

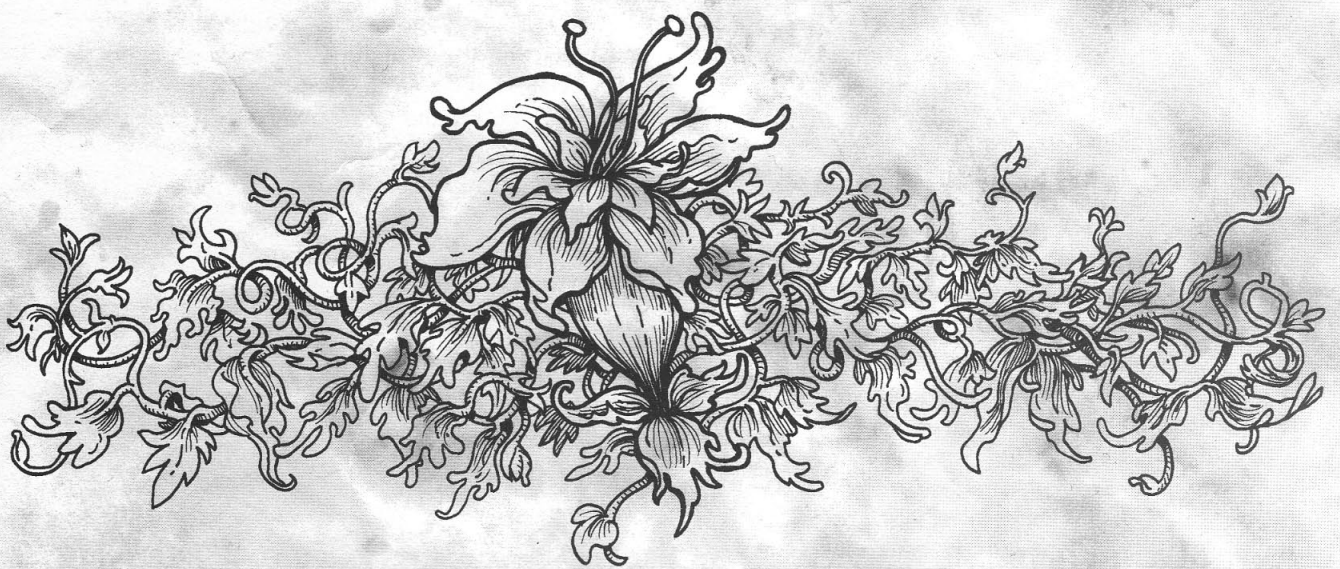
King of Spring



alone

A Drama in the Twilight Realms

Ring of Spring



A Drama in the Twilight Realms

Crédits

AGONE

An epic role-playing game in the Twilight Realms. Adapted from the novels by Mathieu Gaborit

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Best wishes for happiness to Gaël and Emilie; Pierre dedicates this Drama to Elisabeth. The Ogre-Mercenary dedicates this Drama to Anne-Elisa and to Daerel for the inspiration and the bad temper. Special thanks from the translator: all my best to Cécilia and to the Old Serb Club.



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Introduction

Harmundia is composed of numerous Domains, great and small. These Domains are stakes in the struggles for power of the mortals and the Eternals. Some Domains emerge from these fights strengthened, while others, weakened by incessant conflict, collapse.

This scenario recounts such a struggle. Its main characters are the Inspired of your Troupe. In it, they will travel throughout Harmundia in order to save their Domain from a threat linked to the Masque dating back to the War of the Seasons. This scenario in three acts develops a major aspect of AGONE: playing in a Domain. The Inspired will have to use their Offices and the resources of their Domain to overcome many traps set before them.

The appendices contain useful information that can be used throughout the Drama:

- ♣ A description of a new type of Masker, the Sinister Knight, as well as of the main character of this Drama, Sinister Knight Selent.
- ♣ A description of the Monarch of Jonquils, one of the Kings of the Seasons.
- ♣ A brief summary of the visions that will afflict the Inspired who is the bearer of Selent's Flame.
- ♣ Documents to photocopy and hand out to the Inspired at appropriate moments in the Drama.

Synopsis

In the course of this Drama, the Inspired will be tangled in two interwoven plots.

The first one has to do with Perfidy and places them in opposition with an agent of the Masque named Selent. This Sinister Knight is an ancient creature dedicated to fighting the Inspired. He was, a long time ago, himself an Inspired who lost his Flame at the moment of his death. Selent is particularly interested in the one of them that bears his reborn Flame.

The second plot revolves around Adeln, a sprite, and Velius, a morgana. These two seasonlings conspire to resurrect one of the Kings of Spring, the Monarch of the Jonquils — a creature so powerful and corrupted that his return could cause a new War of the Seasons.

THE GAME OF THE DAMNED

The first act of the Drama is under the influence of Spirit.

In the midst of winter, a few days before the Hydratide, the Inspired are invited to the nearby Domain of Melif to lend their aid to its lord. His family is apparently the victim of a deadly curse: each generation, the lord's spouse dies on her thirtieth birthday.

After a short journey, they reach Gloomwind where they are faced with the superstitions and rumors that

consume the inhabitants. Fear and hatred are on the prowl.

Once they have reached Melif Manor, the Inspired are plunged into the history of the Domain, where legends and historical facts are confused. The baron's enemy, his ancestor Selent – a former Inspired who is now undead and Flameless – identifies his Flame in one of the members of the Troupe. Selent's Inspiration was taken from him by the Masque. In return, Selent was allowed to take vengeance on his family for the injustices that he had to undergo in his time. This minion of the Master of the Sham is clever and difficult to catch. Furthermore, the fight is not fair: one of the Inspired is bound to the Sinister Knight because he bears Selent's flame. The Troupe is therefore less protected than they could have imagined; it is threatened from within.

However, through cleverness and perseverance, the Inspired can finally stop Selent's cycle of death. They will fight him with the help of a new ally, a sprite named Adeln. The combat is tremendous; it will make an everlasting impression on the Inspired and will mark the end of an era in their memory. The Sinister Knight then escapes from them. For good? Nay, for this perfidious character is determined to recover his Flame...

THE GAME OF THE SEASONS

The second act is under the influence of Body.

During their stay in the land of the Melifs, the Inspired will meet Adeln. The sprite is seeking a site to plant a corrupted King of Spring, the legendary Monarch of the Jonquils. To do so, he must find a location where he can become familiar with the rulers in order to take control of the Domain. In addition, his fellow traveler – the Morgana Velius – knows that the blood of those who rule the chosen site must be shed in order to consecrate the return of his King. The name of the Inspired has reached his ears. Velius counts on the obligation of the Troupe to Adeln in Act One in order to overthrow them and usurp their Domain.

The Monarch of the Jonquils is growing. Chaos foists itself on the Troupe's Domain. The Sprites and their villainous ally are preparing to take control.

Velius' Machiavellian scheme encounters several difficulties. On the one hand, Adeln, too self-assured, hinted at the return of the Monarch of the Jonquils. Word spread to the seasonlings of Summer and, alerted by their Lady, they have formed a legion to destroy the menace. Chased by this Legion of Summer, the sprites must call upon the Inspired for protection.

The Domain of the Inspired is also home to a Champion of Summer, who knows what the sprites desire and will try to stop them by extreme measures – he will invoke powerful demons to destroy them.

The Inspired are faced with all these protagonists and must react. Once they have discovered the dark nature of the Champion of Summer, no doubt they will try to thwart him. But the Troupe is misled about the true peril.

At this moment, the powerful and numerous Legion of Summer arrives. The members of the Legion demand that the Inspired hand over the Sprites and also that they give them compensation for having sheltered them. Neither negotiations nor delays are tolerated. The Inspired, deluded once again by appearances, will make the wrong choices. They will then be imprisoned, and will have to fight to recover their Domain. In the meantime the sprites will have betrayed them – they have organized a coup and taken control of their lands!

Fortunately, the Sinister Knight, Selent, is counting on retrieving his Flame from the Inspired and so he saves them from Velius' wrath by sending his deceitful accomplice, Daran, who helps them escape. Daran will lead them to his master...

THE GAME OF THE MIGHTY

The third act is the end of the Drama and is under the influence of the Soul.

At this crucial moment in the Drama, the Inspired must find a way to save their Domain and their souls. They are informed that an eminence grise could obtain a Sentence of Janus, the only solution that could compel the sprites to give up their dark wiles. One of these mysterious characters is known to live in Murk, a city in the Mercenary Republic. Once they arrive in Murk, the Inspired must join in the intrigues of the court of the Coronet (the local lord) to identify the eminence grise they had heard about.

In order to meet the eminence grise, they attend a masked ball. Caught up in the many power struggles of the city's nobility, the Inspired realize how much the Dullen facilitate the manipulation of the Master of the Sham's minions. Nevertheless, by the end of the ball, the Troupe obtains the help they sought. But all threats have not yet been wiped out. Daran steals the Edict of Janus. The Troupe must chase him to Melif Manor, where Selent is waiting to recover his Flame.

The Inspired must triumph over the sinister servant of the Masque, then head back to the woods of their Domain, where the Sprites have resuscitated the Monarch of the Jonquils.

But Eminence, we are still far from the end of this Drama...

THE CURTAIN RISES.



Act One: The Game of the Damned

Long before the fall and the endless twilight, it is said that a King came to Harmundia. Some saw him as the most wise of all sprites, others as a being born of the Elder Roots themselves. The fact remains that he was our Lady's favorite.

The earth shuddered eagerly and the flowers presented their most beautiful colors to please him on his arrival. Fruitless efforts, for the love of the Monarch was entirely for the Lady and her creations.

He displayed much valor in the name of his people. He buried the curse of Ortheniax in a tomb of ivy and thus released the satyrs from his yoke. Up to this day, the sylvan abomination still lies there imprisoned.

However, his feats do not reveal the true power of the Monarch of the Jonquils.

Infant of the Earth, he only strove to embellish it. No less than fifteen types of flowers and thirty medicinal plants are attributed to him. For the smile of his Lady, he founded the reign of Spring in the south, and the Crowning of Lilies in the east. Many wonders that enliven Harmundia in our time are his legacy...

Excerpt from the Sylvan Tomes
chapter XXVII,
paragraph 8



he first Act of the Drama deals with an ancient curse and with Selent, the Sinister Knight, who caused the malediction. The Act leads the Inspired to this nemesis. At the same time, the source of the difficulties that will plague their Domain in the following acts appears in the background.

Dramatization

ATMOSPHERE

The key word to describe this Act is "dark". The Domain of Melif is tormented with sorrow and anguish. Whereas most Melifians believe the death of their baroness is ineluctable, the baron shuts his eyes to this.

Fear prevails in the castle for the curse is well known. But who knows what causes it and how? Indeed, many generations of deaths have distorted its memory. The malediction comes as a shadow in the night that takes away the baroness as well as anyone that stands in its way.

As days pass by, the situation worsens: rumors replace facts, and the dread of the people becomes tangible to the extent that it produces desertions and even fits of hysterics and despair. The superstition is pervasive and the Domain is steeped in an atmosphere of barely suppressed panic.

KEY SCENE

The fight against Selent should express the essence of the struggle for Inspiration. Display Selent as an evil and cold-blooded character. Even the shadows of the room fight with those of the Inspired. The outcome of this combat is unsure until Selent's own Flame pushes him to flee.

THE TRUTH

♣ Life and death of an Inspired

The story of the curse is the story of Selent. In order to comprehend it, one must trace the evil to its source, seven hundred years earlier.

Selent was the Prince of Melif, successor to the barony. All agreed that a glorious future lay before him. Loved by all his people, his destiny was to lead the barony to shining glory. Elwyn, Selent's father, contrived to bring to the barony the daughter of a powerful Janrenian lord in order to ensure this ideal future. Her name was Flamen and it was love at first sight. Shortly, they announced their engagement to their families.

Alas, Selent had a brother who was to him what the moon is to the sun. Serwyn had many good qualities

but none made him equal to his Inspired brother, who bore a powerful Flame. Serwyn's jealousy grew, and the announcement of Selent's marriage vow cut him to the heart. From that day on, the brotherly love was transformed into a hatred as cold as winter, and a desire as scorching as summer. But Serwyn was patient and weaved his plan for a long time.

When his father died, he appeared to become a loving brother to his new lord. Selent trusted Serwyn and even gave him the command of the palace guards.

One winter, shortly after the birth of Selent's child, while the Prince was fighting some of the Masque's henchmen, Serwyn decided to take action. The common people of Melif had been protesting to Selent about his indifference to their lot, and to the privations they endured. Selent, in his struggle for Inspiration, had been neglecting his duties and had been using money for foreign purposes. Through insinuations concerning the Prince's secret activities, Serwyn gained the guards' loyalty and took over the palace. Flamen attempted to escape, but, chased by the dogs of the upstart, she fell into a frozen lake and died the day after her thirtieth birthday. The body of the child was never found.

Upon his return, Selent was imprisoned by his former soldiers and by mercenaries in the service of his brother. He was hanged for "demonism".

♣ Among the Dead

The cold of the tomb does not stop those in which burns the flame of revenge. The Masque contacted Selent. A proposal was made and accepted. Selent soon drew himself up amongst the dead as a Sinister Knight in order to punish his brother.

He could not kill him, for that would mean the extinction of the Melif line, and his sense of duty was opposed to that. Thus, he schemed to make Serwyn suffer. Selent surreptitiously made him meet a young woman and resorted to every trick to produce love in their hearts. Soon after the birth of an heir to the barony, on the day of the baroness' thirtieth birthday, he killed her and then revealed himself to his brother. Subsequently Selent revealed the curse he had laid upon the barony: he would kill each baroness with his own hands and damned the descendants of the Melifs to live in fear and misery. Selent has been fulfilling the curse for the last seven hundred years. It is now the turn of the baroness Lucille of Melif to die.

Will the Inspired be able to prevent the fulfillment of the curse once again?



Introduction for the Inspired

WHAT THEY KNOW OF THE SITUATION

The Inspired know Tharon of Melif by reputation. He is, after all, their most powerful neighbor. Most sources depict him as a righteous man devoted to his people and consumed by his love for his wife, Lucille of Melif. It is possible for the Inspired — if they are the “owners” of their Domain or if their social rank is high enough — to have already met the baron Tharon and got on well.

Any Inspired who succeeds in an INT + History and legends roll against DIF 10 will recall the malediction of the Melifs.

Depending on their Offices, the Inspired will have access to the following information:

♣ If one of the Inspired is the head of a spy network, Larcen will be at his service (see insert below).

♣ Any mage endowed with an important Office in the Cipher-sorcerer will have access to a certain amount of information concerning the magic nature of the Domain of Melif. He will thus be aware of the existence of Dancers near Slimfrost Lake as well as the legend concerning it. He will also know some information concerning the Dean of the local School, Merdyniel.

♣ A master-at-arms could evaluate the military capacity of the Domain and be aware of its historic role in the defense of the region against the draaken raids. If the Inspired succeeds in an INT + Strategy roll against DIF 15, he will recognize the danger of that army if the baron ever completely lost his mind.

♣ A caravaneer or a bourgeois will be familiar with certain addresses in Melif such as the Inn of the Polecat's Cry. The economics of the Domain of Melif will make the Inspired grasp the importance of an alliance with the Domain.

♣ A chamberlain could be in contact with certain people of the baron's suite, such as Nan the servant, who could have previously served in the Troupe's Domain.

♣ A lord, a noble or someone from a known family might have met Tharon or his wife during a visit. The Inspired could then have already stayed at the manor once or even be on good terms with the baron and his wife. The Inspired will therefore know that the baroness has just given birth to a child and that her thirtieth birthday is coming soon.

Finally, Inspired who are highly involved in the struggle against the Masque will know that even though Tharon is a Dullen, he is their best ally in the region. He grants his help to any Inspired and even tries to organize them in the border regions. It is possible that he has already contacted the Troupe for this purpose.

A MATTER OF MOTIVATION

In the beginning of winter, as the snow starts piling up on the mountain passes, a pigeon or a messenger

THE BARONY OF MELIF

Located in Tariander Mountains on the frontier between Lyphan and Janrenia, the Barony of Melif is a small Domain that borders the Troupe's Domain. As baron of a border region, Tharon of Melif knows of the reputation of the Inspired and has already done business with them, even if it has only been through messengers.

Geography

The size of the barony has decreased since the time when Selent was still alive, and succeeding barons have sunk into a melancholic muteness. They have neglected the growth of the Domain and the defense of its borders.

Melif is characterized by narrow valleys and high mountains. Most watercourses here are mountain streams and many villages are built along mountain lakes. The days are shortened because of the near omnipresent fog in autumn and in springtime.

The main city, Gloomwind, is an important village built on the banks of a raging river, the Vivavoce. Melif Manor overhangs the Vivavoce, from which the only main road of the barony leads to the Janrenian city of Jorline.

Climate

The proximity of mountains emphasizes the biting cold of winter in the Domain of Melif. The paved roads are terribly slippery. The wood of doors and shutters shrinks and creaks. Faces turn blue and lips chap.

It is up to you, Eminence, to convey this cold to your players. One solution is to use the game mechanics of AGONE. All the actions of the Inspired will be hindered by a +3 penalty on all DIFs! But do not let yourself be dominated by game mechanics. Under no circumstances must the narration or the atmosphere be weighed down by rules. And be logical — the cold can make someone less supple but not less creative.

Economy

Melif exports wood and metal. Its imports consist of food and manufactured goods.

Its farms are insufficient to provide for the inhabitants because of the rarity of arable lands. Sheep and goats mostly account for the livestock.

Magic and intelligence

To fight the curse, the barons of Melif have equipped themselves with a small intelligence network and contacts in the region, as well as a small Jornist School.

Body: 5/0

Army: 6

Defense: 7

Denizens: 6

Organization: 5

Spirit: 4/1

Finance: 4

Information: 5

Soul: 5/5

Magical ability: 5

Diplomatic relations: 6

brings a letter to the Inspired from the baron of Melif asking for their help (Handout 1 p. 57).

At the same time, the baron will circulate a notice throughout the bordering Domains, including that of the Troupe. The notice offers a five hundred gold piece reward (to be converted into the local currency) to whoever gets rid of the curse that has been affecting his Domain for centuries (Handout 2 p. 58).

♣ If the bearer of Selent's Flame reads the notice: The mention of the malediction will move something within him. He will feel interested in this story, without knowing exactly why.

♣ If the Inspired are the regents of their Domain: They should of course accept the baron's request. The barony of Melif is relatively wealthy, and above all, its armed forces and its intelligence network are of considerable means. It would be a shame to neglect a potential ally. Moreover, this visit is the perfect moment to sign various treaties with the major wood and steel producers of the region.

If the Inspired are not the regents of their Domain, the same arguments apply indirectly. Any Inspired that has a trading concern or political influence will not disregard the gratitude of one of the great men of Harmundia.

Furthermore, it is possible, in order to motivate the Troupe, that some of the Inspired already know certain members of the baron's suite. Hence, a mage could have been trained by Merdyniel, the Dean of the Domain's School, or a warrior could have gone through his first campaign under the previous baron who saved his life during a battle...

Lastly, there is always the possibility that the regent of their Domain asks the Troupe to go to Melif, subject to payment or not, in order to help his old friend.



The sites

MELIF MANOR

The manor of the Melifs is the major location of this Act. Even though it is over eight hundred years old, it is not a Remain of the Flamboyance. It is but one of the magnificent creations of the Square (so there is no magic nor Shard present).

The exterior aspect of the construction is massive – it is half built into the face of a mountain and overlooks Gloomwind from more than three hundred feet, dwarfing the village with its colossal dimensions. From the walls of the manor, one can see the whole valley below, and its only access, a road that winds up and down the flank of the mountains, makes it nearly impregnable.

THE SECRET OF THE MANOR

The manor of Melif is older than the Square would like to say, and even Selent is ignorant of this. The manor was originally a dwarven stronghold, built during the Wars of the Seasons, of which the bowels were used to shelter some of the most faithful allies of the dwarves: the giants of frost.

These giants, who betrayed Summer for Winter, were lodged in the deepest parts of the mountain, where the heat coming from the center of the earth enabled them to remember the Lady of Summer and their treason. Some still lie there.

By them is an ice cope and within it rests an apple-sized plant bulb. It is the corm of the Monarch of the Jonquils, an old King of Spring detained by the forces of cold.

You will find more information concerning the fate of this King in the appendices at the end of the Drama.

The manor's interior is in a less good state. Since the beginning of the curse, the lords of Melif have had a tendency to die young, allowing the manor to fall into disrepair. Moreover, each generation has more and more trouble finding employees, especially when the fated moment draws near.

Thus, the air of the long corridors rarely rings with the footsteps of guests, while cobwebs accumulate on the colossal ceilings of hallways and banquet halls.

The more the castle plunges into the mountain, the more it seems to have been built for giants in view of the height of the door arches. Yet, none have actually ventured further than the dungeon and its dark cells for decades because it evokes such an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia.

The Inspired are lodged in the same wing, near the baron's suite. In fact, all of the baron's guests are lodged here because of his lack of servants and a courteousness that forbids him from moving them further away.

The rooms are spacious, furnished with luxurious Keshite beds. All is set up for comfort in winter, from feather eiderdowns to large crackling fireplaces. Primitive but comfortable bathrooms extend from each room.

GLOOMWIND

Though it is the largest city in the barony, no more than seven hundred people live in Gloomwind during

THE INN OF THE POLECAT'S CRY

It is the main tavern of the village and the only one that will accept any strangers. The inn was bought only three years ago by Enora, a sprite from the city of Jorline. She suffers from the stonepox, and she thought fresh mountain air would help her survive the slow petrification. Enora considers the Melifs' curse a naive superstition; she does not believe it at all.

The inn consists of a dozen double rooms and three luxurious single rooms. The prices are reasonable and the food is delicious. This is where Selent's henchmen have been lodging for nearly a month to make preparations, and where they will receive their master.

the dead of winter. Travelers on the roads of the barony are frequently snow-bound. It is then impossible — even for the bravest men — to leave their mountain homes without risking a fall into a crevasse or on a patch of ice. So, most of the inhabitants possess a residence in the city, where they spend winter.

Winter is a time of festivities and of nocturnal feasts. It is also the moment where trading deals and marriages are arranged for the coming year. But, under the shadow of the curse, most people shut themselves up and try not to attract attention. Many of them are preparing wreaths and planning secret funeral banquets for the baron. All fear what is to come, and (is it even necessary to point out?) strangers are not welcome.

SLIMFROST LAKE

Located less than one hour on horseback from Gloomwind, Slimfrost Lake is broad and very deep. Its surface, heated by underground springs, only freezes at a shallow depth. It is where baroness Flamen of Melif and her child drowned seven hundred years ago.

Nowadays, only a few Dancers come in the dead of winter to perform graceful pirouettes and to play with the snowflakes that cover its frozen surface. However, the ghost of Flamen materializes on some winter nights when the snow and the moonbeams join together and give her a semblance of life.

Selent comes here, at sunset, to prepare himself before taking the life of a baroness.



