

Nations of Théah: Book Three

Montaigne™

by Kevin Wilson



~1668~

Roleplaying Game



Montaigne

"When the sun sets, the land will run red with blood."

— Lady Jamais Sices du Sices

This is truly a golden age. Montaigne stands on top of the world, and no one can challenge her authority. The limitless gold that pours from the Empereur's coffers fuels the war against Castille — a war which can only end in victory for Montaigne, and the destruction of the Empereur's most bitter enemy, the Church itself. Beneath the surface, however, dark forces have begun to stir, and the voices of a thousand spirits cry out for vengeance!

The *Montaigne* sourcebook includes:

- Information on the fifteen provinces of the Empire of the Sun King, complete with history, background information, and prominent personalities.
- Tips on playing the most dangerous game of them all — courtly intrigue.
- A wealth of new rules: fighting schools, new uses for Porté, Montaigne Puzzle Swords, and L'Empereur's Musketeers.
- Descriptions of the native ghosts and spectres, a two-page map of the Montaigne capital, and more!



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Montaigne

The Center of the World



The sun that shines too brightly burns the earth below.

– Lady Jamais Sices du Sices





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*This book is dedicated to my cousin, Johnny Barnwell. You were always there for your little cousin,
and I miss our fishing trips to the Canary Hole, copperheads or no.*



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Montegue's Stand

"Open the gates! My men are dying out here, you cowards!" The speaker, his uniform stained with blood and dirt, hammered at the tall gates in frustration.

"His Majesty's orders, soldier. Fight or die!" replied a shout from behind the safety of the wall.

Montegue memorized the sound of that voice as his commander turned back to him in defeat. "No good, boys. We make our stand here. Backs to the wall and keep low, everyone. Reload, quickly!"

The unit took up their positions — a long row of thirty men. Montegue knelt, and the world flickered before him. He saw his death. *There are almost 150 of them. The Castillians will advance to the hedge, there, draw a volley from us, and then charge. They can cover the distance before we can reload. That commander with the red rose on his chest, he's the one, he's our murderer—*

He shook his head. No time for that now. Automatically, he poured powder into his gun, rammed down some wadding, added a ball, and packed it tight. Then he lifted the musket to his shoulder.

Their officer raised his hand. "Ready! Aim! Fi—" He was thrown back against the wall as a ball took him in the chest. He coughed blood, then slid to the ground, dead.

The other men gaped in terror. They started to lower their muskets, but Montegue just stared. He was in command now. He was responsible for their lives. His feelings vanished as the world began flickering again...

Red rose dies, and the Castillians will falter. We fire, but the Castillians come on, led by his second, and we die. If the second dies as well, the Castillians will crouch behind the hedge and reload. They fire, we die. We charge. We die. We climb the wall. We die. We die. We die. Nothing, there's nothing — Wait. We live.

Montegue jumped to his feet. "Steady!" he called out, "There's nowhere to run. Listen to me. Karl, take down that officer with the red rose on his chest."

The blonde Eisen nodded and drew a bead on the Castillian, his hands shaking. The musket fired. The officer remained in his saddle, and Montegue began to curse. "Got him," smiled Karl. Startled, Montegue looked back in time to watch the man fall to the ground, blood spreading from where Karl had shot him through his rose. The Castillian advance halted while the second checked on his dead commander. Montegue snapped out his next orders.

"Every other man, take one step forward, starting with you, Jean-Claude. When I give the order, the front row fires, and the back row steps forward in front of them while they reload. Got that?" There was a moment while the men worked it out, then Jean-Claude stepped forward, as did 15 other men. "Not you two. Jacques, Darin, you're in the back row. Karl, you're with me."

The Castillians came on, reaching the hedge. Montegue shouted, "Ready! Aim! Front row, fire!" Thirteen muskets sounded their report, and two Castillians fell, their cover spoiling the volley. The second waved his men forward, and they stepped out of the hedge, grim smiles on their faces. "Back row, step forward. Front row, reload! Get ready... now!" There was uncertainty in the second's eyes. He wasn't sure what he was seeing. "Ready! Aim! Back row, Fire!" Disbelief flashed across the Castillian faces as nine of their company died suddenly — far too quickly for the Montaigne to have reloaded already.

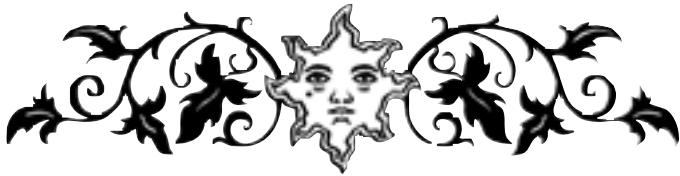
Montegue spun around to Karl. "Now! Take the second!" Without bothering to watch, he turned back to the men. "Front row, step forward! Back row, reload! Hurry up!" There was a report, and a cheer from several of the men. Karl started to reload as the second bounced limply on the





Introduction

ground. “Now, front row, fire!” Another volley slammed into the Castillians, and six died. A man stepped forward and picked up the second’s sword. Montegue tossed Karl his own musket. “Take the ambitious one.” Karl nodded and drew a bead. Everything was all right; Montegue had a plan...



Introduction

There are few heroes that stir the swashbuckling portion of the soul like Dumas’ musketeers. There is something about their fabulous daring, their reckless courage, that makes the heart soar. We feel that these men could do anything, and by extension we come to feel that anything is possible. Whether they are fighting for their Queen, or for the love of a beautiful woman, they’re always ready with a witty remark and a well turned blade. After all, these men have two things in common:

First, they feel that courage without style is a waste of their time.

Second, they’re French.

When you read this book, leave behind any pre-conceived notions you have of baguettes and berets. The Montaigne, like the French, have a heroism unique to their culture, in which *how* you kill the Villain is as important as the deed itself. They are the masters of the sweeping gesture, the cutting remark, and the generous gift. They understand the true worth of a comrade, and value their friends and family above everything else in the world.

Of course, just as with the other nations, there is an uglier side to Montaigne. The nobility are a stifling drain on the peasants’ resources. Obscene opulence surrounds the elite, cushioning them from the harsh reality that the peasants face every day. Often, these nobles are not evil, they simply

don’t see what’s going on around them. It was such a broad gap between haves and have-nots that led Marie Antoinette to utter her famous quote, “Let them eat cake.” Some historians believe that Marie honestly failed to understand that the peasants were starving. She thought that they were upset simply because they were out of bread, not that there was no food to be had anywhere. Why riot over bread, when you have cake in the pantry? If this theory is true, then Marie lost her head to the guillotine merely for being ignorant of the world. The nobles of Montaigne may need to learn from her example soon enough. The peasants, for their part, may learn the secret of the efreit in the bottle — once you let it out, you can’t put it back.

Once the bottle is opened, Montaigne will never be the same again.

But that’s the way of things, and taking the bad with the good is all part of the game.

So if you can find heroism in the enduring loyalty of the musketeers; if you can feel the power behind Cyrano’s love as he rushes out to slay a hundred men in a single evening; if you can sympathize with an old peasant as her sons are taken away to war, or a tearful young noblewoman as she is dragged to the chopping block for reasons she doesn’t understand — if these things excite your imagination, then this book, and Montaigne, is for you.

The book is organized into five chapters. We’ll start with **Montaigne** and look at the families and places that make up Montaigne. In **Hero**, we’ll look at some of the nation’s most important people. **Drama** gives you new mechanics and additional rules for making Montaigne Heroes. **Style** discusses the finer points of roleplaying a Montaigne. There is also a section for GMs only, which contains secrets that players will not want to read. Lastly, the **Appendix** gives you some useful graphics and forms, such as the three sample Montaigne navy ships and the courtly intrigue sheet.

So, without further ado, welcome to the home of literature and art on Théah. Welcome to the final bastion of culture. Welcome to Montaigne, the center of the world.





Montaigne

Last Goodbyes, Part One

Léon Alexandre XIV, Emperor of the World, sat alone in the dining room, picking at his venison. The wealth surrounding him would have struck his subjects dumb with wonder – the embroidered curtains alone were worth as much as a minor Montaigne noble saw in a year. Any of the golden plates at the table could allow a peasant to retire and never work another day in his life. Yet it all went unnoticed by *l'Empereur*.

Reaching absently for his glass, he tipped it over, shattering the crystal goblet and spilling the dark red wine across the fine silken tablecloth. The wine was an expensive vintage some forty years old, the tablecloth a priceless relic brought from Cathay by Ussuran traders. He noticed the destruction of neither. Instead, his gaze rose to a pair of mirrors hanging on the walls across from each other.

The surface of the mirrors reflected a being found nowhere in the dining room. It appeared nearly human, save its blood-red pupilless eyes and its dripping wrists bereft of hands. It returned *l'Empereur's* stare mutely, managing the feat despite the fact that its own eyes were seemingly incapable of sight. The *Empereur* smiled at the sight of the tortured monstrosity. Taking note of his broken glass at last, he swept the wreckage onto the floor and poured himself another cup of wine, then toasted the creature reflected in his mirrors.

"Strange, isn't it, old friend, that I can find companionship only with a ghost? I can speak to you of those things that weigh most heavily upon my mind and know that you won't whisper these secrets in a lover's ear, or sell them for a pouch of Castillian gold. You are the only person in the whole world whom I may trust completely, and then only because it's impossible for you to betray me." Léon lifted his hand to caress the mirror closest to him.

"Sometimes I wonder if perhaps I am not the one on the inside of the mirror. Maybe all the world is an illusion to keep me happy within the confines of a looking-glass prison. That would explain the lifeless feel to the people whose company I am forced to endure."

He rubbed his chin thoughtfully, sipping at his wine. "Well then, what of this Montegue? He is real, that's for certain. He has all the reality of a drunkard puking into the gutter, and none of the noble bearing. He would wallow in his vomit like a pig, enjoying the earthiness of the experience." Léon glanced at the ghost. "Perhaps he is a fellow prisoner then? Are the two of us hanging on your wall like butterflies on display?" He sighed, "My subjects, illusory or not, love him dearly in a way they have never loved me. He has the loyalty of my own army. With a nod of his head, he could unseat me."

Léon clenched his fist tightly. "I was a fool to raise him up through the ranks that day! But I was still trembling like a whipped dog, and my thoughts were full of gratitude to the peasant who had saved me from the Inquisition's lash. I had no thought to the future. Marrying Dominique to him, though, that was a masterstroke. My line is assured, even if I topple. Better yet, she is going to have a son!" He gazed up at the ceiling. "I'll beat my mother yet. I will have an heir, even if it is Montegue's son and not my own. There's nothing this supposed curse can do to stop me! My grandson will build an empire so great that the Montaigne name will reign supreme across every inch of Théah. What do you think of that?" The ghost regarded him impassively.

"Yes. Montegue. I had forgotten. He will never let me give the boy the upbringing that an Empereur needs. So I must get him out of the way, but how?" Steepling his fingers, Léon looked down the length of the table at the map of Théah on the wall, dominated by the cold, unwelcoming borders of Ussura.

"Of course..."



History

The nation of Montaigne has been one of the most stable influences on Théan history since it was first founded, but its own history really begins much earlier than that.

Ancient History

Montaigne's origins go back to the Old Republic. In fact, its story begins with the distinguished senators of that ancient kingdom.

The Senators

Between 700 and 724 AUC, the senators of the Old Republic became the world's first sorcerers. Among these men was shrewd Senator Octavius Montanus. The bloodline of the Montaigne nobles stems from this man and his supporters. When the Empire split into Eastern and Western portions, Octavius' descendants remained influential in the west. They continued to wield considerable power in spite of barbarian raids, the foundation of a sorcerer-hating Church, the beginning of the Dark Ages, and even Emperor Corantine's conquest of the area. Their authority seemed untouchable until Emperor Carleman's rule in 600 AV.

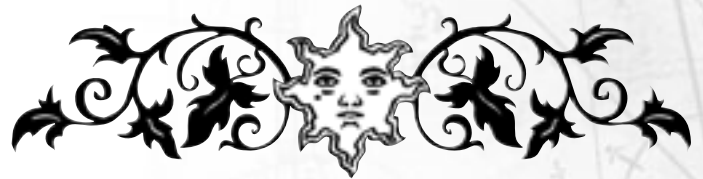
Imperator Carleman

Carleman disdained the Montanus family, and its power dwindled during his reign until the family became little

more than wealthy errand boys. On the Emperor's death, he left the area that would later become Montaigne to his second son, Charles. In order to maintain stability in his impoverished kingdom, Charles was forced to marry Isabeau Montanus, the daughter of the Montanus patriarch. While his two brothers squabbled in their kingdoms, Charles grew ill and became bedridden. Within five years he was dead, leaving his wife as his only heir.

The Founding of Montaigne

Isabeau wasted no time. She married her distant cousin, Léon Alexandre Montanus, and named her newly claimed kingdom "Montaigne." She also changed her name to Isabeau du Montaigne. Montaigne was the translation of her family name into the local language, and Isabeau gained her subjects' trust by showing them in this way that she was one of them. She divided the country into eight provinces and named her most trusted supporters as dukes. As for Léon, he was ruler in name only, and did whatever his wife told him to. He is remembered to this day as Léon the Weak.



Medieval History

After the coming of the Third Prophet, the Vaticine Church took a violent turn, and the Montaignes had to hide their sorcery or risk excommunication and death. Other noble families hid their magic as well, but a few continued to display it openly. This usually proved to be a poor choice, as was dramatically demonstrated when the sorcerer-kings of Castille were dethroned and executed by the Third Prophet. Montaigne's king was so shaken by the slaughter that he created the Lightning Guard to protect himself.

Occupation of Avalon

In 1028, Henri du Montaigne led his forces to victory on Avalon soil, claiming the islands for his own. The Leveque family was instrumental in this success, and a particularly brave soldier in their employ named Lucien brought the corpse of the King of Avalon before the Montaigne king. As a reward for his valor, Lucien was granted all of Avalon as his province. He was thereafter known as Lord Lucien Savary du Lac, since the king had been killed next to a large lake. He managed the province well, but his descendants gradually integrated with the natives. Avalon remained in a constant state of pseudo-independence. New families arose to claim the throne, and even warred with Montaigne if the opportunity presented itself. Finally, after six hundred years, the Avalons threw off Montaigne rule entirely. The Savary family, the last to remain true to the Montaigne crown, was forced to flee the country in disgrace. It was stripped of its titles and family name, thereafter being known only as the “du Lac” family.

Recent Events

Within the last thirty years, *l'Empereur* Léon XIV has caused sweeping changes in his nation. The Church has not been welcome in Montaigne for some time now, and his country is now a wealthy world power.

The War of the Cross

When Emperor Riefenstahl took the Eisen throne in 1636, the Vaticine Church urged Montaigne to join the war against Eisen reformists. However, the young Léon XIV held a grudge against the Church, and declared to the court that he would rather see Eisen in ruins than Montaigne. Finally, once the war had devastated most of Eisen, the Montaigne army invaded. Several other countries followed suit, eager to feast upon the corpse of the Holy Republic. The Emperor was forced to sign the Treaty of Weissberg, which turned over several large pieces of land to the foreign invaders in exchange for peace. In annexing this land, Montaigne also received a fresh supply of Eisen refugees





and mercenaries, many of whom joined the Montaigne army.

Sorcerous Revelations and Foreign Invasion

In 1664, Léon openly declared that not only was he a sorcerer, but that Montaigne would shelter other sorcerers from the Church's prosecution. The Hierophant issued a statement of disapproval, but he was unsure whether to march against Montaigne over the matter. The decision was made for him two years later when the High Inquisitor and his men raised a small army of devout Castilians on their own and marched toward Charouse. Using diversionary tactics, the Inquisition's army reached the capital with a minimum of bloodshed, leaving the Montaigne army days away. Only a small garrison and the Lightning Guard were there to defend their King against a force that outnumbered them five to one.

Montegue's Stand

The battle went poorly for Montaigne. They lost more than half of their men and nearly all of their commanders in the first volley. The army contingent was forced right up against the walls of the Château du Soleil. The Lightning Guard then shut the gates against them. The garrison took devastating losses as the Castilians poured fire into them, until they were reduced to a single unit of thirty men. Among them was a corporal named Montegue. He organized the survivors into a more efficient formation that allowed them to keep up a constant stream of fire and drew the Castilians out of their cover. As snipers fired upon their officers, the constant volleys sent them reeling. The Castilians fled, and the Lightning Guard poured out of the gates after them. Montegue was promoted to High General of Montaigne and married to the King's youngest daughter in gratitude for his astonishing victory. Léon then instructed him to invade Castille in order to free it from the tyrannous power of the Church.

The Montaigne-Castille War

During the first year of the war, High General Montegue decided to take Western Castille, avoiding the massive river fortresses along the Delia. Under his leadership, nearly the

entire provinces of Torres and Zepeda became Montaigne property. However, there was a small area in the south of Zepeda that managed to hold out against the Montaigne forces, and the war effort stalled briefly. Then the Empereur inexplicably called Montegue back to Charouse and ordered him to invade Ussura.

Since Montegue's departure, the war has been a disaster, with the three remaining generals hurling tens of thousands of Montaigne to their doom against the walls of the mighty Castillian fortresses. For more information on the war and on occupied Castille, please see the forthcoming *Castille Sourcebook*.

El Morro

El Morro is an enormous Castillian fortress located at the meeting point of the Rio de Delia and the Rio de Dios. This river fortress wages a bitter defense of Castille's current western border and holds Montaigne river traffic in check. As long as it remains, the Montaigne will be denied access to the Rio de Dios, and consequently, most of Castille, including Vaticine City.

The Last Wall

The newest structure built by the Castillian military is a twenty-foot wall at the southern end of occupied Castille. It has come to be called La Muralla al Ultimo ("The Last Wall"), and it has allowed the Castilians there to hold out against superior Montaigne forces. Rumors run rampant through the Montaigne military that the Brotherhood of the Coast are providing these men with supplies, and the General (see pg. 66) has made them a high priority on his list.



Prominent Families

In Montaigne, it is impossible to ignore family, even if one wishes to. Without his family and friends, a Hero in Montaigne would quickly reach an untenable position — bereft of allies, his numerous enemies would move in for the kill. Thus, more so than other Théan nations, Montaigne is a land in which cousin helps cousin.

Nobility

The game effects of being from a specific noble family are listed in *italics* following its description. Only Heroes with the Noble Advantage can be from a noble family.

The Montaigne Family

The royal family has been in power since Montaigne declared its independence from the Old Empire. The family has traditionally produced the most powerful sorcerers Montaigne has to offer, due to its pure bloodline.

The current patriarch of the Montaigne family is Léon Alexandre du Montaigne. Aside from his wife, his nine daughters, several cousins, and sons-in-law, no one else has the right to bear the name “du Montaigne.”

Members of the Montaigne family have an effectively unlimited income, and receive twice the normal number of points in Sorcerous Knacks at character creation. GMs are advised against

allowing Heroes from the Montaigne family for purposes of game balance.

Allais du Crieux

The Allais family is very wealthy. Its fertile lands and key trading ports have provided it with the independence it needs to quietly refuse the Empereur’s requests on more than one occasion, and its famous parties have provided the allies it needs to make the Empereur think twice about seizing its holdings. When he withholds tax money from the Allais, they simply fall back on their own resources. Thus far, the Empereur has resisted the urge to use military force against them, but someday they may go too far.

The current patriarch of the family is Douard Allais du Crieux, a stubborn, willful man. Also of note are his nephew, Fench Allais du Crieux, and his sister, Julie Allais du Crieux. Fench is a famous dilettante and favorite at the Château du Soleil, renowned for his rapier wit and merciless tongue. Julie hosts the Spring Ball during the first feasting day of Tertius every year. At the Ball, young nobles just reaching their thirteenth birthday are presented before the other noble families for the first time, their elders arranging marriages with all the skill of experienced horse traders. It is a great honor in Montaigne to attend this ball.

Noble Heroes who belong to the Allais family receive an extra income of 100G per month, but they receive two fewer Reputation dice (minimum 1) when at court in Charouse, limiting their success as courtiers.

Flaubert du Doré

The Flaubert family recently became very rich when the current patriarch, Pierre Flaubert du Doré, converted all of the family’s farmland into grazing territory for cattle. However, he did so at the expense of his country. The grain and vegetables the family grew on its land were needed for the war effort, but Pierre knew that beef would fetch a much better price. Due to his actions, Montaigne is experiencing the start of a famine, and the Flaubert family is currently shunned throughout Montaigne.

Pierre is a hot-headed young man out to further the cause of his family at any cost. Other notable members of the Flaubert family include his brother, Xavier Flaubert du Doré, and his daughter, Sylvia Flaubert du Doré. Xavier is one of the most skilled diplomats of Montaigne and currently serves as the Ambassador to Ussura. Sylvia is one of the great beauties of Théah, and suitors come from all over to try to win her hand in marriage. So far, none have caught her eye, though they are willing to go to extraordinary lengths to gain her favor. Some suspect that she is withholding her choice in order to enjoy the attention a bit longer.

Noble Heroes who belong to the Flaubert family receive an extra income of 150G per month, but receive one fewer Reputation die (minimum 1) when in Montaigne.

Riché du Paroisse

The Riché family have one of the largest provinces in Montaigne and control a major portion of the Sineuse River. This lets them levy tariffs on trade up and down the river, which serves as their greatest source of income — a right they guard fiercely, since they are poor compared to other noble lines. Their ferocity is often the subject of ridicule, for they are also among the shortest of the Montaigne. Referring to a Riché as a “terrier” is the worst insult you can give him, and will certainly result in a duel.

The current matriarch of the Riché family is Mariana Riché du Paroisse, known for her gentle (at least by Riché standards) temperament and loyalty to the Empereur. Also of interest are her uncle, Jardin Riché du Paroisse, and her grandson, Albion Riché du Paroisse. Jardin served in the Montaigne navy for 30 years before retiring as an Admiral a year ago, and still has considerable pull with them. Albion is a noted duelist — a Master in Valroux, and a Journeyman in three other styles, including Tout Près.

Noble Heroes who belong to the Riché family automatically receive the Small Advantage for free, and receive 12 HP if they choose the Hot-headed Hubris as their Arcana. However, they must pay 12 HP to choose the Self-controlled Virtue as their

Arcana, they receive 100G less income per month, and their Brawn maximum is reduced by 1 (to 4, in most instances).

Leveque d'Aur

The Leveque War College has long been famed for turning out some of the greatest soldiers in Montaigne history. At the heart of this fabled academy lies the Leveque family itself, whose military history is just as long and illustrious as the college's. A Leveque has led every successful incursion into Avalon, and the peasants believe that the family possesses some sort of charm against the Sidhe Glamour that pervades that island. As a reward for their victories, the King of Montaigne at the time granted them their land, tax-free, in perpetuity. Thus, their name is d'Aur, not du Aur, signifying that they are not *of* the land, but that they *are* the land. Unfortunately, because of their history, the Leveques have a tendency to neglect the less military aspects of their education.

The current head of the Leveque family is Victor Leveque d'Aur, known for his icy demeanor and skill with a pistol and saber. Other notables of the Leveque family include his son, Luc Leveque d'Aur, and his cousin, Irene Leveque d'Aur. Luc is an officer in the Montaigne army and leads the forces assaulting El Morro. His two older brothers both attempted the feat earlier; both were killed by Castillian snipers. Rather than complain, however, Victor sent his final son to restore the family's good name. Luc's death would leave him without an heir, but he is confident in his youngest son. Irene is a famous singer in Montaigne. Her voice has been said to make the birds weep for jealousy, and she has a great deal of pull with Pierre Flaubert du Doré. Some suspect that her involvement with Pierre, while not technically improper (he is a widower and she is unmarried) is rather more romantic than either would care to publicize.

Noble Heroes who belong to the Leveque family are immune to taxes and tariffs of all sorts while in Montaigne. In addition, they receive the Academy Advantage for free. However, each Civil Skill they purchase costs them 3 HP at character creation, and 15 XP thereafter. Finally, because of their martial skill and

privilege, l'Empereur tends to keep a close eye on their affairs (at the GM's discretion).

Duboise du Arrent

As the owners of the largest province in Montaigne, the Duboise family produces much of the nation's agriculture, including grains, vegetables, and a variety of cheeses. They even produce a few good wines in their vineyards on the gentle slopes of the nearby hills. They are a large family, and it seems that no matter where a traveler goes in Montaigne, there is always a Duboise to welcome them. Perhaps because of this, they have acquired a reputation for friendliness and hospitality.

The current leader of the family is Samuel Duboise du Arrent, a generous man known to donate heavily to the poor of Montaigne. Other well known members of the family include his aunt, Anne Duboise du Arrent, his cousin, Georges Duboise du Arrent, and his nephew, Guy Duboise du Arrent. Anne is a social maven, with standing invitations to all the most exclusive parties and society events. Georges, a bishop in the Vaticine Church, has recently disappeared, much to Samuel's concern. Samuel has posted a reward of 1000G for the return of his cousin, no questions asked. Guy is a scholar famed for his knowledge of astronomy, natural philosophy, and mathematics.

Noble Heroes from the Duboise family may purchase the Friendly Virtue for 5 HP. In addition, they receive one Free Raise when performing Reputation Actions in Montaigne. However, they receive only 5 HP if they take the Proud Hubris, and in any event, it costs them 3 HP to purchase Martial Skills at character creation, and 15 XP thereafter.

Valroux du Martise

The Valroux family are famous for three things: rapiers, river trade, and ridicule. François Valroux du Martise developed the popular Valroux style of fighting in 1593. Enemies too numerous to count have fallen to Valroux swords after being baited into a confrontation thanks to a choice insult dropped at the proper moment. Only the slow-witted should be surprised to learn that most of these

enemies had threatened the family's livelihood — the trading runs their ships make up and down the Sineuse River. The Valroux are somewhat isolated from the other Montaigne noble families because of this practice. In fact, thanks to their standoffish ways, their bright, gaudy clothing, and their habit of holding balls on the gently swaying decks of their ships, none of the other families would so much as lift a finger to help a Valroux. Fortunately, this has only strengthened their familial loyalty that much more.

The current matriarch of the Valroux family is "Grandmother" Madeleine Sabine Valroux du Martise, an elderly lady of such common sense and social grace that any Valroux would gladly give his life defending her. Two other well-known members of the family are her son, Victor Valroux du Martise, and her grandson, Sébastien Valroux du Martise. Victor is suspected of having extensive underworld connections and a smuggling network. Sébastien, though alienated from his father, is one of the three greatest duelists in Montaigne today. He is a Master of three styles of fighting, including Valroux, and a Journeyman in two others.

Noble Heroes from the Valroux family may learn the Valroux style of fighting for 20 HP. In addition, they always receive one Free Raise when performing a Taunt or Intimidate Action against Montaigne. On the other hand, their other Reputation Actions have their TN raised by 5 while in Montaigne, and they must purchase Montaigne Swordsman Schools besides Valroux as if they were from another country.

Bisset du Verre

The Bisset family controls the northwestern tip of Montaigne, an important port for resupplying troops in occupied Castille. Since the beginning of the war, the Bisset family has seen its coffers fill to overflowing with *l'Empereur's* coins, so it might be forgiven if it is reluctant to see his largesse come to an end. The Bisset have always been perceived as greedy, and their recent behavior has done nothing to change this. Whenever the Empereur seems tired of the war, the Bisset are always there to remind



him of the indignities he has suffered at the hands of the Vaticine Church.

The current patriarch of the Bisset family is Claude Bisset du Verre. He possesses an agile mind, and Legion's own talent for mental calculations. Also of note are his grandfather, Maurice Bisset du Verre, and his sister, Paulette Bisset du Verre. Maurice is a crotchety old man on his last legs who has amassed an enormous fortune that his relatives are eager to get their hands on. Unfortunately for them, he is one of the few family members who earned his money honestly, and has no taste for their money-grubbing ways. Paulette is an aspiring political satirist with three popular books already under her belt. Her next work, *La Nouvelle Garde Robe du l'Empereur*, is a report on an accounting statement she slipped out of the Château du Soleil. In it, she states that over 100 peasants could be fed for six months on what the Empereur spends on a single outfit. Paulette may never again see the light of day if this work is ever published, but in the meantime, she holds a fair amount of

political importance, since most nobles are reluctant to have her quill turned against them.

Noble Heroes from the Bisset family receive 12 HP if they take the Greedy Hubris, and receive an extra 125G in income each month. However, they must pay 12 HP for the Altruistic Virtue, and should the war end, they will not only lose the extra 125G a month income they receive, but an additional 50G each month besides.

Étalon du Toille

The Étalon family has a deserved reputation as the most well-mannered and virtuous noble family in Montaigne. It has a strong claim as the direct descendants of the chivalrous knight Bastion; indeed, the family possesses the original copy of his memoirs. As though this collected virtue somehow swells their muscles, Étalons are among the physically strongest in Montaigne, and the mighty Étalon stallions are the preferred mounts for officers in the Montaigne army.

The current patriarch is Tristan Étalon du Toille. He inspires the younger generations of his family, but he is 80 years old and on the verge of death. Also of note are his nephew, Philippe Étalon du Toille, and his great-granddaughter, Marie Étalon du Toille. Philippe is a famous cavalry commander in the Montaigne army. Never once has his unit known defeat in battle, but it inevitably suffers heavy casualties, giving his superiors a certain hesitation to call upon his very expensive tactics. He is next in line for control of the family once Tristan dies. Marie is something of a black sheep. She has delved into the occult for several years now, and has become an authority on Porté sorcery.

Noble Heroes from the Étalon family pay only 5 HP if they choose a Virtue as their Arcana. However, they receive no points if they take a Hubris as their Arcana. In addition, they receive a +1 to their Brawn instead of the normal Montaigne bonus of +1 to Panache. As might be expected from such men of honor, all Étalons give half their monthly income to charity.

Praisse du Rachetisse

The Praisse family, while not as magically powerful as the ruling Montaigne, possesses some of the strongest sorcerous blood in the nation. Many great mages rose from its ranks to fame and fortune. Members of the family with strong magical talents tend to avoid dogs, which often attack them on sight.

The Praisse are currently led by Aurore Praisse du Rachetisse, a talented sorceress who is attempting to convince Vincent Gaulle du Motte to marry her so that they can merge their two provinces. Other famous Praisses include her uncle, High Admiral of the Montaigne navy Alazais Valoix Praisse du Rachetisse, and her nephew, Hughes Praisse du Rachetisse. As the High Admiral, Alazais is in a good position to arrange positions of power for other family members. Hughes has been blind from birth, but possesses strong Porté magic. He often carries on long conversations with the beings on the other side of the portal, since he is in no danger of accidentally opening his eyes.

Noble Heroes from the Praisse family with Porté Sorcery receive two extra points of Porté Sorcerous Knacks during character creation. However, they receive 5 fewer HP and canines take an instant dislike to them, snarling or attacking if the opportunity presents itself. Praisse Heroes who do not take Sorcery do not receive the extra Sorcerous Knacks, nor do they suffer from the 5 HP penalty or the enmity of canines.

Rois et Reines du Rogné

The Rois et Reines family arose from the joining of two families centuries ago. It has maintained a long tradition of loyalty and valor since then, with its members often signing on as musketeers in the service of the king. Its personal income comes from the trade running through Buché as well as the crops grown on its land. No other noble family is as trusted by l'Empereur as the Rois et Reines.



The current matriarch of the Rois et Reines family is Thérèse Rois et Reines du Rogné. She rules over the family with a strong hand, withholding funds from those foolish enough to oppose her will or to speak ill of the Empereur. Other famous Rois et Reines family members include two of her grandsons, Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné and Gerard Rois et Reines du Rogné. The two brothers are respected members of the musketeers; Jean-Marie has risen to become the head of the order, and Gerard serves as an advisor to the General, an Eisen mercenary recently placed in charge of clearing the coastal waters of pirates.

Noble Heroes from the Rois et Reines family may take the Membership (Musketeers) Advantage for free. However, if they do so, they must then select a Hubris for their Arcana, for which they receive only 8 HP.

Gaulle dul Motte

The Gaulle family is best known for its reclusive habits. Living far from the concerns of the court, the Gaulles pay their taxes and the Empereur leaves them alone. This probably has more to do with the small size of their holdings than anything else, but the Gaulles are happy with the arrangement. Most other families consider them to be backwater nobles, unsuited to the complexities of court. The Gaulles, on the other hand, consider the court a playground for children with nothing better to do. Interestingly, la Motte has a higher concentration of ghosts than any other place on Théah. The Gaulles often study the spirits, and as a result they've become quite adept at capturing them. The "dul" in the family name has no special significance; it's simply a contraction of "du la."

The current patriarch of the Gaulle family is Vincent Gaulle dul Motte, a powerful sorcerer with little interest in the outside world. He is currently attempting to fend off an unwanted marriage proposal from Aurore Praise du Rachetisse. Other famous Gaulles include his grandson, Simon Gaulle dul Motte, and his granddaughter, Jeanne Gaulle dul Motte. Simon is a skilled bladesmith who makes some of the finest rapiers in all of Montaigne, while Jeanne is a civil engineer who is concerned with improving the lot of the peasants in the area.

Noble Heroes from the Gaulle family are unable to learn the Courtier Skill, and lose one Reputation die (minimum 1) when they are in any major Montaigne city. However, they receive the Scholar Skill for free, and due to their familiarity with the unnatural beings near their home, receive two Free Raises when rolling to resist Fear effects.

Sices du Sices

Much like the Michel family, the Sices family recently rose out of the gentry to become nobility thanks to the land ceded to Montaigne by Eisen at the Treaty of Weissberg. Unlike the Michels, however, the Sices have been content to leave their portion of the Black Forest alone. They have no need for the money its lumber could bring them, and no desire to face the same problems as the Michels even if they needed the funds. Instead, the Sices have turned out some of the greatest "Wits" of the age — courtiers who specialize in humiliating others in order to amuse the Empereur. The most gifted Wits sometimes even dare to make fun of the Empereur himself, and if he's in a good mood, they may live to tell the tale.

The head of the Sices family is Lady Jamais Sices du Sices — the acknowledged queen of Wit. Those who cross tongues with her seldom escape unscathed. Other famous Sices include her distant cousin, Louis Sices du Sices, and her daughter, Diane Sices du Sices. Louis is a famed gunner in the Montaigne navy, one of the few men to have adapted his meager Porté sorcery to naval combat. Diane, both an atheist and a philosopher, is a frequent correspondent of Nicklaus Trägue's and a talented Wit in her own right.

Noble Heroes from the Sices family always receive one Free Raise when using the Repartee system — whether defending against it or using it themselves. When they spend Drama dice while using the Repartee system, they receive two Kept dice for every Drama die they spend. However, every two Drama dice spent to augment a Martial Skill add only one Kept die to the roll.

Michel du Gloyure

The Michel family was only recently promoted from the gentry into the nobility by their purchase of the newly acquired Gloyure province. Sadly for them, this land

included a portion of the forests known in Eisen as *die Schwarzen Walden*. Over 20 men and women have died mysteriously in these woods, usually while attempting to harvest lumber. The Michels, unfortunately, have no sorcerers to analyze and deal with this strange threat, since no member of the family has ever been born with the smallest drop of sorcery. In fact, not only are the Michels unable to work magic, it is extremely difficult to work magic on them. This is either a curse or a blessing, depending on who's telling the tale.