Dramatis Personae

THARON OF MELIF

♣ Appearance

The baron of Melif is powerfully built. Although he is not yet thirty years old, his body is covered with scars for he is a great warrior. His jet-black hair strongly contrasts with eyes as blue as the streams that travel through his Domain. He is usually bearded and long-haired, but shaves before every combat. He will do so on the day before Lucille's birthday, the 6th day of Hydra-tide. His high-quality clothes are not lavish, so they do not impede his movements, and they are always composed of the family colors: dark green and black.

♣ Story

From his earliest youth, Tharon was brought up to fight the Evilen. He has been baron since he was sixteen years old, after his father threw himself over a cliff. Since then, the curse has lain heavy on him.

LADY FLAMEN

Even though local legends do not mention it, it is very dangerous to encounter the poor woman's ghost. Deprived of her child, her husband and her life, she is but a hungry specter consumed by the endless cold.

She thus seeks warmth and tries to embrace anyone she meets. Unfortunately, in doing so she drains their life.

The only way to free her from her malediction is for someone who actually knows her true story to embrace her willingly and to warm her.

In game terms

Flamen has only one attribute: STR 10.

Embrace: 20 + 1d10 against victim's AGI + Dodge. To shake her off, the Inspired must succeed in an opposed STR roll.

This embrace has a Cold VIR of 15 - victim's Flame (divided by two if the victim is a winter seasonling). Armor does not prevent any damage from the embrace.

A willing embrace causes the exact same damage but allows her freedom after five rounds. The lady, a sad smile on her face, thanks her liberator, then transforms into a flurry of snow. Her soul will haunt the living no longer.

Typical quote: *"Hold me... it is so cold... so, so cold..."*

He met the woman who became his wife seven years ago, and, like all his ancestors, he fell deeply in love with her. Now she has given birth to their son, Menma. He has been calling all kinds of people to advise him and to protect his wife.

♣ What he knows

- **About the curse:** Tharon consulted the family archives soon after meeting Lucille, he therefore knows the severity of the situation. He refuses to let his wife go without fighting. That is the reason why he decided to act.

He still remembers that morning when he was five years old and he saw his mother pale and cold next to his father in tears.

THE EVILEN, EBONILE AND THE MISTRESS OF DEAD LEAVES

The beliefs of Melif reflect an atavistic knowledge of the Eternals and of their conflict. The traditional function of the barons of Melif is to protect the people from the conjuring of two monsters that live in the mountains: the Evilen, a blond-haired deceitful spirit that lures children out to die in the cold, and his wife, Ebonile, a dark-skinned witch that lives in a thatched cottage made of herbs hidden in the woods of Melif.

These two creatures are supposed to be the offspring of the Mistress of Dead Leaves, one of the four ambivalent Mistresses of the Year. She is a purveyor of crops as well as the herald of winter. These legends are the consequences of Serwyn's efforts to redeem himself of his betrayal by continuing his struggle against the Masque.

THARON OF MELIF

Origin: Janrenia
Age: 29 years
Size: 5'11" (SIZ 0)
Weight: 198 lbs.

Attributes
 Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/0
 Body bonus: 0
 AGI: 8
 STR: 9
 PER: 7
 STA: 7

Spirit: 0/0
 Spirit bonus: 0
 INT: 6
 WIL: 8

Soul: 0/0
 Soul bonus: 0
 CHA: 7
 CRE: 5

Secondary attributes

ART: -
 MEL: 8
 ASC: -
 AIM: 7
 HP: 54
 SWT: 18
 CWT: 27
 DB: + 2

Fortune points: 0
Powers of Flame: none
Seasoning powers: none
Darkening: 0
Perfidy: 0

Skills

Trials: Weapon (Sword) 8, Weapon (Shield) 6, Alertness 6, Athletics 5, Dodge 8, Riding 7
Rogue: Hunt 6
Courtly: Diplomacy 5, Eloquence 5, Etiquette 5, Traditions (Janrenian) 5
Knowledge: Alphabet (Armguard) 5,

Language (Janrenian) 5, Law (Janrenian) 5, Strategy 5
Occult: Cipher-sorcerer 2, Concord 2

Assets, gifts: Baron (Office)

Combat

Initiative: 15, Sword 16, Shield 12
 Melee attack: Sword 17, Shield 14
 Attack at distance: -
 Melee defense:
 Dodge: 6
 Parry: Sword 17, Shield 20
 Defense at distance: 3

Armor

Partial plate
 (Penalty: -10, Protection: 13)

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ
Sword	+1	+1	+1	+4 (I/S)	0
Shield	-3	0	+4	+1 (C)	0

• **About Inspiration:** Tharon has learnt the significance of Inspiration through the numerous battles he has taken part in. Though he does not bear a Flame himself, he struggles against the Masque and his agents. For that reason, he always gives a hearty welcome to Inspired or seasonlings. He attempted several times to create a network in order to unite the Inspired of his region, but, being a Dullen, he does not have the required authority. However, that initiative has won him the friendship of certain members of the Decan Council, who have provided him with the names of some of the nearby Inspired, including the Troupe.

Today, he has called for their help. It would be ungrateful to disappoint the hopes of such a man.

♣ Role

You care most of all for your wife, and her impending death eats your heart out. In fact, if she actually dies, you may decide to put an end to your cursed line of descendants, perhaps by giving your son Menma to the woman of ice that sometimes wanders around Slimfrost Lake...

♣ Typical quote

"A Melif never turns away without fighting!"

LUCILLE OF MELIF

The baroness is a proud woman (some say "haughty" behind her back). This tall and red-haired woman is

totally devoted to her husband. She met him by a combination of circumstances: as her escort had just left her to chase a group of bandits, a flight of crows made her horse run away towards the adjoining Domain. A young baron then heroically stopped the horse. Love overwhelmed them and they married one year later. This happened seven years ago.

Lucille bore Tharon a son after a painful childbirth. It is quite possible that she will no longer be able to give birth, but, thanks to Nan's help, Menma should grow into a sturdy young boy.

Lucille is now a happy woman who loves the husband that gave her a son. She is however ready to flee, for she also has consulted the family archives and knows that no baroness has yet escaped from the malediction. She feigns gentle speech and a serene face, yet it is only because she has very firm ideas about her role in the Domain, and because of her pride, that she has not yet fled.

The only clue Lucille has concerning the curse is the painting of Flamen in the records. She will not mention it because she is jealous of this woman who resembles her and whom she considers more beautiful than herself.

MERDYNIEL

♣ Appearance

Merdyniel is a seventy years old Keshite mage. Time has not been merciful to him. His deeply lined brow holds the blue gem fixed to his forehead. A gleam emanates

from the gem as from his old brown eyes — the sign of a great inner power and a formidable strength of mind.

His Dancers, Haeol and Trancedance, rarely hide and spend most of their time twirling on his sleeves and in the pleats of his fur coat.

♣ Story

The Cipher-sorcerer considered Merdyniel a prodigy for a long time. The arcane intricacies of Ascendancy seemed to have held no secrets from him, and Dancers enjoyed enveloping him with sparkles. His advancement was rapid, but his gift was also his ruin. The authorities of Cipher-sorcery distrusted this idealistic genius. So, when he invented a revolutionary spell for healing wounded Dancers, he was granted a poisoned reward.

He was to create a School in Melif to inquire into the curse of the Domain.

Unqualified and far away from his lands, Merdyniel, not surprisingly, failed. He was unable to save Tharon's mother. His only possibility for redemption was to stay in this Domain so different from his beloved Keshite desert, until the next baroness' 30th birthday. He has passed the time instructing occasional apprentices and preparing for Lucille's 30th birthday.

He is ready this year. Having studied the occurrences of the malediction, he now entertains certain theories about its origins. Consultation of the family records should corroborate his suspicions.

♣ What he knows

- **About Melif genealogy and legends:** His knowledge is nearly complete on these subjects. Merdyniel has been studying the legends of the Domain as well as its history for the last thirty years. He is now sure that something happened between the two brothers, seven hundred years ago. His research in the archives of the manor enabled him to find Selent's journal the day before the arrival of the Troupe at Melif. He will keep the journal in his room and will write notes in it.

He will share most of the information he has, except his theories concerning the cause of the curse. He will not, however, say anything about the journal he found. He considers he is the only person to have the right to this item since he has been working on this project for such a long time now. Moreover, he is ashamed not to have shared the information before.

- **About the manor:** The legends he has examined give him a good idea about the history of the manor. He knows that the building dates back to the War of the Seasons and that one of the most prized dwarven treasures is hidden there. He will not hesitate in circulating this piece of news, and the Inspired may be misled about the true cause of the curse.



♣ Role

Before you did not have enough time to prepare to face the malediction. Now, you are ready. You believe the cause to be a creature and not a power; thus, you hope your art will enable you to fight it. You are generally paternalistic with other people when you share your knowledge of the Domain's legends.

Faced with another mage, you completely change. Your expression alters to one of cold professionalism. These are the people who exiled you from your homeland and your true studies. You will help them as little as possible. Nevertheless, you will not lie to them because you know the effects of spells such as "Truth" (in AGONE rulebook) that you frequently use yourself.

♣ Typical quote

"All this is quite... interesting. But for what reasons would someone do that?"

ADELN

♣ Appearance

Adeln is rather small, even for a sprite. His features are deep-set. He seems dreamy sometimes (when he is thinking of Velius). Adeln has piercing green eyes and his long bushy hair is dyed green.

His costume consists of moss-lined clothing with numerous sewn pockets from which tufts of dried flowers sprout. A scent of earth and pollen emanates from him.

If you wish, Eminence, you can specify to your Troupe that Adeln sometimes wears a weedsday flower on his boutonniere (see below).

Note: An INT + Plant lore roll against DIF 20 allows recognition of the plant (against DIF 10 for a sprite).

♣ Story

From birth, Adeln was promised a grand destiny. His community had him bonded to a king-tree that accepted him. Fortified by this blessing, he was then educated to become one of the rulers of his community, which was being sorely tested by the growth of surrounding

IF THE TROUPE ENTERS THE UNDERGROUND TUNNELS...

With Merdyniel's information, the Troupe may try to venture underneath the manor to seek either treasure or the cause of the malediction.

It is a waste of time. The underground is labyrinthine for those who do not know the layout of the site (as Adeln does). The giants of frost are the protégés of the Lady of Winter who intends to keep them from the revenge of the seasonlings of Summer who might discover them. Only Adeln has a magic way to navigate the maze.

cities. His heart was however far from politics. He loved only flowers, from which he sometimes thought he heard voices. He left the community at sixteen to wander about Harmundia in order to improve his botanical knowledge and to find a master able to teach him Seed magic. He never achieved these goals. Indeed, his life drastically changed soon after his departure. As he was traveling through Buccaneer Haven, he met a male morgana – Velius – repudiated by his people for an unclear reason. A friendship began between the two seasonlings. Velius passed secrets that his people had stolen from the pixies on to Adeln concerning the brewing of potions and elixirs. Their friendship became passion, and then love.

MERDYNIEL

Origin: Empire of Keshe
Race: human
Age: 75 years
Size: 5'4"
Weight: 115 lbs.
MOV: 3

Attributes
Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/0
Body bonus: 0
AGI: 4
STR: 4
PER: 6
STA: 4

Spirit: 0/0
Spirit bonus: 0
INT: 10
WIL: 7

Soul: 0/0
Soul bonus: 0
CHA: 6
CRE: 6

Secondary attributes
ART: -

MEL: 4
ASC: 10
AIM: 5
HP: 39
SWT: 13
CWT: 19
DB: 0

Fortune points: 0
Powers of Flame: none
Seasonling powers: none
Darkening: 0
Perfidy: 0

Skills
Trials: Weapon (dagger) 5, Alertness 6, Athletics 2, Dodge 4, First aid 8, Swim 3
Rogue: Conceal 2, Intrigue (Cipher-sorcerer) 5, Stealth 6
Courtly: Diplomacy 3, Traditions (Janrenian) 5
Knowledge: Astronomy 5, Alphabet (Armguard, Septentrian) 6, Urgamand 6, Geography 3, Medicine 7, Plant lore 7, Surgery 7, Zoology 6
Occult: Cipher-sorcerer 8, Concord 3, Dancer lore 8, Resonance (Jornist) 8

Assets, gifts: Dean (Office)

Combat
Initiative: 10, dagger 10
Melee attack: dagger 11
Distance attack: -
Melee defense:
Dodge: 8
Parry: dagger 9
Distance defense: 4

Armor
none

Magic
Empathy 10/Resonance 8
Dancer lore 8
Ascendancy APT: 20/19

Dancers
Haeol – Memory: 20, ASC bonus: +2, Empathy: 6, Stamina: 5, Spells: Clairvoyance, Truth, Impression of truth, Minor healing, Body purification, Magic shield, Major healing
Trancedance – Memory: 12, ASC bonus: +1, Empathy: 4, Stamina: 4, Spells: Dancer consolation, Branding a Dancer, Truth

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ
Dagger	0	+2	0	+1 (I)	0

Subsequently, they strolled through Harmundia in search of new plants up to the moment when Adeln felt the need to see his people again. Once he arrived in the Modehan Marches, he found his village burnt down and its dwellers scattered by a raid of Summer seasonlings.

Once again, Velius came to help him. He imparted one of the secrets of his people to him: how Winter and Fall had overthrown a King of Spring, the Monarch of the Jonquils, and his broken body shriveled into a seed locked away in the dwarven watch of Illcomb.

Adeln then set off. He let Velius reorganize his people while he went to the barony of Melif pretending he was a herbalist. He hopes to gain access to the manor in order to recover the body of the Monarch of the Jonquils.

What he knows

• **About the manor:** Thanks to Velius' information, he is now able to locate the seed and to thwart the traps of the dwarves. He knows the secret passageways that lead to the chambers of the giants of frost as well as the manor's clandestine exits. He will not divulge this information or his mission. He also possesses the key to the secret halls, where the last breaths of the Lady of Winter, crystallized on the highest summits of Harmundia, are stored inside the most perfect enchanted globes.

Who knows what would happen if the globes were shattered and the breaths were released?

• **About the malediction:** All Adeln knows about the curse is its purpose, the death on the baroness, and its symptom, everybody in the manor at the moment of the crime is affected by a deep sleep.

He is opposed to anyone's death and so he brought weedsday flowers (see below) with him. He has as many flowers as members of the Troupe plus another hidden one for himself. If he thinks the Inspired can be trusted, he will give them the flowers. If not, he will simply hide the flowers in the clothes of the Inspired on the day of the curse. Adeln is not in favor of useless death, in particular that of a woman. He thinks the Troupe is capable of undoing the malediction and that it could be profitable to make allies of them.

He will turn the occasion of the curse to his advantage by entering the underground passageways in order to steal the seed from the giants of frost. He will thereafter make the Inspired believe that he also fell asleep, not having kept a flower for himself.

Typical quote

"Ahh... so that's where it hurts. Let's have a look... a little over-green sage concoction should help you heal promptly and sleep well."

ADELN

Origin: Mohedan Marches

Race: Sprite

Age: 26 years

Height: 3'7" (SIZ -1)

Weight: 103 lbs.

MOV: 2

Attributes

Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/0

Body bonus: 0

AGI: 8

STR: 2

PER: 9

STA: 5

Spirit: 0/0

Spirit bonus: 0

INT: 8

WIL: 7

Soul: 0/0

Soul bonus: 0

CHA: 8

CRE: 5

Secondary attributes

ART: -

MEL: 6

ASC: -

AIM: 8

HP: 45

SWT: 15

CWT: 22

DB: -2

Fortune points: 0

Powers of Flame: none

Seasonling powers: The Sap

Darkening: 0

Perfidy: 6

Skills

Trials: Weapon (dagger) 3, Alertness 7, Athletics 4, Dodge 9, First aid 7, Sprite bow 6, Swim 2

Rogue: Conceal 6, Poison (Specialization: plant poisons) 9, Stealth 8

Courtly: Diplomacy 4, Eloquence 8, Etiquette (Modehan) 5, Traditions (Jannenians) 3

Knowledge: Beast lore 6, Medicine 4,

Plant lore (specialization: magical plants) 10, Season (Spring) 7, Season (Fall) 3, Surgery 4

Occult: Concord 4

Assets, gifts: bonded to a king-tree

Faults, sorrows: none

Combat

Initiative: 17, dagger 17, Sprite bow 21

Melee attack: dagger 11

Distance attack: Sprite bow 14

Melee defense:

Dodge: 15

Parry: dagger 9

Distance defense: 7

Armor

Plant vest (penalty -2, protection 4)

Note: He can endure 20 Serious wounds because of his bond with the King-tree. He is able to use a sprite magic that reproduces Viol spells on a roll of Season (Spring) + WIL against DIF Threshold of the Spell.

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Dagger	0	+2	0	+1 (I)	-1	-
Sprite bow	+4	0	+4	+2 (I)	-2	0 yards

BITTERS

♣ Appearance

Bitters is a creepy hunchback who likes to scare Dullen by wearing long black robes covered with silvery esoteric symbols. He cultivates his mysterious and horrifying demeanor. He has a short beard that contrasts with his bald head. He often uses obscure words in his conversations that simply cannot be understood.

An odor of sulfur imbues his clothes.

♣ Story

Bitters has always been considered a bizarre person. As he is quite intelligent, he uses that to protect himself in the streets of Abysm. He started out by pretending that his hump was the gift of his protector, a Crimson, who would punish anyone who bothered him. Little by little he created myths about himself by making everyone believe he was a confidante of the denizens of the Abyss. Unfortunately, his strategy succeeded better than he expected. One day, when a pimp attempted to bully him because Bitters had ravished one of his girls, an Azurean came to the rescue. The Demon explained that Bitters amused him and his peers, especially a High Devil called the Grimacer. He was now to spread their good word throughout Abysm for real.

Bitters — now calling himself Magister Bitters — became for three years the instrument of countless infernal creatures. Then, most demons grew weary of him and he was released from his responsibility. He decided to leave the city and to practice his invoking talents all through the Twilight Realms. Lured by the potential for profit, he came to the barony of Melif.

Something is, however, disturbing him; the date of the curse is looming and someone stole his inks. Without them, he cannot do anything, as he does not have enough time to find other inks.

♣ What he knows

Even though Bitters is a so-called Magister, he is no scholar. He can hardly read and does not feel concerned by the current situation. He suspects that the "curse" is a conflict between each generation of Melifs and... something. He is unable to elaborate. Until a few days ago, he was thinking of invoking a demon to protect the baroness, but he is now powerless without his inks.

This may compel him to cooperate. He is hoping to obtain an office as a court mage in the barony. He must therefore prove himself.

Bitters will not admit his lack of knowledge and power. Intimidation will have to be used (STR + Eloquence roll against DIF 10, for example) for him to acknowledge his weakness.

♣ Role

Your masters taught you that fear rules the world. You strive to create that feeling of dread and respect in everyone you meet.

WEEDSDAY

This large yellow flower is quite rare. It grows only in certain Mohedan forests and blooms on the night of summer solstice. Dried and enclosed in an airtight container, the flower can retain its abilities for a whole year.

A stifling pollen emanates from the flower. Its effect is to deprive sleep from any person who keeps the flower close to his face — in his boutonniere, for example.

Rarity: 20

POW: 20

Effect: the target cannot sleep for negative SM nights. Even magical sleep is resisted. The accumulated fatigue makes itself felt starting the second sleepless night (-1 penalty on all mental actions) and develops day after day (cumulative -1 penalty for every day after the first). If the resistance roll is a fumble, the target can no longer sleep and will die of a ghastly dementia fit after two to three weeks.

The use of weedsday is noticeable because the whites of the victim's eyes become yellow. The hue grows more prominent with the lack of sleep. In the case of a weedsday poisoning (fumble), the victim expires by slaving a bloody yellow cream.

LARZEN

This secretive character introduces himself as one of the baron's bodyguards. He is a well-reputed man, known for being uncommunicative and for his great prowess wielding the lance.

He is actually a spy in the service of one of the border Domains (or perhaps a member of your Troupe that has a "Spy network") sent to watch over the baron.

He stole Bitters' inks in order to blackmail him to reveal all the information he has about the baron.

After two days, Larzen will decide not to tempt providence and will leave Melif without having disclosed any information.

BITTERS' MAGIC ABILITIES

Demonology base: 10

Fast talk base: 14

Darkening: 40

Darkened gifts: Conjuration Circles I & II, experienced Imp (perched on his shoulder, it looks like a bat)

Darkened sorrows: Trickster, Nightmares, Mischievous Demon (who is seeking him because he left it in Abysm), Sleepwalking

Speak with a deep voice. Imply that you are aware of many essential mysteries. There is no need to elaborate, the imagination of the Inspired will do most of the work and they will consequently consider you powerful and erudite. Ah, but you should recover your inks...

♣ Typical quote

"Invoking a Demon? Now? My dear friend, if only you had the slightest idea of the powers implied in the process, you would regret having imagined the possibility. The full

NAN

Stewardship base: 11
Surgery base: 10
Medicine base: 11
Fast talk base: 7

Perfidy: 16

Perfidy gift: Consummate Acting
Perfidy sorrow: Heart of Stone

moon's paranyctial abnotia engenders a seventh-rate "anti-tenebrous" field that would hinder full control."

NAN

Nan is the baroness'maid and lady-in-waiting. She was taken into service seven months ago and miraculously saved the baroness'child. In fact, Selent sent her so that the Melifs never become extinct.

Nan was raised in Selent's fiefdom, Paledale (see the appendices for more information on this Domain), and has always been under his sway. She is over-protective of Lucille and her child. But this is a deception; she will open the gates of the manor when her master comes to fulfill his scheme!

It will, however, be difficult to unmask her. She is absolutely loyal to Selent and will fervently protect the lady and her child. Moreover, Selent bestowed upon her a gift of concealment (Perfidy gift "Consummate Acting").

The only clue that could enable the Inspired to reveal her is hidden in her sewing box. It is a dark green glass phial that contains a yellow powder, weedsday pollen.



Clues

THE PORTRAIT GALLERY

In one of the wings of the manor, the Inspired will find a gallery that extends far into the mountain and leads to the family archives. On the walls are the portraits of each baron and baroness in decreasing chronological order. By following the corridor, after twenty-four portraits, one is able to discover an anomaly in the succession order. The Melifs, who were up to this point dark-haired, suddenly become blonde. Moreover, the dates coincide with the first sign of the curse...

The most pessimistic will notice a disturbing detail: there is not enough room on the wall for Lucille and Tharon's portraits, nor for any following lords.

Note: there are no portraits of Selent, Serwyn or Flamen (Serwyn did not have the courage to destroy them and Flamen is now hidden under a pile of documents in the library). By the end of his life, Serwyn was so tormented with remorse that he tore down his own portrait. A close inspection can therefore discern twenty-three male portraits and twenty-four female portraits. It is however possible to find Serwyn's name on a slat. Each portrait is adorned with a golden slat that specifies the name of the portrayed person, his or her companion and his or her father. Thus, the first dark-haired portrait specifies "Orwenn of Melif, loving husband of Almina of Orlentio, son of Serwyn of Melif".

THE ARCHIVES

Here are gathered all the family's knowledge of the past thousand years (at the time of the human colonization of the Domain and the establishment of the name). Many very old texts can be found, but in dubious condition.

Specific genealogical information can be found, especially regarding the lives and deaths of the barons. One can notice that, since the reign of Serwyn of Melif in the year 822, all the barons married beautiful women who all died on their thirtieth birthday.

Moreover, the line of descendants never died out, even though the baronesses were young at the moment of their deaths and all barons were faithful and devoted to their wives. No adultery and no treachery. Most committed suicide soon after the death of their wife or died of desperation. None of them remarried and none lived to be old.

It is also possible to notice that someone was in the library not long ago. Certain texts are sorted by theme (politics, genealogy, legends, etc.). This classification is the result of a methodical mind. Unfortunately, some texts seem to be missing (a successful INT roll against DIF 10 is required to notice this). A PER + Alertness roll against DIF 15 allows strange symbols to be seen on the texts that any mage can identify as Cryptic (see the AGONE rulebook, p. 127) on a successful INT + Cipher lore roll against DIF 15.

The Troupe can also find, under a pile of documents in the archives, a well-hidden portrait of a calm red-headed woman - "Flamen, baroness of Melif (820)".

SELENT'S JOURNAL

The journal is written in old Janrenian, and it requires an INT + Alphabet (Armguard) roll against DIF 15 to read it. Merdyniel has it at the moment. He found it as he was carrying out research in the library.

The journal recounts Selent's struggle against the Masque as well as the life of the Domain in the years 800 to 822. Selent says much about his wife Flamen and his brother Serwyn, whom he loves and trusts. A shrewd reader will notice that the journal was written at the time

when “blond” Melifs (Selent describes himself as blond) become dark-haired (like Serwyn).

On a successful PER + Intrigue roll against DIF20, an Inspired could notice that by the end of the writing, Serwyn has taken a disproportionate role in the day-to-day administration of the Domain and seems to admire Flamen very much.

LOCAL LEGENDS

It is up to you, Eminence, to tell these legends in any public sites the Inspired visit in Gloomwind as the fateful date approaches.

♣ The Gloom-Coach

The Inspired can hear of this legend in the village. It is a tale of the Gloom-Coach that haunts the streets of the town in wintertime, stealing the souls of bad people. The passenger of the Coach is the Evilen. He never steps out of the coach. From D + 4 (see the Chronology below) rumor has it that the Gloom-Coach has been seen in town. Actually, it is the coach that brought Selent to Gloomwind.

♣ Haunting

Another legend says that Melif Manor is the origin of all their misfortunes. The Evilen is supposed to have been born there and would have married a wife a very long time ago. After a long reign of terror and a bloody uprising, the manor was freed.

But the Domain is still under the yoke of the Evilen who bewitches the barons with Ebonile’s help, making them fall in love, then stealing the soul of the baroness, imprisoning it in the depths of the Domain, and torturing it for all eternity.

Ironically, this legend gave birth to a belief that a ground stone of the manor could be a powerful aphrodisiac. The width of one of the walls of the manor has been halved due to the inhabitants’ springtime desires. This belief is however only a superstition.

♣ The Pact of the doomed baron and the Mistress of Hoarfrost

The last legend concerning the manor relates how one of the barons of Melif decided, after the death of a loved one, to make an agreement with the Evilen. He promised the soul of his people and child for eternal life. Fortunately, the former baron had two twin brothers. The elder, the damned one, was blond, therefore branded by the Evilen. The younger brother was dark-haired. The latter tried unsuccessfully to reason with his elder brother, then decided to tell of his brother’s dark intentions to the people of Melif. Arrangements were made and the damned brother was hanged. His wife chose to flee with her child, and they both drowned in Slimfrost Lake. Her hate-filled soul gave her great powers, and she became one of the Four Mistresses of the Year, who chills crops with her icy breath.

THE MISSING SON

What happened to Selent’s son? The story does not say. His fate is in the hands of the EG, who can choose to integrate him into the Drama or not.

Maybe one of the human Inspired members of the Troupe is the descendant of that child? Or he could have been raised in a bordering Domain. His children might have only just discovered the inheritance and they could have created a group of bandits to fight the baron.

Maybe they live in Gloomwind as simple peasants. Their features would then seem familiar to anyone who has seen the portraits of Flamen or Selent.

It is said that her son did not die but that the stream led him far away and that someday, one of his descendants will take over the Domain and renew his pact with the Evilen.



The facts

THE RECEPTION

The arrival of the Inspired will be soothing to the baron. He trusts their reputation and their Flame. He has set all his hopes on them.

As soon as they arrive, they are welcomed as guests of note. The baron introduces them to all of his court and guests at a banquet in their honor. The atmosphere is good until the moment when the baron asks Bitters to entertain his guests with his skills. As the “magister” has been dispossessed of his inks, he feigns a great anger, saying that as one who rubs elbows with the Abyss dwellers, it is beneath him to entertain children at a fair.

He then leaves the banquet hall with an impressive display of wounded pride, ignoring the baron’s apologies. The rest of the meal takes place in an awkward atmosphere.

THE PASSING OF THE GLOOM-COACH

If the Inspired have kept a contact in town, they will hear of this rumor: certain persons would have seen the legendary Gloom-Coach in town on the D + 3 to D + 4 night.

Even though this rumor is incorrect, it plunges Gloomwind into fear and paranoia. Its inhabitants no longer step out of their houses, and their sole contacts with the outside world are anguished sly looks through their windows.

The truth is that a coach did come in town that night, and three persons came out of it: Selent and two Prin-

ceans merchants who came on trade matters. The coach is only a normal stagecoach that the villagers saw as black because of the lack of light.

Selent is welcomed at the Inn of the Polecat's Cry by his henchmen who had previously made a reservation for him. Officially, Selent is the bailiff of the Paledale Council sent here to do business, particularly to buy metal, from the Domain of Melif.

If the Inspired are on the look out for the Gloom-Coach, they can easily stop it and identify the passengers. Both Selent and the merchants have identification papers as well as good reasons to be here. Therefore, the Inspired will probably let them go.

Moreover, the baron can identify Selent as Silen, bailiff of the Paledale Council, having met him as such on several occasions.

CHRONOLOGY

D-1	is considered the first day of Hydra-tide.
D-2	Bitters, the Invoker, realizes that his inks have been stolen.
D-1	Merdyniel, the mage, discovers Selent's journal in the family archives and takes it.
D day	Arrival of the Troupe. Reception at the manor.
D + 2	Bitters receives a blackmail letter from Larcen.
D + 4	Selent arrives in town. The Gloom-Coach is spotted.
D + 5	Evening with the baron. Last recommendations.
D + 6	7th day of Hydra-tide: the baroness' birthday. Confrontation with Selent. Adeln enters the tunnels and comes back with the seed of the Monarch of the Jonquils.

THE LAST SUPPER

The night before Lucille's thirtieth birthday, a banquet is organized by the baron. In spite of the atmosphere, the baron's fiery speeches soon drive away all negative feelings. With the help of alcohol, he flares up and begins describing how the barony could grow once the malediction is dispelled.

The Inspired will recover all their Fortune points thanks to the atmosphere of the dinner. All of the court is there, including Selent if the baron has been informed of his arrival. It is a good moment for the Inspired to compare their clues with those of the other important characters. For Adeln, it is the moment to hand the weedsday flowers out to them.

The banquet will end at midnight, for everyone wants to rest for the next day. Guards will be posted in front of each room. At dawn, a very deep sleep will affect the manor.

THE CONFRONTATION

The Inspired who bear a weedsday flower as well as the ones who hold Selent's Flame will not be affected by the magical sleep.

However, at the crack of dawn, they do feel a somnolence as they struggle against the pollen.

If Selent was not at the banquet, he now enters the manor with Nan's help. They both go into Lucille's room after having easily opened the door. Even if the Inspired have stayed in their rooms, a successful PER + Alertness roll against DIF 5 enables them to hear the click of his boots on the floor and to feel the icy cold breeze that arises from him.

Selent stands gazing melancholically before the bodies of the baron and his wife, who are asleep side-by-side. He lays his lips onto the baroness' and begins to inhale her heat. If the Inspired do not stop him, Lucille will die in five minutes (30 rounds).

Odds are that the Inspired will deal with Selent before he can perpetrate his crime. He will be surprised by the presence of the Troupe who should be asleep. The Inspired will soon realize that Selent is virtually unaffected by their weapons. The aura of cold light that emanates from him wards off their attacks and Dancer sparks as well as it smothers the Flames of the Inspired.

In fact, nothing seems to affect him. The stamina of the Inspired should soon decrease.

After Selent hits him for the first time, the bearer of his Flame will have his first vision. The Inspired sees himself imbuing his weapon with his Flame by coating it with his blood in order to hit the Sinister Knight with it.

If the Inspired chooses to do so, his blood catches fire; Selent will then back off. The blazing weapon will have to cause twenty damage points for Selent to realize that his life is actually in danger. Thereafter, he will flee by throwing himself out of the window (approximately a 60 ft. fall, but the wind will allow him to drift away from the ramparts).

The day breaks on a wounded Troupe, perhaps infected by Perfidy, but triumphant. A ray of sunlight wakes the surprised baroness.

It is her thirtieth birthday, and Selent will no longer come back, for the cycle of the curse has been broken. The Inspired are victorious.



Conclusion

In the following days, news of the end of the malediction spreads like wildfire. The Inspired are the heroes of the barony. Already, minstrels start to compose songs in their name as they watch the Inspired to catch a glimpse of their lives.

The baron keeps his promise, and gives them five hundred gold pieces (in local currency) per member of the Troupe. Moreover, he mentions them in his will.

If he and his wife die, the Inspired and the mages of the Ciphered School would jointly become regents of the land. If the young Menma were to die before siring a child, they would inherit the barony.

If the Inspired are not the regents of their barony, Tharon writes out a recommendation for the regent praising their abilities and recommending them to offices of high responsibility.

AND WHAT ABOUT ADELN?

Adeln the sprite pretends he spent the night affected by the magical sleep and says he feels sorry for not having helped the Inspired. He will leave the following

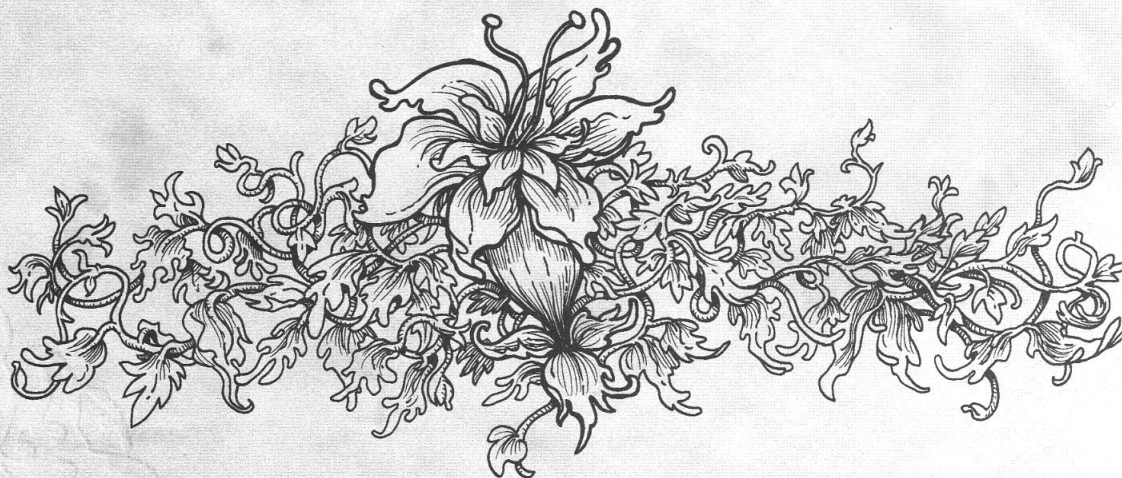
evening to rejoin his people in the Modehan Marches. He promises the Inspired he will never forget them. In his sack lies the Monarch of the Jonquils...

INSPIRATION ALLOTMENT

As well as the IP obtained through role-playing, the EG can attribute more to the Inspired for having attained these goals:

- ♣ Freeing the ghost of Flamen: 2 points.
- ♣ Reading Selent's journal: 1 point + 1 point if they deduce the identity of their enemy.
- ♣ Guessing who is the cause of the curse before the birthday: 2 points.
- ♣ Foiling Larcens' blackmail and giving the inks back to Bitters: 1 point. (If the Inspired do not give the inks back because they know Bitters far too well, award the point anyway.)
- ♣ Saving Lucille and making Selent flee: 3 points. If Lucille dies: only 1 point.

Last of all, if an Inspired presumes (even later in the Drama) that this act was just a beginning and has a vague idea of the events to come: give him 5 IP to invest in the Spirit Aspect or in Knowledge.



Acte two: The Game of the Seasons

...it was a demon. The victory of our Season required his defeat. But how can we fight a creature of such power? Our lord, praised be his name and great be his conquests, was grappling with the expansionist aims of Laeghron, the Emperor of Frosts. We were thus constrained to fight. Ah, it was very different from the usual battles against those pitiful sprites and their crossbows. No, with the Monarch of the Jonquils, we had to fight the earth itself. Roots that pushed through the soil were wiping out our Legions, trees that grew in one night cancelled the impact of our charges while deceitfully insinuating the green season about us. Honored be the Lady. He did not use stratagems such as Sylvan Persistence against us; this had already enabled him to bestow eternal green onto the conifers in order to hamper the expansion of the Crystal Parade in the northern lands.

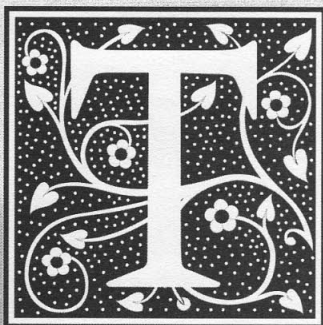
We tried to overcome him by strength – that was our mistake. One of the Elder Roots was even wounded during this attack and forced to underground escape. Once the Monarch of the Jonquils heard of this news, he was overwhelmed by rage. His plants became dangerous. The forests fled no more but turned against us, full of sprites, spriggans and satyrs on their branches. Our wooden weapons sometimes awoke in the middle of a battle to slash our bodies with their blades.

After a month of campaigning, we stood once again before the Quartern Council to admit our failure. The south would remain with the Spring, as well as the enclaves previously mentioned.

The Green Watch would see to that...

From "Chronicle of the Wars of the Seasons, the Summer"
by Anthelm Drywind

Dramatization



ATMOSPHERE

he atmosphere of this second part is laborious as well as bloody.

The Inspired never have enough time. They are perpetually distracted by local problems. Then, little touch by little touch, the story becomes particularly sordid.

The Masque awakens his pawns and excites the vileness of mortal souls in order to occupy his enemies with minor concerns. These are but a pantomime produced to keep the Troupe away from his true ambitions.

KEY SCENES

There are two key scenes in this act.

The first is the battle against the Legion of Summer. Here, disproportionate odds are revealed to the Troupe. Giants fight humans allied with sprites, and the Summer shows its true power.

The second is the escape from Merry Holt. During this scene, the Inspired will face the horror of the Masque's Corruption. The shades of the Merry Holt turn purple and the behavior of the sprites becomes deviant.

Back home

The Inspired leave the Domain of Melif and its atmosphere of celebration. Logically, they should go back home, or to wherever they started from – the barony of Melif is a dead-end. Beyond the barony, there are but wild mountains and wilder draaken clans.

They barely have time to unload their luggage when the lord they are subject to – unless the latter is one of them – summons them. Not only did the baron of Melif show gratitude by giving them gold and recommendations, but he also sent his fastest messenger, Daran, to inform his counterpart of the exceptional merits of the Inspired. The lord knows how precious men like these are, therefore he wants them in the highest posts of the Domain in order to give them the most expediency to make decisions. If the local lord is one of the Inspired, then Daran will have brought a trade and military alliance offer from a nearby lord.

In either case, the messenger's standing orders are to be a liaison with the barony of Melif and to be at the disposal of the Inspired, in order to help them out. This last order, for a good reason, can seem strange. Indeed,

the baron of Melif never mentioned anything about this. Daran invented the ruse in order to keep an eye on the Troupe...



Introduction

Winter is beginning to thaw; Diurn is warming up the crops with renewed intensity. Certain buds begin to sprout. Bizarrely, spring is particularly early in the region – it was not expected at least for another month!

When the Inspired arrive in the Domain, it seems dull and unpopulated. Indeed, a messenger came during their absence to announce the beginning of a war on a distant border. All the Domain's troops and vassals have been mobilized, therefore there is only a very diminished strength present. A majority of the population has been mobilized, leaving behind women, children, some elderly and a handful of men, in order to ensure the survival of the population during winter. Numerous problems have been accumulating.

Guess who will have to solve them?

AND WHAT IF THE INSPIRED...

♣ ... do not have an Office in the Domain?

Even though the Inspired may not wish to, the local lord will oblige them to be involved. He has heard of the Melif event. He actually finds it very interesting to have at his disposal such resourceful individuals, though he feels quite vexed to not have noticed them before. Moreover, the Inspired have never helped him, though they have helped his neighbor. He will use the abilities of the Inspired for his Domain by promoting them and asking them to solve the more complicated problems. Refusing this would be a mistake because the Domain does need their help.

♣ ... are avowed enemies of the ruler?

For example, if they have the "Blackmail" asset towards the ruler or "Ill repute". The lord will still take actions: he bestows on them the offices of counselors and gives them the hardest problems to solve. If they succeed, it will be beneficial for the ruler and if they fail, the lord will then be able to exert pressure on them (failure could even lead to their execution...).

♣ ... are members of a Domain that is difficult to use?

If they are part of a Domain that is contained in a larger area (a school of magic in the middle of a town for

example), or if they belong to a nomadic structure (for example a caravan), the situation could be awkward. The solution consists of using the growing reputation of the Inspired in the region. The inhabitants, instead of the local ruler, will start turning to them in order to solve their problems (e.g.: "The baron never has enough time for us..."; "Only you can help us...", etc.).



The sites

This Drama takes place in a small town (or maybe a neighborhood of a larger town) and the bordering countryside that provides the town with food and miscellaneous products. If the Domain of the Inspired is inside a large town or city, the Inspired will need to travel to work the country. Their duties will include collecting supplies and serving as law enforcement officials.

They will have access to a militia of a dozen inexperienced old men, except for one or two of them who already took up arms once ten years ago, and an equal number of youngsters excited because they have "real weapons" for the first time.

It is up to the Inspired to choose their headquarters, if they need one, and to get down to work. Nevertheless, there are several sites that need further description.

AT MANDATGOL'S

Mandatgol is a well-known and respected private tutor (perhaps even to the children of the local lord). Greatly knowledgeable, his reputation is so good that his students come to his house instead of his having to go to them.

His home is a mess of gargoyles and recesses: its façade is out of proportion and displays grinning faces, crawling monsters and tormented silhouettes. The interior is always dim because it is only lit with hundreds of

small candles. The "welcoming" room is a grand lounge in which the dusk breaks in through a large bay window.

On the walls there are numerous trophies, suits of armors and ancient maps — evidence of an adventurous life. The house is supposed to lodge only three people: Mandatgol the tutor, Belledom (the daughter of his first marriage), and his current wife, a half-giant named Emvira.

THE CAMP OF THE SPRITES

After a couple of weeks of routine activities for the Inspired, the sprites arrive in the region. Adeln, their leader, begs the Inspired for help in light of his former services.

The sprites, who prefer the countryside to towns, settle in the middle of a small wooded area, the Merry Holt. In one night, they transform the forest into a plant-entrenched campsite, with ramparts made of impenetrable bushes and watchtowers built from mossy trees.

Adeln has already planted the Monarch of the Jonquils in the encampment. Through it he took control of the sylvan forces and is increasing their influence in the region.

There are approximately one hundred sprites. They live off the gifts of nature and from their barter with the local peasants.

THE CAMP OF THE LEGION OF SUMMER

The ogres, minotaurs and giants labored very hard to create a clear zone of over several hundred yards for their camp. They have dug a six-foot ditch around the four hundred yard perimeter. The excavated soil was used to raise a six-foot high wall. The interior is a forest of tents. Sometimes, the silhouette of a cautious giant pacing the bastion can be seen.

Their weapons are ready, and provisions are abundant. The army only awaits the answer of the Inspired to attack the sprites... or the army of the Domain.



Dramatis Personae

VELIUS

Appearance

Velius is a seductive, somewhat effeminate, young man. His body is slim and muscular and his smile is coaxing. His very bright hair, nearly white, falls elegantly

VELIUS

Race: morgana
Sex: Male
Age: 27 years old
Height: 5'10" (SIZ 0)
Weight: 122 lbs.
MOV: 3

Attributes

Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/5

Body bonus: +5
AGI: 7
PER: 8
STA: 7
STR: 6

Spirit: 0/1

Spirit bonus: +1
INT: 8
WIL: 8

Soul: 0/7

Soul bonus: +7
CHA: 11
CRE: 5

Secondary attributes

AIM: 7

ART: -
ASC: -
DB: +0
HP: 51
MEL: 6
SWT: 17
CWT: 25

Fortune points: 0

Powers of the Flame: none

Seasonling powers: Tragic love, Phantom

Corrupt powers: Masquerade

Darkening: 12

Perfidy: 78

Skills

Trials: Weapon (bow) 5, Weapon (dagger) 4, Alertness 8, Athletics 5, Climb 5, Dodge 8, First aid 5, Survival 7

Rogue: Hunt 5, Poison 5, Stealth 6

Courtly: Diplomacy 5, Eloquence 6, Etiquette (sprite) 5, Fast talk (spe.: seducing) 7, Traditions (Pixie) 6, Traditions (sprites) 5

Knowledge: Alphabet (Modenian) 6, Beast lore 5, Geography 7, History & legends 4, Language (that of the realm of the Domain) 5, Language (Mode-

han) 6, Medicine 5, Plant lore 8, Season (spring and winter) 4, Season (fall) 6
Occult: Concord 7

Assets, gifts: Attractive, Consummate acting, Dire wisdom, Fog face, Foresight, Lethal charm, Sensuousness, Smooth talker

Faults, sorrows: Blinding, Body alteration, Croaking voice, Cruelty, Hand confusion, Hypocrisy, Lewdness, Lie, Meanness, Physical identity crisis, Spiteful, Venomous blood (Perfidious sorrows)

Combat

Initiative: 19, bow 23, dagger (thrown) 21
Melee attack: dagger 17
Distance attack: bow 17, dagger 16
Melee defense:
Dodge: 20
Parry: dagger 15
Distance defense: 10

Armor:

None

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Bow	+4	0	-	+7 (I)	0	80 y.
Dagger	+0	+2	0	+1 (I)	-1	-
Dagger (thrown)	+2	0	-	+1 (I)	-1	20 y.

on his shoulders. He says his dark purple eyes are a legacy of a sprite ancestor. He is melancholic and seems continually on the verge of tears. His voice is rough but sensual and complements his features. Under his clothing, Velius conceals a bizarre malformation: his pelvis is covered by translucent skin that exposes veins, muscles and ligaments.