The current patriarch of the Michel family is Jean-Paul Michel du Gloyure, who is growing resentful of the sneers he receives at the hands of the "old nobility." Other well-known Gloyures are his son, Pierre, and his cousin, Alice. Pierre is a merchant of great skill. He is able to squeeze the best deal out of anyone without having to worry too much about the interference of sorcery. Alice is perhaps the best tracker in the country, thanks to her sharp eyes and her ability to see magically concealed trails.

Noble Heroes from the Michel family may never purchase Sorcery of any sort. In addition, they receive 75G less income per month. On the bright side, sorcerers attempting to use a Sorcerous Knack directly on a Michel suffer a penalty of -2 unkept dice.

Deneuve du Surlign

The Empereur has placed the Deneuve family in charge of the Paix Embassy, assuring that it runs smoothly, and protecting the ambassadors from harm. This places the Deneuves in an unusual position: nobles who serve foreigners. Of course, this also provides them with the best information grist of any noble family in Montaigne. As might be expected, the Deneuve family gets little respect from the other nobility until the other families have need of some vital information. When that occurs, the Deneuves inevitably squeeze them for all they're worth in repayment for the poor treatment they've received.

The current matriarch of the Deneuve family is Lillian Deneuve du Surlign, who manages the intricate web of information with a deft hand. Others known outside the family include her nephew, Cédric Deneuve du Surlign, and

her cousin, Georgette Deneuve du Surlign. Cédric is a great scholar of history and genealogy. Georgette, on the other hand, has a way of coaxing information out of even the most reticent man.

Noble Heroes from the Deneuve family receive the Servant Skill for free. In addition, their Gossip Knack is considered one higher (maximum 6) when in Paix. However, the TNs of their Reputation Actions are raised by 5 when targeting Montaigne nobles.

Other Notable Names

du Lac

The du Lac family no longer possesses holdings, and only technically has the right to claim noble standing. The du Lacs were once in charge of governing the occupied islands of Avalon; even when they lost the crown several centuries ago they remained prominent in Avalon politics. They fell into disgrace when they were forced to flee that country after the rise of Elaine. Many of them were put to death, and only a few members remain.



du Paix

The name “du Paix” is a pseudonym often taken on by Montaigne who are hiding, or who have some other reason to conceal their real name. The practice is like a modern-day American signing into a hotel as “Mr. Smith.”

Occasionally, an exiled or disinherited noble will change his homeland to “du Paix” (for instance, Jean Bisset du Verre would become Jean Bisset du Paix), signifying that he is a citizen of Montaigne in spirit, if not in fact.

Gentry Names

Gentry names vary widely. Some of the more outrageous gentry take on such epithets as “le Beau” (the Handsome), while others retain their noble names while dropping their ties to their homelands (Jean Bisset du Verre would become Jean du Bisset, for example).

Other Names

As do peasants, merchants, craftsmen, and other Montaigne not of noble blood receive only a first name. However, while away from home they are often known by their town of origin, or by their occupation (such as Paul Arrent, or Timothy Boulanger [Baker]).

Which Paix is du Paix?

To clear up any confusion there might be about the various versions of the “du Paix” surname, here are several examples, complete with descriptions:

Jean Paix — A peasant named Jean from the city of Paix.

Jean du Paix — A Montaigne named Jean who is concealing his name for some reason or another.

Jean Bisset du Paix — A Montaigne noble who was originally named Jean Bisset du Verre, but was exiled or disinherited. His use of this name implies he still considers himself a loyal Montaigne citizen.



Places

Montaigne is divided into fifteen provinces. Each is listed below with information about its prominent cities, rulers, and other features.

Charouse

Ruler: Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne

Dialect Spoken: South Montaigne

Charouse is the home of the Empereur as well as the nominal capital of the nation, a fact which the city of Paix and its embassy have begun to contest. The city of Charouse is built upon a hill in a defensible position, while the other cities in the province are either clustered along the Sineuse River, or spread around Charouse in the lush grasslands like a pack of dogs waiting to be thrown a bone.

Charouse

Population: 500,000

Charouse is the largest city in Montaigne. Originally a colony of the Old Republic, it presents a view of such grandeur that it can awe even the most jaded noble. The streets are narrow and labyrinthine, growing narrower as they approach important buildings. This was originally for defense in case an enemy breached the walls. Some points of interest in Charouse include:

Religious Buildings

For many years, Charouse was famed for her numerous and extravagant cathedrals. The most well-known of these is the towering *Lame Enflammée*. Built during the lifetime of the Third Prophet, its high walls and grinning gargoyles stand out from the other structures nearby, most of which are short, squat governmental buildings. The cathedral has been boarded up following the Empereur's decree that no church worship shall take place within ten miles of the Château du Soleil. Other cathedrals have been converted into public museums, libraries, or shelters for the poor.

A recent scandal arose from the Empereur's treatment of another of Charouse's religious edifices. After the Cardinal d'Argeneau disappeared, the Empereur converted the Cardinal's traditional home, a palatial estate known as the

Château du Theus, into a home for disabled soldiers. The Church was outraged, but when they demanded the estate be returned, the Empereur replied, "You would have me throw thousands of crippled men out on the streets to make room for one man who may never return? What would your Prophets say?" The Church backed off the issue, but remains furious.

Public Buildings

Among the more interesting public buildings in Charouse is a newly constructed observatory. It has five refracting telescopes, including one 130' long, and is open to the use of Montaigne scholars, who have but to ask permission to gain entrance.





Just to the west of the Château du Soleil is the royal tapestry factory, known as the *Fantôme* by locals because of rumors that the building is haunted. Several dozen weavers are employed there, turning out yards of illustrated fabrics and other furnishings with which to decorate the homes of the Empereur and his favored nobles. When the Empereur gives one away it is a sign of great favor with him, and the lucky recipient can expect several dozen new friends, all eager to have Léon's favor rub off on them. One such tapestry might bring 10,000G, as much as a member of the gentry can expect to inherit from his parents!

Finally, a testimony to the Empereur's excess can be found near the Château du Soleil. He had an equestrian statue of himself made recently, and then had his architects design an entire plaza to set it off. The walkways are positioned at just the right distance away to give the best impression of the statue — all for the small sum of 40,000 Sols, or 240,000G.

The Empereur's Holdings

The Empereur has two palaces at his disposal in Charouse: the old palace of the king, and the Château du Soleil, which he had constructed himself.

The old palace is located in the center of Charouse. As might be expected, it is large, impressive, and opulent. However, since the construction of the Château du Soleil, the Empereur has used it mostly to house his priceless collection of art. A small contingent of musketeers (10–20) guard the palace at any given time to thwart would-be art thieves.

The Château du Soleil is another matter entirely. Built on the eastern edge of town to help alleviate traffic congestion in the center of the city, it contains rooms for several hundred courtiers, six separate gardens, over twenty fountains, three hedge mazes, a wine cellar over two acres in size, and a maze of secret passages that run through the walls of the building. The main ballroom itself can contain over four hundred dancers at once, and often has to be sectioned off for smaller affairs. Construction was completed in 1664, and the Empereur moved in immediately thereafter. However, for all its beauty, the

Château is not very comfortable. It is often cold in winter and hot in summer. The enormous rooms are built to impress, not to enjoy. This, combined with the bizarre customs that courtiers must follow while staying at the Château (such as bowing to the Empereur's dinner if it passes by in the hallway), make begging a favor from Léon a very exhausting ordeal — not that it stops anyone from trying.

Colleges and Universities

Charouse houses over twenty-five very old and distinguished universities. The two most famous are the Pierre Leveque War College and Le Grand Université.

The Leveque War College trains young nobles in the art of command. The teachers infuse their pupils with a practicality rarely seen in Montaigne. Each student, before his graduation, is required to attend a public execution and give the order for the headsman to strike. The teaches the student the seriousness of command. Hundreds of men will live or die at their commander's word, and if he fails to understand that, he will lose their trust. The Great Tomb outside the college honors the Montaigne soldiers who have fallen in war.

Le Grand Université is the foremost place of learning in all of Montaigne. Tuition is 300G per five-month semester, and the professors are all respected practitioners in their fields. If the school has a flaw, it is that hands-on experience takes a back seat to lectures and library research. However, that has not stopped many of the graduates of the Université from going on to become great scholars in their own rights.

Petit Charouse

The sewers underneath the city were not built — they were discovered. The city planners simply decided to put them to use rather than build another sewer system. Eventually, some of the poorer citizens of the town moved into these sewers, and that's when the disappearances began. On more than one occasion, the musketeers have come running in answer to a cry of help, only to witness some unfortunate citizen being dragged into the sewers by an unknown force. People living in the sewers have begun crafting weapons



from the detritus they find, hoping to protect themselves from this unknown threat. Ghouls, rats, explosive gasses and other, less natural terrors also haunt the sewers. For more on Petit Charouse, see the *Game Master's Screen*.

Arrent

Ruler: Duke Samuel Duboise du Arrent

Dialect Spoken: North Montaigne

Bordered on the west by the Sineuse River, Arrent is one of the largest provinces, but it remains a largely agricultural economy. Most of the western half is cultivated by peasants, while the eastern half is heavily forested. The woods are an extension of the dreaded Lockhorn Forest, however, and are avoided by the locals. Two small lumbering communities have developed there, inhabited by only the bravest Arrents.

Rayure

Population: 25,000

With its central location, Rayure serves primarily as a trading hub for Arrent. Farmers often bring their crops here to sell, minimizing the distance they have to travel and the tariffs they have to pay. As a result, the city bustles with activity every harvest. Auctions are held, imported goods such as farm implements and luxury items are sold, and nightly dances are held for three months. For the farmers of Arrent, Rayure is the biggest city they know.

Aur

Ruler: Duke Victor Leveque d'Aur

Dialect Spoken: North Montaigne

The Aur province, like Arrent, is agrarian. However, the peasants who live here are among the most content in all of Montaigne. The d'Aur family, mostly interested in military matters, largely ignores them; consequently the taxes here are much lower than elsewhere in Montaigne. Aur has a small strip of coastline in the west, on which its capital, Muguet, is built. Several prosperous fishing villages can be

found there. The Lockhorn Forest borders Aur to the east, but none of the mysterious disappearances that plague that place have occurred this far north, leading to a thriving lumber economy based out of *Liérre-Vallée*. Aur is the number one source of shipwrights and ships in all of Montaigne.

Muguet

Population: 30,000

As Aur's capital and only major port, Muguet has been the launching point of every major Montaigne assault against Avalon. Several bronze statues of famous d'Aur generals commemorate the invasions, which the Muguet people are inordinately proud of. The Duke d'Aur can usually be found in his manor near the docks, but assassins beware — he has a crack group of bodyguards second only to the Lightning Guard. Goods are often shipped into Muguet from Martise, and troops are sent to Verre for training. Without Muguet, the surrounding cities would have difficulty surviving.

Liérre-Vallée

Population: 5,000 (15,000 during festival)

As the name suggests, the city of Liérre-Vallée is built in a valley that boasts a bright profusion of lilies. All shapes and sizes are represented here, and the flowers have brought the city great fame. The population of the city swells from 5,000 to 15,000 for the first week in Tertius, when the Lily Festival is held. Thousands of blooming lilies are picked and spread in profusion all over the town. Dances are held in which each attendant receives a lily, and the rules of the dance say that they can only pair up with partners wearing a flower of a different color. Needless to say, couples are always given matching lilies. Most folks see the festival as a chance to cut loose and dance with a stranger — perhaps even to meet someone to share their life with, if they haven't already. Besides the festival, Liérre-Vallée has a thriving lumber industry that keeps the city prosperous the rest of the year.



Crieux

Ruler: Duke Douard Allais du Crieux

Dialect Spoken: North Montaigne

Crieux is both financially and politically powerful. The Allais family has grown so wealthy from its trading ports and fertile lands that it can refuse or work around the Empereur himself. Crieux alone in all of northern and western Montaigne pays the *taille* (see page 46) with the *Pays d'Etat*, thanks to a favor that the Duke called in. The west coast of Crieux is dotted with ports and tiny fishing villages, while the rest of the province consists of cultivated farmland.

Crieux

Population: 60,000

Crieux serves as the home of the headquarters of the Knights of the Rose and Cross — Crieux House. It's also where Duke Allais makes his home, in an opulent manor in the center of town. The Duke is constantly putting on some extravagant event, such as mock battles using entire armies, or games of Squares using people as the pieces. He uses his own fortune to fund these events, and keeps the taxes reasonably low with his political connections, so the people find him a tolerable ruler.

Doré

Ruler: Duke Pierre Flaubert du Doré

Dialect Spoken: North or Dechaine Montaigne

Up on the northernmost tip of Montaigne is the province of Doré, home of the Flaubert family. Having an abundance of coastline ensures that there are dozens of small fishing

villages here, but the main income comes from the farmland that has been converted for grazing. A small section of forest extends into Doré, but it is mostly second or third growth now, having been harvested several times already.

Dechaine

Population: 15,000

Dechaine is the capital of Doré, yet it's a surprisingly small city. Duke Flaubert makes his home here, and the peasantry are fond of him. He has brought economic prosperity to the province simply by converting farmland into grazing land. Of course, other parts of Montaigne are starving because of this, but that's out of sight and out of mind for the people of Doré.

The townsfolk of Dechaine have a great deal of contact with the Vendel and the Eisen, which has given them an unusual accent. In addition, they are a somewhat provincial group, and most have difficulty adapting to the larger cities in Montaigne. This has given rise to the saying "as slow as a Dechaine." The Duke has an intense dislike for this attitude, and he once hired a Swordsman to duel a noble who had mocked the Dechaine accent while the Duke was listening.

Gloyure

Ruler: Lord Jean-Paul Michel du Gloyure

Dialect Spoken: South Montaigne

The province of Gloyure is in the southeast of Montaigne. It was recently purchased by Lord Jean-Paul Michel in a silent auction run by the Empereur after gaining it from the Eisen in the Treaty of Weissberg. While he does not have the right to the title of Duke, he can attach the "du Gloyure" to his name, and his great-grandson will be a duke if Gloyure remains in the family's possession that long (only after three generations of possession is that title bestowed upon a Montaigne family). Over half of the province is covered in thick forest, which the Michel family has attempted to harvest. Unfortunately, loggers keep vanishing in the woods, so progress has been slow. In the meantime,

the western farmland supplies a steady income to the area with its fertile soil.

Prevoye

Population: 13,000

The small town of Prevoye is tucked up in the foothills, with a small river running downhill to the west. This makes it an ideal place for a lumbering operation. Enormous logs are cut in the nearby forest, pushed into the river, and sent downstream to the town of Prélant, where they are milled and made into useful items. This has been complicated by the disappearances in the forest, but so far Lord Michel has kept morale up by accompanying the loggers into the forest himself, armed with his hunting musket and two finely crafted pistols.

La Motte

Ruler: Duke Vincent Gaulle dul Motte

Dialect Spoken: Bascone Montaigne

Although bordered by three provinces, this lightly-wooded area is mostly cut off from the rest of the world. The people don't like outsiders, and for good reason. La Motte has the highest occurrence of ghosts and spirits anywhere in Théah. Anyone unknown here could be a dangerous spirit. La Motte draws its income largely from its bountiful fruit orchards. In spite of his status as a powerful mage, Duke Gaulle is very friendly to his peasants, and visiting nobility are often surprised to find themselves eating at the same table as the orchard workers he has invited to dinner.

Bascone

Population: 12,000

Bascone was built in such a manner as to blend into the forest surrounding it. Tree-lined avenues and gardens filled with native plants are the rule rather than the exception. The community here is very tight-knit and even the Gaulle family members are friendly and approachable. They prefer not to lord their wealth over the peasants, and their manor is small and simple. When *l'Empereur* last visited, the entire



family moved out to make room for him and his retinue, who were packed six or more to a room. The Empereur was so embarrassed when his hosts were forced to sleep outside in tents in order to accommodate him that he has not visited since, much to the Gaulle family's relief.

Martise

Ruler: Duchess Madeleine Sabine Valroux du Martise

Dialect Spoken: West Montaigne

Although Martise is an enormous province, much of its true life is centered along the Sineuse River and Courais Lake. Small, elaborate riverboats sail up and down the river, carrying both cargo and nobles. Masquerade balls and duels of honor take place on their decks, and the gentle swaying of the ships adds an extra element of excitement. Further away from the river, the pace of life slows down to a dull crawl, as farmers plant, harvest, and sell their wares. Boring though it may be, the farming is just as essential to the survival of the province as the trade on the river.

Coteau

Population: 30,000

Some 10,000 of Coteau's inhabitants live in buildings built out over the lake. The city was frequently raided by pirates and Vestenmannavnjar early in its history, so its people moved it up a nearby hill, where it would be more defensible. Eventually the raids stopped, and some of the people moved back into the lake city. As the two towns grew, they gradually merged together, forming the town that exists today.

Echine

Population: 50,000

The current capital of Martise and the home of Duchess Valroux, Echine is the center of trade for most of northern Montaigne. Merchants sell their products in Echine rather than pay the high tariffs on goods traveling downstream to Charouse, which allows the Valroux family to buy goods cheaply in Echine, and sell them dearly in the capital

without too much difficulty. The pirates of Port-Élancé are a frequent thorn in their side, but their complaints are typically ignored by the Arrents, who are still upset at losing the right to levy tariffs on river traffic to the Valroux family in 1664. In any event, the streets of Echine are often thick with young noblemen spoiling for a fight.

Vraise

Population: 5,000

Vraise is a medium-sized city capable of housing 20,000, but in recent years, its actual population has dwindled severely, leaving it a veritable ghost town. Forty years ago, it was a thriving port city with a recurring problem with pirates. Then came the man whose name is cursed to this day: Admiral Alissé Praise du Rachetisse. After five years of unsuccessfully chasing pirates, he decided to try a dangerous tactic. His men tied themselves together with rope, and a Blooded arrow was fired over onto the pirate ship. Then the Porté mage aboard ship opened a portal and began passing men through.

Fifty men went through the portal; fifty monsters emerged from the other side. Their minds destroyed, the sailors began tearing the pirates apart with their bare hands. Fleeing below decks, the pirate captain vowed that these beasts would not have him. He opened the top of a keg of gunpowder and fired his pistol into it just as the first of the maddened Montaigne sailors reached him. The resulting explosion tore the bottom out of the ship and sent it to the bottom.

Since that fateful day, tales have surfaced of derelict ships rising from the bottom of the bay, calving icebergs behind them as they sailed in unholy silence. The number of shipwrecks in the area has greatly increased, and sailors have begun to avoid the town and its haunted bay. Finally, the trickle of trade slowed to nothing and people began moving away, leaving it in its current sad shape.



Paroisse

Ruler: Duchess Mariana Riché du Paroisse

Dialect Spoken: South Montaigne

Bordered on the east by the Sineuse River and on the south by the Trade River, Paroisse has been blessed with plentiful shipping. Because the peasants here pay much lighter taxes than those in northern and western Montaigne, the economy is in much better shape. This allows the local farmers a higher standard of living, and the peasants are happier as a result.

Tamis

Population: 28,000

Tamis is the capital of Paroisse, but the Riché family only gathers here when it must. Recently, they have considered moving the capital to Chasteltorbe, but so far no action has been taken. This commotion started last year, when for no apparent reason Porté sorcery ceased working in the town entirely — no one could teleport in or out of it. Even the permanent gateways shut down. The Duchess later received a note signed by the Rilasciare claiming responsibility for the death of Porté in Tamis, but whether there's any truth to the claim or not is unknown. After all, asked the Duchess, "If the Rilasciare have that sort of power, why don't they strike again?"

Rachetisse

Ruler: Duchess Aurore Praise du Rachetisse

Dialect Spoken: West Montaigne

Aside from Charouse, Rachetisse has the highest number of Porté gateways in the country. These gates lead everywhere from Charouse to distant islands inhabited by dark-skinned people. Canines of all sorts are banned from entering Rachetisse's borders because of their antipathy toward the Praise family.

Vergogne

Population: 25,000

Vergogne has a population of nearly 25,000 cats. Because of the Praise family's ban on dogs, the capital has become a haven for cats of all sorts. The strays here have become a nuisance, stealing food from the shopkeeper's stalls and yowling at all hours of the night. Unfortunately, the Duchess has taken a liking to the animals, and has passed a law against harming any cat in the town. Violators receive three lashes in the town square, which is severe enough to make any villager put up with the felines.

There are three known Porté gateways in town. One leads to Charouse, one leads to Numa in Vodacce, and one leads to Carleon in Avalon.

Rogné

Ruler: Duchess Thérèse Rois et Reines du Rogné

Dialect Spoken: South Montaigne

The province of Rogné is largely dominated by ports, with a few small farming and fishing communities in between. Since the beginning of the Montaigne-Castille War, the province has heavily militarized. Travel is restricted, and travelers must often bribe patrols in order to avoid incarceration. Only the town of Buché remains open to traffic.

Buché

Population: 40,000

Buché is the last open port between Montaigne and Castille. Further inland, ships encounter only fortresses and guns until they reach the mud-soaked fields of Eisen. Traders from both Vodacce and Vendel dock here frequently, bringing loads of weapons, iron for shot, gunpowder, and even mercenaries. There were frequently disputes between the Vendel and Vodacce traders over who had the right to trade in the city for some time, but the recent acquisition of Barcino, on the other side of the River, has alleviated this problem. Now the Vendel are directed to Buché, while the

Vodacce go to Barcino, and the Montaigne play both factions against each other in order to drive down prices.

Sices

Ruler: Lady Jamais Sices du Sices

Dialect Spoken: South Montaigne

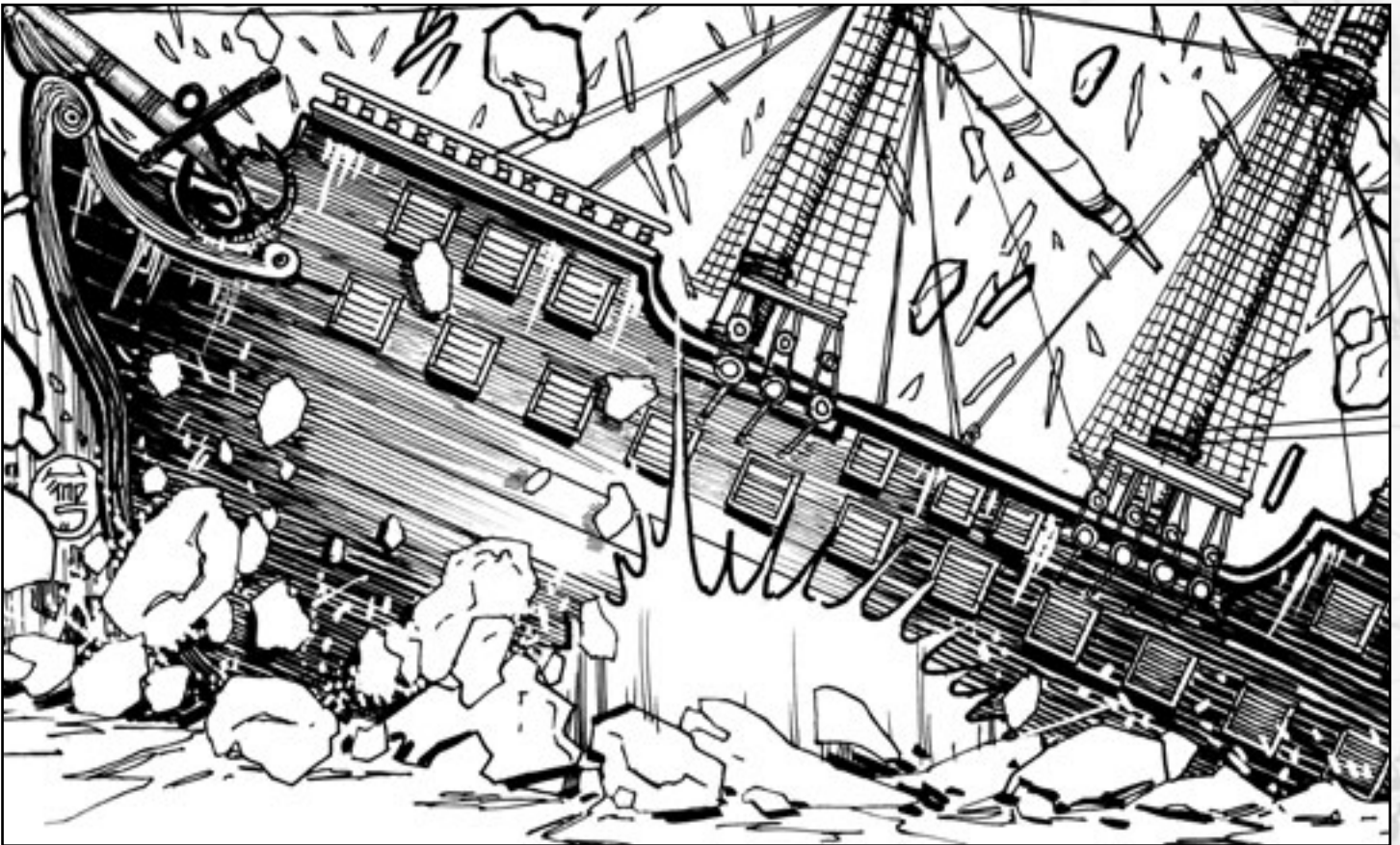
The province of Sices was recently acquired from the Eisen in the treaty of Weissberg. Lady Jamais Sices purchased it in a silent auction held by the Empereur. Unfortunately, most of the area is uninhabitable because of the Lockhorn Forest. Only two small communities have been established within the woods. The others produce specialized products such as glass and charcoal in order to survive.

Mont San Gabriyon

Population: 8,000

Mont San Gabriyon lies deep in the Lockhorn Forest. Never once have the monsters of the forest attacked the city or any of its roads.

Legend tells of Saint Gabriyon, a singer who went into the woods looking for her little brother. Although lost, she stumbled across him in a clearing, but the sounds of the forest fiends grew ever closer. Gabriyon sang to calm her brother, and the monsters retreated. She sang through the night, though her throat became very sore, and the next day they found their way out of the woods. Some time later, a woodsman later took shelter in the same clearing, and found that the beasts of the forest would not go near it. Perhaps some small measure of Gabriyon's song still protected it. In any event, he later founded Mont San Gabriyon on the spot.



Surlign

Ruler: Duchess Lillian Deneuve du Surlign

Dialect Spoken: South or Paix Montaigne

The tiny province of Surlign was created by the Empereur when he built the embassy in Paix. It is bordered on three sides by water — the Sineuse River to the west, the Doigt river to the east, and the Trade River itself to the south. The Empereur gave this territory to one of his most trusted noble families, the Deneuves. Surlign's importance hinges on the continued success of the embassy.

Paix

Population: 100,000

Paix is best known for the embassy, locally known as *Le Labyrinthe* because of its enormous size and twisting, confusing corridors. Ambassadors from all over Théah are entertained there while the Empereur's delegates negotiate trade agreements, alliances, and other political coups. At any time, several hundred people stay in the embassy, and its palatial rooms house them easily. The Empereur himself never enters Paix, his jaded palate finding its pleasures somewhat passé. Those courtiers who wish to stay in his favor emulate him unless directly ordered otherwise.

The other dominant feature of the town is its nightly balls and parties. Many nobles come here to relax without the threat of the Empereur showing up. Typically, the nobles who frequent Paix are not currently seeking any favors from him, since they don't fear his disapproval. The parties these nobles often throw are celebrations of decadence. They waste mountains of food, stir up duels among drunken guests, and inevitably provide the latest embarrassing rumors for the town gossips — in short, they're great fun.

Toille

Ruler: Duke Tristan Étalon du Toille

Dialect Spoken: West Montaigne

Located on the west coast of Montaigne, the province of Toille has an illustrious history. Although it was one of the last areas to be settled, those who came here were the

strongest among the Montaigne. They tamed the wilderness and repulsed foreign invaders, even driving off the Vestenmannavnjar when their raids brought them this far south. Today, Toille is home to the most courteous and polite Montaigne. Manners, virtue, and military might are the keys to power here.

Bastonne

Population: 35,000

Bastonne is the capital of Toille. Duke Étalon lives here in his ancestral castle, along with a contingent of trained cavalrymen. Known as the *Vent Conquérant*, they are the finest cavalry in all of Montaigne, and the personal entourage of the Duke. Many of the Étalon stallions are trained for war here in Bastonne. They learn to perform leaping kicks, bite at strangers grabbing their reins, and protect a fallen rider. Typically, a trained Étalon warhorse sells for more than 5,000G, but they can sometimes be purchased here for as little as 3,000G.

Entour

Population: 20,000

The cavalry in the Montaigne-Castille War receive their supplies from Entour. Feed, tack and harness, horses, and riders are all shipped out to aid in the war efforts. The strongest of the Étalon stallions pull the Montaigne horse cannons, while the smartest are presented to officers, and the swiftest go to those messengers who lack Porté. The Étalon family foots the bill for all of this activity. While the Étalons don't care a fig for the Empereur's war, they do know that tens of thousands of Montaigne would be killed in battle without the Montaigne cavalry, so they provide it willingly and freely.

Verre

Ruler: Duke Claude Bisset du Verre

Dialect Spoken: West Montaigne

Never rich in natural resources, and in a difficult position for trade, Verre has long been one of the poorest provinces.



This has recently changed with the coming of the Montaigne-Castille War. Because of its position on the coast, Verre has become the headquarters for the Montaigne army, resulting in a flood of wealth from the soldiers. The people of Verre, while unused to this sort of prosperity, are nonetheless taking advantage of it as quickly as possible. Of course, the sudden end of the War could spell financial disaster...

Arisent

Population: 43,000

Arisent is the hub of Montaigne's war effort — near enough to Castille to ship out troops easily, but far enough away that it cannot be attacked by the Castillian Armada. Much of the higher-ranking Montaigne brass has gathered here. They examine reports sent back from the front, approve requested expenditures, and make many of the important decisions in the war. Montegue preferred to command from the front, but many commanders are afraid of exposing themselves to a sniper's bullet, and with the Porté messaging system that Montegue set up before being called away to Ussura, why should they have to?

Colonial Holdings

The Montaigne control several islands and pieces of land outside their own country. A few are described below:

L'Il du Bête — The Island of the Beast

Very little illustrates the self-indulgent aspects of Montaigne's nobility as neatly as L'Il du Bête — a small, secluded island hidden on the far western edge of the Frothing Sea. Dotted by Syrneth ruins, it has become a playground for the noblesse elite, who indulge in Théah's most dangerous pastime. Monsters of terrifying ferocity are sent here through portals by Porté sorcerers, a process which drives them mad. The beasts are then hunted by bored nobles. It requires movement in the right circles and a staggering amount of money to acquire an invitation. In order to gain access, one must first contact the Master of the Hunt, Martin de Huet. Assuming the hunter's credentials

are adequate, he is sailed to the island and lodged at one of six Syrneth buildings which have been converted into manor houses. By day, he stalks the jungles in search of prey; by night, he is fed sumptuous meals and entertained by a variety of performers. The Syrneth wards around the buildings keep everyone safe from the beasts outside. Hunters may bring their own weapons, or choose from an extensive on-site arsenal. Each hunter is permitted one kill per trip, and taxidermists are available to stuff and mount any trophies. Most hunters find a single kill more than enough, as the monsters here are quite fearsome and one in three hunters never leaves the island alive.

For more information on L'Il du Bête and Martin de Huet, consult the *7th Sea* adventure module *Scoundrel's Folly*.

Prison Islands

Montaigne has an increasing problem with criminals and political dissidents. It has been forced to seek new places to incarcerate them, which has led to the founding of the prison islands. The location of these prisons is always kept secret, but news of them often trickles out after a few visits from supply ships, since the prisons must often be supplied with food from outside and sailors love to gossip. Occasionally, daring escapes have been made, but only those prisoners with outside aid have succeeded.

Occupied Castille

In those parts of Castille that the Montaigne have captured, things seem peaceful enough on the surface. At first, the Dons were vocal about their grievances, but after the Montaigne shot one in his own city square, the Castillians turned to a campaign of passive resistance. They hide what supplies they can, attempting to smuggle them across to the unoccupied parts of their country. They have performed incredible feats of valor simply to keep a keg of good wine out of the hands of their Montaigne conquerors, and will keep up this quiet fight until their home is theirs once again. For more information on occupied Castille, please see the forthcoming *Castille* sourcebook.





Culture

The Montaigne have one of the most advanced cultures in all of Théah. Their art is admired far and wide, and artists flock to the country seeking wealthy patrons to provide for them. This has given Montaigne a very cosmopolitan perspective (at least in the major cities), and Théans of all nationalities can be encountered there.

Art

The centerpiece of Montaigne culture is its extravagant and beautiful art. Art receives great importance in their society, and successful artists are honored and generously paid. This royal treatment causes artists to flock here from all over Théah.

Painting

Painting is the most honored, and most unstable, of the arts. Trends come and go within a few months. Artists who were dining with the Empereur one month find themselves without a patron the next. This year, the popular style has moved from bright, cheerful paintings to more dark, somber pieces, such as Basil Margonne's tragic portraits of the peasants' personal lives. His piece *Le Souper des Paysans* is considered one of the great cultural treasures of Montaigne, and has been hung in the old palace of the king. Unfortunately, Basil's original intent (to call attention to the peasants' plight) has been largely unaccomplished.

Sculpting

Sculpting is the least developed art in Montaigne. Typically, Vodacce masters produce the most important pieces. However, being overlooked has its advantages. The Montaigne have very traditional tastes when it comes to sculpture. They like smooth lines, graceful beauty, and classic features. Sculptors are often called in to create frontispieces for important buildings, to carve statues in the beautiful gardens of the nobility, and to sculpt busts of particularly powerful nobles.

The most recent master to arrive in Montaigne was Pascal Vestanzi. He sculpted a magnificent statue of the Empereur, and had finished work on a statue of the Imperatrice when he disappeared. The Empereur says that he was called back home by an emergency, but the peasants whisper that the Empereur was jealous of the Imperatrice's statue and killed its poor creator.

Music

The music of Montaigne is undergoing a transformation, thanks to a young Eisen composer named Wolfffrond Guy von Hazel. His recent performances have spurred an entire new school of thought within the Montaigne music society. Rather than restrict himself to soft, refined music, Wolfffrond's selections are loud, patriotic, and tell a story through the melody, with various instruments playing the parts of the characters in the story. His performances have spawned a horde of imitators, all striving to create the most powerful, nationalistic music possible. However, a small group of composers refuse to partake in this new style of music, calling it "Eisen tripe, not fit for the refined palates of the Montaigne people." The careers of these men have suffered because they hold out against the trend, but they feel the sacrifice will be worth it if it preserves traditional Montaigne music in the face of the Eisen invader.

Literature

Currently, there are two types of literary works in demand in Montaigne: the historical novel and the philosophical essay.