Velius always wears green, and he prefers loose clothes made of several layers of thin fabric. He generally wears a dark-green cloak that wrapped around his emerald-green silk doublet. Under that, he wears two or three very loose shirts of a lighter green that are tucked into his dark-green pants. He does not wear shoes.

Story

A few years ago, Velius made the mistake of seducing an aged pixie. Even though it enabled him to steal some of the secrets of that race, his life became such a permanent hell that, in an outburst of uncontrollable rage, he killed his mistress. He then fled, leaving behind everything he possessed. He and Adeln met as they were both seeking a rare plant. Because of his former relationship, Velius decided not to use his power in order to net him. However, a lasting friendship bonded the

sprite and the morgana. After a certain time, Velius cultivated their relationship and tried to make Adeln fall in love with him by "natural" means. The exceptional beauty of the morgana as well as the knowledge he had stolen from the pixies gave birth to platonic love between the two seasonlings. Velius grew weary of their life of wandering and decided to create a place where he could satisfy his drive for power. Unfortunately, Adeln was not corrupt enough to forget his distaste for murder and therefore would have never lent him to anything of that sort. Velius then hired a group of mercenaries, all seasonlings of Summer, that devastated the sprite's village of birth. Under the shock, Adeln accepted Velius' insane plan: he would steal the Monarch of the Jonquils from Melif Manor and restore him, to punish Summer.

Role

You are discreetness incarnate. Considerate but not invasive, you follow Adeln wherever he goes. Once in a while, you seduce a page or a servant so that you can prove to yourself that your seductiveness is still unblemished, but these love affairs are always ephemeral because you must not "lose" your sprite. Under the cloak of virtue, you are actually a tyrant eager for power

and recognition. Your friends are all toadies or slaves completely dependent on your goodwill. Anything that is unyielding must be held off and killed (discreetly, of course). Play the part of the good guy for the time being – the most lethal attacks are those that are unexpected.

♣ Typical quote

"If you say so... What do you think, Adeln? Oh, I sure do agree!" (then, gazing at a young servant, he smiles) "Please excuse me, but I must... well, you do understand..." (he stands up and starts chasing the servant)

MANDATGOL THE ELDER

♣ Appearance

Mandatgol is a learned old minotaur of gentlemanly manner; his weapons are now rusting in the bottom of a chest. His hair is white and he is scored with many scars, some of which are too recent to be explicable (lunar scarifications – a Darkness Sorrow). He is now stooped, a little nearsighted, and somewhat stiff from his old wounds. When he moves about, he does it with extreme care as if he had difficulty simply putting one

foot ahead of the other. He prefers to conceal that he is actually still very strong for a minotaur his age. He also conceals his status as a champion, by pretending to be older than he is. He is convinced that the Lady of Summer granted him his exceptional longevity.

♣ Story

Mandatgol was, in his time, one of the champions of his Season. Instead of maintaining the fairly brutal behavior of his people, he amassed a great deal of knowledge. It is only recently that he has found a certain happiness.

The first part of his life was devoted to questing across Harmundia in the hope of discovering the woman of his life, the one that would love him eternally, as he would her, and who would bear his children. Mandatgol found love two times, but both women died in childbirth.

The last tragedy shattered all hope for the minotaur. Weary of striving after an impossible dream, Mandatgol gradually abandoned his quest to live peacefully. In order to ensure his subsistence, Mandatgol won the office of private tutor thanks to his very extensive knowledge of the world. He conceals his mysterious malformations from his employers and students under the

MANDATGOL

Race: minotaur
Sex: 67 years old
Height: 8'3" (SIZ + 1)
Weight: 378 lbs.
MOV: 4

Attributes

Flame: 0/0
Body: 1/3
Body bonus: +2
AGI: 5
PER: 4
STA: 10
STR: 10
Spirit: 0/6
Spirit bonus: +6
INT: 9
WIL: 8
Soul: 0/0
Soul bonus: 0
CHA: 6
CRE: 6

Secondary attributes

AIM: 4
ART: -
ASC: -
DB: + 8

HP: 78
SWT: 26
CWT: 39

Fortune points: 0
Flame powers: none
Seasoning powers: Goring, Minor night vision
Darkening: 71
Perfidy: 2

Skills

Trials: Weapon (ogre axe) 8, Weapon (horns) 8, Weapon (tower) 7, Weapon (long bow) 7, Alertness 9, Athletics 6, Climb 5, Dodge 8, First aid 6, Swim 3, Survival 5
Rogue: Conceal 6, Hunt 3, Stealth 7
Courtly: Eloquence 5, Etiquette (the Domain's realm) 7, Traditions (the Domain's realm) 9
Knowledge: Alphabet (Armguard) 6, Alphabet (Septentrian) 5, Alphabet (Modehan), Astronomy 5, Beast lore 5, Cult (Modehan marches) 5, Cult (Liturgy) 3, Geography 9, History & legends 8, Language (that of the Domain's realm) 9, Language (all the

others) 5, Law 4, Medicine 3, Navigation 4, Season (summer) 8, Season (spring and winter) 3, Season (fall) 1, Strategy 7, Surgery 3
Occult: Cipher-sorcerer 5, Concord 6, Dancer lore 2, Demonology 9

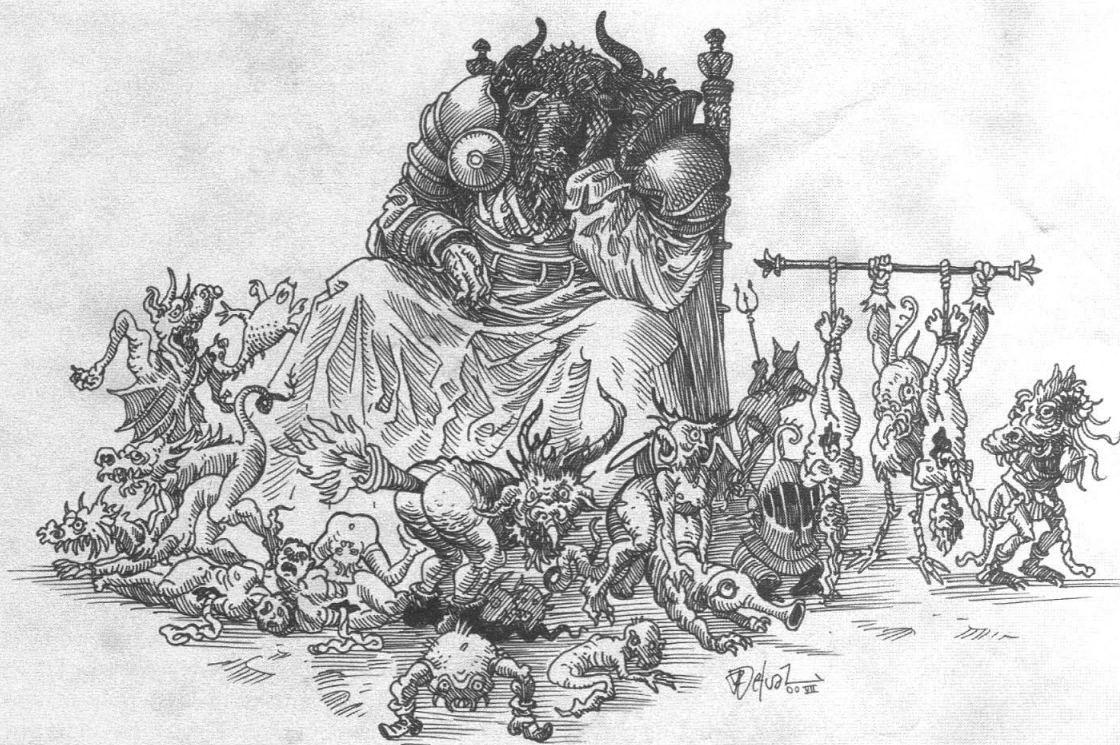
Assets, gifts: Touch of summer, Invoking Circle I, II & III. Experienced imp.
Faults, sorrows: Trickster, Nightmares, Mischievous demon, Sleepwalking, Insomnia, Contempt, Sexual perversion (only with a demon – and his sex drive is not what it used to be), Lunar scarifications, Demon twin

Combat

Initiative: 11, ogre axe 12, horns 10, tower 7, long bow 15
Melee attack: ogre axe 16, horns 16, tower 14
Distance attack: long bow 13
Melee defense:
Dodge: 15
Parry: ogre axe 14, tower 20
Distance defense: 7

Armor: none

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Horns	-1	0	-	+11 (I)	-	-
Long bow	+4	0	-	+8 (I)	+1	80 y.
Ogre axe	+1	0	-2	+16 (S)	0	-
Tower	-4	-1	+5	+10 (C)	+1	-



guise of an aged minotaur. Because of his extreme lassitude, he abandoned this Office. He has not, however, forgotten his true function: a defender of Summer.

Unable to accept his seclusion, he buried himself in the arcana of Demonology, becoming a Darkened. He hoped the Abyss would enable him to invoke she who would not die from bearing his child. His quest was not ineffectual for Emvira came. This beautiful succubus brought him peace as an alternative to love.

Mandatgol is also saddled with an imp, a mischievous demon, and a demon twin of himself that he permanently must keep at bay. He has nearly killed them twice!

♣ What he knows

- **The sprites (and Spring in general):** Mandatgol is convinced that the majority of the spring Decans are corrupted to the bone by Perfidy and Darkening. He is able to recognize the infiltration and the preparations of a coup, having practiced those activities in his youth. Without being totally paranoid, his hatred of Spring seasonlings allows him to identify signs that something terrible is being planned. He will confront it by any means necessary. Unfortunately for him, he is more out of condition than he thinks. His obstinacy will bring about his failure.

- **The Monarch of the Jonquils:** He is mad with jealousy that a miserable sprite was able to find a sovereign of Spring whereas he never had the faintest idea of where to find one sovereign from his own season. There is one issue he understands in this situation: the sprites, in their madness, wish to abolish the status quo of the Decans and to revive the War of the Seasons. The Monarch of the Jonquils is a decisive advantage in the

coming confrontation. Once again, the minotaur keeps this information to himself; he would rather die than to call for help. He will have to be tortured or completely drunk to give it away!

- **Inspiration:** during his long and adventurous life, the old champion has met many Inspired, some who helped and others who thwarted him. He knows of their existence, but does not know much more. He considers them to be as he is to his Lady: a defender, a herald, a champion, and her hope. He is unable to detect Inspiration and he entertains no favorable opinions of the Inspired.

♣ Role

You may be an old minotaur, but you remain much stronger than many mortals and you know that. Furthermore, you are a particularly intelligent and exceptional individual. You are subject to the curiosity of people because you prefer looking like a scholar rather than a warrior.

But, this concealment seems useless because you spend most of your time relating your battle memories and your past victories. Nonetheless, you have convinced everybody of your weakness caused mostly by your age and some wounds.

You very much value the occupation you have achieved and you will do anything to keep it...

♣ Typical quote

"Of course not! The Gruil is a torrent, sure, but it flows at the southern border of the Horns, close to the Liturgical border, not in Janrenia! By the way, that reminds me of an incredible ambush that took place there, when did that hap-

pen? Well, whatever... there were many Liturgical soldiers supported by a cavalry unit..." (he starts drawing a remarkable map of the region) "We were hidden on the banks, right here and here again. Suddenly, as the scouts were passing by..."

SOLM THE PROVOKING BELLEDOM THE ENVIOUS DANTGOLAM THE SAME

This odd trio consists of an imp, a mischievous demon, and Mandatgol's demon twin.

Appearance

Solm is a tall threadlike creature with a disproportionately large head garnished with ridiculously small horns.

Belledom is a beautiful young blond woman; she looks like an angel whose wings and manicured claws reveal her demonic nature.

Dantgolam is an exact replica of the aged minotaur.

Story

Strangely, these three creatures have bonded through bitterness: Solm the imp for having been neglected for Emvir, Belledom the Azuren for never having warmed

the depths of her master's heart, and Dantgolam the demonic twin for only being a pale imitation of his alter ego who surpasses him in everything (even Belledom is stronger than he is!).

What they know

They have no interest whatsoever in their "master's" doings. Mandatgol is sinking deeper into Darkening without their help. It's disgusting! They do not know where he goes, nor who he meets, and actually do not care. On the other hand, they are glad to hear that a cruel, aggressive and promising new organization of thieves is settling in town. They have already made use of it to conceal their own activities and will only give it away under duress.

Besides, as Mandatgol is a very powerful warrior who has previously proved he could exterminate them, at least individually, they assume a discreet manner.

Role

You are extremely perverted. Your pleasure is to make mortals suffer, to punish them to live in this wonderful world without appreciating it. You are obsessed with the remembrance of the Abyss, an unbearably dull, cold and painful place.

SOLM THE PROVOKING, BELLEDOM THE ENVIOUS, AND DANTGOLAM THE SAME

SOLM THE PROVOKING

Sex: male
Origin: imp

AIM: 6
AGI: 5
CHA: 2
CRE: 1
DB: +0
INT: 5
MEL: 5
MOV: 4/2 (flying)
PER: 6
SIZ: +1
STR: 5
WIL: 4
Density: 22
Opacity: 3

Claw: 3
Trials: Alertness 6, Athletics 3, Dodge 6
Rogue: Stealth 3

Imp powers: Demonic friendship, Demon tongue

Typical quote: "Nanana and na! Ya nat pwetty, A dant lake ya! Na!"

BELLEDOM THE ENVIOUS

Sex: female
Origin: azuren
Second circle demon

AIM: 10
AGI: 11
CHA: 9
CRE: 6
DB: +6
INT: 6
MEL: 11
MOV: 3/6 (flying)
PER: 9
SIZ: +0
STR: 11
WIL: 8
Density: 35
Opacity: 7

Claws: 6
Trials: Alertness 5, Athletics (spe.: sexual intercourse) 6, Dodge 6
Rogue: Acrobatics 4, Stealth 3

Typical quote: "Please my dear... a handsome and strong warrior like you... Oh, you wine barrel! Go fuck an Obsidian and get your dirty paws off my silky underwear or I will cut your dick off and feed it to you!"

DANTGOLAM THE SAME

Sex: male
Origin: Saffron
Third circle demon

AIM: 3
AGI: 4
CHA: 5
CRE: 5
DB: +4
INT: 8
MOV: 6/9 (flying)
MEL: 5
PER: 3
SIZ: +1
STR: 9
WIL: 7
Density: 200
Opacity: 23

Claws: 7
Trials: Alertness 6, Athletics 5, Dodge 6
Courtly: Eloquence 4
Knowledge: Alphabet (Septentrian) 5, Geography 5, Language (reshite) 5, Strategy 4

Typical quote: "Aaaahhhh! I hate him, stupid Mandatgol! If only I could kill him... or just torture him a little bit... oh, well, I should go to help that old fool."

As Solm, you love very unpleasant tricks, such as killing a child's favorite dog and putting the dead body in his bed wearing his night-cap, poisoning a well and laughing at the diseases caused by it, or tripping up horsemen with a rope tightened across a path.

As Belledom, you adore inflaming the desire of men. Sometimes you begin to make love with them, but you never go further than the preliminaries because you have had enough of that in the Abyss. You dislike rudeness to the extent that you do not hesitate to disfigure anyone who is disrespectful. You have already killed two men and a spriggen. Their bodies have not yet been discovered, but it will not take long. The thing you loathe the most is that impotent minotaur who never even desired you.

As Dantgolam, you are a bitter and discreet creature who spends most of your time materializing behind your replica in order to pretend to be him and sully his name. Several servants have seen you incontinent. One night, while Mandatgol was dead drunk, one of them, having slept with you, noticed your partial impotence. The aged minotaur has not yet found out about this little game of yours, but you fear him more than the High Devils and therefore you would do anything for him not to discover it. Your only advantage is your resemblance but you know that an invoker could realize right away that the minotaur has a demonic twin... Fear is your daily lot.

EMVIRA, SHE WHO LOVES

Appearance

Emvira is an extremely tall woman, the size of a minotaur. She is over eight feet tall and is beautiful with delicately tanned skin and deep dark eyes. She has magnificent soft wings and at least a dozen lovers throughout the region who she flies to at nighttime. The servants and most of the town's inhabitants believe she's the half-breed child of a giant and an ogress, or something like that. A few of her lovers suspect she's something else, but no one is really sure.

Story

Emvira is chained to Mandatgol by a Connivance that specifies that she must love him in return for her price. Unfortunately for her, the old minotaur never really interested her, so, despite her appellation, she was unable to arouse love on either side. She is thus breaking their contract, but the minotaur is sufficiently pleased with her "services" to not mind the breach of Connivance. Nonetheless, as he did not fall in love with her, he also comes under the breach of contract. For the moment, Emvira is no longer bothered by Mandatgol's advances, so she turns this occasion to account instead of denouncing their agreement.

Her only goal is to enjoy the present situation as much as possible. As a very tall succubus, she is rarely invoked and only by the mentally ill, whose depraved manners do not allow her to have fun either. Her carnal specialty

EMVIRA, SHE WHO LOVES

Sex: female
Origin: amber
Third circle demon

AIM: 11
AGI: 11
CHA: 14
CRE: 10
DB: +15
INT: 10
MEL: 12
MOV: 6/9 (flying)
PER: 12
STR: 14
WIL: 10
Density: 144
Opacity: 38

Claws: 3
Trials: Alertness 6, Athletics (spe.: sexual intercourse) 7, Dodge 6
Rogue: Acrobatics 6, Disguise 3, Intrigue (spe.: seduction) 7, Stealth 3
Knowledge: Eloquence 5, Fast talk 5

Typical quote: (with a coaxing smile while her interlocutor is gaping at her in admiration) *"Come here! I want you."*

should have enabled her to become the wife of a worthy Abyss minotaur. She only leaves the Abyss, generally to satisfy rather unpleasant Connivances.

What she knows

Emvira has some scraps of Mandatgol's knowledge that she keeps to herself just to prove what she is capable of. She knows that the minotaur was a hero to his people. She is also aware of his hatred of sprites and has guessed that her lover discovered their new neighbors' terrifying activities. She has not thoroughly examined the situation and has not planned anything, which could call her position into question. Only Mandatgol's imminent death could incite her to talk.

Role

You are a demon fascinated by this wonderfully calm world that is exempt from cruelty and malice. You are neither particularly cruel nor good. In fact, you do not understand morals and ethics, nor can you differentiate good from evil. The only thing that stops you from killing or stealing is the preservation of your current status.

But that does not stop you from sleeping with anyone, and getting all you need through those lovers, who, once they have slept with you, cannot refuse any of your demands.

Finally, even though you are a killing machine, your true weapon is not your claws nor your extreme strength but your attractiveness. Emvira is a passive character - wherever she goes, everyone looks at her either with desire

LOTHORN, CHAMPION OF SUMMER

Race: minotaur
Sex: male
Age: 22 years old
Height: 9'1" (SIZ + 2)
Weight: 489 lbs.
MOV: 6

Attributes

Flame: 0/0

Body: + 1/0

Body bonus: +1

AGI: 8

STR: 14

PER: 8

RES: 14

Spirit: 0/1

Spirit bonus: -1

INT: 6

WIL: 9

Soul: 0/0

Soul bonus: 0

CHA: 7

CRE: 6

Secondary attributes

AIM: 8

ART: -

ASC: -

DB: +18

HP: 105

MEL: 10

SWT: 35

CWT: 52

Fortune points: 0

Flame powers: none

Seasoning powers: Minor night vision, Goring

Darkening: 11

Perfidy: 0

Skills

Trials: Weapon (giant axe) 9, Weapon (horns) 9, Weapon (tower) 7, Weapon (giant lance) 9, Alertness 9, Athletics 8, Climb 3, Dodge 9, First aid 5, Survival 3, Swim 1

Rogue: Conceal 6, Intrigue 4, Stealth 7

Courtly: Eloquence 5, Etiquette (Wild Reaches) 8, Traditions (Wild Reaches) 9

Knowledge: Alphabet (Septentrian) 6, Geography 6, Language (Nordik) 6, Language (Keshite) 5, Medicine 3, Season (summer) 6, Surgery 5, Strategy 6

Occult: Concord 4, Demonology 5

Assets, gifts: Touch of Summer, Huge

Faults, sorrows: Trickster (Dark sorrow: Lothorn imprisoned it in a small cage and left to die somewhere in the Wild Reaches)

Combat

Initiative: 17, giant axe 19, horns 16, tower 13, giant lance 25, giant axe (thrown) 19, giant lance (thrown) 18
 Melee attack: giant axe 20, horns 20, tower 17, giant lance 20
 Distance attack: giant axe 20, giant lance 19

Melee defense:

Dodge: 8

Parry: giant axe 19, giant lance 19, tower 23

Distance defense: 4

Armor:

Partial plate: penalty -10, protection 13

Typical quote: "Obey! Bring us that Spring vermin or we will kill all of you, then dance and feast on your dead bodies under the light of a funeral pyre." (thunderous laughter more disquieting than amusing)

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Giant axe	+2	0	-1	+30 (S)	+2	-
Giant axe (thrown)	+2	+1	-	+30 (S)	+2	38 y.
Giant lance	+8	0	-1	+24 (I)	+2	-
Giant lance (thrown)	+1	0	-	+24 (I)	+2	42 y.
Horns	-1	0	-	+21 (I)	-	-
Tower	-4	-1	+5	+20 (C)	+2	-

or jealousy. With a single gesture, she can enslave a man. Only the most depraved or ill could resist her charms.

LOTHORN, CHAMPION OF SUMMER

Lothorn was once a great warrior but not much more. Too impetuous to command, he had however proved his courage on several occasions. He had, up to now, refused the command that had been offered to him because he was fully aware of his shortcomings.

And then, one night, his life changed. He had a strange dream: a woman whose unbearable beauty burned like the summer sun enjoined him to rise up against the progression of Spring and the breaking of the agreement enforced by Janus in a region he had never heard of before. At the end of this very realistic dream, the Lady laid her hand on Lothorn's chest and placed her mark on him.

The next morning, the minotaur indeed discovered a hand branded on his chest. Galvanized by the vision,

Lothorn mustered a powerful army and crossed Har-mundia in search of the site his Lady had shown him.

Unfortunately, the minotaur has not learnt much in the last several months of wanderings. He remains impulsive and obsessed with himself. Besides, the power of his army does not spur him to moderation.

Lothorn is a massive and wild being who was tamed on battlefields. He does not speak, but rather he howls his orders and war cries. He does not sleep, and only rests briefly while awaiting the next combat. Covered with scars, he is the prime example of the warrior spirit - brutal, noisy and barbaric but also full of honor and completely devoted to his duty.



DARAN

Race: draaken
Age: 117 years old
Height: 5'9" (Daran)/6'4" (Sschtas)
(SIZ 0)
Weight: 216 lbs.
MOV: 3

Attributes
 Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/6
 Body bonus: +6
 AGI: 8
 STR: 7
 PER: 9
 STA: 10
Spirit: 0/0
 Spirit bonus: 0
 INT: 11
 WIL: 7
Soul: 0/4
 Soul bonus: +4
 CHA: 6
 CRE: 5

Secondary attributes
 AIM: 8
 ART: -
 ASC: -
 DB: +1

HP: 48
 MEL: 7
 SWT: 16
 CWT: 24

Fortune points: 0
Flame powers: none
Seasoning powers: Dragon merge (Sschtas will only use this power in an extreme situation, if half of his clan is killed, for example), Protean ability, Twin bond
Darkening: 1
Perfidy: 75

Skills
Trials: Weapon (dagger) 7, Weapon (lance) 7, Weapon (composite bow) 7, Alertness 9, Athletics (spe.: Protean ability) 10, Climb 6, Dodge 9, First aid 4, Ride 5, Survival 7, Swim 7
Rogue: Conceal 8, Hunt 7, Stealth 9
 Courtly: Fast talk 6, Traditions (dragon) 7
Knowledge: Alphabet (Septentrian) 3, Beast lore 7, Geography (spe.: underground) 8, Language (draaken) 6, Language (keshite) 5, Medicine 3, Plant lore 7, Season (fall) 6, Surgery 5
Occult: Concord 4

Assets, gifts: Lord (clan chieftain), Common sense, Clear thinker, Iron will, Lightning speed (Perfidious gift), Foresight (Perfidious gift), Doggedness (Perfidious gift), Hypnotism (Perfidious gift)

Faults, sorrows: Misshapen (his scales are a disgusting shade of green, dripping with pus), Cruelty, Traitor's mug, Premature aging, Heart of stone, Body alteration (his back is full of barbed bone needles), Hand confusion, Evil readings

Combat
 Initiative: 24, lance 28, lance (thrown) 25, composite bow 28
 Melee attack: dagger 21, lance 20
 Distance attack: lance 20, composite bow 20
 Melee defense:
 Dodge: 23
 Parry: dagger 20, lance 19
 Distance defense: 11

Armor:
 Partial leather: penalty -1, protection 3

Typical quote: "Yes, my Lord. No, my Lord. If you say so, my Lord."

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Dagger	+2	0	+1	+3 (I/S)	-1	-
Composite bow	+4	0	-	+8 (I)	0	100 y.
Lance	+4	0	-1	+5 (I)	-	-
Lance (thrown)	+1	0	-	+5 (I)	0	30 y.

DARAN, ALIAS SSCHTAS

Sschtas is a draaken. Initially, he was the shaman and war chief of his clan. He was ordered, by a minion of the Masque, to put his clan and his mastery of draaken metamorphosis at Selent's disposal. Hence, he infiltrated the baron of Melif's guard as a messenger, a scout and a soldier. Naturally patient, at least for a draaken, he conceals his lack of knowledge of human culture under a veil of rugged professionalism and acts as if he preferred silence and the wild open air to the company of men.

His human appearance is that of a middle-aged man with a strongly lined face, not excessively strong, and always wearing discreet somber clothes. He talks little, preferring action to useless discussion. As a draaken, he is a monstrosity of black and green scales, over six feet tall.

The facts

In the beginning, everything goes well: the responsibilities of the Inspired are not too heavy a burden. Most disputes are simple to settle. The most difficult task is keeping up with the paperwork.

Then, new problems arise (listed below) that are not always as easy to resolve... All these events are not obligatory. You can choose not to use some of them if you consider the Drama is too long, or, conversely, you can create more of these situations. Missing from the list are the exciting Most Beautiful Pig Contest, and the enticing Queen of spring election. These are the responsibility of the Inspired too.

Whenever possible, Daran (see above) makes himself useful: taking care of messages, getting hold of people, etc. If asked why, he will answer that the baron of Melif asked him to be at the disposal of the Inspired.



CHRONOLOGY

D - 6	Arrival of Daran
D - 5	Departure of the army
D - 5 to	
D day	Disturbances in the Domain
D day	The Inspired return from Melif
D + 2	Gorgeous Juvelia's case
D + 5	The murder
D + 6	First attack of the brigands
D + 7	Rape of the farmer's wife
D + 9	Second attack of the brigands.
D + 11	The brigands are denounced.
D + 15	Arrival of Adeln's emissary
D + 16	Arrival of Adeln's group
D + 17	Merry Holt fortress emerges.
D + 18	The sprites begin to infiltrate local organizations.
D + 21	A spriggan is atrociously murdered.
D + 22	A sprite is also murdered.
D + 24	A sprite family is butchered.
D + 28	A heavily armed sprite convoy is massacred by three demons. Scouts from Lothorn's army are spotted.
D + 30	Three demons appear and kill seven sprite guards on the ramparts of the Merry Holt plant fortress.
D + 31	The camp of the army of Summer is set up. Peasants come to the Inspired because their houses and fields were demolished by some giants. An emissary of Lothorn gives an ultimatum.
D + 32	Beginning of the hostilities
D + 34	The Summer seasonlings are driven off. The sprites betray the Inspired. They try and (normally should) succeed in capturing them.
D + 35	The Inspired are contacted by Daran. They escape.

GORGEOUS JUVELIA

Juvelia is a twenty-year old young lady whose beauty has not yet faded from hard work in the fields. She is dragged, with her three children and her aging mother, before the Inspired. A butcher and his son, a baker, an aged merchant, and an important landowner, also with his son, are involved in a dispute with Juvelia. According to the six men, Juvelia owes one hundred and fifty-three gold pieces, in the local currency, half of which is owed to the merchant.

In fact, the merchant profited from the departure of Juvelia's husband, provoking her to spend her money unsparingly, and making her sign many acknowledgments of indebtedness, in order to induce her to sleep with him. He used the same method with Juvelia's mother when she was young. Foreseeing the problem, the old lady forbade her daughter to pay the merchant in kind. Moreover, as Juvelia cannot even count to ten, the six men have excessively increased the debt.

The Inspired will simply have to ask what was bought with the money to notice (INT + Stewardship against

DIF 10) a "small" miscalculation – the total amount of the debt has been multiplied by five. In addition, the butcher's son and the landowner's son should both be in the army, but their fathers have bribed the recruiting officer.

Juvelia's speech is not very clear and her three children are crying noisily while the creditors are screaming even louder to make their point. In the confusion, only the old woman and the merchant are more or less calm while glaring at each other (PER + Alertness against DIF 20 or PER + Intrigue against DIF 15 to notice it).

The Inspired must settle the dispute. There is no ideal solution...

THE MURDER

Early in the morning, as the Inspired are still asleep after a late night taking care of a tax problem, a militia man wakes them up. A man named Hollowbold has been killed. His throat was cut in his bed in the tavern where he lived. An aged employee found his body as he was going to clean up the room. The innkeeper, who thought Hollowbold had left the day before, is very worried. But who would not be in such circumstances?

In fact, it is the innkeeper and his wife who killed Hollowbold. He had deserted the army that just departed. Having previously noticed that the innkeeper's son, hidden in the cellar, had not gone to war, he decided to blackmail the family. He had been staying in the tavern's best room at no cost for the last few days. His mistake was to ask for a big amount of money from the innkeeper. The latter panicked, and he and his wife decided to get rid of the scoundrel. Their son could be hanged if he were found...

In the room, on a successful PER + Alertness roll against DIF 20 or an INT + Search against DIF 15, the Inspired will notice the following: the man had his throat cut in his sleep and the door has not been broken. Therefore, either the door was open or the assassin had the key. The innkeeper and his wife are the only people to have spare keys. Finally, the dead man virtually possessed nothing at all: his clothes, approximately two gold pieces in the local currency, and a knife.

In town, nobody knows the victim. A fellow drunkard will nevertheless provide the following information:

☛ The victim spent his money unsparingly.

☛ The innkeeper did not seem very happy about this.

☛ Hollowbold had worked as a day laborer close to Merry Holt, a desolate location characterized by a small, unused wood. Several local farmers do know him and will be surprised if they hear about Hollowbold's sudden wealth because he was always poor and spendthrift. Moreover, he was enlisted in the army that recently left.

Solving this problem with leniency is possible, but will the sense of justice of the Inspired allow that? And if they learn the truth of the entire case, what decision will they take? Should they hang the whole family (the legal punishment for such a crime)?

THE BRIGANDS

The army has emptied the prisons of the Domain in order to increase its strength. Of the twenty prisoners that were enlisted, ten immediately deserted with weapons after killing their guards. They are all merciless, old offenders. They have settled in a ruin close to the Domain's frontier.

Unfortunately for them, the recent war has diminished all economic activities, so they have not found much to pilfer. On D + 6, they bump into two messengers and beat them to death. A peasant will find the bodies in the evening and immediately bring them before the Inspired. On D + 9, as the brigands are tired of waiting for a good opportunity, they decide to create one: they plunder a farm, raping and killing all those who live there. On D + 11, a young poacher spots a light in the brigands' ruin. He informs a militiaman who then warns the Inspired.

The bandits are clever. They leave few trails and always use shortcuts. Furthermore, they never strike less than one hour away from their hideout. Two days of intensive tracking are required to hunt them out (PER + Hunt against DIF 25).

If found, they will not surrender, preferring death to imprisonment.

THE RAPE OF THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER

Tasmus is the son of one of the town's richest merchants. He had been courting Maglevea for ten days. When she refused to sleep with him, he then raped her. The young girl, only fourteen years old, is in shock. It is her father, when he heard her screaming, who intervened... alas, a little too late. The father, a sturdy peasant, seems particularly embarrassed. Tasmus, on the other hand, is arrogantly claiming damages from the peasant for having "molested" him. Confident of his father's protection, the young man is sure he can get out of this without any difficulty. But what do the Inspired think of this?

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SPRITES

A young sprite, covered with dust and tired from a long journey, requests an audience of the Inspired. He solicits their permission for sixty members of his community to settle in the Domain. The sprites only need a small wood, and they are ready in return to help out as they can. They are also aware of the fact that the mobilization deprived the Domain of its finest men, so they want to lend a hand. Adeln is prepared to negotiate. His

THE BRIGANDS

Eight dirty and shaggy men with lances and daggers.

SIZ 0
MOV 3
HP 49
SWT 16
CWT 24
DB +1

Init. 12, dagger 12, lance 16
Att. Dagger 12, lance 10
Dodge 10
Parry dagger 11, lance 9
DB dagger +3 (I/S), lance +5 (I)

Armor: none

Typical quote: "Yyyaaaaahhhhhh! C'mon, give me yer moany! Damit! Me pants ere fallin' off!"

plan is to obtain residency in the Domain in exchange for the involvement of the sprites in the life of the Domain so that he will be able to take over the wheels of power.

The reason for their exodus is simple: they are being chased by a troop of Summer seasonlings who have already demolished their village and killed many of them. They need protection, or at least a defensible refuge. The sprite is filthy and exhausted; his words are desperate. Can such a request be refused to innocent (for the moment) people?

On D + 16, the sprites inhabit the only unexploited wood of the Domain: the Merry Holt. It belongs to the lord of the Domain, who has no use for it, and it is big enough to shelter the fifty sprite warriors and their families. One hundred sprites already inhabit the wood... Adeln has "slightly" understated their true numbers.

On D + 17, the small wood is totally altered. The trees have closed ranks, and an incredible brushwood fortification surrounds it. Nobody, except sprites, can enter it. A successful PER + Alertness roll against DIF 20 or PER + Strategy against DIF 15 allows one to realize that the wood is now a true military encampment with organized patrols. "Of course," answers Adeln to any indiscreet question, "the only survivors of my clan are the most experienced warriors." The next morning, the sprites will begin coming out of their sylvan fortress. They will quickly go about the immediate countryside to salute their new neighbors. At midday, one of the elder sprites will come before the Inspired to lend a hand. He is a farming expert (INT 8, Beast lore 9, Plant lore 8). If he is accepted, six assistants will miraculously arrive on the scene and begin to scour the Domain for farmers in need of advice. Then, a law counselor (INT 8, Law 9) and a military specialist (INT 7, Strategy 9) will appear: "My function is to liaise with you, my lords, so that we do not tread on each other's feet. You have banditry pro-

blems, my lords? Methinks, we could help you." And so on... Each advisor is escorted by two or three assistants. There will even be a dozen sprites that enlist in the militia to help increase its numbers.

Each time, the sprites are the embodiment of consideration. They "only wish to help out" and are ready to get down to work. And, they actually do work so hard that there will be no more problems as long as they are there... At least up until the arrival of the army of Summer.

THE CROOKS

Unless one of the Inspired has contacts in the local underworld ("Spy network" Office), they will not be aware of what is happening in the criminal world. Nevertheless, between D + 18 and D + 21, many profound changes will take place. After many undisclosed deaths, and the disappearance of the leaders of the crooks, the sprites will have taken control. The climax of these changes will be the atrocious death of a spriggan.

Harlotta was in charge of a team of burglars. She noticed the development of the sprites. She was curious about the reasons that were driving them and she was also rankled because of numerous deaths among the middlemen she dealt with. She decided to break into the sprite camp. Regrettably, she was captured, tortured to reveal who sent her, then killed. Finally, her body was abandoned in an alley in town. But unfortunately for the sprites, she had a lover who witnessed the judgment of the Inspired in the Hollowbold case. The lover, Hulwen, demands justice, confident in the sense of equity of the Inspired. Hulwen knows Harlotta worked in a second-hand furniture shop, but the owner recently died after falling down a staircase and "stabbing himself five times in the back", and the shop is now for sale. Harlotta lived in the attic, above the shop. Succeeding in a PER + Search against DIF 10 or an INT + Alertness against DIF 15, will make clear that Harlotta did not actually live in the attic for there is no food at all, just a lot of dust.

There is no clue of where Harlotta lived. Through the use of magic, the Inspired can find an old barn that has been renovated into a warehouse, well furnished and full of miscellaneous objects, quite probably stolen. On a wall, a map of the Merry Holt and many sketches indicate the victim's last target.

Confronted with these facts, Adeln cleverly hands over the body of a madman who supposedly was found hanged in his hut. He confessed that he could not bear the idea that he endangered the community and that he preferred to inflict upon himself the punishment he deserved. He unfortunately died a couple of hours ago, and Adeln is sorry not to have warned the Inspired but he tells them that he feared his people would be thrown out of the Domain.

MANDATGOL GOES INTO ACTION

Mandatgol is very concerned about the situation. On a D + 18, he sends a small demon to spy on the sprite encampment. After four days of close watch, he realizes the identity of the plant "thing" that appeared in the center of the clearing: the Monarch of the Jonquils.

He believes that he can kill the hundred sprites if it is done very discreetly over approximately twenty days. His estimation is correct, but does not take into account the involvement of the Inspired.

For his plan, he needs three aggressive, swift and discreet demons. He invokes them on D + 22 and sends them on a first attempt that turns out quite well. On D + 24, sends his assassins at a more ambitious target: an entire family. Finally, on D + 28, he launches them on the most powerful target he would dare attack, a heavily guarded convoy. It is his first mistake, for the survivors of the assault will be able to recognize the attackers as demons. Mandatgol leaves between each attack a required period of time in order to see if the attack failed or if he is suspected. Once he is sure that the attack was successful, the massacre begins for he sends his assassins to slaughter the sprites. Once all the warriors are dead, the families have no hope of resistance.

♣ Clues

Unmasking Mandatgol will be very difficult. His demonic minions are indeed intelligent and talented killers. Besides, the old minotaur is far from being a fool, and he has cautiously been covering his trail. However, there are several elements that could confound him...

♣ **The first murder:** The first victim, Velsti Oak-leaf, was one of the farming assistants sent by Adeln to help the Inspired. He is on a small path, late one night, heading towards a farm that had offered him board and lodging. The farmers, concerned that he was late, decided to go back up the path calling for him. Their dogs found the body in a ditch. The farmers, a family of unlearned peasants, are in a state of shock. They are unable to determine if the body was recently deceased or any other detail. They do not notice anything else because it is nighttime.

The body does not have much information to provide: his head was removed. Someone making a PER or INT + Medicine against DIF 15 will recognize cuts around the wound that could indicate the use of one or several short blades.

At the scene of the crime, a PER + Alertness against DIF 10 will reveal that the dogs are covered with blood. This means that the body was dead from the moment of discovery. There is still blood all over the surrounding trees. Moreover, the dogs are too nervous; they are strong hunting dogs that should not be afraid of blood. Something has scared them.

Then, on a PER + Hunt or INT + Search against 25, the trail of the assassins can be distinguished. There are

three sets of barefooted tracks that suddenly stop in front of a puddle of water as if they had taken off (which is what they actually did). A second roll (same skills and DIF) will reveal a very small bloody trail that is barely perceptible. This will practically disappear after the second day – D + 23. It follows the footsteps but continues on a small distance from the puddle. So, either the assassins flew away, or they concealed their trails... diabolically.

♣ **The second murder:** It is far more daring. In the middle of the night, strangers penetrated a house in town and slaughtered a sprite, his wife and their four children. According to the witnesses, who shut themselves up and only heard the tragedy, the screaming did not last more than a minute.

The main door to the house lies several yards inside. A PER + Locksmith roll against DIF 20 or an INT + Search against DIF 15 will make clear that the hinges were torn off with colossal strength. The interior is strangely very tidy. The murderers just entered the house, killed its occupants and left. The male sprite has been disemboweled and has had his throat cut. His wife was thrown against the wall for her brains have left a long trail on it. All four children had their neck broken. The militia did not move the bodies. A PER + Medicine roll against DIF 20 (one roll per body) will enable one to determine that the sprite had his throat slit by a sharp weapon, maybe a dagger. The disembowelment is due to a longer weapon, probably a sword. All of the bones of the sprite's wife are shattered – her killer had to be extremely strong. Only a Summer seasonling, such as a minotaur or a giant could do this kind of damage. There is no information to collect from the bodies of the children.

♣ **The other murders:** As for the attack of the convoy, the identity of the assailants will be more specific: they are demons. An INT + Demonology roll against DIF 15, will identify them as either ambers or saffrons. They usually attack from the air at dusk. They glide near their targets and dive at the last moment.

♣ **The Advocatus Diaboli:** There is one Advocatus Diaboli in town – if you know where to look – but she is a dead end. This beautiful young lady is guarded by two monstrous crimsones. Even if the Inspired do eliminate her protection, the Advocatus will not reveal anything, preferring death. The reprisals, for such breach in her client's trust, would be terrible. Even if she tells them his name, Mandatgol will not return to his house before he has finished.

♣ **Satisfying the demons:** This is the true flaw in Mandatgol's plan. Usually, saffrons call for wandering throughout Harmundia. But he is unable to provide that. Instead, he feeds them the best food, and supplies three young prostitutes who do not outlive the night.

THE OGRES

SIZ 0
MOV 3
HP 63
DB +4
SWT 21
CWT 31

Init. 12, ogre sword 14
Att. ogre sword 14
Dodge 4
Parry ogre sword 14
DB ogre sword +9 (I/S)

Armor: Complete studded leather (prot. 6)

Typical quote: "Dha?"

By investigating the local underworld, on a successful CHA + Intrigue against DIF 20, one can discover that an old minotaur hired the girls. Moreover, a PER + Demonology roll against DIF 15 will permit the identification of Belledom's demonic nature. It also goes without mentioning that Emvira is far too beautiful to be a natural creature...

If the Inspired bother Mandatgol too much, he will attempt to flee even if he has to kill those who dare try to stop him. Convinced of still being a ferocious warrior, he will not hesitate to take up his arms and die instead of failing. Anyway, he is persuaded that nobody can understand his reasons.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE LEGION OF SUMMER

On D + 28, peasants and travelers will report having seen a small troop of horsemen led by an armored minotaur in the hinterland.

The true problems begins on D + 31, around midday. Several families that live in a hamlet come before the Inspired to give an account that their houses were demolished by giants and the surrounding woods have disappeared. Henceforth, a fortress stands "occupied by demons fur sur, me lord, dey can't have bilt it so fast!"

At last, in the evening, an emissary of the invaders comes forth. He specifies that he is speaking in the name of the warlord, Lothorn, and says that, if at dawn all the sprites have not surrendered, the Legion of Summer will begin to march and will destroy anything between it and its enemies. Moreover, for having sheltered the sprites, Lothorn demands the Domain pay a forty thousand gold piece indemnity. If that generous offer is refused, the soldiers will loot the town, and the rulers of the Domain will be strung up. The emissaries of the Domain are expected the next day at the crack of dawn. Lothorn guarantees their security.

The messenger leaves as soon as he has finished. Whatever the Inspired decide, the ransom is far beyond the

capacity of the Domain. They will have to negotiate.

The next morning, Lothorn awaits the emissaries. He is bursting with pride and turns a deaf ear to all advice. He is, in fact, furious that the sprites have not yet surrendered. Whatever the Inspired may do, if he does not have either the sprites or the money, he will have the emissaries imprisoned, and will order the Legion to march on the town. He has, after all, guaranteed the security of the emissaries. Where could they be more secure than in the conqueror's camp?

The Inspired are gagged and tied up by a swarm of ogres. Four giants are keeping an eye on them in the background. The Legion starts off. The prisoners are abandoned in the near-deserted encampment; they are guarded by four ogres, two of which are wounded.

Once the Inspired have escaped, they still need to overcome the Legion of Summer. Its strength is forty ogres, ten minotaurs and, most of all, four giants. Impossible, think the Inspired? Not quite.

An INT + Strategy roll against DIF 20 will reveal that the strength of this army is divided into two sections: the four giants and Lothorn. If one of these two sections were defeated, it might almost certainly ensure victory. Furthermore, Lothorn has a weakness: he does not like mages, therefore his army has no magical assistance. The use of magic could overwhelm the giants or even Lothorn.

The final combat should take place on D + 34, two days after the Inspired were captured. If the situation becomes too dangerous for the Inspired, the sprites will draw the legion towards the Merry Holt. Once the legion has penetrated the wood, many horrible screams and howls will be heard... then silence. The sprites will come out of the wood and kill the exhausted survivors. They are thirty and they only want one Inspired alive. However, they will attempt to take as many prisoners as possible. The sprites should succeed because of their numbers and their physical conditioning.

THE ALTERATION OF THE MERRY HOLT

In two days time, the wood has completely changed. Instead of the trees, there are hideous tendrils of a gloomy ivy from which hang heavy clusters of enormous dark fruit. A tendril can reach a diameter of 9 feet and a ripe fruit can be the size of a man. In the depths of the wood, a sort of deformed embryo can be seen.

This incredible plant has taken possession of the surrounding countryside, leaving only a few clear spots where crops struggle for survival. Dead bodies are rotting in certain tendrils that seem to be able to attack upon a mysterious signal. The tendrils have also reached the town, whatever the distance from the wood. Houses are covered with them, the inhabitants are so afraid they do not dare run away. Those who tried were choked to death by the plant.

The prisoners are led to the center of the old sylvan fortress. They are then plunged into a fruit that has been

emptied of its innards, and sewn back up by the sprites. In a couple of seconds, the victim is affected by the ghastly stench and falls into unconsciousness – there is no STA roll: failure is automatic unless the victim holds his breath. But why do so? The walls are impregnable without an extremely sharp weapon and the sprites keep an eye on their prisoners.