The historical novel is a movement that started six years ago with a collection of short historical stories entitled *Nouvelles Montaigne*, written by Lucien Sices. Novels of this sort are typically short (about 400 pages), and take place in the arena of a princely court. Intrigues and secret negotiations are staples of the genre, and authors typically use actual correspondence from the historical period they have chosen to write about.

The other fashionable literary form – the philosophical essay – has been largely started by the Freethought Society, a branch of the Rilasciare. Often published anonymously, these booklets challenge many of the traditions of the Montaigne. The value of the noble class is questioned; the right of the Empereur to rule is questioned – even the right to own property has been decried by these booklets. Of course, no one is sure which of them were actually published by the Rilasciare, but it amuses the Montaigne to keep guessing.

Theater

Montaigne traditionally enjoy rowdy comedies and romantic tragedies. The unchallenged master of the farce was Louis Gaulle dul Motte, author of the acclaimed *Don Avila*. It was his portrayal of the famous Castillian as both a devoutly religious man and a debauched hypocrite that gained the Empereur's favor for him. Unfortunately, Montaigne's theater, like their music, is currently suffering a foreign invasion. The bawdy Montaigne comedies and tragic love stories are being overshadowed by plays imported from Avalon, particularly those written by the Avalon playwright Montgomery Peerson. This has not gone uncontested, however. Six Montaigne playwrights, led by Louis Gaulle dul Motte, who have fallen out of favor have formed a small society called *La Plume Sanglante*. Their society is angry with Peerson not only because he has lost them their positions, but also because they see him as the end of Montaigne theater. Their feelings are so strong that they are plotting to kill him when he visits the Empereur in four months to present his new play, *The Maelstrom*.



Social Clubs

Social clubs are small groups of people who meet to discuss a specific topic. While this concept isn't unique to Montaigne, it is more popular here than anywhere else. Typical topics for a club include hobbies, sports, literature, and music. Since many of their members are nobles, these clubs allow the wealthiest people in Montaigne to meet other people with ideas and talents who need money to proceed. A member can have his voice heard at court just by asking a more influential member to speak in his favor. This creates a web of favors owed that can help the member obtain almost anything without his name ever being mentioned.

As people with a common interest, the members share a sense of brotherhood, much like a secret society. Parties are regularly organized to help all the members meet one another. A new member can make surprising connections at such a gathering, possibly even the head of a major noble family or a close relative of *l'Empereur*. When a member is in need, however low in the club's hierarchy he might be, he can expect help from his fellows.

For two examples of famous social clubs in Montaigne, please see page 86.

Science and Technology

While the Montaigne are not known for their scientific accomplishments, they are quite advanced in certain areas of technology, including architecture and artillery.

The Montaigne have closely studied the Sryneth buildings within their country, and as a result have discovered several innovative architectural techniques that would have been lost otherwise. This allows them to design enormous arches, broad domes, and high towers beyond the capability of other Théans. In addition, their knowledge of civil engineering, irrigation, and fountain design is the most advanced in the world.

In the area of artillery, there is an ongoing debate as to whether Montaigne artillery is better than Eisen artillery. The difference of opinion seems to be split about 50/50, for

while Eisen cannons pack a bigger punch, Montaigne cannons are more accurate. This accuracy, combined with the enormous maneuverability of the 6-lb. Montaigne horse cannons, makes them a swift and deadly force.

The Church in Montaigne

The current standing of the Church of the Prophets in Montaigne varies depending on who is asked. On the one hand, it has steadily lost ground among the nobility, thanks to the Empereur's outspoken dislike of the Church. On the other hand, the Church is as powerful as ever among the peasantry, who continue to look to Theus for protection and aid. This split opinion is rarely seen by foreigners, however, who tend to overlook the peasantry. As far as the rest of Théah is concerned, Montaigne is sinking ever deeper into sin.

The Nobility and the Church

The nobles of Montaigne have turned away from the Church *en masse*. Some have done so out of personal preference, but many have done so to retain the Empereur's favor. A few still privately practice their religion, but they are careful not to be caught. If it becomes known at court that a noble is a practicing member of the Vaticine Church, his prestige suffers alarmingly. Most nobles take the chance that their souls will be imperiled later rather than risk a social catastrophe now.

The Peasants and the Church

The peasants have been left alone to practice their beliefs, except in certain areas. The Empereur is afraid of an uprising if he outlaws the Vaticine Church entirely, so the priests may still preach, but anti-Léon sentiments in their sermons are grounds for imprisonment. Musketeers have been known to attend church services in disguise, then step up and arrest the priest in mid-sentence. This policy has created a great deal of resentment among the remaining priests in Montaigne, and they have done their best to pass this attitude on to the peasants.

No church services of any kind are allowed within ten miles of the Château du Soleil, nor do any servants employed there admit to being Vaticines. This is supposed to be for the protection of the Empereur, who might otherwise face assassination at the hands of a religious zealot. In fact, only one outspoken Vaticine, Cardinal Durkheim of Eisen, speaks to the Empereur with any regularity.

The Church's Power

Politically and financially, the Church has lost a great deal of power in Montaigne. Many of the most famous cathedrals have been seized and converted to other purposes, the nobles have largely ceased tithing; worst of all, the Church now faces taxation just like any private individual.

Although the peasants largely still trust the Church, some have begun to question their beliefs. After all, if a self-proclaimed sorcerer can snub the Vaticines and get away with it, perhaps Theus doesn't really exist after all. These disillusioned peasants are often confused and looking for some sort of purpose in their lives. Some even believe that the Empereur is the Fourth Prophet, come to destroy the world.

The Missing Cardinal and Archbishops

The disappearance of the Cardinal of Montaigne has crippled the Church's ability to respond to the Empereur's actions, as has the retreat of his nine archbishops into seclusion. It is unknown why the archbishops have gone into hiding, but some believe that they feared for their lives when the Empereur appeared wearing the Cardinal's ring. Unfortunately, this sequence of events has left the Church without leadership in Montaigne. The bishops are doing their best to keep things running smoothly within their dioceses, but they have no time to see to the Church's policy within Montaigne as a whole.

Since the Cardinal of Montaigne occupies one of the ten seats on the Hieros Council and a new Hierophant





is only electable with a full vote, the Church has been unable to elect a new leader, and will not be able to do so until the Cardinal reappears or is replaced.

Montaigne Legends

Folk legends find widespread circulation among the commoners of Montaigne, but the nobility usually scoffs at them as peasant superstitions. Two of these legends, as told by Antoine Muguet, a popular Montaigne storyteller, are transcribed below.

The Thing in the Mirror

There was once a very vain noblewoman who lived in Bascone. She often liked to sit between two mirrors so that

she could see her reflection trailing off into infinity. Others warned her that her vanity would lead her into trouble, but she ignored them and continued to primp and preen.

One night, she heard a moaning noise as she was sleeping. Opening her eyes, she saw a ghost hovering over her bed. Its hands had been cut off at the wrist, and its eyes were filled with blood. The noblewoman was a Porté sorcerer, so naturally her first reaction was to teleport away. To her horror, she found that she couldn't use her sorcery — not even to get a dagger from the dresser. The ghost reached out for her with its arms, and she felt icy fingers around her neck, even though it had no hands! Screaming, she rolled off the bed, cowering in the corner of the room.



Montaigne

The ghost slowly approached her, arms outstretched. She could almost feel its fingers upon her neck once more when it passed between the two mirrors in her room that were facing one another. The ghost saw itself reflected a thousand times and screamed as it was pulled inside the mirrors. The ghost howled silently but it couldn't get out.

The noblewoman began showing off the ghost to her friends the next day. The sight was so miraculous that nobles came from far and wide to see it, and the woman became very rich because of her new-found fame. Her only regret was that the mirrors in her bedroom were spoiled, and reflected only the hideous ghost trapped within.

Finally, she got it into her head to move the ghost to another room and put up new mirrors in her bedroom. But no sooner had she taken down the first mirror than the ghost was freed. It leaped upon her in an instant and strangled her; when her servants came to investigate the single scream she had managed to make, her corpse felt as cold as if she'd been dead for several hours already. Her vanity had finally gotten her what she deserved.

The Puzzle Swords

Many years ago, the greatest bladesmith ever to grace the shores of Montaigne was born. His name was Maître; he was a full-blooded noble, and his knowledge of Porté ran deeper than any man's before or since. He also made the smallest mechanical pieces — springs and gears smaller than even the most skilled craftsman can make today. Add to this his skill at the forge, and it is easy to see why he was the most sought-after bladesmith of his day.

He combined all of his arts — Porté, clockworks, and blacksmithing — to create what became known as the Puzzle Swords. They were elaborately decorated, with hidden switches built into their filigree — so well hidden that only the sword's owner could find them. Some of these swords cut through armor like it wasn't there. Others leapt to their owner's hand with a thought. Truly, they were marvelous weapons.

Maître grew old, however, and he eventually took on two apprentices, named Créer and Detruire. Neither possessed

his noble blood, so they could not duplicate the powerful Porté effects he enchanted into his swords. But their hands were nimble, and they learned his clockworks and his blacksmithing.

Créer was the gentler of the two. He preferred devices that would prevent the swords from being stolen, or that would preserve their wielder's life in a fight. Detruire, on the other hand, turned his talents to creating deadly devices. Swords forged by these two reflect their different attitudes.

When they grew old, they too took on apprentices — one apiece. Créer selected a young woman named Renard, and Detruire selected a man named Loup. They passed their blacksmithing secrets down to the two apprentices, but were unable to teach their students how to construct Maître's marvelous clockwork devices, since they lacked the great manual dexterity of their master.

This rivalry might have continued forever, except for one unexpected development — Loup and Renard fell in love. They were married, and they swore that they would only pass on their secrets to their children. No one else would receive the few remaining gifts of the great Maître. Tragically, Renard proved to be unable to have children, and the couple's talents died with them.

However, the swords that they, their masters, and Maître forged over the years still remain. It is not uncommon for a family to have one or two that they pass down from one generation to the next, with each new wielder being shown the hidden catches and buttons by the previous owner. To this day, the Puzzle Swords are still in the hands of the greatest duelists in Montaigne.

Ceremonies & Special Events

Occasionally, the monotony of even the poorest peasant's life is interrupted by a special occasion. People get married, have children, and die, among other things. While these events aren't always welcome, they are at least a break from the grinding routine of day-to-day existence.



Marriage

Marriage in Montaigne is a short, simple affair for peasants, and an elaborate display of excess for nobles.

Peasants typically gather at the nearest church, exchange vows of loyalty to one another in front of the local priest, and share a meal with friends and family. For peasants who aren't Vaticine, the process is even simpler. They simply exchange vows in front of three friends, and provide a meal for their witnesses.

Nobles, on the other hand, typically marry in front of hundreds of witnesses, sometimes even inviting the peasants from their lands to view the proceedings from a distance. Their families spend hundreds of sols on the celebration, and a feast is provided for everyone who attends. Of course, if peasants are invited, they are fed less expensive fare than the nobles, and dine at different tables. The noble couple simply stands on a raised platform and exchanges their vows loudly enough for everyone to hear. A bishop or archbishop was traditionally present to hear the vows. Now, not only do priests not officiate the weddings, they aren't even invited to them.

Funerals

When a peasant dies, the funeral is a quiet affair, with everyone in the village attending. The corpse is laid out in the church while the neighbors walk past and pay their respects. The local priest then says a prayer over the deceased, and the corpse is buried in the local cemetery, wrapped in a cloth shroud.

Noble funerals are much more involved. Family and friends come to view the corpse decked out in its best finery. Close friends of the deceased give speeches, followed by a feast for the attending nobles. The place in which the body is on display is then opened to the public so that they can view the corpse (presumably to reassure themselves that their cruel landlord is actually dead). The body remains a certain number of days depending on its rank. A duke is displayed for six days, for instance, while an Empereur or Imperatrice must be displayed for a full fortnight. When the viewing ends, a grand procession takes the body to its family crypt,

where it is interred with a long ceremony that only the immediate family may attend. While priests normally perform this function, magistrates have been filling in for them during the recent trouble with the Church.

The Draft

The Montaigne need a great deal of manpower for their wars, which the Empereur raises through conscription. Each landlord in Montaigne is required to send a certain number of healthy young men to enlist in the army every time the Empereur issues the order. Men selected by the draft may buy their way out of military service for the sum of 500G, and those landlords who are hard-pressed to supply their quota can appeal to the Empereur for an exemption, or at least a reduced number to contribute. Unfortunately, this system ensures that the poorest sections of Montaigne are hit the hardest by the draft, which further disrupts the local economy, driving those areas further into depression.

Daily Life

Obviously, the lives of the peasants differ greatly from those of the nobility and the middle class. They have a much lower standard of living, fewer possessions, and less time for fun and games. Still, certain traditions cross the boundaries of wealth, becoming integral to the self-image of all Montaigne.

Clothing

Montaigne is the home of fashion. Trends that begin here make their way into courts all across Théah. Even the Ussuran court takes its fashion cues from Montaigne eventually. Montaigne clothes are an elegant mix of leather, cotton, and wool, with the richer outfits incorporating fine velvet as well. Silk occasionally makes an appearance, particularly as leggings and handkerchiefs.

Montaigne nobles concerned with maintaining their status must follow fashion trends religiously, even when they tend toward the ridiculous — incorporating exotic furs, fruits, plants, and even lit candles. Happily, these bizarre trends are few and far between. Most clothing is more practical,



but it is no laughing matter at court even when it becomes unwieldy or poorly thought out. Six noble ladies were frostbitten one year when summer dresses came into style in the middle of winter. The Empereur was forced to comment that he found the idea ridiculous before the ladies would give it up.

Another indicator of the importance of fashion at court is the “teller.” A highly sought position among the Empereur’s attendants, the teller spies on the Empereur and Imperatrice as they dress in the morning, and then rushes to distribute descriptions of their attire among the other nobles, often at a stiff fee. While the teller is an unofficial position, the Empereur gives his unspoken approval to the practice by allowing the spying to continue unpunished. This allows the nobles to dress extravagantly without wearing something more magnificent than the Empereur or Imperatrice.

Those in Montaigne’s middle class attempt to dress as the nobles do, in order to borrow some of the nobility’s status for themselves. Of course, their clothes tend to be several months out of date, less ridiculous, and slightly less well constructed than the nobles’.

As always, peasants have nothing to do with fashion. They dress in poor woolen clothing during the winter, and in tanned cattle skin the rest of the year. They either go without shoes or purchase cheap sandals to protect their feet.

Food

Commoners get very little food. Fish, cereals, vegetables, and farm products (cheese and eggs) dominate their daily meals. Bread is the most important staple, since it fills their stomachs, can be saved for a week, and is easily made. Once or twice a month, peasants get meat (usually rabbit,

chicken, or duck). The rest of the time, they sell their excess livestock to taverns and pubs to pay their taxes and cover their other expenses.

The best place to get good food is a tavern or pub. With the money a tavern earns, the master of the house purchases meat and fruits. While this fare isn't expensive by noble standards, peasants are still too poor to enjoy it.

At the court or in noble houses, things are different. As landlords, nobles have the right to hunt and can rent this right as a favor. Therefore, they can enjoy meat on a regular basis. Besides game, they can get whatever money will buy; when a merchant ship berths in a Montaigne port, nobles send representatives to the dock to buy the goods they want before they reach the stores.

It is not uncommon among the nobility to organize a feast involving gigantic quantities of food. As astounding as it might seem, the goal of these dinners is to waste as much food as possible in order to show off the host's wealth. Indeed, the waste from one of these feasts could easily feed an entire peasant family for months.

When it comes to drink, Montaigne custom is fairly straightforward. Nobody drinks water because scholars believe that it poisons the blood. Considering the unsanitary treatment of the water in many places, they aren't far from the truth. Milk isn't drunk either, since it's far more valuable in the form of cheese. That leaves the very symbol of Montaigne culture: wine. Cheap and tasty, it helps the peasants forget their daily woes, entices travelers to spend more money, and is relatively safe to drink. Wine is the only thing that all Montaigne citizens have in common, whether rich or poor. Though cheap wines are the most common, a few are particularly sought after:

- **Château des Demoiselles:** Made in Rogné, this wine owes its name to the tradition of young fiancées treading and dancing on the grapes to turn them into juice.
- **Manoir du Veneur:** Made in Verre, this wine is often the first vintage foreigners drink after entering Montaigne.

• **Côteaux des Trois Pendus:** Once there were three peasants hunting game on their landlord's vineyard. He caught and killed them, spilling their blood on the grapes. Ever since then, this Crieux wine has been famed for its rich taste, and has become a favorite of *l'Empereur*.

Leisure

Since Montaigne nobles and gentry are easily bored, they spend much of their time inventing new games. There are too many to enumerate, since nobles get bored with them after about a month. Some retainers are paid to create new games every month, and the nobles often engage in an ongoing contest to see who can produce the most entertaining game this month. In some ways, creating new games has become a full-time hobby. Still, the most popular games are blind man's bluff and tennis, which is played barehanded with a piece of leather in the players' palms to hit the ball. Another favorite game is cup and ball, a test of dexterity that can make a player look foolish as easily as it can impress the ladies.

As for the merchants, dice and cards are their favorite games. Among these games, 421 (which is played with dice) and Pendu (which is played with cards) are the most popular.

The peasants have no time for leisure. They pay almost 80% taxes, and they have to work such long hours that they lack the energy for play afterward.

Customs

An old custom in Montaigne is the noble "veto vote." Theater groups that write their own plays and wish to perform them in Montaigne must receive approval from the nobles of the court. The artists play in front of the noble audience, and at the end each noble votes with a white or black flag. Theoretically, there's one representative per province and each black flag means that the play will not be welcomed in that province. Should there be a majority of black flags, then the veto passes and the play is censored. Most of the time, the nobles wait for the Empereur to vote and follow his lead to avoid contesting his opinion. Some nobles even sleep during the play and only wake up to see

which flag the Empereur raises. Since Léon XIV became Empereur, no noble has ever contested his judgment.

When merchants first sell their goods in a new marketplace they follow a custom known as the “courtesy tax.” Since it would be highly disrespectful (not to mention dangerous) to sell higher-quality goods than the owners of the marketplace, peddlers agree to let the owners (usually one to three merchants who have sold goods at the marketplace the longest) take one item of theirs for free. According to tradition, the owners would take the highest-quality items, ensuring that the newcomers didn’t make their goods look bad in comparison. However, peddlers are no longer the fierce competitors they once were and they know not to endanger the supremacy of these marketplace owners. Thus, the tradition has evolved over time so that now the owners usually take nearly worthless goods as long as the peddlers make sure to “self-censor” their own goods.

Among the peasants, sharing wine is a traditional practice. More than just a beverage, wine is a gift of all the earth, born from the fertile soil the grapes grew in, warmed by the sun, cooled by the wind, and fed by the water. The syrup produced by this process is transformed into a blessing by the passion and knowledge of the vintner, and blessed by the peasants. Since they are so poor, wine is all they have to share with one another, making wine the symbol of eternal friendship in Montaigne.

Government

Although perceived by the Montaigne peasants as useless parasites, the nobles perform duties that keep the government working. Without them, the nation’s stability would be greatly threatened.



The Hierarchy

The Empereur is at the top of the pyramid. He creates Imperial laws, rules the nobility, declares Imperial taxes, and has authority over the law enforcement agencies, both Musketeer and military.

Beneath him are the dukes and duchesses. Each of them rule over one of the fifteen provinces, create ducal laws, administrate High Court justice, collect ducal taxes, and are by rights the owners of the lands they rule. Their title can only be stripped from them by the Empereur himself.

Next are the lords and ladies. They have the same rights and duties as the dukes. After retaining this title for three

generations, if they have performed well, the family is promoted to the rank of dukes; otherwise their title is stripped from them.

Directly below the ranks of Duke and Lord are the Marquis and Marquises. They are the lowest-ranking titled nobles and they rule over small portions of a province. They create regional laws, oversee Middle Court justice, collect regional taxes, and govern their portions of the Ducal lands.

Next is the administrative title of Intendant. This is one of the highest positions a commoner can aspire to. Intendants are the right arm of the Marquis and uphold the laws in his name. They command the musketeers placed under them and administer Low Court justice. Since there is only one Intendant for every four regions, they are kept fantastically busy trying cases. Intendants may be appointed by a Duke or by *l'Empereur's* personal secretary, and most of them are retired musketeers or military men.

Mayor is the next most powerful position available to commoners. They are elected by the citizens every three years and they each govern a single city. They are responsible for civil matters like noble marriages, funerals, and festivals, but they have no real political power. They are the local spokesmen for the nobility, from whom they receive their instructions.

Lastly, there are approximately 60,000 administrative positions in the government that the Empereur has created in order to sell to raise money. These positions have no real responsibilities or powers attached to them, but they do provide tax exemption, and for that reason are avidly sought.

Laws

There are three levels of law in Montaigne: Imperial, Ducal, and Regional. Imperial laws are passed by the Empereur — they affect all of Montaigne and cannot be contradicted by any other laws. Ducal laws are passed by a duke and approved by the Empereur — they affect that duke's province and cannot be contradicted by regional laws. Regional laws are passed by a Marquis and approved by the duke they serve — they affect only that region. Obviously, this system encourages a patchwork of laws that vary from





area to area, making it almost impossible for commoners to avoid breaking the law if they travel outside their home region.

Justice

Montaigne has three courts of justice. The laws apply differently to nobles than to commoners. Not only do nobles get their cases tried in a higher court of law, but the penalties imposed on them are less severe. Each of the courts hear both civil and penal cases, but an officer of the Musketeers provides evidence to the judges during penal cases.

Low Court

Cases between two commoners are heard in Low Court. An Intendant presides as judge, and is often assisted by two musketeers who have not been involved with the case.

Middle Court

Cases appealed from Low Court or that involve gentry or merchants are heard in Middle Court. The Marquis of the region presides as judge. Most civil cases involving money, tariffs, or trade are heard here.

High Court

Cases appealed from Middle Court or that involve nobility are heard in High Court. The Duke of the province presides as judge. Nobles and gentry may appeal court decisions directly to the Empereur, but for all others, the verdict of the High Court is final.

Defense and Testimonies

Although all citizens have the right to be defended by a lawyer, commoners are often too poor to afford one and must defend themselves. Commoners who bring a case against a merchant, gentry, or noble have little chance of winning, since justice doesn't come cheap in Montaigne. The problem is that while appearing in court is free, it costs a lot of money (up to 200G) to appeal a court decision. This means that a commoner has to win his case three times, but his opponent must only win once, since the commoner is unable to afford an appeal.

As for testimony in court, a noble's word will overrule all but the highest-ranking musketeer, while a musketeer's word is worth that of three commoners. In addition, documents may be submitted as proof by both commoners and nobility, but a commoner may not challenge the authenticity of documents submitted by a noble.

Sentencing

For both nobles and commoners, losing a civil case results in a fine. However, if the commoner fails to pay the fine, he can be jailed and his property seized; the noble's property is safe.

Penal sentences show this segregation between commoners and nobles even more clearly. Commoners usually receive both a fine and a corporal punishment such as branding, amputation, or execution. Nobles, on the other hand, seldom receive corporal punishment except in the most extreme cases. They can, however, face the loss of their title and/or property. Treason and noble assassination are always punished by death, of course.

The Musketeers

The Musketeers serve as the primary law-enforcement officers in Montaigne. They hunt down criminals, arbitrate legal arguments, and keep the peace.

Joining the Musketeers

Anyone who wishes to join the Musketeers must travel to the city of Charouse to apply. New students are accepted every four months, and applicants must meet the following requirements:

- They must be at least 16 years old.
- They must never have been convicted by any Montaigne court.
- They must not have any crippling disabilities that would interfere with their duties.

The first class of the year is only open to applicants who have served three years of military service, while the other



three are open to anyone who meets the entry requirements.

Basic Training

Any student who attends the school undergoes six months of training that culminate in a week-long final examination which is a mix of physical, written, and oral tests. Only 10% of all applicants pass this exam and go on to the standard three-year training program, but even those who fail manage to receive training in the following topics:

Reading and Writing: Most Montaigne commoners are illiterate, so literacy is the first thing taught at the school. This is one of the few ways a peasant can receive such education, so Musketeer basic training is worthwhile even if the student washes out.

Mathematics: The students are taught enough math to handle the economics course they take later.

Politics: As many peasants are woefully unaware of the details of their government, the Musketeers teach them the basics so they don't embarrass the Order later on an issue of rank.

Economics: The students are taught the basics of Montaigne economics and taxes. They also learn the duties of the nobles and gentry.

Etiquette: Musketeers with common habits would humiliate the Order, so great care is taken to train the students how to behave in court. They also learn how to speak to the nobility.

Horsemanship: Lastly, the Musketeers are trained to ride. They also learn how to take care of their mount, since a well-cared-for horse might someday save their life.

The Musketeer School

Applicants who pass their final exam begin the three-year training process which will end with the Musketeer's Oath. Fewer than half of the students who have made it this far are invited to join the ranks of the Musketeers. During their three years of training, the students rise at 5 A.M. every morning to begin a 12-hour day of work.

Fencing: Swordplay comprises the majority of their training. They study the most famous duels, learn to recognize ambushes, and are briefly introduced to the various fighting styles of Théah.

Investigation: These classes teach numerous skills such as questioning witnesses and suspects, collecting evidence, and legal procedures.

International Customs: In this class the students learn all they need to know about foreign legal systems and etiquette.

The Musketeer's Oath

Once their training is completed, all students swear an oath of fealty that officially makes them "real" Musketeers. They dress in the civilian clothes that they first applied for membership in, and their commanding officer leads them to the monument to Bastion, who is considered the first Musketeer. The entire group has their wrists tied together with rope as a symbol of their brotherhood, and their hold their hands over a flame while they recite the oath. Should one of them flinch away from the flames, his brothers will stand by him and help him to find the strength he needs. When all are ready, they speak the Oath:

"On this day, I, [state your name], hereby pledge allegiance to the Sun. May his light be my guide now and forever. May I resist temptation and be fair and honest in all matters. May my sword and tabard remind me of who I am and of the responsibility I bear. May my soul be brave and my arm strong. Here I am, free of greed and hate. Here I am, standing by my brothers. All for one, and one for all!"

Duties of a Musketeer

A musketeer regularly performs two duties: policing and arbitration.

Policing

Garrisons of musketeers can be found in all cities with more than 500 citizens. They work as the local police and are familiar with all cases in their town, both civil and penal. They have the prerogative to question or arrest suspects and reluctant witnesses, and they write the files that are



presented to the judge presiding over the case. They can enter anyone's house at any time, and although they are charged to respect the lives of all citizens, they can kill without warning if they feel threatened. However, musketeers are not supposed to be judge and jury. They gather evidence and when they testify in court, their testimony is taken very seriously.

Arbitration

Musketeers are often asked to act as arbitrators for small arguments that crop up between citizens. Questions about where a farmer's property line lies, or who is responsible for the damage caused by a runaway horse, often fall to the musketeers to decide. Besides this, many musketeers make themselves available to the (mostly illiterate) citizens in order to read them letters, write for them, or even file any official documents that may be required of them. Because of all the small things the musketeers do for the citizens, they may be envied, but they are always respected.

A Musketeer's Life

After joining the Musketeers, the Order becomes the student's family and his life. It isn't an easy life, but many have found it very rewarding in its own way.

Family

A Musketeer needs to get approval from the school to get married. His duty might oblige him to move often and nothing is supposed to root him to a particular province. However, if permission is granted, a Musketeer's children have access to the best schools in Montaigne.

Hierarchy

The ranks available to Musketeers are as follows:

- Corporal (starting rank)
- Sergeant
- Lieutenant, 2nd Class
- Lieutenant, 1st Class
- Captain

Currently, Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné is the Captain of the Musketeers. A new Captain can only be appointed when he steps down.

Rewards

Among the most glamorous medals that are awarded to Musketeers are the Medal of Honor, the Medal of Valor, and the Medal of the Sun King (which is awarded by *l'Empereur* himself). Only a dozen medals exist for the Order – these awards are only given out for extremely valorous or unusual services.

Punishments

Musketeers who betray their Oath and the reputation of the Order receive unforgiving punishments. Frequently, they are sentenced to death even for such small crimes as accepting a bribe. However, should the musketeer have shown great valor or promise in the past, the sentence may be commuted to a demotion or expulsion from the Order.

Retirement

After 30 years of dedicated duty, a musketeer must retire. He receives the Medal of Service, and can easily find a position in the government should he desire one. Frequently, musketeers become Intendants upon retiring. The retired musketeer receives exemption from taxes, and a monthly pension for the rest of his life.

Economy

Montaigne's economy is beginning to slide into a recession after years of financial growth. The constant drain from the Montaigne-Castille War has finally started to show. The onerous taxes being levied by the *Empereur* do not help. There are three

particularly hated taxes that have been imposed: the *taille*, the *gabelle*, and the *corvée*.

The *taille* is an income tax, and it is enforced in two different ways. West and North Montaigne use what is known as the *Pays d'Elections*, while South Montaigne enforces the *taille* with the *Pays d'Etat*. The *Pays d'Elections*





makes no allowance for an arbitrator to argue the peasants' taxes down to a reasonable level, and therefore produces much higher taxes than the *Pays d'Etat*. In addition, in South Montaigne the taxes are collected by an organization created for that purpose, but in the other two areas, tax collection is passed back and forth among the peasants like a hot potato. Should the collector turn up short on the tax monies, then he's clapped in jail unless he's wealthy enough to bribe an official. Even if he performs his duties successfully, he must fear the next year's taxes, when his successor will inevitably exact a bitter revenge on him in the form of a grossly overestimated tax for the year.

The *gabelle* is a salt tax. In areas where salt is produced, it is available cheaply, but the rations are so restricted that a family can barely survive on them. In other places, salt is sold (via the Empereur's agents) at exorbitant prices. Worse, the citizens living there are forced by law to purchase a certain amount of salt each month — far more than they could reasonably consume. This tax is so poorly designed that its enactment has created a new breed of criminal — the *faux saulniers*, or salt smugglers. To combat this, the government has employed the *maréchaussée*, a group of soldiers whose principal duty is the capture and execution of salt smugglers. Over a quarter of the monies collected through the *gabelle* are spent enforcing it.

The *corvée* is a mandatory contribution of labor to public structures. Every villager under sixty must spend six days a year working on roads, bridges, etc. While not especially damaging to the farmers, they resent this tax more than any other except the *taille*.

This doesn't include the many tolls and tariffs imposed on citizens who attempt to transport goods. A farmer can expect to pay up to a third of the value of his goods in taxes each time he passes across a provincial border or past a major city. As a result, some farmers leave their crops to rot rather than transport them for sale. After all, they would wind up losing money on their crops if they tried to transport them to the places they were needed. Unless something is done soon, the process of trade — and

thereafter the entire economy of Montaigne — will break down.

Other Nations

The Montaigne have enemies in almost every port of call. The Avalons resent the time they spent under Montaigne's thumb, while the Castillians are currently at war with *l'Empereur*. The Eisen hate Montaigne's involvement in the War of the Cross (but are as happy as ever to take their guilders), and the Ussurans are nervous around Porté magic. Even the Vestenmannavnjar think that the Montaigne are puffed-up popinjays. The only two groups who actively like the Montaigne are the Vendel and the Vodacce, and that's only because of their trade agreements.

However, this does not mean that every Montaigne citizen is hated by the citizens of nearly every country. Far from it. Nationalism is still weak, and people tend to form opinions of others based on their personal experiences rather than national stereotypes. It is unlikely for a Castillian to hate a Montaigne on sight just because their two countries are at war. While the Montaigne as a people are almost universally reviled, individual Montaigne can be found in every city in the world, enjoying friendly relations with their neighbors.







Hero

Last Goodbyes, Part Two

The mirror hung in her private quarters. It was the only one she permitted in her house, and even so it was covered with a dusty cloth most of the time. She claimed that the sight of her crippled leg pained her, but as she pulled the cloth off, the true reason was revealed. She cast no reflection.

Sighing, she wondered once again if her duty to the Church was truly worth the things she had been asked to do. With a resigned frown, she moved her hand down to the sharp edge of her cane and gripped it tightly until a trickle of blood ran from between her fingers. She didn't even notice the pain. She had learned to ignore the endless throbbing of her leg; what was a scratch on her hand in comparison?

Raising her hand to the mirror's surface, she smeared the blood across the glass and whispered a name known to no living person but her. There was a sudden tension in the room, and then the footsteps approached her from behind as she knew they would. The unseen feet walked toward the mirror, and as they passed in front of it, an apparition was reflected there — the same that had been reflected in the Empereur's looking glass a short time ago. It seemed to step to the edge of the mirror and look at the smeared blood with hunger in its eyes, then stopped and stared guiltily at her. She politely turned her head away as the ghost fed.

"Thank you, Mistress Erika. You may ask me your questions now." The Cardinal turned to see the apparition lick the last vestiges of blood from its lips with a satisfied smile.

Erika quirked half a grin. "There's no need to be so formal with me, Michel. I swear, sometimes I think you enjoy your curse more than you let on."

The thing in the mirror frowned. "I never enjoy it, exactly, Erika. I merely make the most of it, as I have for twenty years. Now, please, ask your questions before the strain of my feeding grows too much for you."

They silently regarded each other for a moment, then Erika spoke. "It's only pain, Michel. I have never let it master me. But you are right, of course. It's a risk to talk to you too long — a servant could see. My first question is this: What has the Empereur said this week concerning Cardinal d'Argeneau?"

"Nothing. Ask your second question."

"Blast the man. What did he say this week concerning his plans for the war with Castille, then?"

"He plans to recall High General Montegue to Charouse and give him a small invasion force to assault Ussura."

Erika's brow furrowed, "What? But why? I don't understand this. Montegue is winning the war for him. It doesn't make any sense—"

"What is your third question, Erika? Hurry."

Her mind raced. "Give me a moment. Ah, I've got it now. What has the Empereur said this week concerning his reasons for reassigning Montegue?"

"Only that he must get Montegue out of the way before his grandson is born. It was all jumbled up. I think he is insane. Will there be anything else, Mistress?"

"Just one thing, Michel. Is there anything I can do? To make things more bearable for you, I mean. We have known each other a long time, and I would give you my life if it would undo what has been done to you."

"There is only one thing you could do for me, Erika."

"Anything."

"When your vengeance upon him is complete, and you have no more use for me... I want you to kill me."

Erika stared silently, making no promises. Finally, Michel sighed and walked away.

Long after the ghost's footsteps faded away, Erika stood there looking into the empty mirror. At last, she whispered, "Of course, brother. Anything you want."

The Royal Family

L'Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne XIV

More information on L'Empereur can be found on pg. 73 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Shortly after Léon reached his twelfth birthday, his father, King Léon Alexandre du Montaigne XIII, passed away, leaving the kingdom in the hands of the Queen, a self-centered member of the Bisset family named Camille du Montaigne. She was more interested in the trappings of court and her own finances than raising a son, so Léon remained in the hands of his nursemaids until he reached his majority. In the meantime, his mother carried on an affair with the young Cardinal of Montaigne, Maurice d'Argeneau.

Over time, the Cardinal became the true ruler of Montaigne, and the Church's influence reached a level unheard of since King Léon XI's reign. The Cardinal lived extravagantly, barely bothering to conceal his relationship with the Queen, while Léon was forced to live in poverty, surrounded by the opulence of court. He ate table scraps, slept under ratty blankets, and wore nice clothing only when presented to the rest of the nobility.

On his eighteenth birthday, Léon put his hand around his mother's shoulders, smiled sweetly at her, and said,

"Mother, you have brought disgrace to the crown. It is time for you to retire from courtly life." She was moved to a small country villa, where she lived out the rest of her life, bemoaning the loss of her extravagant lifestyle. She never saw Cardinal d'Argeneau again, and it is said that she cursed her son on her deathbed, swearing that he would never have a son to pass his throne on to. The Cardinal himself remained at court, but Léon not only ignored his advice, he often worked against it. Eventually, the Church's voice in Montaigne was reduced to a whisper.

Léon's life became a reaction against the enforced poverty of his youth. He no longer allowed people to tell him what to do, he indulged in every luxury, and when the country became prosperous thanks to the War of the Cross, he immediately raised taxes to support his habits.

Léon married his first wife at this time, a Montaigne peasant named Estelle who bore him five daughters before dying, apparently of natural causes. Léon loved her deeply, and married her against the wishes of the nobility, which destabilized his early rule. When she died eight years later, he believed her death to be murder, and he killed her doctors before recovering his senses. Even then, it seemed that he held onto her death as an insult the world had given him. He never married for love again.

His second wife, whom he married only a year after the death of his first, was a political match: the young and beloved princess of Castille, Rosa Velasquez del Sandoval du Montaigne. His new relationship with Castille was instrumental in stabilizing his power, repairing the damage done by his first marriage.

When she died after giving birth to another three daughters, the King of Castille openly questioned the circumstances of her death, and insisted she be returned to Castille for burial. He even sent his son to petition for her return. The King refused, burying her body in the Montaigne family crypt. The Sandovals were forced to erect a memorial to her in their own family graveyard, and relations between the two countries suffered greatly.



L'Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne XIV

Lastly, he married his third wife, a Vodacce Fate Witch, in 1647. She has borne him only one child – a daughter. After this final defeat, it seemed that Léon had finally given up hope for a son. After the debacle with Castille, he was reluctant to take any action against her, fearing to alienate one of his last political allies.

In 1664, King Léon XIV, growing ever more arrogant and dismissive of the Church of the Prophets, announced to the world that he was a sorcerer and that he intended to wield his magic openly. It was his birthright, and the Church had no right telling him that he could not use it. Sorcery was no longer a crime in Montaigne, and dozens of other nobles

began using Porté openly once again. In 1666, the Inquisition, infuriated by the Hierophant's lack of action, raised an army of fanatics and marched against the King of Montaigne. This battle was later known as Montegue's Stand. During the attack, Léon was a nervous wreck. He hid in a secret room in the palace, where he was later found by Remy du Montaigne and given the news of Montaigne's victory. Léon immediately promoted the man responsible – Montegue – to the rank of General.

Léon emerged from these events with a sense of invincibility. He continued openly defying the Church's wishes, converting Vaticine cathedrals to government buildings or even tearing them down. His ego went mad. *Why not bring down the Church itself?* he thought. Why not destroy the symbol of his frustrated childhood? He saw his dream becoming reality as several other royal families announced that they would no longer conceal their sorcery, further weakening the Church's position.

So when, during a visit to Montaigne to smooth over relationships, the Hierophant became ill and died, Léon took it as a sign that Theus favored him, not the Church. He declared himself Empereur, a Montaigne adaptation of the traditional title for the ruler of the Holy Republic – Emperor. Normally, only a Hierophant could bestow this honor, but with the Hierophant dead, there was none to stop Léon from claiming the title himself.

Within three months of the Hierophant's death, Cardinal d'Argeneau, Léon's old rival, vanished without a trace. Léon has since been seen openly wearing the man's ring of office, although no one dares question him about it.

He grows ever more erratic in his behavior – some days paralyzed with guilt about the conditions in which the peasantry lives, other days inflicting ever harsher cruelties on them. Only his immense power and political savvy keep his enemies from pouncing on him. Meanwhile, most of the court waits for his faculties to weaken. Should he show any sign of vulnerability, they'll be on him like starving wolves.

Of all the people at court, Léon truly trusts only his bodyguard, Remy. He has come to fear Montegue's

popularity, and never liked either his daughters or the other nobles at court, most of whom he's certain are working to bring him down.

However, with his daughter Dominique pregnant, he feels that his chance for an heir has come at last. His grandson represents a way around the curse he seems to be under, and nothing is going to stop him from claiming it. He has even assigned three of his personal guards to watch over Dominique against her protests.

Imperatrice Morella du Montaigne

More information on Morella can be found on pg. 74 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Morella is the youngest daughter of Vincenzo Caligari, one of the Vodacce Princes. She is a fading beauty in her late forties with dark hair, green eyes, and impeccable taste in clothing. She married *l'Empereur* in 1647 and gave him a child a year later. When he heard that she had given birth to a girl, Léon turned and walked away from her. Since then he has always treated her coldly, and their marriage has become a thing of political alliance only. Morella's relationship with her daughter hasn't been much better. Dominique finds it hard to understand her mother, who sees things she cannot. As a result, they've never been close. They are simply too alien to each other.

Although she was only five years old at the time, Morella's sister Beatrice foretold three things at the future Imperatrice's birth. She said that Morella would marry the most powerful man in the world, but that she would displease him. She also predicted that this would lead to the birth of the most powerful sorcerer to ever walk the face of Théah. Lastly, Beatrice prophesied that Morella's death would mark the beginning of the worst bloodbath that Montaigne had ever seen. The first has come true. Only time will tell for the others.

Recently, a Vodacce sculptor named Pascal Vestanzi arrived to visit the Château. He did a marvelous sculpture of the Empereur, so Morella approached him and asked him to do one of her as well. He seemed entranced by the

Imperatrice, and while she modeled for the piece, they spent many pleasant hours together talking about their homeland. The sculpture he made was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen, and when she showed it to her husband, she was gushing with enthusiasm and laughing at the sculptor's jokes.

The cover was pulled off the statue, and the Empereur's eyes went cold and hard. He turned to her and said, "Never forget that you are mine and mine alone." With that, he turned and stormed away. A few minutes later, the Empereur's bodyguard arrived with urgent news of Pascal's



Imperatrice Morella du Montaigne

father and ushered him out of the room. Morella's heart went cold, and she longed to warn the sculptor of his danger, but she knew that there was nothing she could do. Instead, she called for two porters and had them hide the statue he had carved of her, promising that she would condemn their souls to the Abyss if they ever spoke of it to anyone. When Pascal did not return, she knew that he must be dead.

Since then, Morella has found comfort in painting. She spends much of her day doing portraits of the palace's inhabitants. Recently, she has used Jean-Marie Rois et



Dominique du Montaigne

Reines as her model. He enjoys her company, and since his men are loath to interrupt the Imperatrice, it gives him a break from his busy schedule.

Her husband sometimes comes to her with a strange gleam in his eye, asking her to curse or bless someone, or otherwise tug the strands of fate. When she tries to look at his strands, they gleam as brightly as the sun itself — too bright to tug on, or even read. Sometimes she has had to refuse his requests because of this, and Léon simply nods and says, "Do what you can." This odd restraint from her normally forceful husband frightens Morella. She fearfully awaits the day when he no longer has any use for her or Vodacce. Imagining a sword hanging by a thread over her head, she believes that when he is done with her, *l'Empereur* will cut the strand. One snip, and her life will be forfeit.

Dominique du Montaigne

More information on Dominique can be found on pg. 75 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Dominique is the youngest of the Empereur's nine daughters, and the only one born of his current wife. When the Fate Witches examined her at her birth, they declared that she had no sorcery at all, and the Empereur lost interest in her. Her mother never related well to her, so she was raised by the kitchen staff, preferring their genuinely friendly company to the cold familiarity of her parents.

Being the youngest of nine allowed her to remain out of sight. She often played with the servants' children, and delighted in disappearing when her father or mother were looking for her. This odd mix of noble and common upbringing produced a self-sufficient young lady more aware of the servants constantly swirling around the castle than most of the other nobles.

In order to put an end to her constant escapades, she eventually received duties to keep her out from underfoot. The Imperatrice put her in charge of sending gifts and performing other social niceties for those in the royal family's favor. Dominique took advantage of this position to send several loyal maids out to important nobles around

Théah. These maids kept her informed of the comings and goings of the nobles they served, thereby giving her an effective spy network. Dominique grew content with her new position in life and settled into a simple routine, eagerly listening to developments most rulers would have given their right arms to learn.

Her world changed abruptly after Montegue's Stand. To show his appreciation of the soldier's valor in battle, the Empereur gave him Dominique's hand in marriage, making Montegue a member of the royal family. This strengthened the Empereur's political position, but Dominique awkwardly tried to come to terms with her new husband. She had some success relating to him, since he was a



Anna, Dominique's Fate Witch

commoner like the kitchen staff she knew and loved, but she was utterly unprepared to deal with him on a romantic level. Thus far, the two have fumbled their way through the relationship, and their feelings for each other are still very much up in the air. Dominique definitely respects Montegue; she's just not sure if she loves him or not. Her marriage, at least, is a good deal friendlier than her parents', but it will take time and a bit of luck if it's going to develop into anything more than mutual respect.

Dominique's maid is a dusky Vodacce beauty named Anna, a Fate Witch assigned to Dominique when both were six years old. The Imperatrice told Anna to protect her daughter, since the girl had no sorcery of her own. Thanks to Dominique's unassuming personality, the two became close friends, and Anna is now completely loyal to her mistress. Although she reports to the Imperatrice, she would never do anything to hurt Dominique.

Dominique is currently expecting a child. Her father began to fuss over her as soon as her mother determined that the child was going to be a boy. The Empereur has smothered her with so much attention and unwanted protection that she longs for the simpler days when her parents simply ignored her. In addition, Dominique is worried that this new attention forebodes something sinister. She has never known her father to be an affectionate man, and assumes that he wants something from her — possibly even her son.

The Empereur's Other Daughters

The Empereur's other eight daughters play a much less important role in Montaigne's future than Dominique, but each deserves at least a brief mention.

The first five were born to Estelle, the Empereur's first wife. Estelle was a beautiful woman with pale skin, ruby lips, and dark hair, and her daughters inherited these traits as well.

The first of these — a full-blood — is named Chérie du Montaigne. She is married to Don Aldana, a powerful Castillian noble. The war has placed her in an awkward position, but so far she has faced no violence at the hands of the Castillians.



The Empereur's Other Daughters

The next two daughters have very little Porté magic. They are twins, and they have proven able to Blood only a single object – a chalkboard that the two write notes on and pass back and forth to each other. They are named Rosamonde and Evelyne du Montaigne. Rosamonde often serves as an inspector for the Montaigne navy, while Evelyne has married into the Étalon family and envies her sister's adventures at sea. They are very close, though they bicker occasionally.

The fourth daughter, Miriam du Montaigne, is an ambassador to Vendel. She has become romantically

involved with the Chair of the Carpenter's Guild, Master Joris Brak. Their affair has recently become public, and the Empereur has mailed her a letter demanding that she either break off the relationship or secure an offer of marriage.

The fifth daughter, Lydia du Montaigne, was also a full-blooded Porté sorcerer and was one of the two who disappeared while investigating the Lockhorn Forest. All searchers found of her was a bloodied piece of her shirt.

The other three daughters were born to the Empereur's second wife, Rosa Velasquez del Sandoval du Montaigne. Since Rosa possessed no magic of her own, her daughters were half-blooded Porté sorcerers. They also inherited her graceful features, dusky skin, and long, flowing black hair.

Rosa's first daughter, the Empereur's sixth, is named Anne du Montaigne. She is happily married to Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, the captain of the musketeers. She is a skilled courtier and can often be found at the social functions haunted by Montaigne nobles. She acts as the royal family's representative at these events, keeping an eye on the lesser nobles and trying to keep them happy.

The seventh daughter, Nicolette du Montaigne, is currently at the Paix Embassy. A willful girl, she so angered the Empereur that he has essentially banished her there. Ostensibly, she acts as royal attaché to the Embassy, but in reality she has no more political pull than a minor Marquis.

Ysabelle du Montaigne was always a rebellious young lady, and she ran away from home five years ago to get away from the stifling atmosphere of court. Currently, she is calling herself Isabelle, and is embroiled in the Castille-Montaigne War as a smuggler, blockade runner, and pirate.

Montegue du Montaigne

More information on Montegue can be found on pg. 76 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Montegue was originally a peasant from the province of Paroisse. His mother died when he was very young, and his father followed when their plow horse, frightened by a wolf,

kicked him in the head. Montegue was fifteen years old at the time.

He sold the family farm and joined the army. After two years of service, he rose to the rank of corporal and received training at the hands of his immediate superior, a nobleman named Luc Flaubert du Doré. Luc taught him military history as well as a smattering of strategy and tactics. Montegue found that he had a gift for what he learned. He could remember every detail of each battle he read about and envision them in his head, replaying them and spotting the mistakes the other commanders had made.



Montegue du Montaigne

Not long after came the moment immortalized as “Montegue’s Stand.” The Inquisition raised an army to attack King Léon and storm the palace. Things went poorly – the Montaigne forces were suffering tragic losses. Then Luc fell to a Castillian volley and command passed to Montegue. He had no particular loyalty to his king, but could see the different ways the fight could go, and chose the path with the best outcome for himself and his men. Almost mechanically, he gave the orders that saved the day.

His life then became a whirlwind of events. The King promoted him to the rank of General and married him to his youngest daughter, much to the soldier’s profound embarrassment. The servants attempted to take the hard edges off his manners and he had to learn and dress the part of a noble. Finally, in a grand ceremony, the King presented him to the nobility of Montaigne and placed him in charge of the army. After receiving his commission, the King gave him his first command – liberate the people of Castille from the oppressive Vaticine Church and place the true Castillian royal bloodline back in command of the country, if they could be found.

The war effort went well under his command. He devised innovative ways to use the few Porté mages available to him, assigning them to carry messages to his subcommanders, and used this advantage to split his army into smaller, more maneuverable blocks. Normally, an army so fragmented would be taking a terrible risk, but with Porté, the troops could receive word of where they needed to be. Pressing his advantage, and always taking the offensive, Montegue steadily forced the Castillians back. He became a hero to the peasantry.

Then the King crowned himself Empereur after the Hierophant’s death, and things changed again. Montegue found that he was no longer Léon’s favored son. In fact, the Empereur called him away from the front line and ordered him to assault Ussura instead – something which had never been successfully accomplished. Nonetheless, Montegue bid farewell to his wife and left to carry out *l’Empereur’s* orders. To do otherwise would have been suicide, and Montegue, above all else, is a pragmatist.

Powerful People

Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim

Cardinal Durkheim occupies the Eisen seat on the Council of Cardinals in the Vaticine Church. She is a strikingly beautiful woman in her early thirties with long blonde hair. Thanks to a childhood disease, she is lame in her right leg, which forces her to walk with a cane.

She joined the clergy at a young age, rising through the ranks because of her fervent belief and devotion, as well as the political connections of her parents, who were respected Vaticines. She went to Castille to study at Vaticine City where she met the man who became her mentor, Salvador Garcia. With his help she became a bishop, and eventually a cardinal.

Not everything went perfectly for her, though. Four years ago, a servant claimed to have seen her talking to a ghostly figure in her mirror. The servant was certain that she had been consorting with a demon. An Inquisitor interrogated her for three days before clearing her of all charges, and she doesn't like to talk about what went on during that time. She later grudgingly received a public apology from them — angering a Cardinal is unwise, even for the Inquisition.

She recently arrived in Montaigne to help Cardinal d'Argeneau deal with the aftereffects of the Hierophant's death. Durkheim was not friends with d'Argeneau, but she knew that the man was out of his depth and needed

assistance. As the only other member of the Council of Cardinals to hold the single seat for her country, she felt the duty fell to her. D'Argeneau was only too grateful for her assistance; he'd been tearing his hair out wondering how he'd deal with everything.

Once things had settled down, she was preparing to leave for home when the unthinkable happened — Cardinal d'Argeneau disappeared, and the Empereur turned up the next day wearing the man's ring of office. Cardinal Durkheim questioned *l'Empereur* in private. He practically admitted his guilt. Worse, he used the meeting to make a



Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim

pass at her, in spite of her vows of chastity and celibacy (not to mention her obvious disgust at the man). He seemed secure in his belief that she would fall into his arms, and angrily ended the interview when she persistently failed to do so.

Because of certain things said in that meeting, she has withheld this knowledge from the rest of the Council of Cardinals, but she has remained in Montaigne, working to repair some of the damage *l'Empereur* has caused. The Montaigne nobility's new-found disrespect for the Church has hampered her efforts, as has the Empereur himself. The nobility fails to take her work seriously, while Léon's advances have become more public and improper as time goes on. The Cardinal hopes she can finish her work and return to Eisen, where she is also desperately needed, before things get too much worse.

Thérèse Rois et Reines du Rogné

Thérèse is a fiery noblewoman in her late sixties. Younger relatives are hard-pressed to keep up with her on her daily walks. Her flashing eyes and silvery hair, which she normally wears in a bun, retain a spark of beauty that hints at the rare treasure she was in her early days.

As a young girl, Thérèse was raised on tales of bravery and heroism among the musketeers. She became very aware of her family's distinguished heritage of service to the crown, and her romantic young mind soaked it up like a sponge. She dreamed constantly of the day she could join their ranks, and she trained hard to make it come true.

As soon as she was old enough, Thérèse joined the musketeers. She served loyally for many years, even saving the life of King Léon XIII on one occasion. She only retired from the musketeers many years later, when she met and fell in love with a distinguished nobleman from the d'Aur family. As the only child of the head of the Rois et Reines family, both she and her children retained her family name by a special agreement with her husband.

He taught her a great deal about the politics of court; where she had once protected the King with her sword arm, she

gradually came to protect him with her political acumen. Eventually, her husband passed away, and her children grew up and got married. Thérèse spent several bad years alone, and retreated into herself. Fortunately for her, word came that her father had died, leaving the leadership of the Rois et Reines family to her.

Once again she had something to live for. She whipped the family's finances back into shape and used her savvy to gain an influential place at court. Thérèse eventually became one of Léon's most trusted advisors.



Thérèse Rois et Reines du Rogné

Now, many years later, Thérèse is sometimes referred to as the “Grand Dame of Montaigne Politics.” Very little goes on that she doesn’t find out about eventually. She is an old lady, stubborn and set in her ways, who rules her family with a firm grip. If one of her “children” gets out of line, she simply cuts off his share of the family’s income until he repents his rebellious ways. She has little difficulty handling them in this manner.

Thérèse is a loyal supporter of *l’Empereur*. She has seen him elevate Montaigne to the foremost nation in Théah, which in her mind far outweighs his flaws. She cannot bear to hear

ill spoken of him, and had one of her own sons committed to the Donjon for speaking against the Empereur. No one in her family, not even the man’s own children, dared to speak ill of her for it. As the Rois et Reines say, “I’d spit in Theus’ eye before I’d look cross-eyed at Lady Rois et Reines.”

Nonetheless, Thérèse is seen as a domineering old busybody by her family. Though she wields a great deal of power at court, her family doesn’t particularly like or respect her. Jean-Marie Rois et Reines can tolerate her presence as long as his wife’s name is never mentioned, but Gerard Rois et Reines volunteered for duty at sea specifically to get away from her.



Lady Jamais Sices du Sices

Lady Jamais Sices du Sices

A tall, noblewoman in her late twenties, Lady Jamais (whose name means “never” — a bad joke her parents took too far) has a habit of looking down her nose at others — a trait which infuriates the older courtiers. But then, much of her behavior is designed to do just that.

When she was younger, Jamais aspired to be a scholar and tore through volumes of Théan history. When she wearied of that, she read the biting works of political satire that are considered some of Montaigne’s greatest national treasures. Since her older brother was expected to take over the leadership of the family, her father didn’t concern himself with her education. Thus, Lady Jamais grew up knowing little of mathematics, accounting, or statesmanship.

She might have gone on to become a historian, but her older brother died in a hunting accident as she was preparing to go away to university. Her father canceled her enrollment and began the wearisome task of teaching her the art of politics. Jamais hated it. She had no eye for math, and statesmanship held none of the fascination for her that history did. Her introverted personality had trouble dealing with the intrigues of court, and at first she seemed a colossal failure. Her father was convinced that she would ruin the family’s fortune at court.

Then one day, a nobleman made the mistake of insulting her in public. Instantly, she lashed out, and had the entire

court laughing at him with a few sentences. His reputation was ruined – he had been bested by a girl who barely knew her way around court. He wouldn't be the last.

Jamais found that her talent for ridicule won her many admirers, so she applied it more and more frequently, earning a reputation as the sharpest wit at court. Gradually, she became a much crueler person, not caring who she hurt as long as they weren't politically powerful enough to ruin her. As one story tells it, she once humiliated a noble so completely at his own ball that he drank a cup of poisoned wine rather than face the court the next morning.

Since her first fumbling appearances, Lady Jamais has polished her wit to a razor-sharp edge. She can insult a noble without his ever realizing it. In fact, the insults she hurls often set trends among the other courtiers as they scramble to put a fresh spin on the crumbs she dropped the evening before. This doesn't mean that she takes foolish chances. Lady Jamais has seen too many wits lose their position because of too sharp a tongue, and is careful to avoid the line between amusing banter and high treason.

In spite of this care, she has won few friends among the more powerful nobles – many of whom have been on the receiving end of her tongue. Indeed, Thérèse Rois et Reines hates her passionately. She sees Lady Jamais as an evening's entertainment rather than a true noble, and despises the fact that Jamais has risen so far so fast. Thérèse herself worked years to earn the same privileges Jamais received within months of arriving at court. Thérèse would like nothing better than to destroy her.

After all, even a wit has to answer for her actions eventually.

Karl Thomas Steiner

A short, spindly man in his late thirties with cropped white hair, Karl defies many of the stereotypes about the Eisen. Besides his short stature, he's also a craven coward. As a boy he once spent the night in the Black Forest alone on a dare. The things he saw that evening have been blotted from his memory, but he returned a shattered person. His hair had turned pure white, his right hand was missing its



Karl Thomas Steiner

ring finger, and his chest bore a series of claw marks that weren't made by any beast known to man. In addition, Karl acquired a morbid fear of death. Whenever he was placed into a deadly situation, he found himself completely paralyzed. After the danger had passed, he typically collapsed into a sobbing, whimpering heap.

Before he discovered this crippling weakness, he served as one of Reinhard von Wische's guardsmen. His task was to protect Reinhard's last surviving son. The boy's two older brothers had been killed previously in the War of the Cross, and von Wische was taking no chances. Unfortunately, a

highwayman attempted to rob the pair as they were traveling along a major road, and Karl shrank in fear. His charge, on the other hand, drew his pistol – and was shot down before he could even take aim. Karl meekly allowed the thief to make off with their belongings. Too terrified to face his lord’s wrath, Karl fled to the south, writing a letter to tell of the boy’s death. Upon reading this letter, Reinhard sank into the uncaring malaise that has claimed him.

Karl served under several other Eisenfürsten, each time attempting to redeem himself, but his cowardice would always surface and force him to move on in disgrace. A stint with Erich Sieger ended when an assassin pushed easily past him; Karl had to flee the country when Sieger gunned down the assassin with one of his pistols and then tried to kill his lax bodyguard with the other.

Fortunately for him, he had a sharp mind and a ready grasp of military tactics – something the Montaigne army needed. He was eagerly accepted, and found himself serving as a sniper in the same unit as a young Montaigne peasant named Montegue. Since he killed from a distance, his cowardice didn’t get a chance to rear its ugly head. He and Montegue became friends, spending many evenings drinking and talking together.

During Montegue’s Stand, Karl took down three enemy officers. When Montegue was promoted to General, he chose Karl as one of his advisors. For whatever reason, the two of them worked better as a team than apart. Alone, Montegue was a tactical genius – but with Karl, he could work miracles. Karl was quite pleased with his new status in the army, and the two men grew inseparable, seldom arguing with any real seriousness.

Currently, Karl is with Montegue in dreary Ussura. He desperately tried to talk his friend out of the ill-advised invasion, but Montegue simply pointed out (quite correctly) that the Empereur would have him jailed or executed if he refused a direct order. Karl hates this latest assignment, but realizes that his friend has a good point. Still, if Karl should desert, Montegue will be left in a very bad position. He has become dependent on his friend’s advice, and it’s hard to say what he’d do without his faithful Eisen advisor.

The Military

Remy du Montaigne

Remy is a tall and lanky Montaigne in his early thirties, a handsome man with long dark hair, stylish clothing, and a scar above his left eye.

Remy is probably the finest swordsman in Montaigne. He has spent most of his life doing little except honing his skills. His cousin, the Empereur, recognized his talent early on and made him Captain of the Lightning Guard. Léon doesn’t trust anyone else to guard his person, and takes great care to maintain Remy’s loyalty. Virtually anything he wants, he gets. As a result, Remy is devoted to his cousin.

Remy has developed a strong rivalry with Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, the Captain of the Musketeers. He sees Jean-Marie as a rival for the Empereur’s attention, and fears that the man may someday replace him as Léon’s bodyguard. The two have nearly come to blows on three occasions, and their subordinates have developed a rivalry of their own.

Remy has an honest heart, but he’s been spoiled by his years of success and luxury. He enjoys the pampering he receives at the palace and wouldn’t give up his playboy lifestyle for anyone or anything. He likes dancing with attractive ladies, eating exotic foods, and drinking imported wines. The one indulgence he forbids himself is drunkenness. If he were drunk when an assassin attacked

the Empereur, his easy living would come to an end, and that's the last thing he wants.

Of course, his relationship with his cousin isn't perfect. The Empereur sometimes asks him to do things that keep him up nights. For instance, when the Inquisition's army attacked, the Empereur instructed him to close the gates and not to allow any of the Montaigne troops inside, although this would mean almost certain death for them. Léon wanted them fighting for their lives. Remy did as he was instructed, and because of this Montegue and his men were forced to fight just outside the wall. They hold a grudge against Remy to this day. Remy still has nightmares



Remy du Montaigne

about peasants clawing at the gates, begging to be let inside as they're gunned down from behind.

On another, more recent occasion, it is whispered that Léon handed Remy a wine bottle and said to him, "I want you to bring me Cardinal d'Argeneau's ring of office, as well as the finger he wears it on; while you're at it, fill this bottle to the brim with his tears."

As the story goes, Remy brought the Empereur the ring and the finger, and watched as his cousin drank a glass poured from the bottle into a brandy snifter, savoring the tears like a fine wine. On special occasions, it is said, Léon prefers this special "vintage" over anything else.

Whether all this is true or not is anyone's guess, but the Empereur does wear the Cardinal's ring, and the Cardinal has not been seen in quite a while...

Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné

More information on Jean-Marie can be found on pg. 76 of the Game Masters' Guide.

A strikingly handsome man in his early thirties, Jean-Marie is the Captain of the Musketeers. He always presents an impressive sight in his immaculately kept uniform, and his men respect and love him.

Years ago, Jean-Marie was just a young nobleman trying to make his way up through the ranks of the musketeers when he was assigned to escort Princess Anne du Montaigne on a long journey. She was a talkative companion, and began to chat with him. For the first three days, he hardly said a word, just listening to her endless tirades about people at court. Finally, out of self-preservation more than anything, he asked, "Don't you do anything but complain?"

Anne's mouth snapped shut, and she spun around icily to confront the musketeer who had dared to insult her. Encouraged by her extended silence, he continued, "Here we are, surrounded by beautiful scenery on a leisurely ride through the countryside, and all you can do is whine about how your latest ploy to move the next ball from Crieux to Paix was blocked by a clever counterscheme of some lady

or another. Why don't you just enjoy the moment for a change? Ride in silence for an hour or so, and look at the lovely flowers. Stare at the stars and the moon tonight instead of worrying about which gown will be in fashion when you get back to court. What is the point of leaving Charouse if you take it with you?"

Anne turned away from him, and they rode on in silence. She did not speak a single word to the musketeer for the rest of the journey. As they neared the palace once again he feared that he'd angered her so much that she was going to have him put to death. He was, after all, just a musketeer,



Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné

and he'd spoken very rudely to a member of the royal family. But when the days passed and no one came to drag him away to the executioner, he relaxed and forgot about the incident.

Three months later, he was assigned to escort her on another journey, at her request. As they prepared to depart, he began a stumbling apology for his snippish behavior on the last journey, but she simply shushed him. They spent that trip in absolute silence, and the one after that, and the one after that.

A year later, the two were married with the Empereur's blessing. The Captain of the Musketeers was retiring, and Anne had whispered in Léon's ear that it would be a good idea to place a relative in that position. Jean-Marie received the post as a dowry thanks to Anne's clever politicking.

Since then, Jean-Marie's life has only been truly fulfilling when he is home with his wife. They spend their evenings together quietly, often holding hands. Sometimes they look at the stars; sometimes they read together. Seldom do they speak. Both of them must talk all day long, and it is a relief to come home to some peace and quiet.

At work, Jean-Marie must often do things he doesn't want to do. He has had to divert food from starving villages to fatten cattle in the countryside, shoot protesting citizens, and turn peasants over to be executed for stealing a crust of bread. He has tried to make up for these deeds in small ways, spending his personal fortune on food and alms for the poor, and he is loved by the peasants for his kindness, but he wonders if he could do more.

Alazais Valoix Praise du Rachetisse III

Alazais is a regal man in his early fifties. He wears a powdered wig and the latest in Montaigne fashion, but unlike many nobles, it looks good on him. He appears impressive rather than effeminate. He was an athletic man in his youth, and though his figure has softened some, he lacks the ponderous gut so common among courtiers.

As a boy, Alazais dreamed of becoming a sailor and plying the waves. He wanted to battle with storms, skirt dangerous reefs, and ward off bloodthirsty pirates. So at age seventeen, he ran away from his noble family and joined the navy.

It didn't take him long to regret the decision. He faced long periods of boredom, back-breaking labor, and maniacal commanders. He decided almost immediately that he didn't want to be a sailor anymore. He wrote to his father, asking him to pull some strings with the navy. Still angry with his son for running away, he stalled for two years before finally arranging to have the boy transferred to a desk position.



Alazais Valoix Praise du Rachetisse III

It was only then that Alazais' true talents showed up. He proved to be a masterful politician, and rose quickly through the ranks over the years on the grace of his engaging personality and quick wit. Eventually, he gained the opportunity to turn his charm on the Empereur himself. The two of them closeted themselves away with a Squares board and played a cutthroat game that lasted for twelve straight hours. Rumor has it they had a bet going. If the Empereur won, Alazais would be put to death. If Alazais won, he'd be made High Admiral of the Montaigne navy. As the story goes, Alazais was the less skilled player, but he kept up a continuous stream of stories so amusing that the Empereur could not concentrate on the game and eventually made several mistakes that let Alazais win the game. The Admiral hotly denies this rumor, but it continues to plague him. It does seem unusual, however, that a storyteller and braggart of his caliber would turn down a place in one of the most famous barroom anecdotes in all of Montaigne. The tale has even been published in a book of stories as "Alazais' Greatest Gambit."

Although he is a naval officer, Alazais' greatest strengths are his ability to speak charmingly and lie convincingly. He attends all the major social functions in Montaigne, and tells the nobles what they want to hear. He eases their fears and soothes their nerves. The nobles like to get him drunk and listen to the wild tales of his youth, when he was a common sailor. He particularly enjoys recounting the six months he was marooned on an island after a shipwreck, a tale which has grown in the telling until it is obvious that at least half is completely fabricated. The nobles don't mind; Alazais is a very entertaining speaker. In return for his appearances in public, his many friends and patrons have guaranteed his place in the navy.

On the few occasions that Alazais has actually been coerced into climbing aboard a ship, he has had the good sense to simply let the men do their jobs. Alazais is not a great commander himself, but he *is* a canny judge of character. He has a talent for delegating authority which has allowed the Montaigne navy to function in spite of his recurring absences.

The General

Several months ago, *l'Empereur* found himself faced with repeated reports of pirate activities in Montaigne waters. In a fit of anger, he turned to one of his Admirals and relieved the man of his position on the spot, pointing to a nearby mercenary and saying, "I bet that Eisen General there could do your job better — in fact, I'm appointing him an admiral of the fleet immediately!"

The Eisen, a burly man in his forties, choked on the mouthful of crab cakes he was eating. Before he knew it, he was given a ship and assigned the task of exterminating any



The General

pirate who dared prey on Montaigne shipping. When asked his name for the commission paperwork, he replied "I have none that I answer to." The clerk simply filled in "The General." The Empereur told him he wanted to see results in three months.

He got them in two. The General brought an unusual mix of land tactics and stern leadership to his ship that proved effective against several smaller pirate bands. More than forty pirates were executed in mass hangings on the 57th day of his command. This act made his reputation as the greatest pirate hunter to ever sail the seas. The pirates were terrified of him. The Empereur, assured that he had picked the right man for the job, turned his attention elsewhere.

Rumor has it that once, long ago, the General was filled with noble dreams and idealistic expectations of his fellow man. Something happened to crush his spirit and make him turn away from his Eisen heritage. Since then, he's been a mercenary who will do anything for money. He has abandoned his former values, and his loyalty lies only with the highest bidder. Worst of all, he sneers at those men who insist, like he used to, that honor is something noble and good, that it is somehow more important than just staying alive. His respect for *l'Empereur* runs only as deep as the stream of sols that pours from Léon's pockets. This is all information the Empereur could have easily discovered if he'd only checked into his mysterious "General."

As for his relationship with his crew: he hates them and they hate him. He uses harsh punishments to whip them into shape, but they're accustomed to gentler treatment, and are so close to one another that punishment of one sailor rankles them all. The General is used to cruder Eisen soldiers, and fails to understand the need for a softer touch with this crew. He longs for the days when a cuff on the head and a shouted order was the accepted way to treat his subordinates.

In spite of all this, they make a deadly team. The General uses spies, paid informers, and occasional sorcery to track his prey down and bring them to justice. Pirates have been rousted out of bed by a gang of armed Montaigne sailors only to find the General's lone eye staring grimly at them

in the chill morning air. Once or twice, the General has even allowed pirates to steal treasure chests that have been Blooded by his ship's sorcerer. Then he and a small group of elite soldiers teleport aboard the pirates' ship late at night and kill all the pirates they can find. Should the General and his crew ever truly learn to function as a group, they will be a terrible force to be reckoned with.

La Lie du Peuple

Literally, "the dregs of the nation", as the nobility refer to them in private and in official correspondence, are the peasantry and other working members of Montaigne. Artists, even those of great renown, are often tossed aside for a newer, more popular protégé within a few months. As for the farmers in the fields, the less said about their miserable lives, the better.