THE JAILFRUIT

Born of the corruption of the Monarch of the Jonquils, jailfruit is very noxious for the Flame. Each day in its contact requires a WIL roll against DIF 20. If he succeeds, the Inspired gains 1d10 Perfidy points. In case of failure, he obtains 1d10 + 5 Perfidy points.

THE SECOND ESCAPE

Daran will not have been captured by the sprites. If some of the Inspired have also avoided imprisonment, he will join them with a precise map of the labyrinth's bowels. He will not say how he obtained it (he altered his appearance to become a sprite, and simply visited the site during the battle). However, he will make the following comment: anyone who does not have a mysterious sprite "power" must not touch the ivy tendrils. These tendrils sense those who are devoid of this power and attack them. The power is of course Perfidy, but Daran will definitely not say so.

Technically, any character with at least five Perfidy points will not be affected by the tendrils. All others will risk being attacked by the plant: Init. 8, Att. 10, Def. 10, Dam. + 15 (C), HP 30. Tendrils stop attacking if they do not hit their target, or if they are not hit by the target for the three following rounds, or if their HP is down to 0.

Daran does not know this.

They must then reach the prisoners and free them, avoiding, in the meantime, the plant and the sprite patrols. Moreover, as soon as Velius is aware of the escape, he will ask the Monarch of the Jonquils to tighten his tendrils. He will therefore be able to identify anyone who touches a tendril and eventually ask the plant to attack that person. Each minute in the vegetal labyrinth requires an AGI + Dodge roll against DIF 20 (25 if the plant has tightened its tendrils) or AGI + Acrobatics against DIF 15 (20 if the plant has tightened its tendrils). The plant attacks as soon as it is touched while Velius is controlling it. It takes approximately ten minutes to enter or get out of the sylvan fortress. It can be done faster on a successful AGI + Athletics (restrictive Stealth) roll against DIF 20. In case of failure, a patrol of five sprites spots the intruders and attacks. Velius will be aware a couple of minutes later that one of the sprites just has to touched the plant.

CONCLUSION

The Inspired barely escaped. They have nothing left, except the bitterness of having been betrayed. Whom can they count on? The distant echo of war does not suggest that they will find any help at all. They can probably count only on themselves, and perhaps a certain baron of Melif, who has not even been warned of the situation. After all, they have only lost a battle, not the war...

INSPIRATION ALLOTMENT

As well as the IP obtained for their role-playing (AGONE rulebook p. 180), you can distribute more if they have achieved any of the following:

- ♣ Per case solved: 1 point.
- ♣ For the defeat of Mandatgol: 3 points. Only 2 points if his demons are still at large.
- ♣ For the defeat of the Legion of Summer: 4 points. Only 2 points if the sprites actually put an end to the combat.
- ♣ Escaping from Merry Holt fortress: 2 points.

Finally, if a player actually concludes that the intrigue has to do with the corruption of Spring by Fall, grant him 5 extra IP to attribute to Rogue, Intrigue or Body Aspect.

VELIUS'S PRITES

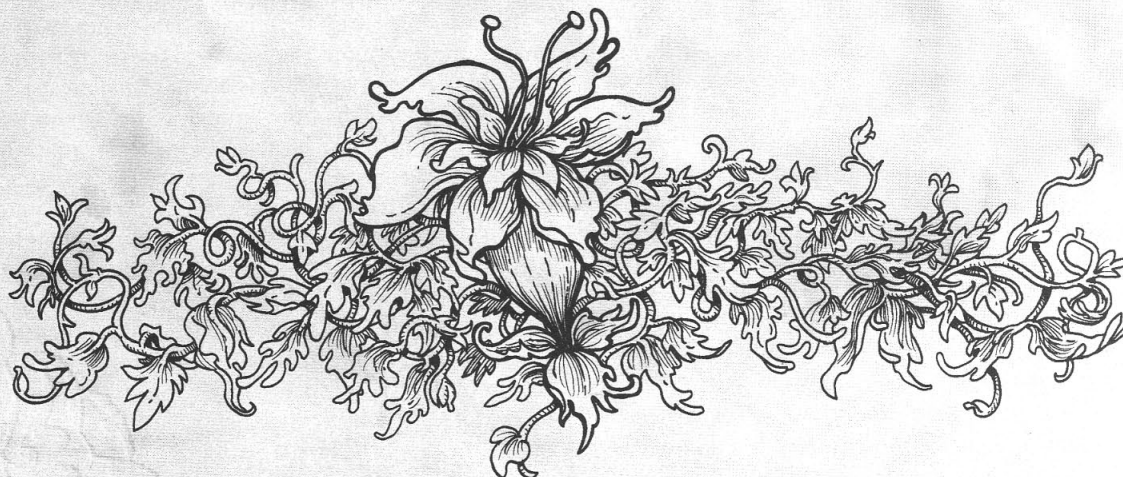
They are corrupt and will fight to death.

SIZ -1
MOV 2
HP 45
DB +0
SWT 15
CWT 22

Init. 18, sword (two-handed) 17
Att. sword (two-handed) 19
Dodge 15
Parry, sword 19
DB +5 (I/S)

Armor: none

Typical quote: Silent concentration.



Acte three: The Game of the Mighty

...She was a highborn lady named Murmur. Some say she is the enigmatic Master of Fall's daughter. As a morgana, her heart remained wild. Yet, her beauty brought her no cheer and her heart was full of sorrow. Murmur was bored. Years were passing and she saw no lover capable of filling the emptiness of her soul. She feared time would make her old and ugly before love could make her blossom. Every evening, as the stars wept for her, she called upon the darkness for a lover.

One night, the darkness answered. Laeghon came to her and told her the legend of the King of Spring and his court of lights. He told her of his feats and of his legendary righteousness. When his narration ended, Murmur was spell-bound. In order to conquer her, he had but to offer a bargain: she would have immortality if she conveyed his regards to his cousin. She agreed. He kissed her.

The pact was sealed.

After months of journeying, led by the wings of her fascination, Murmur succeeded in reaching the Verdant Court. She had to undergo many trials of the Green Watch and of the Crimson Bull, but she was always successful, often thanks to her mentor, Laeghon, who had discreetly followed her. Finally, her good faith and her virtue having been detected, she was brought before the Monarch of the Jonquils. Both beings gazed at each other and understood they were complementary – she, the dusk, he, the dawn. After wooing her and asking her father for her hand, they married... and Laeghon's felony attained its ends. The Monarch kissed Murmur, and her breath entered his body. The Monarch of the Jonquils felt the chill spreading inside. His branches became brittle, and his leaves fell off. He struggled to call upon his Lady, but she was jealous of his love for Murmur, and refused to answer. Then his body froze and shattered. The Monarch of the Jonquils was dead. In the meantime, the troops of Winter charged, led by the frost giants. It was the end of the Green Watch and the Sylvan Court.

No one knows what has become of Murmur.

*The Word of the Dwarven,
The End of the War.*



he third act is the end of the Drama. The Troupe will negotiate their way through the intrigues of the court of Murk, a town in the Mercenary Republic, in order to obtain the help of an eminence grise. A masked ball is the setting for a struggle between the upper classes of the town. The Troupe will

partake in the struggle to obtain an Edict of Janus in order to fight Adeln's artificial spring.

Once they have acquired the edict, the Inspired will be drawn by Daran to resolve their conflict with Selent in a last fight for Selent's Flame. Finally, the Inspired will be able to bring together all the forces acquired in this act to attack the Merry Holt and defeat the Monarch of the Jonquils once and for all.

Dramatization

ATMOSPHERE

Despair is predominant in this act. The Inspired are faced with mythical powers that go far beyond the capacities of mortals. The Ladies of the Seasons grapple as Janus and the Masque reveal themselves through the deeds of their servants, who are after all but pawns.

In the meantime, a feeling of finality surfaces. The intrigues of the previous acts are coming to an end. Encourage the Troupe to feel this idea throughout the conflicts and deaths that will take place in the act. It is the end of an age in Harmundia.

KEY SCENES

There are three key scenes in this act.

The ball in Murk is the first. All is sham and intrigue here. Everybody is maneuvering in order to develop their schemes. The decadent society of Murk must contrast with the purity of the Flames of the Inspired.

The second key scene is the combat against Selent. More than a fight against a minion of the Masque, it is a struggle between Inspired for the Flame. Get Selent talking. He was once a herald of the Muses, and, in a certain way, he is striving to become one again. But you should also reveal his hideous aspect. His death must make the Inspired aware of the dangers of Perfidy.

The third scene, the combat against the Monarch of the Jonquils, must be tragic. The King did not choose Corruption – he is a creature in agony. Demonstrate his pain through moments of lucidity that show on his distorted face. He is a son of nature and should be on their side, not their enemy's.

Scene one: Regrouping

Having just escaped from Adeln's clutches, the Inspired do not know what to do. They obviously need outside assistance to support their struggle. Two factions can be supportive: the Domain of Melif and the Legion of Summer.

THE LEGION OF SUMMER

♣ Attitude towards the Inspired

The Legion has received a fresh supply of troops, led by Lothorn's lieutenants, Lenmack Livecoal and the shaman Frail Ironheart. They arrived too late to save him, so they hope to vindicate his death by continuing his struggle.

The new legion consists of thirty ogres, ten giants and four minotaurs.

♣ Atmosphere

Built on the ruins of the old encampment, this entrenched camp should bring back bad memories for the Inspired. Seasonlings from most of the biggest species are present here, so it requires much prudence to walk around it. A black fey would risk being crushed and even a human should be careful.

Spring seasonlings should be especially discreet, for many children of Summer died during the first attacks.

♣ Positioning

The original purpose of the Legion of Summer was to take the Monarch of the Jonquils back before his power grew too strong. Under the present circumstances, this goal is no longer possible. The ivy is an emanation of this King of Spring that allows him to feel the presence of "non-perfidious" people and stop them from penetrating his Domain. The troops of the Legion of Summer that dared to enter the Merry Holt were paralyzed by roots sprouting out of the soil and then strangled by the tendrils.

The Legion of Summer has therefore rallied at its initial position on the border of the Domain, where the Inspired came to negotiate. The mortals that have joined the Legion are in a state of expectancy. The former general, Lothorn, was killed during the attack on the Merry Holt and his lieutenant, the ogre Lenmack Livecoal, has taken his place. As a fine strategist, he acknowledges the strength of the sprites' position and is searching, with the shaman Frail Ironheart, for a way to counter the "sprite magic".

LENMACK LIVECOAL

♣ Appearance

Lenmack Livecoal is a massive and muscular ogre. Clad in chain mail, the only visible parts of his body are full

LENMACK LIVECOAL

Race: ogre
Sex: male
Age: 70 years old
Height: 6'3" (SIZ 0)
Weight: 225 lbs.
MOV: 3

Attributes
Flame: 0/0

Body: 0/0
Body bonus: 0
AGI: 8
STR: 11
PER: 6
STA: 11
Spirit: 0/0
Spirit bonus: 0
INT: 5
WIL: 6
Soul: 0/0
Soul bonus: 0
CHA: 6
CRE: 2

Secondary attributes
AIM: 7
ART: -
ASC: -
DB: +6
HP: 65
MEL: +9
SWT: 21
CWT: 32

Fortune points: none
Flame powers: none
Seasoning powers: Noon blaze
Darkening: 0
Perfidy: 0

Skills
Trials: Weapon (ogre sword) 9, Alertness 8, Athletics 7, Dodge 7, First aid 5, Ride 6, Survival (spe.: mountains) 7, Swim 5
Rogue: Gambling 5, Hunt 7, Stealth 2
Courtly: Stewardship (spe.: army) 8, Traditions (Horns) 5, Traditions (Urga-

mand) 4, Traditions (Mercenary Republic) 4
Knowledge: Language (Horns) 5, Language (Urgamand) 4, Language (Mercenary) 4, Season (summer) 5, Strategy 8, Surgery 5
Occult: Concord 3

Combat
Initiative: 14, ogre sword 16
Melee attack: ogre sword 19
Distance attack: -
Defense:
Dodge: 15
Parry: ogre sword 19
Distance defense: 7

Armor: none

Weapon	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ
Ogre sword	+2	+1	+1	+5 (S/C)	0

of scars from the numerous battles he has fought. He is one-eyed, and is missing three fingers on his left hand.

♣ Story

Lenmack Livecoal is one of the most loyal generals of the Legions of Summer. He is seventy years old, and he has spent the major part of his life fighting and leading troops, be they human or seasoning. It was during one of these battles that he became friends with Lothorn. The latter recently contacted him in order to second him at the head of his legion in the struggle against the Monarch of the Jonquils.

But nothing took place as Lothorn thought. Lenmack Livecoal is now faced with an unexpected event: he cannot attack the Merry Holt and lay siege to it. He thus awaits and consults his tacticians in order to find a solution. He secretly fears that the sprites will spread their influence on the region by extending the ghastly ivy.

♣ Relationship with the Inspired

Lenmack Livecoal is very interested in them. Only they know exactly what is happening in the wood. He will ask them to draw precise maps of the site, specifying the number of sprites and their activities. He will be reassured if the Inspired tell him that the Monarch has not yet blossomed, for he would like some time to find a way out.

If the Inspired proved their honor and their valor during the last act, he will invite them to the war councils and will accord great value to their advice.

After several days, he will bring them before the shaman Frail Ironheart in order to work with them on a solution.

♣ Typical quote

(throwing a table out of the tent) "By the Noon blaze! Another troop lost. Ahhh! Should we be ridiculed by a flower?!"

FRAIL IRONHEART

♣ Appearance

Frail Ironheart is a giant. As shaman of Summer he is quite noticeable: he is covered in red and orange body-paint, and wears many drums tied to his belt. He shines kindness through his gentle features and sad blue eyes.

♣ Story

He was the third child of an aging mother. Many thought the sickly child would never survive in the ruthless world of giants. His mother, a priestess of a cult devoted to an incarnation of the Lady of Summer, offered her health for the life of her child. The Lady of Summer probably heard her prayer, for Frail - he kept the name given by the members of his clan - grew up to be a powerfully built young giant. In return, he devoted his life to serve the Lady of Summer. His proximity to his season enabled him to feel the presence of the Monarch of the Jonquils. It is also he who convinced his people to rally a Legion of Summer to put an end to the threat.

FRAIL IRONHEART

Kingdom: Wild Reaches
Race: giant **Sex:** male
Age: 46 years old
Height: 13'7" (SIZ + 3)
Weight: 1375 lbs. **MOV:** 3

Attributes
 Flame: 3/0

Body: 4/0
 Body bonus: 4
 AGI: 3
 STR: 18
 PER: 7
 STA: 16
Spirit: 3/0
 Spirit bonus: 3
 INT: 7
 WIL: 8
Soul: 4/0
 Soul bonus: 4
 CHA: 5
 CRE: 8

Secondary attributes

AIM: 5
 ART: 6
 ASC: -
 DB: +35
 HP: 155
 MEL: 8
 SWT: 51
 CWT: 77

Fortune points: 6

Flame powers: Gift of Flame, Tongue of fire

Seasonling powers: Empathy with nature, Ramming

Skills

Trials: Weapon (giant mallet) 9, Weapon (rock throwing) 5, Alertness 5, Athletics 9, Dodge 8, Survival (sp.: mountains) 5
Rogue: Hunt 7

Courtly: Traditions (Urgamand) 3, Traditions (Janrenian) 4, Painting 9
Knowledge: Astronomy 7, Beast lore 7, Geography 5, Language (Urgamand) 5, Language (Janrenian) 5, Plant lore 6, Season (summer) 5, Season (spring) 3
Occult: Concord 8, Vista 8

Assets, gifts: Flame Giver

Combat

Initiative: 14, giant mallet 16, rock (thrown) 16
 Melee attack: giant mallet 22
 Distance attack: rock 15
 Defense:
 Dodge: 11
 Parry: giant mallet 20
 Distance defense: 5

Armor: none

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ
Giant mallet	+2	+1	-1	+12 (C)	+3
Rock	+2	+1	-	+6 (C)	+2

He did not agree with Lothorn, whom he found too fiery, but he does lament the leader's death and the deaths of all his soldiers. He tends to prefer Lenmack, for he considers him a more discerning chief and more caring about his troops than his predecessor.

♣ Relationship with the Inspired

Even though he does not like war or violence, Frail Ironheart must support the Legion's troops with his magic. He is the seasonling least prone to violence of the entire Legion of Summer. He will attempt to find a solution that leads to the fewest deaths in both the Legion and in the Troupe's Domain. In spite of his intimidating look, Frail Ironheart is probably the character that will be the most supportive of the Inspired. He is an Inspired and a Flame Giver. Although he is not a member of the Decan Council, he has many friends there and will suggest making contact with them to help solve the situation.

♣ Typical quote

"Another charge? Don't you ever learn through experience? The cold tendrils of that ivy will devour your fury and feed on it. It will only weaken us. You're more intelligent than that."

OPTIONS

Once they have established contact with the Legion of Summer, the Inspired will have the following options.

♣ Leading a charge against the sprites

Frail will be opposed to this solution. And indeed, such an attempt would result in failure. The Monarch's ivy protects the Domain far too well from "non-perfidious" characters. As soon as the Inspired enter a contaminated area, the ground begins to shake and roots grow out of the soil to entangle any available targets. In order to simulate this situation, require AGI + Dodge rolls against DIF 10 each round to dodge attacks, and STR against DIF 20 when an Inspired needs to extricate himself from the roots. A character imprisoned in the ivy will undergo 1d10 damage points per round, and any armor protection is ignored. The sprites will then finish off the prisoners!

♣ Discreetly entering the Domain

This strategy, even though it may seem better than the first option, will also fail. The merest glimpse of the fort, INT + Strategy (or Survival) against DIF 20, will enable the Inspired to realize that the Merry Holt is too well-guarded and that entering it is impossible for one who is not a sprite. Even if the Troupe has a sprite willing to help them, Lenmack and Frail will be opposed to it. Basically, Lenmack suspects any Spring seasonling of disloyalty. On the other hand, Frail will then warn the Inspired of the true danger. It is neither Adeln nor Velius, but the Monarch of the Jonquils. His power over Nature is so strong that his presence threatens the fragile balance established by Janus between the Ladies of the Seasons. Seasonlings cannot kill him for he is a King of the Seasons.



SEEKING AN ETERNAL...

It becomes obvious that the only solution left for the Inspired is to solicit the involvement of Janus. An INT + Season (or Concord) roll against DIF 10 will allow them to see the transgression of the sprites against the nature of things. Indeed, the artificial spring created by the sprites trespasses on the other seasons' territory. Only Janus, with a Sentence, would be able to restore stability. But how to contact him?

- Janus is a secretive being.
- His role in Harmundia is subtle.
- Few have the required capabilities to call upon him: the Council of the Decans, who represent the Ladies of the Seasons before Janus, the eminences grise, and certain rare Damned who redeemed their Flame.

Note: If necessary, Frail will be able to tell the Inspired the above information.

♣ Turning to the Decans

If the Inspired try to call upon the Council of the Decans, Frail will be able to forward their request. Two weeks will then be necessary before a disappointing answer is returned: the procedure cannot succeed. Indeed, the representative of the sprites refuses to vote and prevents any decision.

♣ Turning to an eminence

The only option left is to call upon an eminence grise. They are very hard to find – the first rule of their order is secrecy because they need to be able to keep an eye on the mighty of Harmundia without being suspected.

If your Inspired do not know an eminence grise, Lenmack will help them. He befriended an eminence after the victory of his troops protecting the city of Murk in 1432, in the Mercenary Republic. Her name is Selimona and she lives in Murk.

It is up to the Inspired to go there and find her.

BACK TO MELIF

Another option is for the Inspired is to go back to the barony of Melif. There are several reasons for such a decision that Daran will point out.

The barony of Melif is probably the closest ally of the Domain of the Inspired. Moreover, the baron of Melif is indebted towards the Inspired. Finally, the barony of Melif is a major military power and an ally in the struggle for inspiration. For these reasons, it is quite possible that the baron would decide to involve his Domain in their problem.

♣ Atmosphere

At their arrival in Melif, the Inspired should be surprised by the contrast between their first visit and the

present situation. The manor is crowded and overjoyed. The courtesans throng before the baron to hear the recounting of the end of the curse or to help him in his plans for future. Indeed, with the intrusion of the sprites and the arrival of the Legion of Summer in the Troupe's Domain, he is preparing himself for war. Gloomwind and the manor are alive with soldiers, cooks and lackeys. There are many carriages being filled – a sign of the coming preparations.

But there is one unusual omen in the midst of this joyful atmosphere: the mountain has been shaking a little. People fear the Evilen may have decided to sink the reigning family and the manor into the depths of the mountain.

♣ Reception

The baron and his wife will be delighted to hear of the arrival of the Inspired. They are welcomed as soon as their presence is known and the reception lives up to their feats.

The most luxurious rooms are provided to them (more luxurious than those for dignitaries from any other Domain), and the baron will be take pleasure in confiding in them or in merely seeing them at any moment of the day.

He will be open to their requests and will offer his assistance. The services he can provide are the following:

♣ Fifty armed men as well as the adequate support for them, one or two catapults and one battering ram. These troops will prove to be a great asset in a direct combat, but, in any case, will not be able to recover the Troupe's Domain. If they attempt to do so, they will be annihilated by the ivy tendrils and the roots before even coming in sight of the Merry Holt.

♣ Receiving the Domain's refugees. The baron will take care of their lodgings. The barony is prosperous and the refugees can provide manpower for the war preparations. Moreover, the troops of the Domain of the Inspired may have withdrawn to Melif when they lost the Domain. It is up to you, Eminence, to determine their forces depending on the conflict and the Domain's available troops.

♣ Serving as an ambassador to negotiate with the Legion of Summer. This option enables you, Eminence, to give Frail's information to the Inspired and to grant them the assistance of the Legion. But will the Troupe trust the Legion after the events that occurred in Act Two?

♣ Advice on the best course of action. Even though Tharon is a Dullen, he has certain contacts within the Council of the Decans. He understands the dilemma of the Inspired, and can give them the same information as Frail Ironheart and Lenmack Livecoal. He can contact the Council of the Decans (with the same response but only after four weeks) and also suggest a search for an eminence grise. Here again, he will point them to Murk,

which he visited three years ago whilst seeking support in his struggle with the malediction.

♣ Tharon will not commit the entire resources of his Domain. Indeed, he wants to keep open the possibility of a withdrawal in case the fight is lost and the sprites decide to invade Melif. Moreover, he still fears for the life of his wife and will never leave her unprotected as long as Selent has not been defeated.

Scene two: The quest for an eminence

MURK

Murk is a large city of over thirty thousand inhabitants. Located eighty miles from Darkdream in the Draaken Mountains, Murk is on the border between the Mercenary Republic and the Widowlands. A traveler approaching the city proceeds over well-kept roads that can be quite steep for horses. Indeed, the roads are abrupt and twisting. Brigands often take advantage of these roads to ambush travelers. One in six caravans does not arrive in Murk. Nevertheless, the city thrives.