Pascal Vestanzi, Great Vodacce Sculptor

Pascal is a tall swarthy man with dark hair and black eyes. Although he is in his late forties, he looks no more than thirty years old. He has rough hands with thick, stubby fingers. Looking at them, one would never believe that he is the greatest Vodacce sculptor alive.

When he was a child, Pascal played among the beautiful fountains of Vodacce, pretending to be a great prince. But one afternoon, a passing Fate Witch yelled as a letter she was reading was torn from her hands and blew right toward

the fountain. As his playmates watched silently, Pascal leaped up and snatched the paper from the air before it could be soaked. The Fate Witch looked down at the boy and said to him, "What do you most want to grow up to be, boy?" Looking at the lovely fountain, he replied, "I want to make beautiful fountains like that one." The Fate Witch peered at him closely and said, "You have the makings of a great sculptor; you just need a little push."

Three weeks later, he was apprenticed to a sculptor sponsored by the great Prince Vestini, who took a great interest in the boy. Pascal grew up under the Prince's



Pascal Vestanzi

watchful eye. He studied with some of the greatest sculptors in the world and eventually earned the right to count himself their equal. Vestini admired Pascal so much that he bestowed the name Vestanzi upon him. He was on top of the world. Then he made the greatest mistake of his life...

He came to Montaigne to make his fortune.

At first, he was the talk of all Paix. His exotic sculpture, with its strong lines and angular forms, appealed to the Montaigne art patrons. He could pick and choose among the jobs he was offered. He even did a sculpture of the Empereur himself, a



Jerome

regal figure that he declared his best work ever. Then, he made the second greatest mistake of his life... he fell in love.

Pascal was approached by an older woman whose bottomless green eyes and upturned lips made his heart soar. Transported by his feelings, he sculpted his greatest masterpiece. Every line of the statue spoke of his love. Every curve was a sonnet; every shadow a serenade.

Unfortunately, the woman was the Imperatrice Morella du Montaigne, and while the Empereur didn't have strong feelings for her, he could be possessive when provoked. Even for an uninterested husband, one look at that statue was a declaration of war.

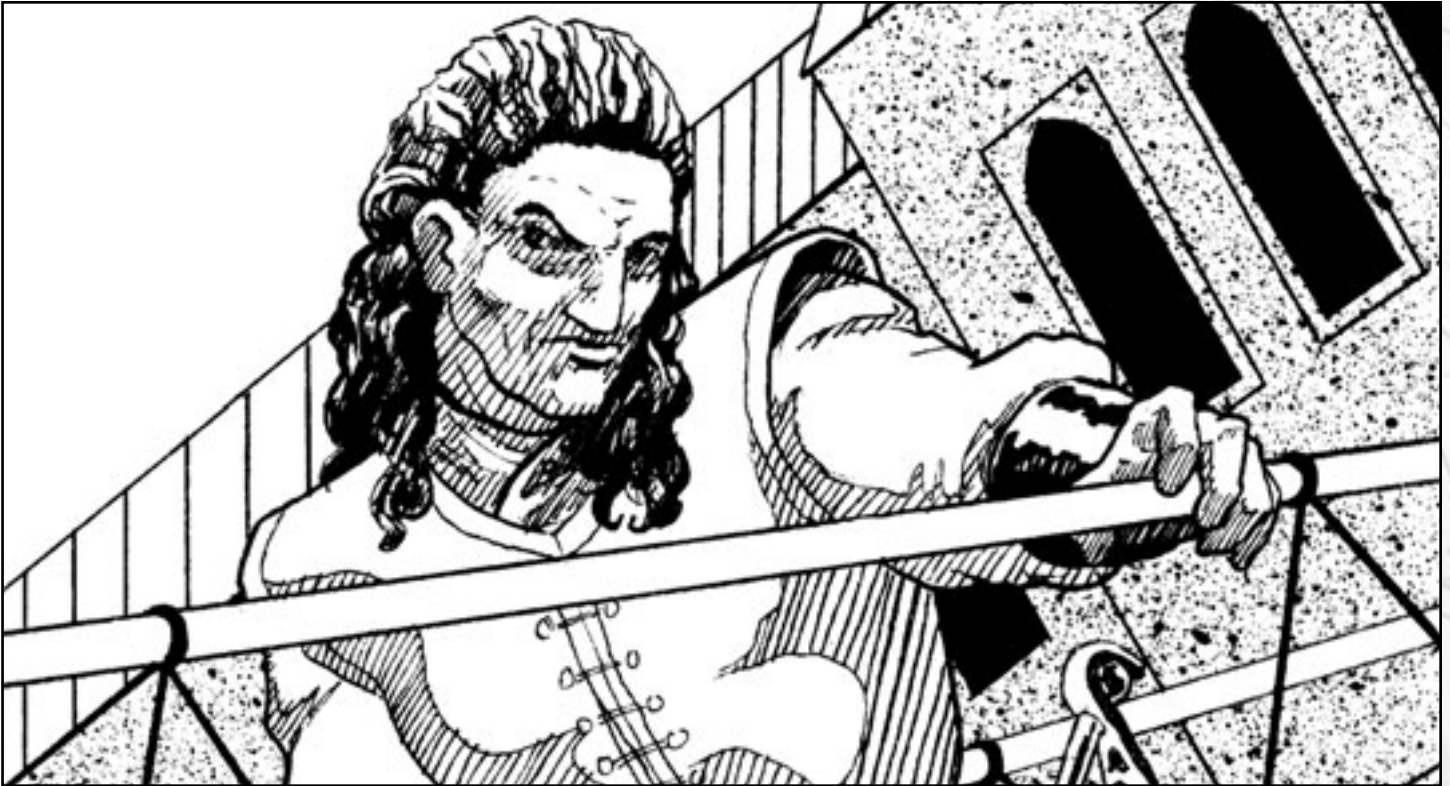
Pascal was called away by Remy du Montaigne, the Empereur's bodyguard, and never seen again. They claimed that he had returned home to Vodacce, but if that's so, he has yet to report to Prince Vestini.

Jerome, a Private in the Army

There is little to distinguish Jerome from the thousands of other peasants conscripted into the Montaigne army. He's short and lean, with dirt encrusted into his fingers and nails. The callouses on his hands could block a rapier thrust, and his dark hair is dirty and cut short. On the surface, he's just like the other hopeless souls trudging down muddy roads toward possible death in Castille. On the surface.

Beneath the skin, Jerome can be stopped by neither man nor demon. He can crawl through the molten pits of the Abyss and emerge untouched by Legion's steel talons. He's fought in three major battles, and although each time bullets and cannonballs smashed through men mere feet away from him, he was always untouched. He has even walked away from two ambushes without a scratch, while most of the rest of his unit was destroyed.

Jerome cannot die because he will not allow himself to die. The Castellians can cut him or shoot him, but he is urged forward by the most powerful force in Théah — love. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will prevent him from going home to marry his lady, Valory.



Except for one little problem. Unbeknownst to Jerome, she's already married. He hasn't been home in over a year, and was mistakenly reported dead after the last battle. Valory was heartbroken, but her family was slowly starving because of the crippling taxes, and when she received an offer of marriage from a wealthy noble named Yanick Bisset du Verre, she had no compelling reason to turn him down.

If her husband had proven to be a good man she wouldn't mind it so much. Her family is well fed and secure. Her younger sister is flirting with a flock of handsome young nobles and she herself lives in the lap of luxury.

Unfortunately for her, Yanick has a violent temper. When driven to the edge of his patience, or when things simply go wrong for him, he takes it out on her. He screams at her, calls her names, and generally makes her life miserable. Blows are rare; he only gets physically violent if she argues with him. She bears the marks of his anger on her arms and chest, where others can't see them beneath her lovely gowns.

But no matter how bad things get, love will find a way.

Jerome is coming home at last. He's been discharged from the army because he saved a grateful officer from a sniper's bullet. The officer listened to his tale of the woman waiting for him, and decided that a bag of guilders, a fast horse, and a discharge were the best reward he could possibly give. So Jerome has 100G, a fine horse, and the wind under his feet as he makes his way back to Valory. In two, maybe three weeks, he should be standing in front of her house — the one she and her family used to live in, at least.

After that, anything could happen. Certainly, he could easily track her down, and find out the real story behind her marriage. She still loves him as much as ever, but she's bound by her wedding vows and the laws of Montaigne. It could even be that they will part ways, their love forever unfulfilled, and both of them miserable to the bone. Only one thing is certain. If Jerome sees those marks on Valory's arms, Yanick will never live to see another dawn. His love will make sure of that.





Drama

Last Goodbyes, Part Three

Two pairs of heavy boots clicked their way down a corridor in the Château du Soleil. Montegue and Karl Steiner strode away from the Empereur's audience chamber. Karl chewed at his lower lip. "We've just been sent off to die, Montegue."

The younger man looked at his advisor as he walked. "Don't talk nonsense. *L'Empereur* has decided that the Ussurans have resources we need for our war effort that could be easily taken from them. It's a sound decision."

Karl cursed. "That's a lie and you know it. There's nothing that Ussura has that Eisen doesn't, and Eisen is fragmented right now. It would be an easier conquest."

"Nonsense. A foreign invader would just unite the Eisenfürsten. The last thing Montaigne needs is a united Eisen. Besides, you know how many of our officers are Eisen. The army would turn on itself in a minute."

"And I still say that it would be the easier conquest, Montegue. Haven't you ever wondered why the Eisen never expanded into Ussura? We've taken land from other countries, why not that one?"

"Because of the Drachenbergs, I would assume. The passes that *do* exist are only clear one month of the year."

"Snow! Is that what you think? We went around. We sent *four* invasions by river before we gave up. They weren't led by stupid men. Those were some of the best military minds in Eisen, and Ussura chewed them up and spat them out like salt pork! I'd follow you anywhere, but we're next on the menu, my friend."

Montegue grabbed his advisor's arm and spun Karl to face him, dropping his voice to an angry whisper. "I'm not an idiot, Karl. I can tell the Empereur is getting rid of me for awhile, but I can't be sure he's sending me off to die. I don't have any proof besides our suspicions, and those won't

inspire the nobles *or* the army to follow our lead. If we simply refused to follow a direct order from the Empereur, we'd be committing suicide!"

Karl frowned at his friend. "So you're going to drag a hundred thousand men to the frozen wastes of Ussura where we'll all freeze together. Is that the plan? I don't want to die, but if dying means saving that many lives, I'll go without a whimper."

Montegue's voice got louder and angrier, "Have you heard what my so-called Generals are planning, Karl? They're going to try a frontal assault on El Morro. *El Morro!* With *my* men, and I can't stop them!"

Karl's face went white, "But... that's madness! That fortress will never fall from the outside. They'll be throwing away tens of thousands of lives!"

"I know," sighed Montegue.

"Then order them not to do it!"

"I did. That order's only going to stand until I'm out of sight and you know it. They're eager for a quick finish to this war and a pat on the head from *l'Empereur*. You know how they howled for blood when the Castillians repulsed us in San Augustin."

Karl's face fell. "Of course. What are your plans, then?"

"I'm taking all my best men with me. At least I can try to protect them in Ussura. If I leave them here, they'll just be more meat for El Morro to grind up."

"And the rest of the Thirty—"

"Are coming with us, yes. At least those still in the army. Those who took the Empereur's discharge and went home to their families are safe enough."

Karl's face twisted into an ironic grin. "And to think I came to Montaigne because I thought there'd be *less* fighting. At least we'll die among friends."

Montegue put his hand on Karl's shoulder. "Don't fret, my friend. I said that I have a plan, didn't I? I'm nobody's fool, least of all the Empereur's."

The Destiny Spread

Fate Witches have a particular form of reading they use to give their querent a general idea of what his destiny is like. They use a 5-card spread from the Sorte deck in a cross formation to accomplish this.

The first card is the querent's Strength. This embodies his most noble quality.

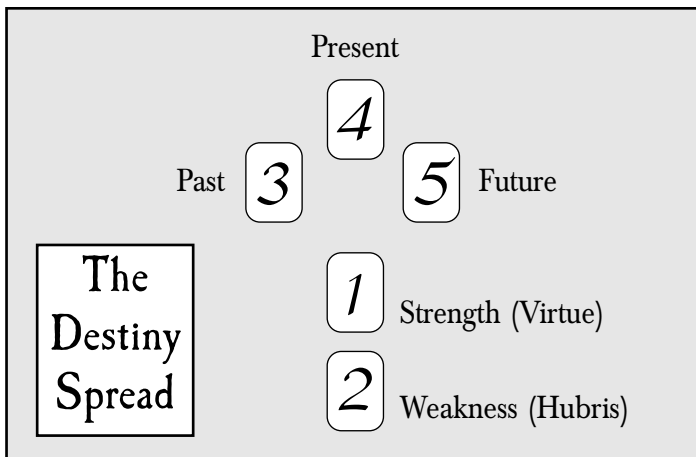
The second card is the querent's Weakness. This shows his greatest flaw.

The third card is the querent's Past. This shows an important event that helped make him who he is.

The fourth card is the querent's Present. This shows his current situation.

The fifth card is the querent's Future. This shows him an important event that is fast approaching in his life that he should be prepared for.

Normally, the first and second cards are selected from the Greater Arcana, while the other three cards are selected from the two suits from the Minor Arcana that are the most significant to the querent. Fate Witches traditionally leave the Court Cards out of these readings, since they signify events that cannot be controlled.



The Destiny Spread in Hero Creation

To use this system properly, you need a Tarot deck. Perform this reading right after assigning Traits and Nationality to your Hero, but before assigning anything else. Separate out the Major Arcana, shuffle them, and put them in one pile. Next, pull out the two suits that are most significant to your character — here, Coins and Staves — leaving out the Page, Knight, Queen, and King cards. Montaigne have a strong affinity for the suits of Coins and Staves: Coins because of their great wealth, and Staves because of their enormous political power.

Shuffle the two suits together into a pile. Next, lay out the Destiny Spread as described above. You must choose to focus on either your Strength or your Weakness. If you choose your Strength, your Hero gains the Virtue corresponding to that card, and you pay 10 HP for performing the Destiny Spread. If you choose your Weakness, your Hero gains the Hubris corresponding to that card, and you gain 10 extra HP to build your Hero with. Finally, consult the Past, Present, and Future charts to see what your Hero gained (or lost!) from those draws.

If you don't have a Tarot deck, it's hard to determine your Strength or Weakness at random, so have your GM select one. Then roll once each on the Past, Present, and Future charts (odd — Coins/even — Staves, then a die for the card number).

Note: In some Tarot decks, Coins are referred to as Pentacles, and Staves are referred to as Wands or Rods.

Past

These are the events that have shaped your Hero and made him who he is. Some of them may still hang over his head.

Ace of Coins: Every year a member of your family hosts a grand ball for the nobility. This year the responsibility has fallen on your shoulders. Your family has provided you with a stipend to help cover the expenses, but should the ball flop they will never help you again. You begin the game with an extra 200 Guilders and a 2-point Obligation Background for free.

Two of Coins: For over a year now you have been wooing an influential member of the court. At first, your interests were pragmatic — your would-be lover's powerful social position could bolster your courtly influence. But somewhere along the way, you fell in love with him or her. Unfortunately, he or she has shied away from your latest attempts, preferring the company of a more prestigious courtier than you. You receive a 3-point Lost Love Background for free.

Three of Coins: A few years ago you lent money to an acquaintance who since that time has avoided you like the plague. Recently, you and a few bodyguards collected on the debt. You begin the game with an extra 500 guilders and a 1-point Nemesis Background for free.

Four of Coins: When you were a small child you caught the White Plague. Although you survived, you have always been a little sickly and were frequently bed-ridden while growing up. Your Resolve is reduced by 1, and your Wits is increased by 1.

Five of Coins: A year ago you borrowed money from a rich and powerful nobleman. You invested it, along with your savings, to fund a privateer captain who promised you more gold than you could imagine. You never saw him again. Worse yet, the nobleman wants his money back. You begin the game with a 3-point Debt Background for free.

Six of Coins: As a child you shunned your noble playmates, not caring for their shallow machinations. Instead you would sneak out and play with the peasant children. You loved their innocence and zeal for life. You would bring them food, toys, and, when you were older, money. You are well known among the peasantry as charitable and honorable, with their best interests at heart. You receive one extra Reputation die when dealing with commoners.

Seven of Coins: As a child, you were betrothed to the child of a respected courtier. Unfortunately, you and your betrothed can't stand each other. Your betrothed has assured you that if you were to marry him or her, he or she would make your life miserable. You begin the game with

a 3-point Obligation Background for free. If you do not marry your betrothed and fulfill the Obligation Background within 3 months, it becomes a 3-point Nemesis background (with the father) instead.

Eight of Coins: Since you were young you have loved to read books. You had a tendency to avoid any physical training so that you could sit down and study. As a result, your father sent you to a university when you came of age. You receive the University Advantage and literacy in Montaigne for free.

Nine of Coins: Your family has had a long and distinguished service in the Montaigne military. You have carried on that tradition by rapidly rising through the ranks. You receive a 4-point discount when purchasing the Commission Advantage.

Ten of Coins: For as long as you can remember, you have had an excellent sense of fashion. It wasn't that you could predict the directions that fashion would take in the coming months, it was that you chose the direction fashion would take. You have always been on the cutting edge of style, and the other nobles look to you for direction. You begin the game with the Courtier Skill and Rank 3 in your Fashion Knack for free.

Ace of Staves: You were always close to your extended family. You grew up with a cousin who was like a brother to you. Throughout your childhood, you came to his aid more times than you can count, and he came to yours. Now he is a respected man in a powerful position, and he will never forget his childhood friend. You receive a 3-point Close Family Member Advantage for free.

Two of Staves: You are a member of the gentry. You have no land to speak of, but you have money. You travel from place to place relying on other nobles to house and support you. You are always on the lookout for a good investment opportunity. You receive a 4-point discount when you purchase the Gentry Advantage, or receive it for free if you also purchase Sorcery.

Three of Staves: You grew up knowing that you were different. There was just something about you that attracted



members of the opposite sex. No matter what you did, or how well you did it, you were surrounded by people eager to catch your eye. Now you know how to play the game, and your skills have been exceptionally useful in court. You receive the Dangerous Beauty Advantage for free.

Four of Staves: As a child, you studied under a renowned artist. You were mainly a helper, but you did have a bit of natural talent that blossomed into true skill. You begin the game with the Artist Skill and Rank 3 in one of its Basic Knacks for free.

Five of Staves: When you were a child your family was condemned as traitors. Your father was captured and hanged, but your mother escaped and fled the country with you. You have returned to clear your family name. If anyone finds out who you truly are, however, you will probably be executed. You begin the game with a 2-point Exiled Background and a 2-point True Identity Background for free.

Six of Staves: You come from a long line of duelists, soldiers, and mercenaries. Your father drilled you in weapons and tactics from the time you were old enough to walk. When you surpassed his training, he sent you to a military academy in hopes that you would make him proud. You begin the game with the Academy Advantage for free.

Seven of Staves: Long ago you were beaten badly at what you do best. Worse yet, the person who showed you up was a good friend of yours. Word has gotten around that you are a pale shadow of your friend and no one takes you seriously. You begin the game with a 2-point Defeated Background for free.

Eight of Staves: Your father was an ambassador to many different kingdoms over his lifetime. As a child, you often accompanied him when he traveled abroad, and you picked up several different languages along the way. You begin the game with the Linguist Advantage for free.

Nine of Staves: Your entire childhood was spent in preparation for the time you would represent your family in court. You excelled in your studies and became the epitome of grace and dignity. During your first visit to court,

however, you were utterly humiliated by a family enemy in front of the most influential people in Montaigne. Now you are afraid to show your face in court. You gain a 2-point Fear Background for free.

Ten of Staves: Since you were a child, trouble has had a way of finding you. No matter what you did, no matter how many problems you solved, more would follow. You have always been plagued with more than your fair share of problems and adventure. You begin the game with the Foul Weather Jack Advantage for free.

Present

These events represent situations that your Hero could find himself currently entangled in. They will have to be dealt with soon, whether he likes it or not.

Ace of Coins: You recently did a favor for one of your contacts at court. In thanks, he has acquired a Montaigne Puzzle Sword for you. You must roll on the chart as normal, but with a 2-point discount on the final cost of your sword.

Two of Coins: Due to a recent *faux pas* at court, you have fallen out of favor with the head of your family. As a result, he has cut you off from the family funds. You begin the game with half of your starting money. In addition, your monthly income is reduced by half until you can appease your family patriarch.

Three of Coins: You recently had occasion to impress an esteemed gentleman while attending court. This man introduced you to his friends, who in turn invited you to join their social club. You begin the game with a 3-point Social Club Advantage of the GM's choice or creation for free.

Four of Coins: You have been shrewd in your investments and business transactions. You have never taken unnecessary risks with your money, and never spent a guilder unwisely. As a result, your starting income is increased by 50% for free.

Five of Coins: A few nights ago you entered a tavern with a light heart and a full purse. You ate, drank, engaged



in games of chance, and drank some more. You were invited into a game by a man who kept buying you drinks. When you woke up, you were in the alley behind the tavern with no money, no sword, and rags for clothes; but you will never forget the face of the man who cheated you. You begin the game with no starting money and a 3-point Vendetta Background for free.

Six of Coins: Last week, you saw a poor old blind man begging for money in the street. Those who walked by either avoided him or took no notice of him whatsoever. You strolled up to him and placed a bag of guilders in his hand. In thanks, he gave you the only possession he had, a marble-sized steel ball with a 2-inch metallic shaft running through its center. You had no idea what it was, but you slipped it in your pocket for further study. You begin the game with a 2-point Synneth Artifact Advantage for free. The marble has unknown properties.

Seven of Coins: A courtier of great renown has presented you with an expensive gift. In his eyes this is a favor, and you are of course now in his debt. You begin the game with one item of your choice which costs 1,000G or less. In addition you receive a 3-point Obligation Background for free.

Eight of Coins: You have a long tradition of letting others foot your bills. If other nobles want to support you for the pleasure of your company, who are you to argue? You begin the game with the Courtier Skill and Rank 2 in the Mooch Knack for free.

Nine of Coins: Ever since you were a small child you had a dream – to be a Musketeer like your father. Now your dream is at hand. You have just completed your training and have been sent out into Montaigne to carry out the justice of the Empereur. You begin the game with the Musketeers Advantage for free.

Ten of Coins: While attending court recently, you were mercilessly ridiculed by one of your chief rivals. You became the laughing-stock of the entire evening, much to the pleasure of your rival. Your starting Reputation is

lowered by 5 and you receive a 2-point Ridiculed Background for free.

Ace of Staves: You recently came of age and have ventured out to make a name for yourself. However, your parents insisted that you take along a servant as befits your station. You receive a 4-point Montaigne Servant Advantage for free.

Two of Staves: Your family can trace its lineage back to royalty. It is one of the oldest and most powerful in Montaigne, and is very influential at court. You may purchase the Noble Advantage for 5 points, or gain it for free if you purchase Sorcery.

Three of Staves: The conclusion of a business deal has brought you prosperity. You begin the game with 150G extra starting money and a 2-point Connection Advantage for free.

Four of Staves: Being the youngest son of a powerful noble, you stood to inherit very little. A few years ago you struck out on your own, having little or no contact with your family and living by any means necessary. You tasted street life and found it wasn't for you. You have recently been allowed back home, though you were given an icy welcome. You gain the Scoundrel Advantage for free.

Five of Staves: A long time ago you were in love. This person was absolute perfection, everything you always wanted... until the next person caught your eye. Your jilted lover moved away without saying so much as a word to you. Well, now he (or she) is back and intends to ruin you forever. You receive a 3-point Lost Love Background for free.

Six of Staves: You recently visited court and dazzled the nobility with your wit. You were the life of the party. After arriving with the most astonishing attire of the evening, you proceeded to grant a few favors, make a few introductions, and gossip like there was no tomorrow. Your starting Reputation is increased by 5.

Seven of Staves: Two months ago you angered a Fate Witch by ridiculing her in open court. Since then, odd



things have begun to happen to you. You have a tendency to get choked up and stutter whenever you are involved in a social situation. You start the game with two Curse dice linked to Staves (see page 222 in the *Players' Guide*).

Eight of Staves: During your recent travels, you unwittingly foiled a plot perpetuated by the Inquisition. Now they want you. You always seem to have someone following you, but when you turn to look, they are gone. You feel as if you are being watched at all times, and you grow more nervous by the day. You receive a 2-point Hunted Background for free.

Nine of Staves: You know what it's like to be beaten down. It seems that your life has been nothing but hard times. You know what hard work and labor is all about, as well as pain and physical punishment. You never let it get you down, however, and things have started getting better. You receive the Toughness Advantage for free.

Ten of Staves: Recently, a good friend of yours was killed in battle right next to you. As he lay dying in your arms he asked you to grant him one request – take care of his wife and son. You receive a 2-point Vow Background for free.



Future

These are events that are looming in your Hero's future. They may have been caused by choices he made in his past, or choices he has yet to make. These predictions are all purposefully vague. Your GM will work out the specifics of how they come into play.

Ace of Coins: With patience comes prosperity. (Treasure Map 2)

Two of Coins: The true and good always prevail. (Cursed 2)

Three of Coins: You will soon meet an influential friend. (Rivalry 2)

Four of Coins: Luck is on your side, but beware what is hidden. (Treasure Map 1, Rivalry 1)

Five of Coins: Hang on to your special moments. They are fleeting. (Lost Love 2)

Six of Coins: Your acts of kindness will be rewarded. (Romance 2)

Seven of Coins: Something you love will soon be lost. (Hunting 2)

Eight of Coins: You will one day know perfection. (Moment of Awe 2)

Nine of Coins: Your dreams of travel will soon be fulfilled. (Pressed Into Service 2)

Ten of Coins: You will become famous. (Wanted 2)

Ace of Staves: Someone you know will soon take a trip. (Lost Relative 2)

Two of Staves: Never make a promise you can't keep. (Vow 2)

Three of Staves: You will find something you have been looking for. (Hunting 2)

Four of Staves: Accept the next proposition offered you. (Exiled 2)

Five of Staves: Revenge is a path that should not be traveled lightly. (Vendetta 2)

Six of Staves: Beware the one who loves you most. (Rivalry 2)

Seven of Staves: It is important that you always accept responsibility. (Obligation 2)

Eight of Staves: Do not be afraid of that which is unknown. (Fear 2)

Nine of Staves: Beware your true face. (True Identity 2)

Ten of Staves: You will forget something very important. (Vow 2)



New Porté Rules

Handing Off an Object

One Porté mage can hand one of his Blooded objects to another Porté mage using Resolve + Bring. The mage begins to send the object, and the other feels a tingle warning him that an object is being sent to him. It takes one Action for each mage to open the portal, and another Action from each to complete the exchange. The closer relations the two mages are, the lower the TN.

Relation Between the Mages	TN
Twins	5
Father, Son, Mother, Daughter	10
Brother, Sister	15
Uncle, Aunt, Nephew, Niece	20
First Cousin.	25
Other (including non-related)	30

Breaking a Fall

A Porté mage of Journeyman or higher rank may attempt to save himself from a fall by entering a portal in midair. He must make a Resolve + Walk check against a TN based on the distance he is falling (see chart below). Note that he is then inside the portal, and must Walk to a Blooded object as usual.

Levels Fallen	TN
1	30
2	25
3	20
4	15
5	10
6+	5

Creating a Permanent Porté Gateway

At least 5 Master Porté mages of different bloodlines (i.e., they would have a TN 30 to hand an object off to one another) are required to create a permanent gateway. Stone archways costing no less than 1,000G each must be constructed at the two sites that the gateway is expected to connect. Then, the mages must travel to both sites and Blood them in a ritual that requires three months at each site to complete. Finally, the mages must each permanently sacrifice one Rank of Resolve. This lowers the maximum that their Resolve can be raised to, and if any of the mages drop below 0 Resolve, they die in the attempt (although the gateway's creation will still succeed if at least one mage survives). Due to the high cost of creating gateways, they are still fairly rare in Théah, typically only connecting capital cities and other important locations.

Using Porté Gateways

Anyone can use a Porté gateway. The user simply steps through with his eyes shut and walks forward until he feels a wrenching sensation, which signifies his arrival at its other end. Once he has stepped out of the gateway, he suffers one Dramatic Wound as the gate siphons off some of his life energy to maintain its operation. Gateways that have been left unused for several centuries or more fade from their usual yellow glow to a bloody red. The first being to step through such a gate is consumed utterly to replenish the gateway's energy. After that, the gate operates normally once again, returning to its yellow coloration.

New Porté Knack

Catch

The Porté mage has mastered the art of quickly whipping open small portals to catch bullets and other projectiles in order to stop them from hitting him. In *7th Sea* terms, this Knack can be used as a Defense Knack for Active Defense against firearms and other such projectiles. In addition, if used as an Active Defense against slower projectiles (arrows, quarrels, thrown weapons, etc.) the mage receives one Free

Raise to the attempt. Anything “caught” in this manner winds up inside the portal and is lost, probably forever. This Knack may not be used as a Passive Defense, nor is it effective against melee weapons.



New Backgrounds

Assassin

A political rival has hired an assassin to kill you. There’s nothing personal about it — you simply represent a threat to his power base and must be eliminated. The number of points you put in this Background determines how skilled the assassin is, how soon he will strike, and whether or not your rival will hire another if the first fails.

Ridiculed

When you first went to court, one of the wits there made you his “special project” and humiliated you in front of the courtiers. Now every time you appear, he makes sure that you are the butt of his every joke. The more points you invest in this Background, the wittier and more powerful your tormentor is.

New Swordsman Schools

Boucher School

Country of Origin: Montaigne

Description: The Boucher style of fighting was forged in the streets of Montaigne, and isn’t really considered a “Gentleman’s School.” However, some duelists are more concerned with results than with the impression they make on their peers; this style is designed with them in mind. Students of Boucher wield a long knife in each hand, and use the two together in a series of attacks designed to confuse and disorient the opponent.

Boucher is one of the fastest fighting styles taught on Théah today. Once the superior reach of the opponent’s weapon has been overcome, the knife fighter starts a flurry of attacks that is almost impossible to stop.

On the other hand, Boucher uses two weapons with short reach. A clever opponent who can hold even a Master of Boucher at arm’s reach will have little trouble dispatching the troublesome fighter.

Basic Curriculum: Criminal, Knife

Swordsman Knacks: Double-attack (Knife), Double-parry (Knife), Riposte (Knife), Exploit Weakness (Boucher)

Apprentice: Students of the Boucher style of fighting are trained to wield a knife in each hand. This negates the off-

hand penalty when using a knife. They are also trained to get inside an enemy's guard and strike quickly; add the current Phase to your Initiative Total when wielding a knife in each hand. For example, in Phase 6, you may add 6 to your Initiative Total. In addition, instead of receiving membership in the Swordsman's Guild for free, Boucher students receive one free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Journeyman: Journeymen have learned to draw their opponent's attention to the knife that isn't attacking them. When you are wielding a knife in each hand, all opponents must make two Raises when attempting to use an Active Defense against your knife attacks.

Master: You may unleash a flurry of attacks against a single opponent. You must perform one Raise on the first attack, but receive no benefit from it. If you successfully hit your target's Passive Defense (even if the attack is Actively

Defended against) you receive another attack against the same target, this time at two Raises (which again give you no benefit). This cycle continues until an attack fails to hit the target's Passive Defense, adding one more Raise with each successive attack. Damage Rolls and Wound Checks are made for each successive successful attack.

Rois et Reines School

Country of Origin: Montaigne

Description: The Rois et Reines firearm techniques are a relatively new innovation. They were developed especially for the Musketeers, but the training has since spilled over into more common usage.

Arced fire, carefully maintained and cleaned weapons, and exacting precision when measuring powder all contribute to a longer range on the battlefield. That's not to say that a





student of Rois et Reines cannot defend himself up close – far from it. They drill extensively using bayonets, giving them a fearsome advantage against any group not prepared to handle polearms.

The main weakness of the Rois et Reines techniques is their dependency on missile fire. The hand-to-hand techniques are not nearly as advanced as those of many of the other Swordsman schools on Théah. The heavy muskets are not designed to be polearms, and against a group even casually equipped to deal with spears or pikes, the Rois et Reines school is not terrifically effective. The Exploit Weakness (Rois et Reines) Knack is effective only against an opponent wielding a mounted bayonet, not against an enemy sniper taking aim at the Hero.

Basic Curriculum: Firearms, Heavy Weapon

Swordsman Knacks: Beat (Heavy Weapon), Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike, Exploit Weakness (Rois et Reines)

Apprentice: Students of the Rois et Reines style become more adept at using firearms and bayonets. You receive a +10 to pistol and musket range, and the off-hand penalty is negated when wielding a pistol. In addition, you receive one Free Raise to all Attack Rolls using a mounted bayonet. Furthermore, instead of receiving membership in the Swordsman's Guild for free, Rois et Reines students receive one free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Rois et Reines style continue to improve their marksmanship over time. Your bonus to musket and pistol range increases to +25. In addition, you may now draw and fire a pistol using one Action. Lastly, you add +10 to your Initiative Total when wielding a mounted bayonet, thanks to the reach that the makeshift polearm gives you.

Master: Masters of the Rois et Reines style are crack shots under any conditions. The bonus to your musket and pistol range is increased to +50. In addition, you may now spend a Drama die to negate all normal modifiers to a target's TN for one attack. Thus, a target with a TN 20 still only requires a 20 to hit, regardless of cover, range, or other similar

considerations. TN-modifying special abilities such as the Aldana Journeyman ability or the Pyeryem Armor Boon still apply.

Tout Près School

Country of Origin: Montaigne

Description: The Tout Près school is not so much a fighting style as an embodiment of the philosophy, "The best weapon is the one that's close at hand." Practitioners of the Tout Près school have been known to pummel their enemies with everything from planks to fireplace pokers to chamber pots. When your enemies have surprised you in an inn and you have nothing more than a bottle of wine and a ham to defend yourself, there are few schools that are more useful, since Tout Près is the only Swordsman school that offers formal training with Improvised Weapons.

This "philosophy" is most effective when backed up with a more traditional fencing weapon, since steel is always a welcome addition to any defense. Lead-weighted wide-brimmed hats are a popular choice of apparel for students of Tout Près. Such a hat is considered an Improvised Weapon (soft, 1k1 damage).

A stool doesn't command the same respect as a fine rapier, however, and experienced opponents will press through with attacks that they would have held off with had the student been better armed.

Basic Curriculum: Dirty Fighting, Fencing

Swordsman Knacks: Corps-à-Corps, Double-parry (Fencing/Improvised Weapon), Tagging (Improvised Weapon), Exploit Weakness (Tout Près)

Apprentice: Students of the Tout Près school are intimately familiar with many common objects that they might need to defend themselves. The off-hand penalty is negated when you are using an Improvised Weapon. In addition, you receive one Free Raise when using Parry (Improvised Weapon) as an Active Defense. In addition, instead of receiving membership in the Swordsman's Guild



for free, Tout Près students receive one free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Tout Près school learn to react quickly to new situations, and receive instruction in many skills that are useful in getting out of the way of an oncoming blow. You may pick up and attack or parry with an Improvised Weapon in a single Action. In addition, you receive one Free Raise to any non-Parry Active Defense you attempt.