Murk is built in a narrow valley between three surrounding mountains and its mere existence is a proof of human and seasonling brilliance. The city consists of hundreds of jumbled houses, sometimes one on top of the other. There are so many different architectural styles that the first impression is chaotic. Only over time can one admire the beauty of the diversity. A waterfall emerges from the slopes of the city, spewing dark water into the valley below. It is this river, the Murk, that gave the city its name.

The oldest reinforced constructions are below the surface of the city. Watchtowers are entangled by underground markets and covered arenas, which bear the weight of dwellings or warehouses on their roofs.

The city is organized in stratums. The less wealthy inhabitants rarely see the daylight while they strive to survive in a world of thieves. The most prosperous citizens live in aerial towers that rise above the roofs of the city, without ever seeing the lower stratums.

♣ The city of masks

Murk was born of fear. In 1161, the young Mercenary Republic felt threatened by the creation of the Widowlands. The Widowlands represented immediate danger in the form of a nearby seasonling kingdom, moreover, a kingdom led by medusae, who are well-known for their manipulations.

Several guard posts were established, including the guard post of Murk. The soldiers stationed here discovered the first veins of precious stones in the depths of the surrounding mountains.

THE EARTH IS SHAKING!

The earthquakes that are shaking the mountain on which the manor of Melif is built are caused by the theft of the seed of the Monarch of the Jonquils. A slight heat used to emanate from the seed, for it was full of the energy of Spring, and it comforted the giants of frost in their sleep. Without the heat of the seed, the giants are waking, slowly but ineluctably. Their stirrings shake the walls of the mountain and worry the villagers.

The awakening of the giants of frost and their devastation of the Domain is not planned in this Drama. However, the Inspired will most certainly try to solve this mystery. They will have to discover the open passages left by Adeln in the deepest tunnels and oubliettes. Then, the corridors and passageways become frosty and the air is freezing. After many hours of awkward descent into the depths of the mountain, the Inspired enter a cavern with ice-walls from which radiates a cold blue light. In the center, they will find an empty pedestal surrounded by twenty gigantic bodies: the sleeping giants of frost. They are over thirteen feet high, with bodies made of ice as hard as a diamond.

Then one of the giants turns his head toward the Inspired. The walls shake to his movement and the vault seems near collapse. The giants will wake after approximately two years if a source of heat, such as a brazier, is not set up in the cavern.

MURK

Body: 6/0

Army: 7

Defense: 6

Denizens: 8

Organization: 7

Spirit: 7/6

Finance: 7

Information: 7

Soul: 3/4

Magic: 3

Diplomatic relations: 6

The dark Aspects of the city are caused by its corruption, especially the criminal element. The Unveiled Regent is actually a demon. He escaped from the Abyss after attempting to assert his authority in the demonic hierarchy. This Obsidian is now trying to take over the entire city. He exerts pressure on the Coronet (ruler of Murk) by methodically undermining the latter's contacts and means in the lower stratums, and by infiltrating the upper levels. He uses many children to mine the deepest stratums in order to find new gem veins with which he hopes to buy enough elector offices to win the next elections. Hence, he would become Coronet as well as Unveiled Regent.

Note: it is impossible for a giant to access every level of the city. A giant player-character will have to stay within the upper stratums of Murk. The ballroom will, however, be accessible.

Subsequently, many civilians were drawn to the region by the lure of profit. They settled around the Murk guard post to excavate gems. Very few actually succeeded, but enough did to create the appropriate infrastructure necessary for their survival. The first houses emerged. Soon enough, open space on the plateau was used up. The old buildings were reinforced and new ones were built on top of them.

Nowadays, the Mercenary Republic no longer fears the Widowlands. The wealth as well as the quality of the troops make the republic one of the most powerful states in Harmundia. The Widowlands prefer to remain isolated, but nevertheless, Murk prospers. Even though the main stone veins have been tapped out, the city has become one of the primary trade centers between the Widowlands and western Harmundia. The underground bazaars are full all year long, and the treasury of the city levies a tax on each contract.

THE COSTUMES

There is a tradition in Murk according to which a costume is sold depending on the nature of the person who will wear it. In Murk, masquerade is a cult through which, instead of concealment and secrecy, masks are used to reveal feelings and personality.

All mask makers of the city are, in a certain way, craftsmen-psychologists whose main purpose is to determine the buyer's personality with an acute morphological study and several precise questions. You should play out the discussion with the mask maker with the Inspired, and you should attribute a specific costume to each member of the Troupe.

A courageous Inspired might be granted the costume of a lion, while a charismatic Inspired might receive a golden outfit that represents the sun. Seasonlings are clothed with a symbolic representation of their season (moss and ivy for a sprite, stone and snow for a dwarf,...).

The costumes should also reveal the Offices of the Inspired. A lord or a noble would have a costume bearing the arms of his family or Domain, whereas a master of the hunt would wear a costume that represented a dog or a deer.

Traditions

The city of Murk, influenced by the paranoia inherent to its origins, has very odd customs.

The first is the Law of the Masks. Medusae are known to strongly affect the hearts of the men they look at, and legends about their petrifying gaze have survived. Consequently, it was decided that no one should show his or her face in town. Therefore, today everyone wears a mask. For the wealthiest, the masks are often unique creations, such as embroidered wolves or theme masks changed every day. The poor have to satisfy themselves with long hoods pulled over their faces or with rags wrapped around their heads. The consequence of such a law is an incredible distance in relationships. Indeed, the identity of a given person can completely change depending on the mask worn. Murk's exact total population is therefore a mystery. Transgression of the Law of the

Masks is a three-day imprisonment for a first offence, and a one-month banishment for a second.

The second tradition is the carnival. Once every hundred months (ten years) the ruler of Murk (the Coronet) changes. This event is the pretext for a series of parades, balls and feasts for the upper classes lasting two weeks. Everyone shows themselves to good advantage, especially the candidates for the crown, who must not speak a word during the entire celebration, but must present their program through costumes and mime.

By the end of the festivities, the electors – the hundred people who pay the most taxes to the city treasury – vote. The candidate who obtains the most votes is granted the throne for the next ten years.

At the same time, the inferior stratum elect the Unveiled Regent, their equivalent of the Coronet. The Unveiled Regent has no legal power, but rules over the scum of the lower levels of Murk. No one knows how and by whom he is elected, but his existence is proved by many reports.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE INSPIRED

After the long and dangerous journey that leads the Inspired to Murk, they face one of the three gates to the city. It is before the solid oak and metal gates that the ancient purpose of the city as a fortress against the Widowlands becomes unmistakable.

If the Inspired have a recommendation letter from the baron of Melif, from the regent of their Domain, or from Lenmack Livecoal, they will have no difficulty reaching the highest spheres of influence where the eminence grise they seek operates. If not, they will have to utilize their Offices, or attempt to infiltrate the highest stratum (which is a very risky option, for security intensifies with each stratum). In any case, as soon as they arrive in town, they will have to acquire their masks quickly or face the pain of banishment from all public sites in Murk.

Once they are masked, the Inspired will be able to join the busy life of the city.

The carnival is just beginning...

PRELIMINARY CONTACT

Whether the Inspired are trying to get in touch with the eminence grise or not, they will receive a message the day after their arrival inviting them to one of the upper-class parties (Handout 3 p. 59).

It is up to the Inspired to dress suitably. If they do not have enough money to do so, the messenger – a young man with a pigeon mask – will provide them with costumes.

At the agreed time, guides will lead the Inspired to the reception hallway. It is under a vaulted glass ceiling in the center of Murk, on the highest stratum. If the Inspired have been in town for several days, they will be delighted to see the light of the setting sun at last. Eve-

rything here is luxurious and magnificent. In between the tapestries that cover the plaster wall are numerous works of art representing scenes of the history of Harmundia, such as its genesis, an interpretation of the War of the Seasons and the establishment of the guard post that would become Murk. There are many soft sofas and large dishes through out the ballroom. The floor is full of iron-barred openings from which waltz music, performed by an orchestra on the floor below, emanates.

You are free to take advantage of the paintings and of the décor to remind the Inspired of their quest, or to motivate them. The representations of the Season Wars can depict the Monarch of the Jonquils crushing a troop of dwarves or even sprites demolishing a spriggan settlement.

It is also possible to use them to stimulate the Inspired. Certain works of art could bear Vista or Shape opuses that would be interesting for the Troupe if they could take them for study. They will have to ask the permission of their host.

When the Troupe arrives, the ballroom is already full of at least a hundred masked people. Some are dancing, but most of them are talking in small groups.

There are many costumes, most of which are multi-colored. It will be difficult to guess who is the eminence grise. If the Inspired ask, no one will know the answer. The court has no idea that one of the mysterious eminences of the Borrowlight is shadowing them. Most guests will laugh at the possibility and will take offence at any proof of his presence.

Play with the atmosphere of the ball. The high society of Murk is unbridled and decadent. The masks allow them to indulge every extravagance. Libertinage is common. As the Inspired are strangers, they are courted as a novelty. Many will try to seduce them, ask their political or military advice and, most of all, question them about their lives and origins...

The majority of the guests are human, so Inspired seasonlings will feel watched even though few will dare talk with them. Diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Inspired could be very interesting for their Domain. Indeed, some are ready to support their war with troops or weapons in exchange for money, and others are interested in trade agreements. Once again, the Offices of the Inspired will be very important. Nobles are the most highly esteemed, and will draw many courtesans, both male and female, to them. Wealthy Inspired will be contacted for trade matters...

Eminence, we advise you to play these scenes on the side, so that each Inspired has the possibility to develop his or her own plots. The court is a site of many intrigues, even more at the approach of the Coronation. There are countless possibilities for the Inspired as well as for the guests.

Several hours after the arrival of the Troupe, a hand will find its way to the Inspired with the highest CHA. It is Selimona, the eminence grise of the Domain. She will explicitly seduce the character, whether the Inspi-

THE COMEDY

"The Comedy" is a luxurious hotel located in one of the finest stratum of Murk. Although it is impossible to see the sky from the building, the rooms are comfortable and the food is excellent. The only inconvenience is Marold the innkeeper, a former actor who had to regretfully stop his career because of his marriage. He thus changed a normal hotel into a theater. The price of a room is moderate: three gold pieces for a single, plus two gold pieces for an abundant meal. In return, every evening, one and all must behave in a specific manner, specifically chosen by the innkeeper. One evening, a customer will have to play the part of a traveler who came to town to see his daughter without knowing that his neighbor is a con man who is looking for an easy victim (the con man will be played more or less willingly by a peaceful modehan druid). The next evening, the program will be different.

The roles are only supposed to be played in the hotel, but certain customers have so much fun they decide to go on with it for the entire evening...

red be a man or woman – Murk is a liberal city – and will ask covertly why the Inspired are seeking her. If she is asked, she will admit having invited them to the ball. A physionomist Inspired will recognize her page – now dressed as a falcon – as the messenger who delivered the invitations earlier in the morning.

MISSION

The Inspired will have to convince Selimona of the necessity of their quest and of their need for the Sentence of Janus. She will insist on the fact that Janus is an Eternal and that mortals cannot demand anything from him. She will not help the Troupe directly. She will ask them to do her a favor to "show their good faith".

There is a messenger from the lower stratum among the guests. He must deliver a message to the Coronet from the Unveiled Regent. Selimona needs that message in order to maintain the cohesion of the city. The Inspired will have to discover the messenger and discreetly steal the message before it is delivered to the Coronet.

♣ Means

The first difficulty of Selimona's test is to identify the messenger from the lower layers of Murk. The following methods can be used to do so.

♣ A PER + Intrigue roll against DIF 15 will show that two individuals stay on the fringes of the social groups. They are Engarand of Dimwind and Ivan.

♣ If the Troupe asks the most worldly persons, Lady Adorna and Ermaline (described below) about Ivan, they will find out that no one has yet seen him, although his manners and his accent are typical of Murk. Obtaining this information will require a prominent Office, unless the Inspired succeeds in a CHA + Diplomacy roll against DIF 10, or in a CHA + Fast talk against DIF 13.

♣ Ivan's mask (see below) could awaken their suspicions.

♣ The use of certain spells or opuses could also help. An Inspired could use Scansion to see the recent past or future of the guests.

Once they have identified Ivan, they will still have to obtain the document.

♣ The most obvious way is to steal it. It will require an AGI + Legerdemain roll against DIF 15 to steal the message and an AGI + Stealth against DIF 18 for Ivan not to notice it. Such an action will be impossible for an Inspired with a SIZ greater than +1.

♣ It is also possible for a very convincing Inspired to persuade Ivan that he is a representative of the Coronet. Such an action will require a Fast talk roll against DIF 20. This roll can be avoided if the Inspired can provide evidence to make Ivan believe his legitimacy; for example, if he is able to have a long talk with the Coronet that all can observe.

♣ Certain opuses (Fascination, Alter memory) and spells can compel him to hand over the message.

♣ Finally, it is possible to fight Ivan and to steal the message once he is dead or stunned. The Inspired should have a good reason to fight, because the guards will throw out anyone who starts a fight without an excellent excuse. A female Inspired could seduce Ivan and lead him to proposition her. Her "husband" could then demand a duel. The guests would be delighted to draw aside.

♣ Guests

There are over one hundred guests at the ball. The most important are briefly described here.

IVAN

Ivan is a seventeen-year-old young man, already hardened by years of plots and survival. His skin is very pale and his hair is dark. He is of medium size and wears a dark bloodhound costume. His only weapon is a dagger. He bears the message from the Unveiled Regent in the inside lining of his doublet.

SIZ 0, MOV 3, HP 50, DB + 0, SWT 16, CWT 25

Init. 10, dagger 10, sword 11

Att. dagger 11, sword 12

Dodge 11

Parry dagger 10, sword 12

DB dagger +2, sword +4

Armor: vest of heavy cloth (penalty 0, protection 1)

Typical quote: "but Sir, I do not know you."

Ivan is one of the Unveiled Regent's most loyal spies. Since his arrival, he has served as a liaison between the Regent's troops. He is loyal to death, but does have certain weaknesses that could cause the failure of his mission. The first is his inexperience with court games. Though he took part in several balls on the lower stratum, he is not used to so much opulence. Therefore, he avoids any excess, eats very little, and is extremely nervous. Moreover, he does not know any of the guests, and is thus isolated, awaiting the right moment to deliver his message unnoticed to the sovereign. His second weakness is women. He has never seen such beautiful and highborn women. It will not be difficult to seduce him if one of the female Inspired tries.

Engarand of Dimwind is a former Urganish general, who has now retired. He became famous in the course of numerous battles, including the Liturgical Crusade of 1415, and has always attracted attention with his incredible sense of tactics. He is one of the five best strategists in Harmundia. After decades of victories, very often outnumbered or under equipped, the old man retired to Murk to try his new hobby. He believes that human reactions in social groups can be controlled the same way as in an army. He is thus improving his knowledge of the art of subtle manipulation in order to obtain given reactions that are often unapparent. His weapons are feelings and information.

Engarand of Dimwind is a frail seventy-year-old man. He has almost no hair, but his expression still sparkles with the wit of a passionate young man. His costume is a fox in ceremonial armor.

Lady Adorna is the direct descendant of one of Murk's founders. She is probably its wealthiest and best-known figure. She is a middle-aged woman, still beautiful and plump. She is constantly escorted by many courtesans, who take delight in her words and tales. She and her rival, Ermaline, lay down the laws of the fashion for the upper stratum of Murk.

Lady Adorna will seek to talk to any Inspired who seems noble. She dreams of an alliance with a family of prosperous (and noble, if possible) landowners. She will seek to marry her daughter, Cecilia, a quite unattractive nineteen-year-old damsel, to any lord or rich merchant from another city.

It would be a mistake to make an enemy of her, for she can ruin the Troupe's social life in Murk.

She is wearing a peacock costume and always carries a massive fan.

Ermaline, a young widow, is Adorna's antithesis. Whereas Adorna is noble and refined, Ermaline is a young woman who has rebelled against what she considers a corrupt society. Her weapon in this struggle is excess. Ermaline seduces men and women with might and main. In her quest for pleasure, she seeks freshness and she will attempt to seduce any seasonling guests. She will not

hesitate to strip naked if it might provoke outrage. Her vocabulary is colorful and her temper tantrums are memorable. However, if an Inspired can see beyond this façade, he will perceive a young woman of twenty-four years in search of her identity and her role in a society that ignores her. Her husband was killed seven months ago by assassins from the lower stratas. She is still naive in her own way. What really irritates her is that many young girls from the upper stratum have modeled themselves on her.

Ermaline is blond, blue-eyed and slender. She usually wears a white dress and a mask of a dove.

The Coronet, who has ruled the city for the last ten years, is actually Nor Grinber, a former mercenary enriched by many years of looting. He applied his knowledge of tactics and leadership to his electoral campaign, and was crowned in Murk. He is now a completely fulfilled man. His function has enabled him to obtain everything he had ever dreamt of, including the recognition he never had as a soldier. He controls the city as best he can, by counterbalancing the numerous factions so that he remains the one and only ruler of Murk. Alas, his regime and the city are crumbling away. The lower stratum are breaking loose, and this degeneration is spreading to the higher layers of the city. With the approach of the next election, the Coronet fears that his unknown enemy (the Unveiled Regent) will make his moves more openly. This is the last year he can use his authority to express his opinions. He will take advantage of that.

THE HAND OF JANUS

In the theater of Harmundia, where this Drama is acted out, it would be wrong to believe there is only one director. Ever since the Eclipse, two Eternals have fought through their mortal intermediaries: the Masque and his brother, Janus. Both are capable of divining the future. The Masque, in the role of scriptwriter, plans out what is to occur. Meanwhile, Janus influences the future by manipulating events with minor alterations in order to achieve his goals. The Edict Selimona delivers to the Inspired is a perfect example of his manipulations.

Janus integrated it into Harmundia when Selimona left the Borrowlight School.

The parchment was given to her by her master with specific orders not to open it, but to deliver it to its rightful recipients during a ball, "at a propitious moment".

Janus' methods are not so different from those of his perfidious brother: he maneuvers his pawn, the eminences grise. Furthermore, he is no more reliable than the Master of the Sham. He is the Regulator, who often changes his mind and gives another chance to those whom he has punished. For a long time, the eminences grise have believed that Janus might be schizophrenic.

It is not surprising that, during the First Symposium, an Obscurantist eminence remarked: "the Fourth Age will most certainly be dark".

SOMNOLENT PEARLS

Somnolent Moss that grows on the rocks of the cliffs of the Widowlands coasts. It is known to be used as an analgesic and to have light soporific effects. It tends to accumulate in successive layers over the years, and sometimes, extremely small foreign matter (sand, small bones...) is assimilated. It reacts as do oysters, covering the intruders with a layer of grayish porous nacre that gives them a spherical shape. Somnolent pearls are eagerly sought after. They are one of the most highly reputed soporifics in Harmundia. They simply need to be crushed into powder and mixed in a drink or a meal without anyone noticing, or they can be thrown in a fire to send a group to sleep. Someone who ate the moss itself would be immune to the effect of the Somnolent pearls.

VIR: 25 (breathed in)/30 (ingested)

Rarity: 25

Effect: a person who fails to resist immediately falls into a deep sleep. It is then impossible to wake the victim for the next ten hours. If the resistance roll is successful, the victim will feel slow and unskillful. The victim is able to perform one action once every two rounds, with a -10 penalty to all actions.

Recognizing Somnolent or its effects requires an INT + Plant lore roll against DIF 20.

Selimona is an eminence grise who was schooled at the first Borrowlight. A contemporary of Agone of Roun-drock, she never acknowledged him as Diurn's heir. Selimona has been keeping an eye on Murk for the last twenty years. She never wears the same costumes, and is therefore extremely difficult to identify. No one in Murk really knows her. She uses this as a weapon in order to protect Murk from many plots. She employs men at the gates of the city as well as in each stratum. However, she has become anxious because her agents, who are infiltrated in the deepest stratum, have been sending her less alarming reports than before. She now doubts their loyalty.

Her costume, at least this evening, is a cream-colored silk dress and a crying mask.

Outcome

Once the Inspired have the message, they will probably try to find Selimona. Alas, the eminence grise has disappeared. All their inquiries will be fruitless. Most guests will not even remember that strange woman. The Inspired can read the Unveiled Regent's message (Handout 4 p. 60), but it will not reveal much information. Moreover, it will disappear several hours after they steal it. Selimona, or her page, has filched it. The Inspired will find, the next time they enter their rooms at the hotel, a roll of old parchment sealed with a gray ribbon as well as a note thanking them for their efforts (Handouts 5 and 6 pp. 61-62). It is Janus' Edict.

BETRAYAL

There will be one unexpected hitch on the return journey of the Inspired. When they are only a few leagues away from their destination (Melif, the encampment of the Legion, or their Domain), Daran will steal the Edict while

the Inspired are asleep. If Selent's henchman is part of the Troupe and is trusted by its members, he will ask, as usual, his watch turn and will take the Edict at that moment. If it is impossible, he will use Somnolent pearls.

Once the Troupe is asleep, Daran takes the Edict and joins a nearby troop of draaken. They have kept a horse for him, allowing him to get to his master. Daran leaves Selent's letter (Handout 7 p. 63) so that the Inspired see it at their awakening.

Scene three: See Melif and die?

The Inspired do not have any choices left. Their enemy has appeared once again. Without the Edict, all they have accomplished during this act will be in vain. They must recover it. They have a rendezvous with Selent at Melif Manor.

ATMOSPHERE

Once again, the atmosphere of the barony has changed in their absence. At their arrival in Gloomwind, the Inspired will be surprised to see how the city has become sinister and silent. The windows are all closed and only a couple of chimneys emit a thin plume of smoke. The inhabitants have hidden themselves in their houses. The air is saturated with death and fear.

If asked, the inhabitants will tell the following story: their new lord came a week ago with a troop of armed men and nightmarish reptilian creatures. In only a couple of hours, the Domain was his. The baron, his wife and their child died after a mock trial. The troops of the usurper then established martial law in the Domain. Nobody has dared to come out of their houses since then. The new baron's troops are constantly patrolling the streets and no one has the courage to face them.

When the Inspired head towards the manor, they will notice some of these men - pale humans with light armor (Use the Soldier profile in *The Gray Papers*). The majority are mounted, while many others have war dogs. They do not try to pick a quarrel with the Troupe and let them pass. Selent has warned them of their arrival - their orders are to not interfere.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Selent had been weaving his plan for long while. After he fought the Inspired who bears his Flame, he was

almost happy for the first time in centuries. Indeed, he hopes that if he can recover his Flame, he will become a mortal again and will no longer have to suffer from the cold he feels inside him. He will then also be able to recover his title: Baron of Melif.

This is why he sent Daran to the Inspired. His orders were to protect them and to find a way to make them come back to Selent. So Daran stole the Edict. In the meantime, Selent rallied his army. He mobilized Paledale (his Domain, see the appendix) and called upon the support of his allies, the draaken.