Master: Masters of Tout Près use their Improvised Weapons to distract their opponents from the rapier in their other hand. After an attack with an Improvised Weapon (whether successful or not), the Master may spend one Action die (even one from later in the Round) to perform an immediate attack with a fencing weapon. This attack may not be Actively Defended against.



New Advantages

Unless otherwise stated, these Advantages are available to any character, regardless of nationality.

Close Family Member (Varies, Montaigne only)

The Hero has a particularly close family member who will go out of his way to assist him. The Hero may call upon him no more than once every three months (blood is only so thick, even in Montaigne). The cost of this Advantage is determined by the relative's profession and usefulness (detailed below) to the Hero, and the exact relationship between them is up to the player. This Advantage may be purchased up to three times. Noble Heroes should look at the family descriptions in Chapter One for some famous people that they can be related to.

Commander (5 Points)

This relative has a high-ranking position in the Montaigne army or navy, and is capable of pulling strings for the Hero when called upon. This can be used to permit the Hero to cross restricted areas, to arrange for a loan of a few men for some official purpose, or even to make some army equipment "disappear."

Courtier (3 Points)

This relative is well known at court, and is capable of providing one 3-point or smaller favor (excluding money lending) to the Hero when called upon.

Duelist (4 Points)

This relative is a talented duelist (Master of one of the Swordsman Schools), and is capable of standing in for the Hero for one fight when called upon. For each additional Point in this Advantage, your relative receives another Rank in a Swordsman School: for instance, Sébastien Valroux du Martise, who is a Master of three schools and a Journeyman in two others, would cost an extra 10 points for a total of 14,



but your enemies would quake in fear when he showed up to fight for you.

Family Head (10 Points)

This relative is the head of your family, and plans to leave the position to you when he or she dies. In addition, he or she is capable of calling on any of the other relatives listed here (up to 8 Points in value) for the Hero when called upon.

Priest (2 Points)

This relative is highly placed in the Church, and is capable of interceding on behalf of the Hero when called upon. This can convince even the Inquisition to let the Hero go.

Scholar (1 Point)

This relative is a renowned scholar capable of researching the answer to an obscure question or riddle for the Hero when called upon.

Skilled (3 Points)

This relative is very skilled in a single non-Sorcerous Knack (a 5 in both the Knack and the appropriate Trait, for a roll of 10k5), and will use this skill in the Hero's service when called upon. Good choices for the skilled Knack include Blacksmith, Tracking, Seduction, Socializing, and Underworld Lore.

Society Member (3 Points)

This relative is a member of one of the Secret Societies, and can call in favors from the Society for the Hero when called upon.

Sorcerer (2 Points)

This relative, a powerful Porté mage, can transport the Hero and his friends wherever they need to go when called upon.

Wealthy Merchant (3 Points)

This relative is a well-to-do merchant and can loan the Hero money or equipment (up to 1,000G). This must be paid back or returned within three months or this Advantage is lost for good.

Friend at Court (1–3 Points per friend)

This Advantage allows a Hero to begin the game with a connection at court. *For every point put into this Advantage, the Hero may divide 3 points among the Like and Usefulness boxes of the connection. This Advantage may be purchased up to three times, each for a different connection.*



Gentry (8 Points, Montaigne only)

This Advantage costs 4 points if you have already purchased Sorcery.

Your Hero is a member of the gentry, an unlanded noble who wanders from house to house. As a result of your inheritance, you receive 10,000G as starting money, but you have no monthly income unless you create it through investments. Gentry receive one Free Raise when using the Mooch Knack. Finally, while exercising your visitation rights with another noble, you must roll a die once per month on the following chart, subtracting 1 for every month beyond the first you've been living off your current host's hospitality:

2 or less	Your host is angry with you and you are asked to leave. You must move yourself to another noble's house. Every week on your own costs you 100G in living expenses. You cannot visit this noble again for two years, and it is considered a 2-point favor to move into a noble's house (see Courtly Intrigue, pg. 87).
3-8	No effect.
9 or more	You are invited to stay at another noble's house. For the first month, add +2 when rolling on this chart. After that, the modifier to the roll diminishes by 1 every month as usual (+1, +0, -1, -2, etc.).



Montaigne Accent (0 Points, Montaigne only)

An accent is an identifying characteristic in the way a person speaks that indicates he's from a particular area. Only a Hero fully proficient in the language can identify accents. Language Acquaintance and Pidgins are no help, and non-Montaigne may never have an accent. There are six primary accents in Montaigne: North, South, West, Bascone, Dechaine, and Paix. Montaigne Heroes with an accent pay slightly different costs to learn foreign languages. An explanation of each accent follows the language chart, below.

North: This accent indicates that the speaker is from Doré, Crioux, Aur, or Arrent, and is considered the mark of a well-traveled Montaigne. Those with this accent do not roll their **r's**. *Northern and eastern languages are easier for Northern Montaigne to learn, while southern and exotic languages are more difficult.*

South: Those with this accent are from Charouse, Sices, Paroisse, Gloyure, or Surlign, and are considered to be aristocratic. *This is the Montaigne accent described in the Players' Guide.*

West: This accent is found among Montaigne from Verre, Martise, Toille, Rachetisse, and Rogné, and is believed to signify a good education. This accent is easily recognized for its Castillian sounding of **b** and **v**, which makes these letters sound nearly identical, as if they were being slurred together. *Because of their position on the coast, Vendel, Crescent (which is related to Castillian), Théan (which is a common trade tongue) and Avalon are all less expensive to Heroes from West Montaigne. However, the eastern languages are all more expensive.*

Bascone: This accent is associated with provincial speakers from the province of La Motte. Often considered to be indicative of a country bumpkin, the accent is identified

by the speaker's pronunciation of **ai** as the **ie** in "pie." *Because of their xenophobic tendencies, it is hard for Heroes from La Motte to learn to speak foreign languages. However, they are traditionally well read (even the peasants) and pick up Literacy in Montaigne and two other languages for free.*

Dechaine: A Dechaine accent is found only among those raised in the town of Dechaine. Those with this accent pronounce their **a's** as in "awe", like the Vendel and Vestenmannavnjar do, and are believed to be somewhat slow by the rest of the country. *Northern and eastern languages are less expensive for Heroes with this accent, while southern and far eastern languages are more expensive.*

Paix: This accent indicates that the speaker was raised in the town of Paix. Speakers have a tendency to pronounce their **h's**, even at the beginning of a word. This accent is very popular with members of the opposite sex. *Because of the frequent travelers in Paix, Montaigne Heroes with this accent have an easy time learning foreign languages, and in fact, speak up to 3 HP of languages besides Montaigne for free. They also receive the Dangerous Beauty Advantage to simulate their attractive accent. However, they cannot take the Linguist Advantage, and they receive only 95 HP to begin with instead of the normal 100.*

	North	South	West	Bascone	Dechaine	Paix
Avalon	1	2	1	3	1	1
Castille	2	1	1	2	2	0
Crescent	5	4	3	5	4	3
High Eisen	2	3	4	4	2	2
Eisen	1	2	3	3	1	1
Montaigne	0	0	0	0	0	0
Théan	1	2	1	3	2	1
Teodoran	5	4	5	5	5	3
Ussura	4	3	4	4	4	2
Vendel	1	2	1	3	1	1
Vodacce	2	1	1	2	2	0

Montaigne Servant (Varies, Montaigne only)

Since servants are so important to the Montaigne lifestyle, Montaigne Heroes have several more options available to them when purchasing the Servant Advantage. Unless otherwise stated, Servants are subject to the same limitations as Heroes when being created.

Servant Types

Bodyguard (5 Points): All Traits are 2s except Panache, which is a 3. The Bodyguard has all Fencing, Knife, and Firearms Knacks at 3. He also receives another 25 HP that the player may distribute, but no Civil Knacks may go above 2 to begin. A soldier, duelist, or gunner can also be built with this servant type.

Lackey (5 Points): All Traits are 2s except Panache, which is a 3. The Lackey receives all Servant Knacks at 3. He also receives another 25 HP that the player may distribute, but no Martial Knacks may go above 2 to begin. A maid, butler, or valet can also be built with this servant type.

Porté Messenger (5 Points): All Traits are 2s except Panache, which is a 3. The Messenger receives Half-Blooded Porté, and the Bring Knack at 4. His brother or sister remains at the Hero's home base, and the two of them hand off (described under *Handing Off an Object*, pg. 78) a Blooded chalkboard to each other that messages can be written on.

Servant Upgrades

Able Fighter (3 Points): The maximum that the servant's Martial Knacks may be raised during creation is raised by 1 (to 4, normally).

Connected (1 Point): The servant receives the Streetwise Skill and a 5 in the Socializing Knack for free, and always rolls and Keeps one extra die when using Streetwise Skills.

Extremely Loyal (3 Points): The servant will never abandon or betray you.

Sycophant (1 Point): The servant adores the ground the Hero walks on and would give his life to save him at any time. Of course, the rest of the time, the Hero has to endure

the servant's constant toadying remarks and almost smothering attitude.

Very Organized (2 Points): The maximum that the servant's Civil Knacks may be raised during creation is raised by 1 (to 4, normally).

Night Trained (4 Points)

This Advantage gives the Hero better night sight and more awareness of his surroundings in the dark. *Night Trained reduces the Hero's penalties to act in low-light conditions by half. Thus, he loses only 1 Kept die in Dim Lighting, and 2 Kept dice in Total Darkness.*



Puzzle Swords (Varies, Montaigne only)

A Hero who takes this Advantage has received one of the infamous Montaigne Puzzle Swords. Begin designing the sword by rolling on the Montaigne Puzzle Sword Chart on page 93. Follow the instructions on the chart, paying HPs when instructed to do so. A Puzzle Sword will cost 2, 5, or 10 HP, depending on its maker. Once you begin rolling, you **must** pay any costs the chart instructs you to; you cannot opt not to roll on the next chart to avoid the HP cost for doing so. Therefore, it is advisable to set aside 10 HP for this Advantage until after you roll.

Social Club Memberships (Varies)

The Hero is a member of one of the many social clubs found in Théah. These are small groups that meet to share a common interest of some sort, or simply to socialize. *The benefits of this Advantage vary depending on which social club the Hero joins. Two of the most influential and interesting Montaigne social clubs are provided below; others will follow in future supplements. The GM should feel free to design his own as well.*

The Venerable Order of Esteemed Gentlemen (3 Points)

The Venerable Order of Esteemed Gentlemen is a group of some of the wealthiest men from across Théah, who meet weekly in Paix. Their meeting house is lavish and the staff caters to their every whim. Without exception, they joined the Order because they were bored with their lives. The main pastime of the members is gambling — on a grand scale. One member, or a group of members, will propose an outrageous endeavor or adventure, then the others all bet on whether or not they can accomplish it. Fortunes are often wagered on seemingly impossible tasks, and rare indeed is the bet for less than 5,000G. While the bet is underway, the other members of the group keep track of the adventuring party's progress as best they can.

A Hero must have a minimum monthly income of 200G or savings in excess of 10,000G to join the Order. Members of the

Order have access to a group of very wealthy men who are willing to bet enormous sums of money on unusual or interesting adventures.

Mode du Lac (3 Points)

Mode du Lac is the fashion dictatorship of Montaigne. Apart from the Empereur and Empress, Mode du Lac and its members determine what everyone will be wearing next season. The members meet weekly in Crieux and discuss the latest fashions over an exquisite brunch.

A Hero must have a minimum Rank of 3 in both his Fashion Knack and his Panache Trait, as well as a minimum monthly income of 100G or savings of at least 5,000G, in order to join Mode du Lac. Members of Mode du Lac have advance knowledge of the latest fashions, and always receive two Free Raises when using their Fashion Knack.

New Equipment

The Montaigne army has created several new weapons to aid in its conquest of Castille. These include the grenade, the horse cannon, and the bayonet.

Grenades

First developed for use by the Montaigne army last year, grenades have proven nearly as deadly to their own men as the Castillians. They consist of a wrought-iron shell filled with gunpowder, and a piece of cannon fuse to light them with. When the fuse is lit, it burns down to the gunpowder, which explodes, shattering the iron shell into pieces of shrapnel. Grenadiers, who are normally conscripted peasants, last an average of 2.7 battles.

As stated in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook, grenades are a Rank 4 explosion (see the *Game Masters' Guide*, page 174) and the shrapnel causes Heroes who fail their Wound Checks to take one Dramatic Wound, plus one more for

every 5 by which they failed the check. It takes one Action to light the fuse, and another Action to throw the grenade.

Unfortunately, quality control on cannon fuse is rather poor. Some take a long time to burn, while some burn almost instantly. When the Hero lights the fuse of a grenade, have him roll a die. The number rolled is the number of Phases before the grenade goes off. If it's a 0, the grenade goes off immediately. Grenades always go off in a Phase before anything else happens, and a person holding or lying on a grenade gets no chance to avoid the explosion (though in the latter case, only the person lying on the grenade is injured).

Horse Cannon

As mentioned in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook, cannons can be incredibly deadly. However, they are bulky and difficult to aim. The Montaigne have attempted to address this weakness by hitching some of their smaller cannons to teams of horses. The horses must be unhitched before the cannon is fired, but the procedure is still much faster than pushing the enormous weapon around.

Horse cannons deal 6k5 damage if they hit a Hero. If he fails his Wound Check, he suffers one Dramatic Wound, plus one more for every 5 by which he failed the check.

It takes 30 Actions to reload a horse cannon, but up to three people can contribute Actions toward loading it. It takes two Actions to hitch or unhitch the cannon from the team of four horses used to pull it. When unhitched (or all the time, for normal cannons), the cannon may swivel up to 45 degrees or move up to 1 $\leq$ on the Action Map per Action spent. However, when a horse cannon is hitched up, it can move as far as 6 $\leq$ and swivel in any direction at the same time.

Horse cannons have a Range of 200', a Short Range modifier of +10, and a Long Range modifier of +20.

Bayonets

A typical Théan bayonet is simply a long knife blade with a rounded handle designed to fit inside the barrel of a musket. When it is mounted in place, the musket can be used as a polearm (3k2 Heavy Weapon, but uses the Polearm Skill). It takes one Action to either mount or to unmount a plug bayonet. A musket fired with a mounted plug bayonet will explode, inflicting two dice of damage to its wielder.

Montaigne has recently developed the attached bayonet, which clips to the side of the musket barrel and does not prevent the weapon from firing.

Courtly Intrigue

One of the primary activities of the Montaigne nobility is courtly intrigue. Their brand of intrigue is different from Vodacce intrigue, being more emotionally brutal and less physically dangerous. Here are some rules for GMs who want to use court machinations in their campaigns.

The Intrigue Sheet

On pages 116-117, you will find *The Montaigne Courtly Intrigue Sheet*. This sheet is a way to keep track of the Heroes' connections at court, as well as their current standing with each of these connections.

Parts of the Sheet

The Intrigue Sheet is divided into four parts: Connections, Favors & Blackmail, Useful Skills, and Gossip.

Connections

The Connections section is the heart of the Intrigue Sheet. It allows you to map out visually your Hero's relationships at court. Your Hero's name goes in the center, and as he

meets people at court, their names are written in the boxes surrounding his name. To the right of a connection's name are three boxes. From top to bottom they are: Like, Usefulness, and Dislike. These indicate how much the person likes or dislikes the Hero, as well as how useful or intimidating the Hero has been in the past. NPCs may dislike the Hero intensely, but if he has been particularly useful or frightening to them in the past, they will not strike out at him.

When an NPC introduces the Hero to another person at court, that person branches off of the NPC who introduced them. Events that affect the Hero's relationship with the original NPC will also affect this new relationship, although to a lesser degree.

Favors & Blackmail

The Favors & Blackmail section allows the Hero to remember whom he has performed favors for in the past,

so that he can call in those favors when he needs them. Favors the Hero has performed for others should be recorded in the *Given* column. Likewise, when other courtiers perform favors for the Hero, he might want to remember them so that he can someday repay them. Favors performed by an NPC for the Hero are recorded in the *Received* column. Blackmail is handled in a similar manner, but should be noted with a [B], since it has a slightly different game mechanic.

Useful Skills

The Useful Skills section of the Intrigue Sheet allows the player to copy over the Skills that will see frequent use at court. That way, they can be easily referenced without shuffling papers.



Gossip

The Gossip section can be used as a space for the player to take notes. Information such as lies told and secrets known are helpful to jot down here for easy reference. That way a skilled courtier Hero won't get caught in a lie because his player couldn't remember what he said during a session two months ago, even though only a single day has passed in game time.

Courtly Actions

A variety of actions are available to Heroes that may improve their standing at court. GMs should feel free to add to this list. Reputation dice may be spent toward any Courtly Action. However, no more dice than the Hero's Rank in Panache may be spent at any one time.

Fashion Bonuses

When a Hero arrives at court, he may roll Wits + Fashion. For every 10 full points rolled, the Hero receives one extra Reputation die to use while at court.

Make a New Connection

When a Hero is new at court, or does not wish to call in a favor for an introduction, he must rely on his own wit to make the new acquaintance. This isn't an easy thing to do, since most courtiers prefer to meet new people through people they already know. The Hero must make a Wits + Socializing roll against a TN of 30 in order to impress the new connection. The Hero may choose to roll Wits + Etiquette or Politics instead against a TN of 35. Success at this roll (whatever Knack is used) grants the Hero a connection with a Like 1, Usefulness 0, and Dislike 0. For every Raise made on the roll, 1 additional point is added to Like. If the roll fails, the connection becomes an enemy, as described under *Making Enemies*, below.

Grant a Favor

If a Hero is approached by a connection and asked for a favor, he can improve his relation with the courtier by agreeing. After successfully completing the favor, add anywhere from one to three points to the connection's Like

for the Hero (the GM decides exactly how much) and write down the favor in the *Given* column of the Favors & Blackmail section, including the points of Like awarded for the favor.

Favor Point Costs

A 1-point favor is a small thing, such as an introduction. A 2-point favor is a larger thing with no risk involved, such as finding out a piece of information for the Hero. A 3-point favor involves risk, such as passing the Hero damaging information about a dangerous rival.

Ask for a Favor

A Hero may ask one of his connections to perform a favor for him. The GM rates the favor from 1 – 3 points, as above. Then, the Hero must either erase a favor that he has performed for the connection that is of equal or greater value, or he must depend on their charity, in which case the connection's Like of the Hero will drop a number of points equal to the cost of the favor. If this would drop their Like below 0, the favor is refused. The Hero can use a small favor he's done for the connection as "partial payment" on a larger favor, and make up the difference by sacrificing Like.

Ask for an Introduction

An introduction is a 1-point favor, and only connections with a Dislike 0 will agree to introduce the Hero in the first place. Assuming that the connection knows the NPC to whom the Hero wishes to be introduced, all will go as planned, and the Hero will receive a new connection with Like equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ the introducing connection's Like (rounded down), Usefulness 0, and Dislike 0. However, this new connection branches off the person who introduced the Hero to him, and is subject to the *Ripple Effect* (see below).

Ferret Out a Secret

The Hero can use a connection at court to attempt to gain information about another person. This requires a Wits + Gossip roll against a TN of 15, modified by the following table:

Target's Reputation over 25	+5
Target's Reputation over 50	+5 more (10 total)
Target's Reputation over 75	+5 more (15 total)
Target's Reputation over 100	+10 more (25 total)
Connection considers target to be dangerous	+5
Hero lowers Connection's Like of him by 1	-5
Hero cashes in favor owed to him by Connection	-5 per point of Favor
Connection's power at court	-5 to +5 (GM's discretion)

Blackmail a Connection

Once a Hero has a suitably damaging piece of information about one of his connections, he can attempt to blackmail him. The GM should decide how damaging the information is on a scale of 1 to 9 (9 being most damaging, such as proof that the connection is planning to overthrow the Empereur). Then the Hero approaches the connection with the blackmail. The connection's Like of the Hero immediately drops to 0, Dislike goes up by 1, and the Hero's Usefulness becomes the blackmail's rating. In the above instance, it would jump up to a 9. From now on, whenever the Hero calls in a favor, the connection's Dislike is increased by the point cost of the favor. When a favor would make their Dislike of the Hero exceeds his Usefulness, the connection refuses the favor and becomes an enemy (See *Making Enemies*, below).

Borrow or Extort Money

Borrowing money is considered a 1-point favor for every 1,000G (170 sols) borrowed. For every month the loan is allowed to sit, the connection's Like of the Hero drops by 1. When it reaches 0, he demands repayment of the loan. Failure to do so immediately raises the connection's Dislike by 1. Extorting money, on the other hand, can only be done when a Hero is blackmailing a connection, in which case it acts like a favor, as above, but repayment is not expected.

Mooching Money

Mooching money is substantially different from borrowing it. This is an imposition rather than a favor. The Hero rolls Wits + Mooching, and receives a number of Guilders from his connection equal to his roll divided by two (rounded down). Every time he uses this ability more than once in a month on the same connection, his Like is lowered by 1. He cannot use this ability on a connection whose Like is lower than 1.

Ridicule a Courtier

In order to impress others at court, it is common to ridicule or embarrass other courtiers. This can be dangerous, but if successful, it's one of the fastest ways to gain Reputation at court. To ridicule a courtier, the Hero makes a contested roll of Wits + Oratory or Acting or Incitation against the target's Wits + Oratory or Acting or Incitation.

If the roll succeeds, the Hero's Reputation goes up by the target's Reputation divided by 10 (rounding down), the target's Reputation drops by the Hero's Reputation divided by 10 (rounding down), and the target's Like of the Hero goes down by 1. If this takes it below 0, then the target's Dislike goes up by 1 instead.

On the other hand, if the roll fails, the Hero's Reputation goes *down* by the target's Reputation divided by 10 (rounding down), the target's Reputation *goes up* by the Hero's Reputation divided by 10 (rounding down), and the target's Like of the Hero goes down by 1. If this takes it below 0, then the target's Dislike goes up by 1 instead.

Assassinate a Courtier

Should evidence be produced that a Hero has been responsible for the death of a courtier, either directly or indirectly (such as hiring an assassin), it affects every connection he has. Their Like goes down by the victim's Reputation divided by 20 (rounding up); if this brings it below 0, the excess is added to Dislike. In addition, the victim's Reputation divided by 20 (rounding up) is added to the Hero's Usefulness to them.

Host Ball

A safe way to gain reputation and connections is to host a party or ball of some sort. Of course, this is an expensive proposition. For every 250G spent on the ball, roll once on the chart below:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Lose 2 Reputation due to a problem at the party. |
| 2-3 | Gain 1 Reputation Point. |
| 4-6 | A 1-point favor with an existing connection who attended the party. Gain 1 Reputation Point. |
| 7-8 | Add 1 to the Like of an existing connection who attended the party. Gain 1 Reputation Point. |
| 9 | A connection with a 1 Like, 0 Usefulness, and 0 Dislike that branches off an existing connection who attended the party. Gain 1 Reputation Point. |
| 0 | A new connection with a 1 Like, 0 Usefulness, and 0 Dislike. Gain 1 Reputation Point. |

Giving Gifts

The Hero may give a gift to one of his connections in order to improve relations. In Montaigne, the value of the gift is less important than its giver's emotional attachment to it and its appropriateness to the recipient. Giving a diamond ring to a lovely lady is nice, but giving her your grandmother's wedding ring is a true gift. The connection should receive from 1-4 Like depending on how well-chosen the GM feels the gift is. If the connection has Dislike points, the bonus should be subtracted from these before any of them are added to Like. For example, a connection with Like 0 and Dislike 2 who receives a 4-point gift becomes a connection with Like 2 and Dislike 0.

Other Ways of Placating Connections

In addition to the above methods of smoothing things over with a disgruntled connection, the Hero can invite him to a pleasant social situation, apologize for whatever slight he has given him, or do anything else he can think of that the GM agrees would reasonably improve relations. These things should usually add between 1-3 Like to the connection, or reduce Dislike a similar amount.

Other Ways of Angering Connections

In addition to the above methods of angering connections, the Hero can insult them publicly, fail to follow through on a favor they've promised to do, or even humiliate them accidentally in front of an important person. These things should usually subtract between 1-3 Like from the connection, and if this brings Like below 0, the excess should be added to Dislike. The GM should also watch to see if this makes the connection into an enemy at court (see *Making Enemies*, below).



The Ripple Effect

When a connection knows the Hero through another connection (i.e., the connection is not branched directly off the Hero) actions which affect his friends also affect him. When a Like, Dislike, or Usefulness bonus or penalty is applied to a connection in a “chain” of connections, it also affects the rest of the chain, to a lesser degree. Reduce the penalty or bonus by 1 and apply it to all adjacent connections, then repeat until the modifier is either reduced to 0 or has trickled through the entire chain.

Making Enemies

Connections whose Dislike for the Hero becomes higher than the Hero’s Usefulness to them will cease to be helpful to the Hero. They can no longer be placated (they ignore all Like bonuses) and should be circled to show this. In addition, they begin to plot the Hero’s downfall (the GM should treat them as a Nemesis which the Hero receives no bonus XP for confronting).

The Effect of Languages

When far from home, courtiers are usually ecstatic to hear their native language or to run into a fellow countryman. When addressing a connection who is visiting a foreign court, the Hero gains one Free Raise to any Courtly Actions which result in Like bonuses if he speaks to him in his native language. He gains an additional Free Raise if he can show he is from the connection’s home country.

Night Trained Advantage (available for 4 Points; see *New Advantages*).

Reputation Actions

Some Reputation Actions are particularly appropriate for use in Montaigne, and are listed here. These Reputation Actions may be performed anywhere, however.

Sponsoring Artisans

Sponsoring a talented and famous artist increases the Hero’s Reputation as the artist’s star rises. This costs (50 times the Artist’s highest Artist Knack) guilders a month, and is worth a number of Reputation Points equal to the Reputation Rank of the artist. However, because of changing trends, a given artist will produce this benefit only three times.

Joining Social Clubs

Gaining admission to a Social Club after Hero creation (through good roleplaying, the GM’s permission, and possibly several XP) is good for a one-time award of Reputation Points equal to the HP cost of membership in the Social Club.

Fighting in Darkness

There are two low-light conditions in *7th Sea* that characters might have to deal with: Dim Lighting and Total Darkness. Characters lose 2 Kept dice from all Actions taken in Dim Lighting that involve the senses or movement of some sort (e.g. searching for a secret passage, swinging a sword at an enemy). This penalty increases to 4 Kept dice in Total Darkness. These penalties are halved if the character has the



Puzzle Swords Chart

If a Montaigne Hero possesses a Puzzle Sword, roll on the following charts to determine its exact nature. Cost in Hero points should be determined as you progress along the charts.

Heroes from the western provinces (Verre, Toille, Martise, Rachetisse, Rogné, and La Motte) subtract 1 from all rolls on the Puzzle Sword Charts. Heroes from the northern provinces (Doré, Crieux, Aur, and Arrent) add 1 from all rolls on the Puzzle Sword Charts. Heroes from the southern provinces (Sices, Charouse, Pourisse Gloyure, and Surlign) do not modify their rolls.

Roll Result

- 0-5** Roll on the Renard Puzzle Swords Chart. Pay 2 HP.
6-11 Roll on the Loup Puzzle Swords Chart. Pay 2 HP.

General Rules for Puzzle Swords

Many Puzzle Swords have hidden switches, buttons, etc. These switches are subject to the following rules:

- It takes a Wits Check against a TN 30 to discover them unless the user is familiar with the switch already.
- It takes no Actions to push a button, release a catch, etc., assuming that the person doing so is holding the sword in his hand.

Many Puzzle Swords have detachable parts such as darts, oil reservoirs, etc. The removal or emptying of these things throws off the delicate balance of the sword. When a Puzzle Sword is off-balance, its wielder is at a penalty of one Kept die (-1k1) to all Attack Rolls and Active Defenses made with the sword.

Uncommon Swords Chart

Roll Result

- 0-5** Roll on the Créer Puzzle Swords Chart.
6-11 Roll on the Détruire Puzzle Swords Chart.

Renard Puzzle Swords

0: Garotte Hilt The sword hilt conceals a garotte. With a successful attack from the rear, the victim cannot make a sound and begins to suffocate (use the Drowning rules, *Game Masters' Guide*, page 174). The victim is considered to be Grappled (as in the Wrestling Knack) and can attempt to break free normally.

1: Solid Grip The sword's well-crafted grip allows its wielder to make tricky feints. Add 5 to the TN of anyone Actively Defending against an attack from this sword.

2: Disguised Sheath The sword appears to be a cane or a walking stick when sheathed. Add two Free Raises to all rolls to Conceal it.

3: Well Balanced The sword's balance is so good that it increases the Attack Rolls of anyone wielding it by 1 (e.g., raising a 19 to a 20).

4: Blade Catcher The details on the hilt of the sword catch incoming attacks. The sword increases its wielder's Active Defense by 2 when used to Parry (e.g., raising a 19 to a 21).

5-6: Roll again on this chart. Ignore further 5-6 results. Then spend 3 HP and roll on the Uncommon Swords chart.

7: Long Reach The wielder always adds +5 to his Initiative Total.

8: Locksmith's Hilt The hilt of the sword conceals a hidden set of lockpicks (Wits Check against TN 40 to find them). These lockpicks are of such high quality that they give the user a Free Raise when using his Lockpicking Knack.

9: Secret Compartment The pommel of the sword has a tiny secret compartment concealed in it. Messages, jewels, and other small but useful objects may be completely concealed inside this compartment, which can be found only by rolling a Wits Check against a TN of 40.

10: Rustproof The sword is immune to the effects of age and weather. It does not rust, tarnish, or otherwise corrode.

11: Locking Sheath There is a catch on the sheath that holds the sword firmly in place unless a hidden latch is released. It cannot be pulled free with less than a Brawn of 6, which breaks the sheath as the sword is forced loose.

Loup Puzzle Swords

0: Serrated Blade The sword's blade is designed to make ragged, painful cuts. When its wielder successfully makes a Raise on his TN to hit, the resulting Damage Roll is increased by 2 (e.g., 18 becomes 20) for each Raise (in addition to the normal extra unkept die of damage).

1: Flambergé Blade When making Damage Rolls for wounds inflicted with this sword, the wielder may reroll any 1s. He may continue to do so until no 1s remain.

2: Light Sword The sword is extremely light. When making a Riposte, you receive one Free Raise to your Attack Roll (assuming your Active Defense is successful).

3: Unbreakable The sword cannot be broken and always straightens when bent to any angle.

4: Barbed Guard The sword's guard is decorated with filigree designed to catch on blades, and gives one Free Raise to its wielder's Disarm attempts.

5–6: Roll again on this chart. Ignore further 5–6 results. Then spend 3 HP and roll on the Uncommon Swords chart.

7: Keen Blade The sword's edge is so sharp that it increases the Damage Rolls of anyone wielding it by 1 (raising a 19 to a 20, for instance).

8: Spiked Guard The sword's guard is decorated with several sharp spikes. Pommel Strikes performed with the sword inflict 2k2 damage instead of 0k2.

9: Never Dull This sword never loses its keen edge. It never needs to be sharpened, cared for, or otherwise maintained, though it may still rust or be broken.

10: Heavy Blade The sword has a particularly weighty blade, and gives two Free Raises to its wielder when using the Beat Knack.

11: Dagger Hilt A dagger blade pops out of the sword's pommel when a hidden catch is pushed. This allows the wielder to use his Attack (Knife) Knack even if his opponent has his sword in a Bind. The dagger blade inflicts 1k2 damage like a normal knife and automatically breaks the Bind the wielder's sword is in upon dealing damage.

Créer Puzzle Swords

0: Smoke Cloud The sword sprays smoke in a 10' radius when a concealed button is pressed, plunging the area into total darkness for 10 Phases (see Fighting in Darkness, pg. 92). The sword contains enough smoke for one use, then must be refilled with a mixture of oil and common herbs (costing 1G) using 5 Actions. When the reservoir is empty, the sword is off-balance (see General Rules for Montaigne Puzzle Swords, pg. 93).

1: Articulated Grip The sword's grip fits the wielder's palm precisely. The wielder may use Action dice to Parry as though they were one Phase lower than they actually are.

2: Lizard's Tail The sword has a false tip that it can "shed." After a successful Parry against the sword's wielder, the tip falls off. The target must then reroll the Parry. If it's successful a second time, the attack is blocked; otherwise the trick succeeds and the attack gets through after all. It takes 5 Actions to reattach the tip properly; without the tip, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93).



3: Coiling Hilt The hilt of this sword springs shut on its wielder's hand one Phase after being picked up unless a hidden catch is released. It takes a 5 Brawn to pry the victim's hand loose once the hilt has sprung shut. The victim must roll under his Resolve on one die or the hand is broken for one month (giving him a penalty of -1 Finesse). The hilt can be opened by pushing the hidden catch.

4: Grasping Hilt The sword's hilt is a form-fitting design that wraps around the wielder's hand. When grasped, it locks into place. This has two benefits. First, the wielder cannot be disarmed of his sword. Secondly, the catch to release the hilt is hidden, which means that users unfamiliar with the sword will find that it traps their hand like a vise.

5-6: Roll again on this chart. Ignore further 5-6 results. Then spend 5 HP and roll on the Maître Swords chart (pg. 96).

7: Adjustable Hilt The hilt of this sword can be shortened or lengthened, for use as either a Fencing (2k2) or a Heavy Weapon (3k2), by spending one Action. Using it as a Heavy Weapon requires both hands, while the Fencing Weapon form requires only one hand.

8: Grappling Hilt The hilt of the sword can be used as a grappling gun. It has 20 feet of strong cord in it, and takes 10 Actions to rewind. If used as a weapon while the cord is unwound, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93).

9: Healing Touch At the touch of a concealed switch, the sword injects a liquid into the wielder that heals him of 15 Flesh Wounds. The formula for this liquid is known to the wielder and costs 5G per dose, but is only effective if injected. Only one dose per day will work on a single person, and the sword's reservoir holds only one dose. Afterwards it must be refilled, which takes 25 Actions. When it is empty, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93).

10: Loyal Hilt A poisoned needle jabs into the base of the holder's thumb one Phase after picking it up unless a hidden latch is released. The poison may be either arsenic or knock-out drops, at the owner's option. Heavy gloves,

gauntlets, or a panzerhand on the wielder's sword hand will defeat this security measure. The poison reservoir must be refilled after each use, but is not large enough to affect the sword's balance.

11: Blade Breaker The blade breaker is a device designed to strike an opponent's blade at a weak spot and shatter it. This is only useful when an opponent has just Parried the puzzle sword. The wielder then depresses a hidden button, and part of the sword's hilt smashes down, attempting to break the other blade. This works similar to the Eisenfaust Journeyman ability, with the sword having a Brawn of 4 for this purpose. Once sprung, a mechanism must be rewound in the sword, requiring 10 Actions, before the ability can be used again. Until then, the weapon is off-balance (see pg. 93).

Détruire Puzzle Swords

0: Pistol Hilt There is a single-shot concealed pistol built into the hilt of the sword, which can be fired by depressing a hidden button. If the button is pressed when the sword has just caused damage to an opponent, the pistol automatically hits, dealing damage as normal (4k3). Otherwise, the wielder needs to make a successful Attack (Firearms) roll with one Raise in order to hit.

1: Firebreather When the sword is swung and a concealed button is pressed, the sword sprays oil from its tip and ignites it with a built-in flint. This results in a two-foot arc of flame extending from the blade's tip. The arc can be avoided by its target with a Finesse + Rolling check against a TN 20 (this does not require spending an Action). Failure results in two dice of fire damage. (Use the rules for being set on fire from the *Game Masters' Guide*, page 200). The sword holds enough oil for one use, and must be refilled afterward, taking 25 Actions. When it is empty, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93).

2: Blinding Spray The sword has a reservoir of liquid that can be sprayed into an opponent's face at the touch of a hidden button. This requires a successful Attack Roll with two Raises. Instead of suffering damage, the victim is

blinded (as if in Total Darkness; see Fighting in Darkness, pg. 92) until the liquid is washed out of their eyes or one hour has passed, whichever comes first. The sword holds only enough liquid for one use, and takes 5 Actions to refill (using water and herbs available for 50c). When the sword's reservoir is empty, it is off-balance (see pg. 93).

3: Dart Hilt The sword can fire a small dart out of its pommel up to 10' when a hidden button is pressed. This requires a successful Attack Roll with three Raises. Deadly poisons or knock-out drops are typically smeared on the dart. If the dart is lost, a skilled Blacksmith (Rank 4+ in the Knack) is required to replace it at a cost of 10G. When the dart is missing, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93). Poison must be reapplied to the dart after each use.

4: Strange Metal The sword is made from metal so light that the wielder may lower one of his Action dice by one Phase *or* add +10 to his Initiative Total during Phase 1.

5–6: Roll again on this chart. Ignore further 5–6 results. Then spend 5 HP and roll on the Maître Swords chart below.

7: Spreading Blade This sword is designed with a powerful spring between two half blades. When a hidden button is pushed, the two halves of the sword are forced apart. This often results in broken ribs and other horrifying wounds to the victim. In *7th Sea* terms, after a successful attack, the Hero may activate this ability to inflict an additional two dice of Wounds to the target (applied separately after the sword wound itself has been taken). However, the sword's TN to be broken is 5 lower, and once it has been sprung, it is useless until 10 Actions have been spent resetting it.

8: Poison Reservoir There is a small watertight compartment inside the sword's hilt. When a certain decoration is twisted on the pommel, it opens up this compartment, allowing whatever is inside to flow out. If the sword is being held tip down when this is done, the liquid will flow down it, coating it liberally. This takes one Action. However, until the end of the Round (or until the first successful attack with the weapon), the liquid will cling to

the blade and seep into any wounds it makes. Typically, deadly poisons or knock-out drops are placed in the reservoir. The sword holds enough poison for one use and must afterward be refilled, taking 25 Actions. When it is empty, the sword is off-balance (see pg. 93).

9: Collapsing Hilt If the sword is drawn from its sheath without pressing a hidden catch, roll a die. That many Phases later, the sword falls apart in the wielder's hands, taking (10–Wits) Actions to reassemble.

10: Tainted Metal When an opponent fails a Wound Check after being struck by this sword, he may only erase a number of his Flesh Wounds equal to his Wound Check roll. For instance, if he had 87 Flesh Wounds and rolled a 42 for his Wound Check, he would suffer 3 Dramatic Wounds (1+2 for failing by more than 40) and still be left with 45 (87–42) Flesh Wounds.

11: Razor Edge For every 10 the sword's wielder Keeps when making Damage Rolls with the sword, it automatically inflicts one Dramatic Wound to its target. The 10s do not explode, nor are they counted toward the Damage Roll total, but neither do they cause existing Flesh Wounds to go away. For instance, if the wielder rolled a 9 and a 10 for damage, the target would suffer one Dramatic Wound, then add 9 Flesh Wounds to his current total and make a Brawn test against the new total.

Maître Puzzle Swords

0–1: The Eager Blade This sword can instantly leap to its owner's hand whenever he wills it, from any distance. Should he ever hand the sword to another person hilt-first, the sword will begin to obey that person's commands. If the owner dies, the first person to touch the sword becomes its new master.

2–3: The Ghostly Blade No one but the sword's owner can pick up this weapon. Everyone else's hands simply pass right through it. While the wielder holds it in his hand, the sword is solid and can be touched by others (and touch them in return) but if he lets go of it, the sword once again resumes its ghostly behavior. Should he ever hand the sword to another person hilt-first, the sword will then allow only that

person to pick it up. If the owner dies, the sword becomes solid, and the first person to touch it becomes its new master.

4–5: The Grasping Blade Once per Act, this sword can cut at great distances. If the wielder can see a person, he can attack him with the sword, no matter how far away he is — the blade disappears into the air and emerges near the target. The target can still use Passive and Active Defenses as usual. Of course, a Surprise Check (with the wielder receiving two Free Raises) is in order if the target was unaware of the wielder.

6–7: The Shimmering Blade Once per Act, this sword may “shimmer.” It begins to waver in the air like a mirage, and until the beginning of the next Round it ignores armor and cover and cannot be Parried (either Actively or Passively).

8–9: The Greedy Blade This sword’s wielder may spend one Action in order to cut open a hole in the air with the sword, and reach in with his other hand. This allows the wielder to act as though he had the Porté Pocket Knack at Rank 3, but objects inside never vanish.

10–11: The Thirsty Blade Once per Act, this sword can draw some of the blood out of an opponent. The wielder declares that he is activating the blade before rolling for damage. He may then double the value of any one Kept damage die. Thus, if one of the dice exploded and rolled a 15, he could use this ability to double its value to 30, in addition to any other dice he was Keeping for damage.



New Mass Combat Rules

Montaigne is currently spearheading the two largest conflicts in Théah: the war against Castille and the disastrous invasion of Ussura. Your Heroes may be involved in either campaign, especially if they are Montaigne. Below are some additional rolls for large-scale combat, including some unique to Montaigne combatants.

Massed Fire

A common technique on the battlefields of Théah is that of Massed Fire. Simply put, a line of men all armed with muskets fire at the same general target – usually another group of men.

In *7th Sea* terms, all of their attacks are combined into one volley, the number of hits is calculated from the size of the volley, and the hits are converted into damage on a target by target basis. This is useful when the GM wants to have the Heroes fired upon by a large group of musketeers or soldiers (think of the scene in the recent *Man in the Iron Mask* movie). This rule should not replace Mass Combat, instead filling in for much smaller conflicts (20–30 men per side).

Combining the Attacks

Each person firing a musket (which requires spending one Action, remember) in the group adds to its size, which is known as the Volley Rating. Each Brute adds 1, each Henchman adds 2, and each Hero or Villain adds 3. In addition, add the Threat Rating of each Brute Squad with 5 or more members.

For Example:

6 Brutes (Threat 2) and a Henchman = 10 ($6 + 2 + 2$)

12 Brutes (Threat 2) and a Villain = 19 ($12 + 4 + 3$)

Determining the Number of Hits

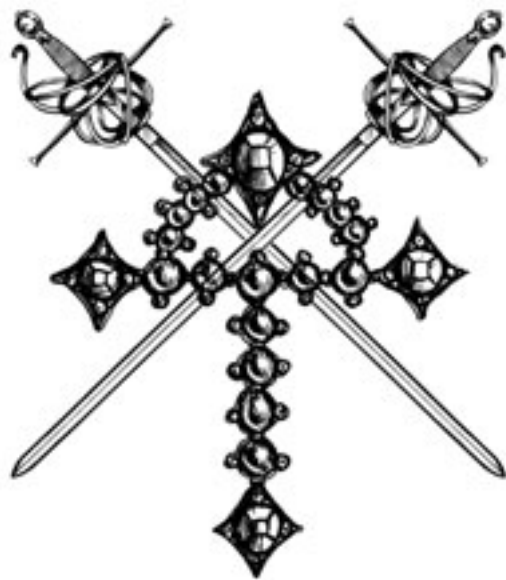
Now divide the Volley Rating by 2 (rounding up) and roll that many dice. Every 8, 9, or 10 is a Hit. Roll another die for each 10.

Converting Hits into Damage

Now divide the Hits out as evenly as possible among the group that was fired upon, randomly distributing any extra Hits. A Hit will kill a Brute automatically, while Henchmen, Heroes, and Villains suffer a number of Flesh Wounds from each Hit according to the chart below. All Flesh Wounds from a single volley are tested against at once.

Target's TN	Flesh Wounds per Hit
5	24
10	21
15	18
20	15
25	12
30	9
35	6
40+	3

Dracheneisen allows its wearer to ignore one Hit from every volley for every Kept die of damage it normally ignores.



Example of Use

Jean-Marie is directing twenty of his musketeers (three Squads of Threat 3 Brutes, with two extra men) to fire upon a group of six Heroes, three of whom have a TN to be hit of 15, two who have a 20, and one who has a 25 and is wearing dracheneisen that ignores one Kept die of damage.

First, the Volley Rating is calculated. 20 is added for the twenty Brutes, 3 for Jean-Marie (who is a Hero), and 9 since there are three Threat 3 Brute Squads with five or more members. This gives us a Volley Rating of 32.

Next, Hits are calculated. The Volley Rating is divided by 2 to determine how many dice are rolled. In this instance, sixteen dice get rolled, resulting in two 8's and three 10's. The 10's are re-rolled, resulting in one more 8. This gives a total of 6 Hits to distribute among the Heroes. Dividing them evenly gives 1 Hit to each Hero.

Lastly, to convert Hits to damage, the chart is consulted. The three TN 15 Heroes each receive 18 Flesh Wounds, the two TN 20 Heroes receive 15 Flesh Wounds apiece, and the TN 25 Hero would receive 12 normally, but his dracheneisen lets him ignore the Hit.

Mass Combat Heroic Actions for Montaigne

These Heroic Actions are particularly appropriate for Montaigne involved in Mass Combat. They should be interspersed with the normal Heroic Actions from the *GM's Guide*.

“Charge Their Line!”

The Hero and 5 Brutes are ordered to charge at a firing line preparing to fire their muskets. In addition to his normal damage from his Personal Results roll, the Hero suffers a Massed Firing attack. The line has a Volley Rating of 36. If the Hero survives the charge without being Knocked Out, he breaks up their line enough to disperse them, and receives 5 Reputation Points. Don't forget to divide the Hits among the 5 Brutes as well as the Hero.

Cavalry Unhorsed

A countryman is knocked off his horse. The Hero may choose to protect him while he remounts, in which case the Hero's Personal Results roll is reduced by 2 for the next two Rounds. Assuming he isn't Knocked Out, the cavalryman regains his steed, and in return defends the Hero, giving a +1 to all his Personal Results rolls for the rest of the battle.

Firing Commander Falls

A Commander in charge of a nearby firing line is killed, leaving the Hero (if he has a Commission of Sergeant or better) in charge of them, as he's the highest ranking officer nearby. By moving himself to Heavily Engaged, the Hero may have his unit fire into the enemy once per Round. Use the Mass Firing rules for the group, penalizing the other General's Wits + Strategy roll by 1 for every two Hits (rounding up) scored the previous Round. The Hero receives Reputation Points equal to the other General's penalty. There are 18 Rank 1 Brutes, which, along with the Hero, gives a Volley Rating of 24. In addition, for every die of damage the Hero takes, one Brute dies. Dracheneisen will not protect the Brutes from dying. When more than 5 Brutes die, the rest will flee, ending this Heroic Action.

Take this Message...

The Hero is commanded to carry a message either to the Reserves or to the Heavily Engaged part of the battle, whichever is further away. He may only move one step closer each Round, and then only if his Personal Results roll is 10 or better. When the message is delivered, add 6 to the next Wits + Strategy roll for that Hero's general, -1 for each Round the Hero took to deliver it, minimum 0. The Hero receives a number of Reputation Points equal to the bonus his General received.

Wounded Porté Mage

The Hero notices a Porté mage fall down nearby. The Hero may choose to defend the fallen mage by reducing his Personal Results roll by 2 for the rest of the battle. Assuming the Hero is still conscious at the end of the fight, the mage rewards him with his share of the loot (an extra roll on the Loot Chart at +3).





Style

Last Goodbyes, Part Four

She was waiting for him next to the portal. For a moment, they simply stared at one another, unsure what to say. Finally, Montegue cleared his throat nervously and bowed to her.

"Good evening, Madam."

Dominique laughed. "Madam'? That's hardly a way to greet your wife, Sir."

Montegue studied her face. Had she always been so beautiful? He hadn't seen her in two months, and then only for a few days before he had had to return to the front. He doubted that he'd spent a month with her since their marriage two years ago. Small wonder that he still acted so formally toward her. "I'm sorry, Dominique. I'm trying, but we still barely know each other."

She placed her hand on her stomach. "That seems like an odd thing to say, my husband..."

Montegue blushed and hurried to change the subject. "How is the child doing?"

"Our son is doing well enough. And I'm feeling much better in the mornings as well, thank you kindly for asking."

"I-I'm sorry, Dominique. I truly didn't mean to be inconsiderate—"

"Hush, you worrywart. You're going to have to learn when I'm serious and when I'm simply having a jest at your expense."

Montegue smiled at her. No matter how well he could read his men by their expressions, his wife remained an utter mystery to him. "I shall make a study of your moods and foibles when I return from Ussura, I promise."

Dominique wrapped her arms around herself and shivered. "There's something wrong about this assignment,

Montegue. I fear that my father has some kind of evil design on you... and our son."

Montegue nodded slowly. "That's what I wanted to speak to you about. I need you to do me a favor."

She smiled. "Of course."

"I want you to keep your ear to the wall. If you can find out why *l'Empereur* is sending me off to Ussura — preferably with some solid evidence — then write me a letter. Once it's in my hand, I'll hurry home. But now, without the evidence I need..."

"...it would be suicide to stay," she finished. "I'm glad you saw that. I'd been worried that you'd try and defy Father."

This time it was Montegue's turn to smile. "Madam, your husband is no fool."

She frowned. "Prove it to me and come back alive."

"If I can. If not, take care of the boy. Keep him out of Léon's hands. There's no telling how his grandfather would twist him given the chance." Montegue took her hand in his and shook it, then changed his mind and kissed it tenderly instead. Dominique pulled him into a hug. "The baby..." he said worriedly.

"He'll be fine. He's a fine strapping man just like his father." Dominique kissed her husband fiercely. "There. Now hurry back so I can make you fall in love with me."

That won't be difficult, he thought. "I've got to go now. The tide is starting to go out in Buché; if I miss the ship I'll have to get a Porté sorcerer to take me, and then I'll be sick as a dog for days. The gateways don't bother me nearly as much, for some reason." Kissing her one last time, he closed his eyes and stepped toward the gateway. Glowing hands reached out and drew him in, there was a flash of light, and then he was gone. Dominique stared at the portal for a moment, then walked away slowly, her hand resting on her stomach.



Player

All for One and One for All

Many Montaigne consider their friends' problems to be their own as well. People of other nationalities tend to hang back more to give their friends the opportunity to deal with their own problems. Not so in Montaigne. They are there for their friends right from the beginning. Moreover, they expect the same treatment from their friends, so misunderstandings and hurt feelings can occur when a Montaigne's companion waits to be invited along to deal with a problem (a custom common in other countries). The Montaigne will feel hurt because his friend did not immediately offer his aid, and his friend will feel hurt because the Montaigne did not trust him enough to ask for it.

In the event of a fight, Montaigne finish their own opponent, then look around to see if anyone wants or needs assistance. A Montaigne who sees a friend about to be killed will rush to his aid, even if the friend doesn't want his help. After all, dealing with hurt feelings is better than burying a good friend. Montaigne are often too proud to ask for help during a fight themselves, but that doesn't mean that they're any less grateful for it. They simply prefer more subtle ways of thanking their rescuer that won't embarrass themselves.

Getting Along with Other Heroes

Since the Montaigne have made so many enemies, Montaigne Heroes are the hardest to work into a campaign. It's difficult, for example, for modern roleplayers to rationalize a Montaigne and a Castillian adventuring together – after all, their countries are at war. It could also be hard to get Montaigne Heroes into the same group as Church Heroes. Don't worry. These problems can be dealt with if you're willing to leave your modern attitudes behind while you roleplay. Théah is a 17th-century game; when one applies a 17th-century outlook to these problems, they become much less burdensome.

The problem of adventuring with Castillian Heroes goes away if you realize that our current perception of war is a new development. The idea of every citizen contributing to the victory of a nation only came about recently. During the 17th century, war was a pastime of kings. It wasn't necessary for a soldier to hate the enemy; he just had to kill them. Battles during this time period were more civilized in an odd sort of way. There were regular cease fires to retrieve bodies from the battlefield and bury them. Soldiers from opposing sides might share a sip of brandy, or exchange pleasantries while waiting for hostilities to resume. Fighting was a service they were performing for their king – nothing personal. In fact, significant personal attachment to the fight, such as might occur if a soldier's best friend were killed in front of him, could be seen as overzealous and dangerous to the men around him. On our world, remnants of this attitude could be found right up through World War I. The fact is, few members of battling nations didn't care about the war except to worry that they might get dragged into the whole mess.

It is not only permissible to play a Montaigne who can get along with Castillian Heroes, it should be unusual to play one who can't. Troubles with the Church can be handled in much the same way. Théah has just witnessed one of the most brutal religious wars in all of history. The War of the Cross knocked the will out of a lot of people to fight over religious differences. It's not that Théans are any less religious now than before the War of the Cross, it's just that this generation has had its fill of fighting to the death over

it. Arguments may arise between Heroes of differing beliefs, and these can be fun in their own way, but it is unlikely that anyone would draw steel and demand satisfaction over a theological debate. They've seen too much blood spilled over similar arguments in the past. At worst, a fist fight might ensue, with the winner buying the loser a drink. Whether this lesson will be handed down to their children remains to be seen.

Finally, when you make a Hero who absolutely hates a given group of people, you should ask yourself – is this trip really necessary? You are restricting the roleplaying choices of your friends, and there are better ways to spend your free time than roleplaying a bigot.

Fighting with Flair

Jacques stood in the church facing his mortal enemy, the Marquis du Tolosa. Around them, a hundred candles were burning. In Jacques' mind, each was a prayer spoken by a starving peasant or a vengeful lady who had been wronged by the Marquis. He vowed silently to himself that it would all end here, one way or another...

If there's one thing Montaigne have and respect, it's style. In order to play such a Hero, you have to do more than simply kill your enemies. You have to humiliate them first. Only when they've realized that they never stood a chance against your skill can the final blow strike home. The Montaigne are Heroes, not butchers.

Jacques lunged forward with his rapier. The Marquis sprang nimbly aside, but it had been a feint, and the blade hissed through the air to his right. Tolosa looked down to see if he had been hit, but Jacques nodded to a nearby candle that he had extinguished

with his blade rather than take the opening. He smiled, "For every mistake you make, I will put out a candle. You will only die after the last one is snuffed out." Looking up at the ninety-nine candles still burning, the Marquis began to laugh at him. Jacques moved forward with his main gauche while the man was distracted – and put out another candle...

Reckless courage is a virtue to the Montaigne. They take stupid chances just to prove a point, or to catch the eye of a lady. This can be anything from scaling a high wall to deliver a love letter, to handicapping themselves during a



sword fight. A Montaigne is never so alive as he is while laughing in death's face.

You cannot be Montaigne and play the pragmatic anti-hero. When you disarm the Villain, you should offer him back his sword, not shoot him in the head with a concealed pistol. This sort of behavior is something you must look upon with contempt. It is the action of a coward who is unsure of his own worth. Instead, go forth and do not fear that you will fail. You are Montaigne – success is in your blood.

The doors to the church swung open as the sun disappeared beneath the horizon, and Monique's breath caught in her throat. Staggering toward her was a bloodied Jacques, wiping his blade on a handkerchief as he approached. Behind him, through the doors, the corpse of the Marquis du Tolosa lay in a puddle of blood, surrounded by a hundred candles, all darkened – each one an answered prayer.

Roleplaying Courtly Manners and Intrigue

The court is a place where witticisms and quips fly fast and furious. The slow-witted find themselves easy prey to the rapier-sharp tongues of the wits and courtiers. In short, it's a tough place for a shy gamer to roleplay in.

Not everyone is capable of hurling insults with the practiced ease of a courtier who has trained all his life to do so. It can be upsetting when your Hero with a Wits of 4 and an Oratory of 3 fails to fend off a ridiculing noble because you couldn't come up with a witty jibe on the spot. In fact, it's downright unfair. Other Heroes don't fall off chandeliers because their players couldn't manage to swing on one themselves; why should you fail at something you've spent points on to be good at?

On the other hand, while miniatures, a bit of description, and some die rolling can represent the action of a fight fairly effectively, rolling dice and telling the GM "I insult the Countess de Winter" is just not that evocative of the intrigues of court. Your GM may ask for more detail than

that from you, and you should be willing to give him something to work with at the very least.

This is when it pays to be prepared. If you are playing a Hero who can ridicule with the best of them, you may need to do a little homework. Happily, it can be painless if you use the right sources. Dumas' work is filled with clever banter, but there are simpler places to look if you're willing to adapt. Try the latest action movie – tough action heroes always have a snappy line ready when they face the villain. Another great source of witty banter is comic books. Granted, you'll have to work a bit harder to weed out the sillier comments, but there are a lot of gems buried in your favorite superhero's latest battle with his nemesis.

After you've found these clever jibes, copy them into a notebook and translate them into banter more appropriate to *7th Sea*. Then keep the notebook at hand when you're playing, and you'll have an easier time coming up with clever remarks.



Game Master

Players should stop reading now. This section of the book contains material that is intended for the GM only. Ignoring this warning will spoil countless surprises for you during the game.

NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the **Hero** chapter that we felt were too sensitive to give to the players.

Empereur Léon Alexandre du Montaigne XIV: Villain



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 6
Resolve: 5
Panache: 2
Reputation: -115
Background: None
Arcana: Hedonistic

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne Accent (South), Noble, Servants (as many as needed)
Courtier: All Knacks at 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4
Hunter: Stealth 3, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 3

Porté (Apprentice): Attunement 3, Bleeding 3, Bring 4, Pocket 3

Rider: Mounting 2, Ride 3

Scholar: History 4, Law 4, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 3, Research 2, Theology 2

L'Empereur has unlimited resources, always has a Usefulness of 9 when added as a connection on a courtly intrigue sheet, and is always surrounded by servants and at least one Brute Squad (TR 4). He is also immune to Sorté.

The Empereur did in fact poison his second wife. He was furious that she couldn't give him a son, and when he saw that the poison had left obvious traces, he was forced to bury her in Montaigne to prevent her family from examining the corpse. However, suspicions had already sprung up.

He also sent Montegue to Ussura to die. He was afraid that the man would try and take his throne from him, so he had him invade an impregnable country.

The Empereur did indeed have his bodyguard kill Cardinal d'Argeneau. He had hated the man from an early age and leapt at the chance to be rid of him.

He is under a curse. He cannot have a male child. His mother's death curse somehow took effect, and he has been raging at her ever since.

Lastly – and this is going to have grave repercussions – the Hierophant didn't get sick and die: the Empereur murdered him in cold blood. Most of the Church knows nothing about this, and even those who do cannot take action against him, because the Empereur has an ace up his sleeve. He has kidnapped the nine archbishops of Montaigne and hidden them away. A new cardinal can't be elected without them, and without a new cardinal, no new Hierophant can be elected. The men cannot simply be replaced, either. Church law requires either proof of their death or a three-year waiting period before a replacement can be appointed. With the state the Church is in, it can't afford to wait three years for new leadership, particularly with the Inquisition running amok.

Empress Morella du Montaigne: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 108
Background: None
Arcana: Focused

Advantages: Vodacce (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Appearance (Above Average), Noble

Artist: Painting 4

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 5, Oratory 2, Politics 4, Scheming 5, Sincerity 4

Rider: Ride 3

Scholar: History 3, Math 2, Occult 4, Philosophy 3, Research 4

Sorte (Master): Arcana 5, Coins 5, Cups 5, Staves 5, Swords 5

Two months ago, Morella confirmed that *l'Empereur* plans to kill her when she awoke to discover a black fate strand attached to her. No Fate Witch apart from her sister has ever lived for longer than six months after the black strand attached itself to her.

However, she has decided to fight Fate for the first time in her life. She has begun preparations for an escape from Montaigne. She has even written a letter to her sister, the most powerful Fate Witch she knows, asking her to manipulate the strands in order to assure the success of her endeavor.

Dominique du Montaigne: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 2
Panache: 3
Reputation: 30
Background: None
Arcana: Altruistic

Advantages: Noble, Servants, Connections, Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Montaigne Accent (South)

Archery: Attack (Bow) 2, Fletcher 1, Horse Archery 1, Snapshot 1

Artist: Singing 2

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 4, Politics 5, Scheming 4, Sincerity 3

Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 1

Scholar: History 3, Math 1, Philosophy 2, Research 1

Dominique has one big secret. When the Fate Witches examined her, they saw that she had no sorcery, but they also saw that her son would be the most powerful sorcerer the world has ever seen. The prophecy made her furious, but only her maid, Anna, knows just how furious. She'd been ignored all her life because of her lack of sorcery, and now her son was going to be a sorcerer-king? Not a chance. Dominique has since found a ritual that will allow her to transfer her unborn son's magic into her, but it must be performed just before the child is born. Anna is willing to help her, but their success is uncertain at best.



Montegue du Montaigne: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 5
Panache: 5
Reputation: 120
Background: None
Arcana: Willful

Advantages: Commission (General), Indomitable Will, Swordsman's Guild, Academy, Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Eisen, Ussuran, Montaigne Accent (South)
Commander: Ambush 5, Artillery 3, Incitation 5, Leadership 4, Logistics 3, Strategy 5, Tactics 4
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 1
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3
Hunter: Stealth 1, Survival 2, Tracking 2
Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 5
Rider: Ride 3
Streetwise: Scrounging 2, Shopping 1, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2
Valroux (Master): Double Parry 5, Feint 5, Tagging 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Montegue is just what he seems — a peasant who rose to power through his own talent. He has tried to be kind to his wife and loyal to the Empereur, but the recent reassignment to Ussura has made him wonder if Léon is trying to have him killed. If he received proof, he would march right back to Montaigne and give l'Empereur the military coup d'état he feared — Montegue doesn't take kindly to people trying to kill him.

Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim: Hero

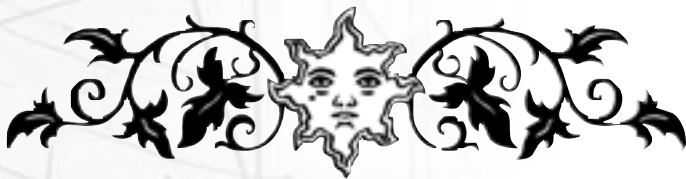


Brawn: 2
Finesse: 1
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: 93
Background: Mistaken Identity
Arcana: Altruistic

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne, Castille, Appearance (Stunning), Faith, Noble
Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Politics 3, Sincerity 4
Performer: Acting 4, Cold Read 3, Dancing 2, Oratory 5, Singing 3
Porté (Apprentice): Attunement 3, Blood 3, Bring 3, Pocket 3
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Occult 3, Philosophy 5, Research 4, Theology 5
Servant: Accounting 2, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 4
Streetwise: Shopping 4, Socializing 4, Street Navigation 3

The Cardinal has some secrets of her own with which to combat the Empereur. First of all, she's a half-blooded Montaigne, which is part of the reason she has come to the area — to find her real father, if he's still alive. All she knows is that he's a Montaigne noble who ought to be pretty old now.

Secondly, she has made a bargain with a dark creature in violation of all her clerical vows. She gained the ability to summon mirror ghosts and ask them three questions a day, and it gained her "reflection." It turns out that the creature meant that literally, since she no longer appears in mirrors. Worse, the creature can appear as her mirror image. This has been helpful once, though. When the Inquisition inspected her for sorcery, she sent the imp in her place, and it was able to fool them. The only problem? The imp was a reflection of her, so it limped with its left leg.



Of course, it might be asked why such a devout woman would deal with such a dark beast. The answer is simple: she was asked to do so by her commander at the time — Gunther Schmidl, the leader of *die Kreuzritter* — as well as the late Hierophant. They needed a spy, and with the knowledge she would gain from the ghosts, she would be ideal. She still retains many connections with *die Kreuzritter*.

Duchess Therese Rois et Reines du Rogné: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 4
Reputation: 59
Background: None
Arcana: Stubborn

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Montaigne Accent (West), Citation, Membership (Musketeers), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Lip Reading 4, Oratory 3, Politics 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 2

Porté (Journeyman): Attunement 4, Bleeding 5, Bring 4, Catch 4, Pocket 4, Walk 4

Valroux (Journeyman): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4

Thérèse is as loyal to the Empereur as she seems. She only has two real secrets. First, she bitterly resents imprisoning her son, but she is so stubborn that she won't forgive him and have him released. Second, she has set in motion a scheme to destroy Lady Jamais Sices du Sices. She hopes to catch the sharp-tongued woman in a vise by tricking her into insulting the Empereur.

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Théan, Castille, Legendary Trait, Montaigne Accent (South), Noble

Lady Jamais Sices du Sices: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 6
Resolve: 2
Panache: 4
Reputation: 98
Background: None
Arcana: Arrogant

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 1, Fashion 2, Gossip 3, Oratory 5

Performer: Acting 3, Cold Read 3, Dancing 2, Oratory 5

Porté (Master): Attunement 5, Bring 5, Bleeding 5, Catch 5, Pocket 5, Walk 5

Rider: Mounting 3, Ride 4

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 2, Research 4

Lady Jamais receives one Free Raise when using the Repartee system. In addition, she receives two Kept dice for every Drama die spent when using the Repartee system. When she augments a Martial Skill using Drama dice, she only receives one Kept die for every two dice spent.

Jamais is a lonely woman. She longs for her history books, and can still be found curled up with discourses on the Old Empire on winter evenings. Truth be told, she hates her life, and is still wracked with guilt over the suicide of the noble she humiliated so many years ago. Lately, as she lies in her bed waiting for sleep, she has contemplated following his example.



Karl Thomas Steiner: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 2
Reputation: 5
Background: None
Arcana: Cowardly

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Eagle Eyes, Small

Commander: Strategy 3, Tactics 4, Ambush 3, Leadership 5, Logistics 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 3, Parry (Polearm) 3, Set Defense 2

Spy: Conceal 4, Hand Signs 3, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 3, Stealth 4

Streetwise: Scrounging 5, Socializing 5, Street Navigation 3

Karl's greatest secret is what really happened that night in the Black Forest — a night he himself doesn't remember. The Schattenmann itself (see *GM's Guide*, page 49) came for the young boy and looked into his eyes. It hissed in pleasure, "No, you I will let go. You will spread a great darkness across the earth someday, I can see." With that, it cut off his ring finger and said, "When your hand is whole once again, the darkness will be born," then left him. Whether the creature's prophecy will prove true still remains to be seen.



Remy du Montaigne: Villain



Brawn: 4
Finesse: 5
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 5
Reputation: -70
Background: Rivalry
Arcana: Hedonistic

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Castillian, Combat Reflexes, Montaigne Accent (South), Puzzle Sword

Aldana (Journeyman): Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4

Ambrogia (Master): Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ambrogia) 5

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Leaping 5, Side-step 5, Sprinting 5, Swinging 5, Throwing 2

Buckler: Parry (Buckler) 5

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 2, Fashion 3, Oratory 2, Seduction 4

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 5, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 4

Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 4

Porté (Master): Attunement 5, Bring 5, Blooding 5, Catch 5, Pocket 5, Walk 5

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Tout Près (Master): Corps-à-corps 4, Double-parry (Fencing/Improvised Weapon) 4, Tagging (Improvised Weapon) 4, Exploit Weakness (Tout Près) 5

Remy has an unlimited income. His Puzzle Sword has Long Reach (+5 to his Initiative Total), Tainted Metal (see pg. 96), and the Thirsty Blade (see pg. 97).

Remy has only one secret that he's really worried about. When the Empereur ordered him to kill Cardinal d'Argeneau, he didn't. He simply cut off the man's finger and pushed him into the river, not wanting to murder the old man — at least, not directly.

Captain Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 5
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 58
Background: Romance
Arcana: Loyal

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Castille, Commission (Captain), Membership (Musketeers), Montaigne Accent (West), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Side-step 4, Sprinting 4, Swinging 5, Throwing 2

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 5, Oratory 4, Politics 3, Sincerity 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5

Riding: Ride 4, Mounting 3, Trick Riding 3

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Jean-Marie's secret is simple enough. He hates the Empereur, but he hasn't the will to break his vows and put himself and his wife in danger by opposing Léon.

Alazais Valoix Praise du Rachetisse III: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 67
Background: None
Arcana: Insightful

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Castille (R/W), Avalon, Keen Senses, Montaigne Accent (South), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3, Swimming 3, Side-step 4

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4, Fashion 5, Gaming 4, Gossip 4, Mooch 5, Oratory 5, Sincerity 5

Captain: Bribery 2, Incitation 4, Logistics 3, Strategy 3, Tactics 3

Criminal: Gambling 5, Quack 1, Shadowing 2, Stealth 4

Performer: Acting 4, Cold Read 5, Dancing 2, Oratory 5, Singing 2, Storytelling 5

Sailor: Balance 4, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Navigation 4, Pilot 4, Rigging 2

Alazais did indeed win his rank in a game of Squares — but there was another clause to the bet, one that no one knows about except him and l'Empereur. He must rid Montaigne waters of piracy by 1670, or his life will be forfeit.



The General: Scoundrel



Brawn: 4
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 5
Panache: 4
Reputation: 67
Background: True Identity
Arcana: Greedy

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Indomitable Will, Noble, Scoundrel, Toughness

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 3, Oratory 4, Politics 3, Sincerity 4

Commander: Ambush 3, Cartography 5, Gunnery 4, Incitation 4, Leadership 4, Logistics 5, Strategy 4, Tactics 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 4

Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 3

The General was once an Eisen nobleman who controlled a small area of land during the War of the Cross. He attempted to talk several of the most powerful nobles into an alliance that would allow them to unite the country. They did not wish to work with one another, preferring instead to use the disharmony to work toward their individual goals. Eventually, the General grew disgusted with their bickering and gave up.

Leaving his land for whomever could conquer it, he buried his suit of dracheneisen in a field and walked away to become a mercenary. He left his name and his honor with his armor, feeling that these three things had only caused him pain and that he would be better off without them.

Pascal Vestanzi: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 2
Panache: 2
Reputation: 48
Background: Defeated
Arcana: None

Advantages: Toughness

Artist: Sculpting 4

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 2, Jab 2

Rider: Ride 4

Scholar: History 2, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 3, Research 4

Streetwise: Scrounging 3, Shopping 4, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 4

When the Empereur saw the statue of his wife, he flew into a rage and had Remy take Pascal to a hidden room in the palace. There, Léon himself placed the artist's hands in a vise and crushed them. Vestanzi's screams were muffled by the walls, but just to be sure, the Empereur cut out his tongue and seared the wound shut with hot pitch. This time, the only signs of Pascal's agony were his convulsions and a thin rattling whimper. His rage exhausted, Léon had Remy dress Pascal in rags and dump him, penniless and forgotten, near a peasant village some fifty miles away.

The poor artist thought he would die from his wounds, but two brothers hauling home a load of firewood found him next to the road and took pity on him. Pascal stayed with the younger brother, Bryce, and the kindly woodcutter's wife nursed him back to health.

When he got his strength back and his hands could once again hold a chisel and work clay, Pascal tried sculpting. As he looked upon the finished fruits of his labor, he wept silent tears. He would never again have the skill he possessed before the Empereur's vice mangled his hands. He was still good, and he paid for his room and board by

sculpting beautiful little statuettes, but Vestanzi had carved his last masterpiece. Thanks to his muteness and illiteracy, he couldn't even tell anyone who had mangled him. As for his last masterpieces, the Empereur smashed his own statue, but when he went to destroy the sculpture of the Imperatrice, she had hidden it where he could not find it.

Jerome: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 2
Resolve: 3
Panache: 2
Reputation: 10
Background: Romance
Arcana: Passionate

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Citation, Montaigne Accent (West)

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Leaping 3, Rolling 2, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3

Hunter: Skinning 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 2

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 3, Parry (Polearm) 3

Streetwise: Scrounging 3, Shopping 2, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2

While it may seem that Jerome's secret was given away in his write-up, his sweetheart's marriage is only a small part of his role to play. The events that follow his return home will be one of the major catalysts of the Montaigne revolution. Without Jerome and his approaching tragedy, the revolution just won't take place.

New Monsters

While not as enchanted as Avalon or dangerous as Eisen, Montaigne's monsters have some unique aspects not found anywhere else in Théah. Decadent nobles attract their own form of evil, and Porté magic creates threats that even the wisest sorcerers cannot predict. The heart of the world still carries a few worms within it... and some of them can bite.

Here is brief description of the monsters that can often be found in the spirit-haunted lands of Montaigne.

Black Wolves

Villain

TN: 20 (see Special Abilities as well)

Brawn: 4

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 3

Wits: 2

Panache: 3

Attack Roll: 5k3 Bite

Damage: 4k2 Bite

Skills: Ambush 5, Footwork 3, Tracking 4

Description: In their assault on Castille, the Montaigne used some questionable tactics. One of these was to send a Porté mage into a Castillian fortress with two or three leashed wolves. They would go mad, and the mage would release them and teleport away. The wolves then provided a distraction while the Montaigne assaulted the fortress. Some of these mages didn't come back, however; soon afterward pony-sized black wolves began appearing in Montaigne and occupied Castille, somehow infected with Porté sorcery. Now, travelers must beware of wolves that appear out of nowhere, leaping for their throats. The wolves don't need Blooded objects like the mages. They simply teleport as needed. They like to appear next to travelers in midleap, or behind them, and they are adept at avoiding missiles hurled or fired at them. Black wolves, unlike their natural brethren, hunt alone.

Special Abilities: Due to their instinctive *Porté* abilities, black wolves add +10 to their roll any time they use their Ambush Knack. In addition, they may spend one Action at any time (ignoring the Interrupt Action rules) to automatically receive a successful Active Defense against any Attack Roll that was not more than 20 times their Defense Knack Rank (e.g., if their Defense Knack is 4, an Attack Roll of up to 80 will be defended against). Lastly, unless an opponent takes some precaution to guard his back, such as backing up against a tree, the black wolf always attacks from the rear.

Echoes

Villain

TN: (5 times Fear Rating)

Resolve: 2

Description: An echo is a half-sentient being created when a person dies by his worst fear. The drowning of a man who deathly feared the water might create an echo, for instance. The spirit lingers in the spot of its creation, reenacting its death on anyone it can lure to its home at night. The death of these innocents seems to strengthen the echo. The one thing that can drive off or destroy it is having a person bravely confront it in spite of its terrifying aspect.

Special Abilities: Echoes have a Fear Rating of anywhere from 1–6. The more victims they’ve killed, the higher the Rating. When facing an echo, an opponent must make a Fear Check each Round, with a penalty of one unkept die for each Dramatic Wound the echo has inflicted upon him. If a Hero’s Cowardly Hubris is activated, he automatically fails this Fear Check. Failure means the victim feels as though he is being murdered in the same way the original victim was killed and suffers an automatic Dramatic Wound. Success means he is free to act normally this Round. Any physical blow against an echo will disperse it for one day. It can only be permanently destroyed by failing a Fear Check of its own (such as through the Courageous Virtue).



Forest Fiends

Brutes

Threat Rating: 3

Usual Weapons: Claws and Teeth (Small)

TN to be Hit: 25 (20 on the ground)

Skills: Climbing 4

Description: The Fiends of the Lockhorn Forest appear to be large, black mammals with a vague resemblance to squirrels, if you ignore their long teeth, thick black claws, and murderous disposition. Because they are so small, most travelers assume they are no threat... until the attack comes. They like to attack their victims *en masse*, then drag the corpses up into the trees to feed upon them. Their territory is marked by skulls and bones, stripped clean by teeth and dropped at the foot of some oak or pine. Forest Fiends have a voracious appetite and groups of them can devour a man in the space of a few minutes. Lockhorn woodsmen sometimes use cows or other livestock to bait them, then shoot the vermin from a distance when they arrive to eat.



The tactic usually works, but the woodsmen always keep a few rounds in reserve... for the one that got away.

Special Abilities: Forest Fiends can go up one Level per Round without spending an Action to do so.

Mirror Ghosts

Villain

Description: Mirror ghosts appear as misty humans with blood-red eyes and bloody stumps where their hands should be. They are always hazy and indistinct, and constantly appear to be in terrible pain. The Montaigne have discovered that if these ghosts pass between two facing mirrors, they become trapped there. The mirrors must remain facing each other for the ghost to stay trapped; if

they are ever moved, it frees the Mirror Ghost within. While trapped, the ghosts are reflected in both mirrors, pounding silently on the glassy surface.

Special Abilities: Porté Knacks will not work near (within the same room as) a mirror ghost. A mirror ghost can only attack characters who have a Hubris, and then only one Hero, once per Round (roll one die to see which Phase the ghost attacks in, but the ghost always attacks first in that Phase). When the ghost attacks, it automatically hits, inflicting one Kept die of damage for each time that Hero's Hubris has been successfully activated this Story. Only running from a mirror ghost (they can only levitate about as fast as a man can jog) or trapping it in two mirrors as described above is effective. They are immune to all normal damage. While a ghost is trapped in mirrors, it cannot attack anyone.

The Montaigne Courtly Intrigue Sheet

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Useful Skills

Example (Wits 2, Acting 3): Acting 5k2

Acting

Etiquette

Fashion

Incitation

Mooch

Oratory

Politics

Socializing

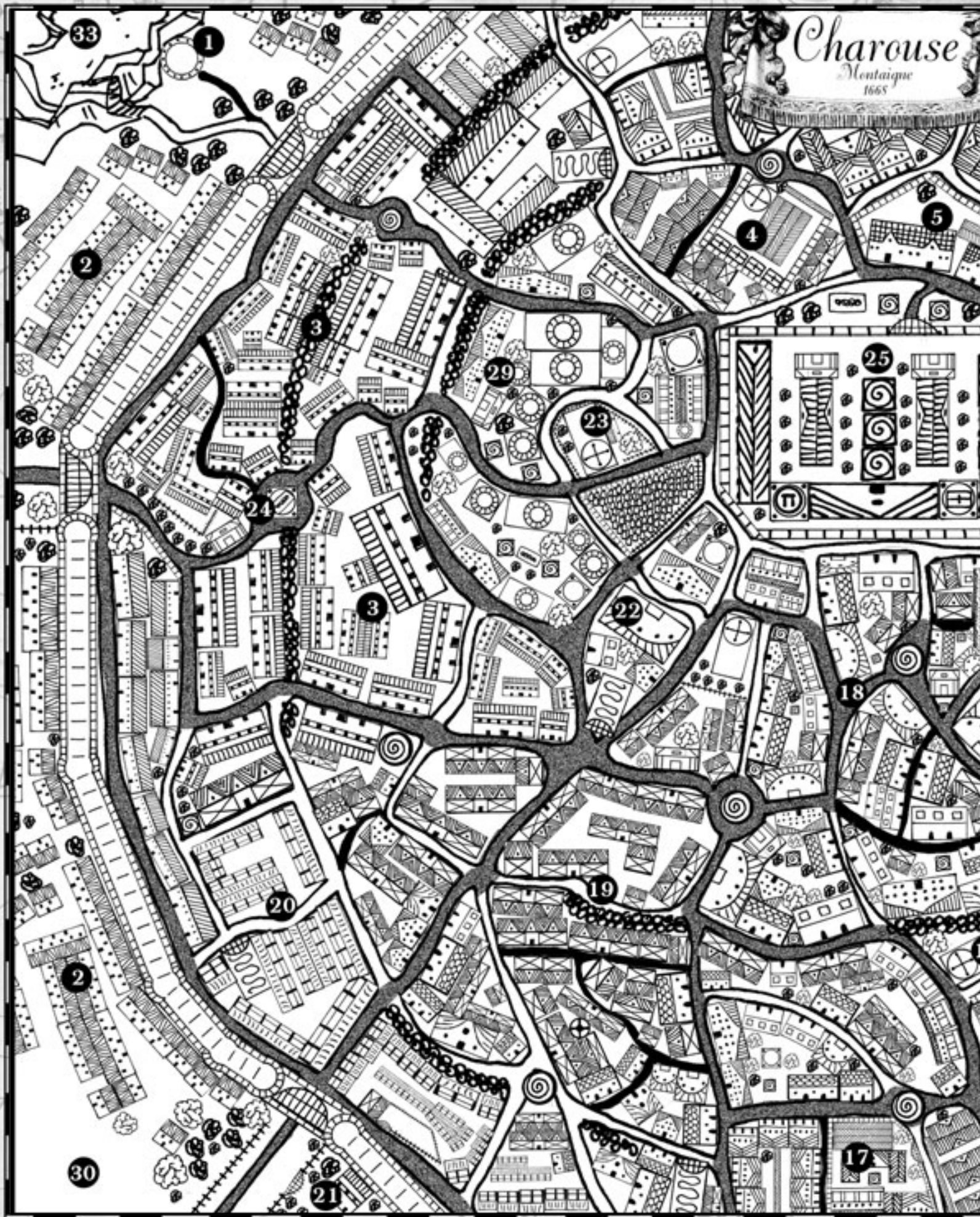
Other

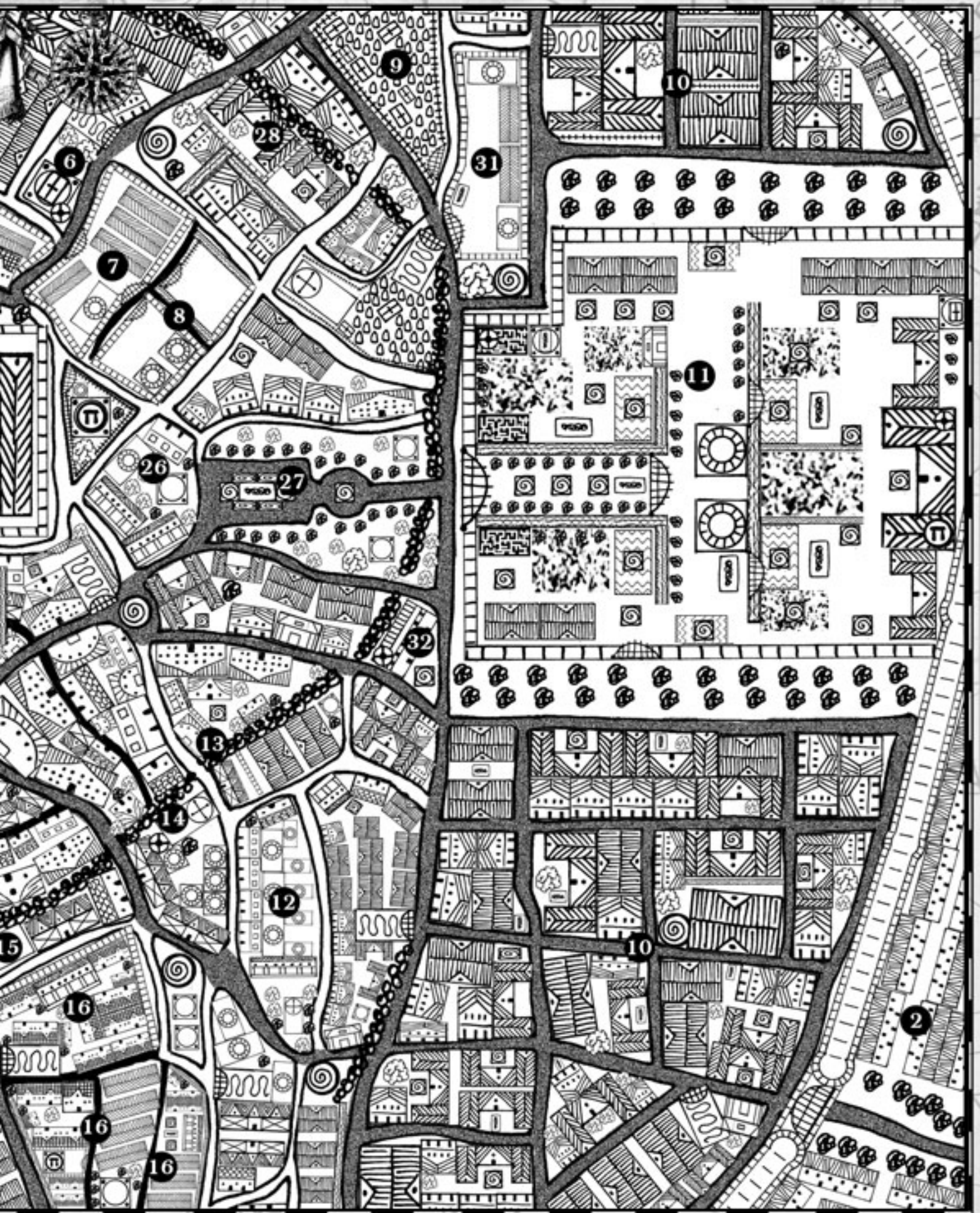
Favors and Blackmail

[illegible]

Gossip

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





Map Locations:

1. Observatory
2. Poor Quarter – peasant village
3. Industrial Quarter – factories
4. Chateau du Theus – hospital
5. Leveque War College
6. The Great Tomb
7. Royal Army Barracks
8. Royal Army Training Grounds, Military Base
9. Noble Cemetery
10. Wealthy Quarter - Noble Estates
11. Chateau du Soleil
12. Office District
13. Acting School
14. Orphanage
15. Royal Asylum
16. Le Grande University
17. Explorer's Society Chapter House – Etienne's House
18. Cultural District
19. Shopping District
20. Marketplace
21. Slaughterhouse
22. Le Grande Opera
23. Lame Enflammee – church
24. Bastion's Monument
25. Palace of the Old King
26. Courthouse and Gallows
27. Plaza of the Empereur
28. Rose and Cross Chapter House – 42nd Street House
29. Government District
30. Livestock Grazing Fields
31. Empereur's Pride – Musketeer Academy
32. Fantome Tapestry Factory
33. Quarry

Charouse

Charouse is a city of leisure and luxury. Fabulously designed and decorated buildings crowd together offering entertainment, fine dining, expensive goods and original art by the most popular new prodigies. The peasantry are kept out of sight – their ramshackle villages huddle outside the city walls. They are employed mainly as factory workers and servants, as there is little agriculture in Charouse. The surrounding fields provide grazing for local cattle, but most of the city's foodstuffs and raw materials are imported from surrounding areas.

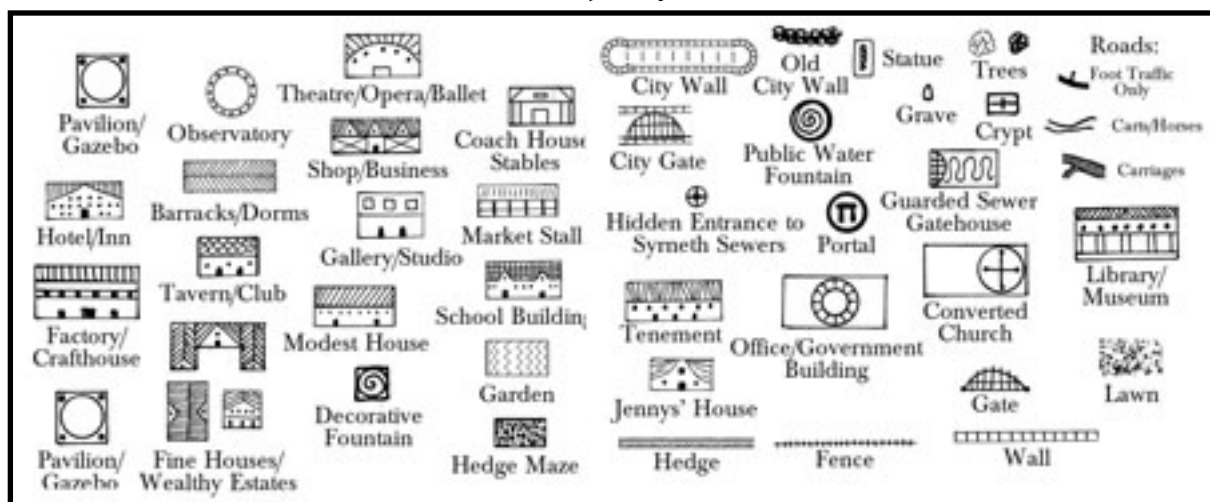
The roads of Charouse are twisted and tangled except for the recently reconstructed eastern region. Many streets are so narrow that they can be navigated only on foot. Others are broad enough to admit horses and small carts. Most main thoroughfares and the newer streets have room for large carriages to pass.

The water system is based on artesian wells, and public fountains are scattered throughout the city, many of them exquisitely designed to be both functional and beautiful.

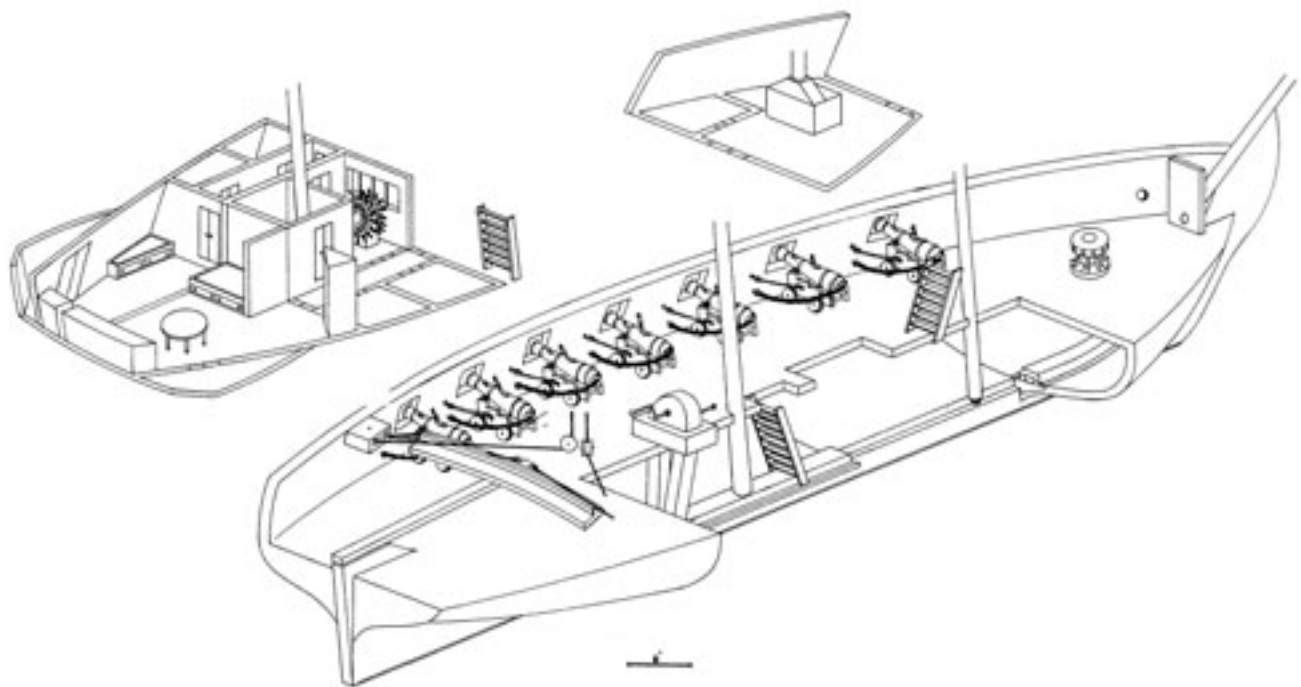
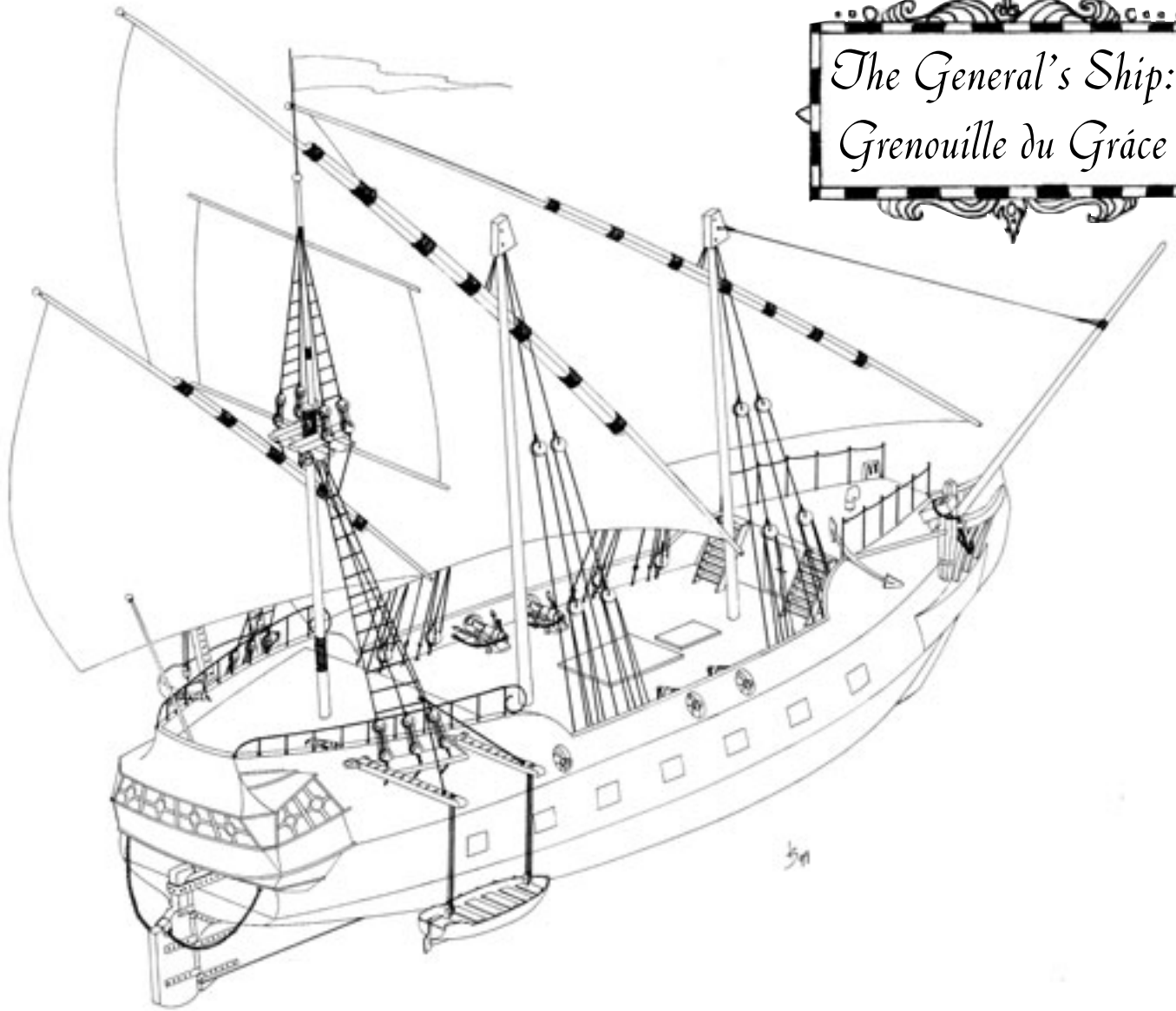
How to Use This Map

The building symbols on the map legend identify each structure as a general type, but details are left up to you. These symbols are not necessarily to scale and do not necessarily reflect the appearance or structure of buildings, but merely signify what type of place it is. Some may even represent a group of buildings, such as a Wealthy Estate, which could include stables and a garden, as well as a large manor.

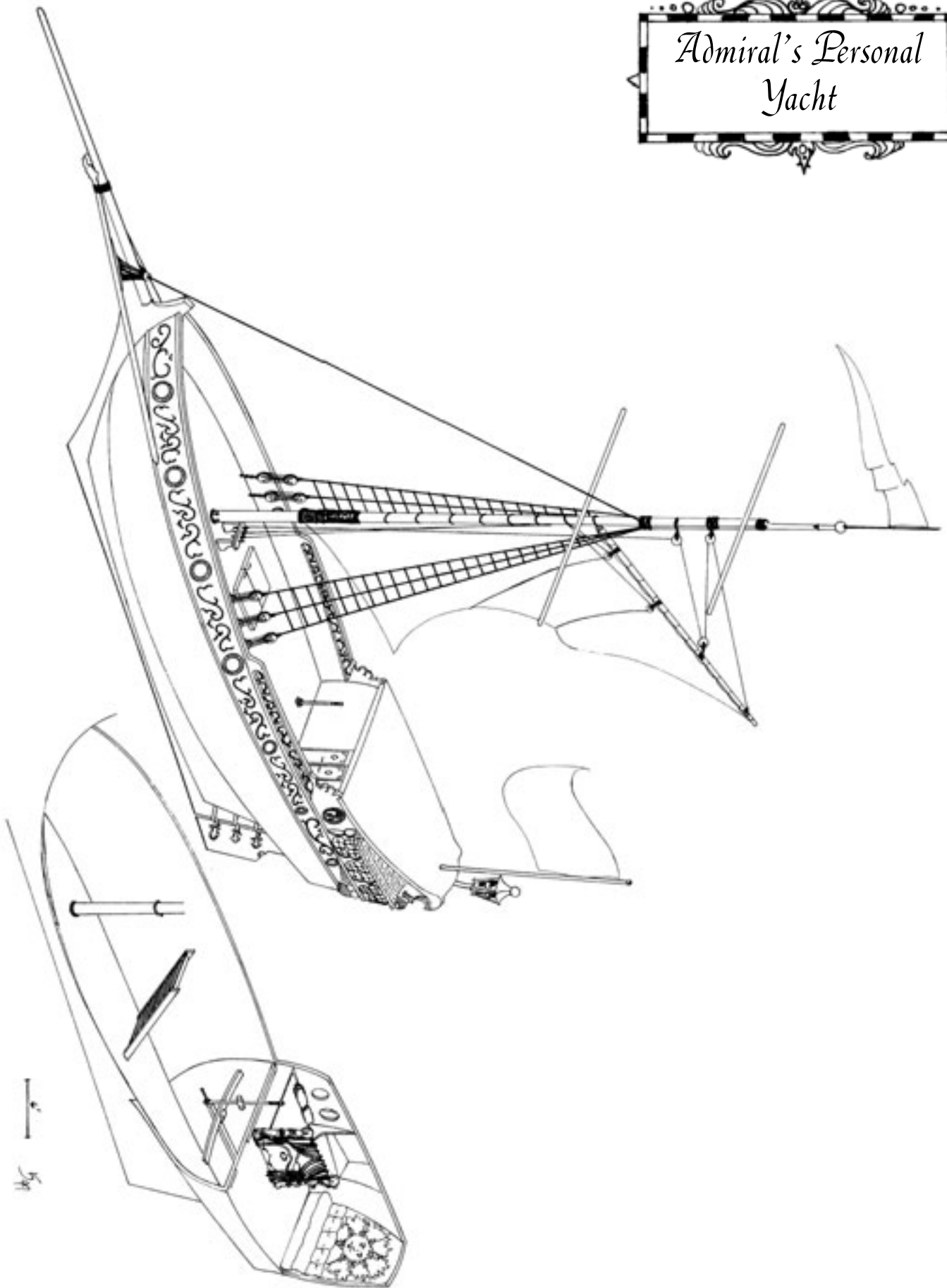
Map Key



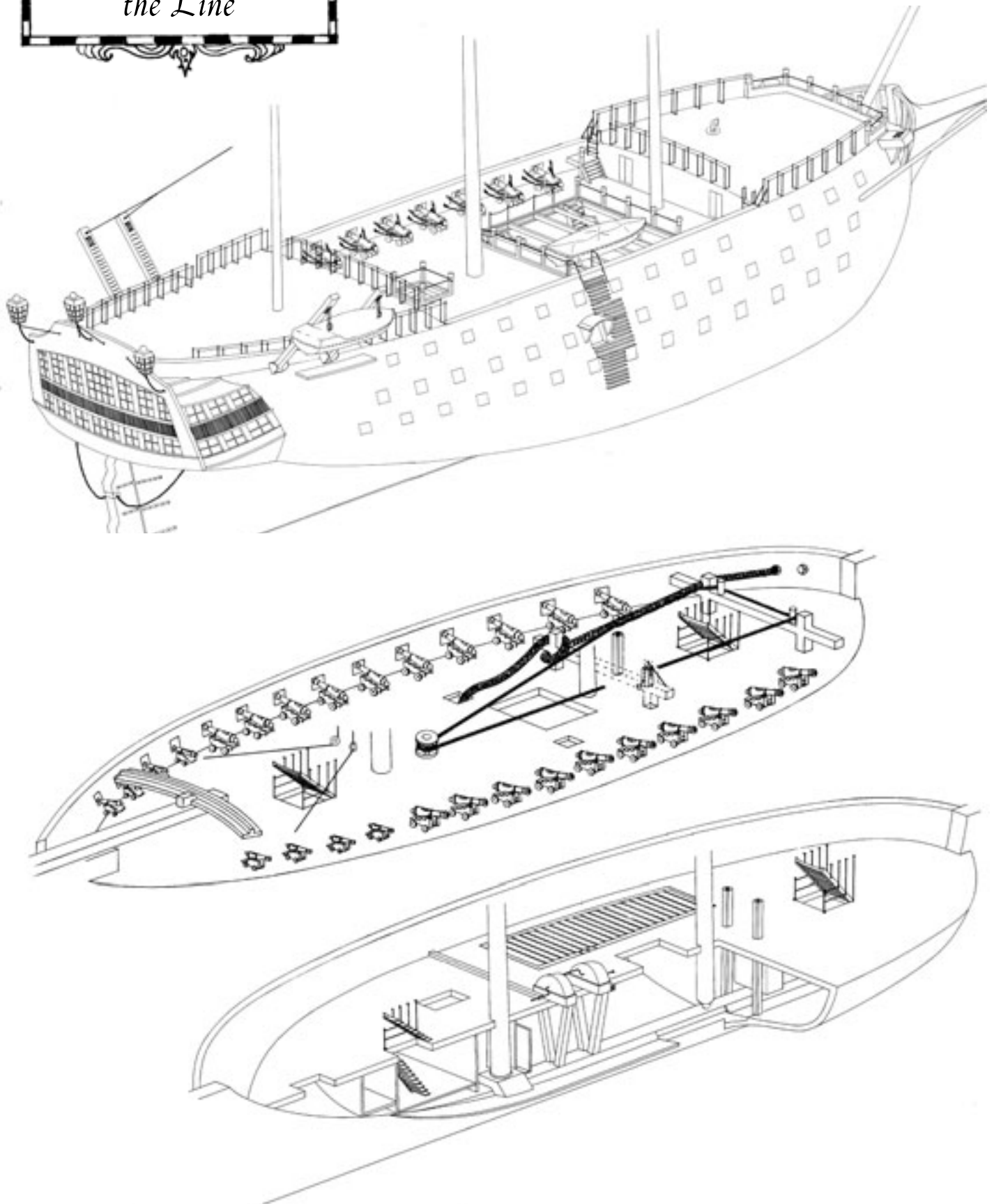
*The General's Ship:
Grenouille du Grâce*



*Admiral's Personal
Yacht*



*Montaigne Ship of
the Line*





Montaigne Musketeer

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	3
Wits	2
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Swordsman's School	(25)
Swordsman's Guild	(0)
Membership: Musketeers	(4)
Montaigne (R/W)	(1)

Background: Ridiculed (1)

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 1

Spy

Shadowing 2, Stealth 1

Streetwise

Socializing 1, Street Navigation 2, Underworld Lore 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1, Swinging 1

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Polearm

Attack (Polearm) 1, Parry (Polearm) 1

Rois et Reines School

Pommel Strike (Firearms) 1

Income: 0G starting / 0G per month, but the Empereur provides your room, board, and equipment

Montaigne Woodsman

Traits

Brawn 3
Finesse 2
Wits 2
Resolve 2
Panache 2

Advantages

Faith (5)
Keen Senses (2)
Toughness (5)
Montaigne (0)
Patron (2)
Any Montaigne Accent (0)

Arcana: Exemplary

Civil Skills

Doctor

Diagnosis 2, First Aid 2, Quack 1

Hunter

Fishing 2, Skinning 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 2, Traps 2, Ambush 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3

Heavy Weapon

Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

Income: 30G starting / 10G per month





Montaigne Spy

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	3
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Close Family Member	(3)
Friend at Court	(2)
Montaigne (R/W)	(1)
Patron	(6)
Any Montaigne Accent	(0)

Arcana: Rash

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Seduction 2

Criminal

Gambling 1, Quack 1, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3, Lockpicking 1, Pickpocket 1, Prestidigitation 1

Spy

Shadowing 3, Stealth 3, Conceal 1, Lip Reading 1, Poison 1, Sincerity 1

Martial Skills

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3

Knife

Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 2

Income: 240G starting / 80G per month

Montaigne Sewer Hunter

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	2
Resolve	3
Panache	2

Advantages

Small	(2)
Toughness	(5)
Montaigne	(0)
Any Montaigne Accent	(0)

Arcana: Proud

Background: Hunted (2)

Civil Skills

Hunter

Fishing 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 2, Traps 3, Ambush 2

Streetwise

Socializing 1, Street Navigation 3, Scrounging 3

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1, Break Fall 1, Leaping 1, Swimming 2

Heavy Weapon

Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

Income: 2G starting / 0G per month, plus one Heavy Weapon (a big plank with nails driven into it)

Note: Starting Income and equipment are from the use of your Scrounging Knack in the sewer



Eisen™

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