Tharon's army tried to resist, but it had been heavily infiltrated by Selent's henchmen, metamorphosed draaken who substituted themselves for the commanders of the army. The barony had no hope of survival. After the first battle, Selent simply had to enter the manor to take over. Tharon, Lucille and their child were hanged in the town square. It is the sign of a new era, said Selent to the inhabitants.

Selent now lives alone in the manor. He spends his days wandering the corridors and purifying himself for what he calls his ultimate trial: a final confrontation with the Inspired.

The only value of the Edict for him is as a lure. However, he always keeps it with him.

THE CLASH

After having entering the empty manor, the Inspired will have to head to the throne room to meet their fate.

Selent is sitting languidly on the throne of the barons of Melif. He is dressed in Tharon's clothes - their resemblance is now striking. Without his blond hair, it would be easy to mistake him for Tharon. All around him, there are many flat candlesticks that light every dark recess, and a braziers (the former banners of Melif) from which emanate an unpleasant heat. Daran is beside him, having assumed his draaken appearance.

At the arrival of the Inspired, Selent rises with a sneering smile on his face. He courteously asks them to enter his throne room. It is a moment of triumph for him, the return of his Flame. He killed the baroness, not for vengeance or to accomplish the malediction, but to recover what he considers his.

The Inspired will undoubtedly be outraged, especially the bearer of Selent's Flame, which is painfully burning in his torso to the rhythm of his heartbeat.

After a brief conversation with Selent, the combat begins.

Selent's strategy is as follows: He will first try to disable the bearer of his Flame, for he represents the greatest danger, without killing him. Once that is done, he will attack mages and Concordists before everyone else. Then, he will come back to the bearer of his Flame and he will take his time to drain his heat. Daran will fight at his side, without ever attacking the bearer of his master's Flame.

The Inspired do stand a chance against Selent, especially if they are prepared for the fight. The visions that



affected the bearer of Selent's Flame will have enabled him to notice some of the Sinister Knight's weaknesses. Moreover, his intimacy with the Felon grants the Inspired a thorough knowledge of Selent's combat tactics (represented by a -5 penalty for all Selent's rolls against him). With sword ablaze, the evil Selent should be overthrown at the end of an epic combat.

This is a key moment of the Drama. Your Inspired should be aware of the Sinister Knight's power. He has plagued Harmundia for the past seven hundred years and he is one of the most powerful creatures of the Masque. He radiates Perfidy and a Corruption roll will be required.

Once Selent dies, his body spontaneously catches fire. In seconds, it is reduced to ash, leaving a stain of soot on the floor that will never wear away. The Melif Manor is left cold and empty.

There is no need to search for the Edict of Janus. Selent put it on a dais next to the throne.

Outside, Selent's troops are surprised to see the Troupe coming out of the manor. The news of his death circulates within their ranks and disorganizes them. An Inspired with leadership abilities could rally them to his banner, becoming the new heir to Melif and Paledale (unless one of Selent's seconds unites his army to take control of both Domains? Daran, maybe?)

Scene four: Death of a King

THE SENTENCE

Once they have arrived at their destination (Melif, the camp of the Legion or any other predetermined location), the Inspired can open the Edict. After they take off the gray ribbon, the ancient parchment opens up and reveals the Sentence (cf. Handout 6 p. 62).

The Sentence is unquestionable, as can be confirmed by an INT + Law (or Concord) roll against DIF 10 (or 5, if Concord is used) or by a CRE + Poetry against DIF 12. Janus settles the litigation between the seasons and restores the natural cycle of seasons. The protection granted to the sprites by the ivy against the Legion of Summer will be canceled if an emanation of Summer is led into the heart of the Domain, where the flower of the Monarch of the Jonquils grows.

If the Inspired do not understand the sibylline meaning of the Sentence, Frail will assist them. The Troupe will still have to find a way to lead Summer into the Domain, as the Legion can not even enter.

MEANS

If the Inspired have military support, odds are that the soldiers will be willing to intervene. The Legion of Summer will gather its troops at the borders of the Domain, but will not enter as long as the ivy is still controlled by

the Monarch of the Jonquils. The Troupe is free to call upon other allies (troops from Melif, Paledale, troops from an agreement signed in Murk, etc.).

The Inspired now have to find a way to enter the Merry Holt in order to bring a symbol of summer to its heart. They have the following possibilities:

♣ A powerful opus of Vista. If necessary, Frail could spend several days teaching a secret seasonling Vista opus, "Summons the Lady", to an adept. Performing this opus enables one to bring Summer into Adeln's fortress.

SUMMONS THE LADY

Season: Summer

Threshold: 25

Range/Area of effect: The Domain in which the Concordist is located

Duration: 1 day

Sketch: 1 hour

Effect: This opus can only be performed during the day. Once it is completed, summer enlightens the Domain. The clouds break and the temperature becomes scorching hot. The high temperature and the energetic atmosphere grant a +1 bonus to all actions of summer seasonlings and a -1 penalty to members of the other Decans. The opus dissipates as soon as the sun fades.

♣ If there is a summer seasonling within the Troupe, he or she could have been contaminated by Perfidy during the combat against Selent, and have been given the Dark Sorrow "Break the Cycle" described p. 49, in Selent's profile. In this case, the seasonling is able to fulfill the requirements of the Sentence. His Perfidy will enable him to go undetected by the ivy.

♣ A human could also achieve the same deed. He will have to clothe himself with representations of Summer (summer pigments, red and golden colors) and infiltrate the ivy fortress. Once he arrives there, he will have to take an oath of eternal vassalage before the Lady of Summer, and swear that from that moment he will serve her will. The Lady will then hear his prayer and make him a "minor" summer seasonling. He will then be considered such for the rest of his life (and will be affected by the appropriate bonuses/penalties during the different seasons...).

♣ Finally, any plan that symbolically leads summer before the Monarch of the Jonquils will succeed.

APPROACHING THE FLOWER

Unless the Inspired devise a diversion with their allies, they will have much difficulty entering the fortress. The ivy will attempt to capture any non-perfidious person that goes into the Merry Holt. Odds are that with all the combats the Inspired took part in, such as the fight against Selent and their imprisonment in the ivy clus-

ters, they will have been, at least slightly, infected by Perfidy.

They will have to be discreet to make their way into the heart of the wood. There are still over one hundred sprites organized in groups and patrols. Yet, the Inspired have two advantages. They are familiar with the geography of their Domain, whereas as the sprites, reassured by the ivy protection, have become a little indolent. They will neglect to protect all the sites that are barely accessible and will only move if the Troupe makes a lot of noise. Velius has also relaxed the strict control he maintained on the ivy, therefore, it will be less complicated to escape from the tendrils than before.

It would however be a good idea to confront the Inspired with a group of sprites that they will have to subdue as quickly as possible, or oblige them to roll Stealth against DIF 10 once in a while in order to maintain the tension.

After all, it should not be that easy to reach the flower.

THE FLOWER BLOOMS

The flower is located in the same place they saw it at the end of Act Two. The body of the Monarch of the Jonquils is discernible inside the flower. An INT + Medicine (restrictive: Season, spring) roll against DIF will reveal that the body resembles the deformed fetus of a sprite. However, the fetus is still premature. Velius and Adeln are holding hands beside it, conversing about the future conquests of the Monarch of the Jonquils once he emerges.

The Inspired should now understand that the moment has come to use the power of the Edict to summon Summer. If they succeed in its use, the consequences are immediate. The clouds instantly break up and a scorching heat falls upon the Domain. A moan comes out of the flower. The roots and ivy tendrils fade and wilt in five rounds. At the same moment, war cries can be heard at the borders of the Domain. The Legion of Summer is on the march. The sprites are terrified...

Adeln and Velius instantly turn to the source of the problem: the Inspired. Adeln is frightened. He asks them the reason for their deed. Then, he explains his own motivations and the reason why he needed their Domain. He is standing between the Inspired and Velius in order to protect the latter.

Velius does not say anything... for the moment. He has unsheathed a dagger that he hides behind him. He knows he is lost, but he has one last card to play. He swiftly turns Adeln towards him and cuts his throat before throwing his dead body before the flower. He then steps back.

The flower begins to shiver. The blood of Adeln, the present regent of the Domain, feeds the flower and symbolically restores its bond with the earth. In a spasm, the corolla opens up to reveal bright yellow petals and the silhouette of the Monarch of the Jonquils. The flower vomits him out in a stream of pollen and nutritive liquids.

The Monarch reels, stands up, and screams with pain. It is an unfinished creature that has been born. One of his arms is gnarled, like a dead branch. His face is deformed by a wood knot. Even his fruits are poisonous.

He rushes at his enemies and tries to destroy them. Velius will take advantage of the situation to try to escape from the wood and the Legion. He should succeed, for the Inspired will be distracted by their fight against the Monarch of the Jonquils.



The combat must be titanic. Although he is disabled, the Monarch is one of the Kings of the Seasons, a Son of Nature. His power is tremendous and his weapons are numerous.

At the moment the Inspired defeat him, he will rise and stiffen. Dead, and his body becomes a blackened and twisted tree. The site is full of a melancholic atmosphere, and the birds begin a sorrowful song. The Lady of Spring's favorite child is dead, perhaps for the last time.

Epilogue

The Legion of Summer will enter the clearing of the Merry Holt, drenched in the blood of the sprites. Without the protection of the ivy, the sprites were unable to resist the sons of Summer.

Lenmack and Frail will suggest burning the wood and the prisoners of the jailfruits to avoid any risk of contamination. Lenmack will also recommend killing every corrupt sprite.

The Inspired must decide quickly. Should they kill the sprites and their prisoners? They are certainly corrupt, but they are not responsible for that.

Making this decision will result in a bloodbath. On the other hand, war requires sacrifices. Whatever they choose to do, the Inspired must realize the scope of their deeds.

The sun will set on a Merry Holt in flames, the departure of the Legion of Summer, and the victory of the Inspired.

CONSEQUENCES

The Domain will have much difficulty recovering its former splendor. The majority of its inhabitants that fled still fear the ivy. Even though, the return of the soldiers – whether their campaign has been a success or not – will help with the reconstruction of the Domain, there will be many scars on the region for a long time.

Nothing will ever grow on the location of the Merry Holt, and all sprites will flee the Domain.

The Inspired will be privileged. Their deeds will grant them wealth and the admiration of the regent of their Domain (if they are not the rulers) and they will be promoted to higher offices in the coming months. Legends of their combat against the Monarch of the Jonquils will emerge, and, if the members of the Troupe are all human, they will become the symbol of a struggle between humans and seasonlings. The legend of a “fifth

INSPIRATION ALLOTMENT

For the IP distribution of this act, please consider the four scenes as four different scenarios. For the amount of IP distributed for each scene, please refer to p. 180 of the AGONE rulebook. As well as the IP awarded to your players for good role-playing, you can award IP for their overall success as follows:

Scene 1:

Rallying the troops of Melif: 1 point

Becoming allies with the second Legion of Summer: 2 points

Having the idea of seeking an eminence grise: 2 points (but not if Frail or Tharon tells them to)

Scene 2:

Stealing the document from Ivan: 4 points

Making agreements or alliances with certain guests: 1 to 5 points depending on the allies and the support they received

Making an ally out of the Coronet: 2 points

Scene 3:

Defeating Daran: 2 points

Defeating Selent: 5 points

Proving their worthiness in Melif's memory (organizing a funeral for Tharon and his family, hunting down the Paledale soldiers): 1 point

Scene 4:

Leading Summer into the Merry Holt: 3 points (only 1 point if a NPC gave them the idea)

Defeating the Monarch of the Jonquils: 5 points

Killing Velius: 2 points

Depending on the decision they took concerning the sprites: 1 to 3 points (It doesn't matter whether they decided to kill them or not. They should be rewarded for a well-weighed decision.)

Finally, the Inspired who understood the theme of this act, its finality and the underlying presence of the Eternals, will realize that the Soul led this act. You should attribute 5 IP to those Inspired, and they may assign them to their Soul Aspect or to Occult Skills.

season” will come out of their achievement, and many anti-seasonling groups, especially in the Liturgical Province, will usurp it.

Finally, an Eclipsist of the Cipher-sorcerer will come before them as the executor of Tharon's will. He will inform them that, in the absence of any heirs, they are now the legal regents of the barony of Melif. It is up to them to decide how to use this Office.

In the following years, the sprites will be discreet at the Decan Council. The infamy of the Monarch of the Jonquils will lie heavy on them for a long time. Maybe they will attempt to search the Merry Holt to see if there is anything left of the Monarch. Or, if he is still alive, maybe Velius will...

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Sinister Knights

♣ Appearance

Sinister Knights appear only slightly different from ordinary humans. Their skin is pale, and dark shining eyes reveal the hunger that consumes them.

Sinister Knights are ancient, scheming creatures. They are devoured by hate and craving. They cannot stand direct confrontation and they easily fall into brutal rage. Their emotions often give them away.

In addition, Sinister Knights have two distinctive features. The first is their freezing skin, very often colder than the ambient temperature (from 15° to 30°F, even in summer). The second is their supernatural weightlessness. A Sinister Knight very often weighs half the weight of a normal person of his size. Therefore, most Sinister Knights can endure extreme falls without undergoing any damage. Some are even said to be able to ride the wind...

♣ Origin

Sinister Knights are one of the rarest creatures of the Masque. They are created when an Inspired, whose Flame is not yet darkened, chooses to join his enemy's side at the moment of his death.

The Masque then decides whether to hear the prayer. If he does, he endows the dying person with a small amount of his power. He accelerates the disappearance of the Flame and takes over the body, which he keeps artificially alive. He then parodies the Ladies of the Season's knighting ceremony by branding the newly Damned with his left hand, and grants him a new mission: tracking Inspired to blow out their Flames. Using the champions of the Muses in such a way pleases the Master of the Sham and provides him with experienced warriors who are consumed by their determination to hunt down their counterparts.

♣ Territory

Sinister Knights live with mortals. Mortals are their sustenance and passion. Sinister Knights need to be in the presence of mortals to prove to themselves they still exist. They have to see the effects of their schemes, the suffering they cause, to be reminded that they are part of Harmundia and will not be forgotten. They often dwell in cities in which they strive to attain positions of power and wealth. Their remarkable intelligence is an advantage for these Damned, who use it extensively to befriend the mighty before usurping their place.

♣ Morals

Sinister Knights have only one passion, hunting, and one hunger, heat. Indeed, when the Masque takes their Flame away, they become creatures imbued with eternal cold that the heat of mortals can only temporarily

Appendices

satiate. Therefore, they scour Harmundia, seducing mortals to take their heat with a lethal kiss.

Inspired are manna for them. A Dull will allow a Sinister Knight to satisfy his hunger for a week, whereas an Inspired will satiate him for one year per Flame point. This means that the Inspired must accept and endure the kiss. Such an action requires an embrace of three turns per Flame point consumed by the Knight (it only takes one round with a Dullen). Therefore, he often has to disable his victims. Many Sinister Knights take pleasure in making their kiss more loving, and sometimes less deadly by taking their time and sparing the life of the victim.

Sinister Knights adore the sun. Its heat warms their skin a little, and occasionally, when it is scorching, they do not feel their craving.

The Tragedy

The purpose of Sinister Knights is "Flame gathering". The Inspired represent what they were before and what they dream to become again: free-willed mortals who act for the protection of Harmundia. Many of them summoned the Masque because they had felt betrayed by their equals, so they often harbor resentment against the Inspired.

To carry this struggle through successfully, they use vast organizations that grant them information and power. The Inspired are then hunted down. Little by little, their influence is undermined and their followers slowly disappear until the moment when the Sinister Knight will appear to blow their Flames out.

To motivate them in their struggle against the Inspired, the Masque informs them that he separated them

Kingdom: Janrenia
Race: N. A
Sex: male
Age: 736 years old
Height: 6'2" (SIZ 0)
Weight: 71 lbs.
MOV: 3

Attributes

Flame: 0/1
Body: 0/6
 Body bonus: 6
AGI: 9
STR: 12
PER: 9
STA: 14
Spirit: 0/2
 Spirit bonus: 2
INT: 9
WIL: 8
Soul: 0/1
 Soul bonus: 1
CHA: 10
CRE: 6

Secondary attributes

AIM: 9
ART: -
ASC: -
DB: +8
HP: 77
MEL: 10
SWT: 29
CWT: 38

Fortune points: 2

Flame powers: none

Seasonling powers: none

Darkening: 40
Perfidy: 50

Skills

Trials: Weapon (sword) 10, Alertness 6,
 Athletics 5, Dodge 6
Rogue: Poison 7, Stealth 8
Courtly: Diplomacy 7, Stewardship 6
Knowledge: nothing remarkable
Occult: Concord 7, Demonology 9

Note: Given his age and experience,
 consider Selent has a base score of 3
 in all other skills aside from Occult.

Assets, gifts: Doggedness, Foresight,
 Invoking Circle I & II, Chronicle of the
 Oncoming, Sensuousness

Faults, sorrows: Cold sweat, Croa-
 king voice, Hand confusion, Imp (it
 left a long time ago), Meanness,
 Mischievous demon (it has also fled),
 Nightmares, Sleepwalking, Venomous
 blood

Combat

Initiative: 24, sword 25
Melee attack: sword 26
Distance attack: -
Melee defense:
Dodge: 21
Parry: sword 26
Distance defense: 10

Armor: none

Special abilities: Selent is not affected by falling damage. He can even glide on the winds for a couple of miles (or longer when in mountains with strong ascendant air currents). He also has several powerful rituals he learned during his long "life", which enable him to carry out extraordinary actions if he has enough time. This is how he causes the whole of Melif manor to fall asleep. Normal weapons, that use other powers than those of the Flame, only cause him a tenth of the normal damage. Spells and opuses affect him conventionally. Cold cannot harm him and fire restores his hit points (POT of the fire = HP gained).

Weaknesses: a weapon covered with the blood of the bearer of his Flame will add the latter's Flame score to its normal damage. In Act Three, Selent will be affected by a -5 penalty against this Inspired, who will have a +5 bonus to all actions against Selent.

Engendered Corruption: 1d10 + 5
Perfidy level: 50

Perfidious sorrow: "Break the Cycle"

A seasonling contaminated by Selent will be granted the "Break the Cycle" perfidious sorrow. He is then cut from the benefits of his season. The seasonling's behavior and actions will no longer be affected by the Ladies of the Seasons. He is granted 1 Dark Soul point.

Weapon	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ
Sword	+1	+1	+1	+4 (I/S)	0

from their Flame and that it was then granted to another Inspired. He lets them know that if they could reabsorb their Flame, they would recover their life and thus Inspiration. So many Flames have been blown out by Sinister Knights that it would be an acknowledged fact if it were possible. In any case, the result would certainly not be the rebirth of an Inspired, but probably the appearance of a new type of Damned...

♣ Selent, Master of the Cold Light

APPEARANCE

Selent is almost the replica of his descendant, Tharon of Melif. He still looks quite young – he was thirty-one years old at the moment of his death. He inspires respect, whether it is his stern and steady tone, his predatory gait or his devouring look. No one can doubt that Selent is a leader. Tharon is also charismatic, but it is only a pale reflection of Selent's who has improved his charisma over the centuries.

In contrast to his descendant, Selent has sun-bleached hair. In Act One, he wears expensive clothes that portray the colors of Melif. In Act Three, he will wear the blazon of the Melifs: a vert yew-tree on an inclined silver ground. He also brandishes the ancestral sword of the Melifs, which everyone in the palace believed lost hundreds of years ago.

STORY

Selent's story up to the day of his revenge is related in Act One, but many details are still shadowy...

Once he murdered the first baroness, Selent left Melif to establish his new haunt. His journeys had him scouring Harmundia for a purpose. During his wanderings, Selent learned sadistic new entertainments. The powers that his Flame formerly granted him were counterbalanced by those of his new Master. Therefore, when he returned, he had no difficulty rallying five tribes of wild men in the Draaken Mountains.

Selent became the defender of the inhabitants of Paledale. He taught them the knowledge he had gathered during his journeys throughout Harmundia. They became extremely loyal to him. The rare times he left Paledale were to satiate his craving for revenge on the descendants of Melif.



DURING THE DRAMA

Meeting the bearer of his Flame will upset Selent. He knows that such an occasion only happens once in a lifetime; therefore he wants to turn the occasion to account.

Once he returns to Paledale, at the end of Act One, his first action is to send his best spy to the court of Melif to make sure that the bearer of his Flame is protected, and to find a way of bringing him back to Selent after a given period of time (which will correspond with the length of the quest for the Edict of Janus).

In the meantime, he will refer to the information he has on his Flame to find the exact way to recover it. His

research enables him to create a ritual that uses corruption and demonology.

Then, as he believes his immortal life is coming to an end, he decides to sever everything that binds him to it. He murders the Melifs in order to recover his title. He then focuses the effects of his ritual on the manor.

The combat against the Inspired will be the turning point in his damnation. If he overcomes them, he might become a human once again. If he fails, his suffering will come to an end.

ROLE

You are as old as the mountains, but also as cold as them. At last, you have a chance to become a mortal. You will resort to any means and never let this ridiculous bearer of your Flame stop you.

TYPICAL QUOTE

"Thou impudent nipper, me Flame burnt so much more of yore. 'T will soon have recovered its glint."

VARIATIONS

If there is a red-haired female human in the Troupe, it is possible to integrate her into the Drama as follows: The young woman will be the exact reflection of Flamen in her time. When the Inspired meet Selent for the first time, he will recognize her as such and will consider her his resuscitated wife.

In Act Three, he will have Daran kidnap her with the Edict and bring her to Melif manor. He will then seduce her and attempt to remind her of what he thinks is her past. Is it a coincidence or mere chance? Or maybe even the doings of another power? You are the only one to know.

If there is a black fey in the Troupe, she may have met Selent during her first incarnation. She will not remember him immediately, but in the following acts (Two and Three), she could share certain visions with the bearer of Selent's Flame. These visions will appear as if perceived by another observer (the black fey, companion of Selent) and will also help the Inspired.

Paledale

HISTORY

After he returned to his native mountains, Selent felt very nostalgic. Staying in Melif would eventually cause him to be discovered, whereas going away separated him from the only purpose that maintained his mental health: revenge on his brother's descendants. He then understood that he needed a long-term project, over many centuries, that would keep him busy. He left for the mountains and created a new type of society, in which people would be treated equally, supported in development, and safe from suffering. To do so, he would reign through fear and example. He united three tribes of bandits who were on the prowl in the mountains and presented himself before them as an obscure god who had selected them as his chosen people. He killed all their

chieftains and took over their symbols of power, then led them to a valley approximately twenty miles from Melif.

His project has been going on for the last six hundred and fifty years, and his success is complete. Even though it is difficult to say if his people are content, no one has to suffer from hunger, cold or lack of basic needs. Nevertheless, they are tormented by fear. Whosoever transgresses the laws of the clergy is subject to the only punishment, death. The shade of the Shadow Sovereign haunts Paledale.

APPEARANCE

The Domain of Paledale is one of the closest neighbors of the barony of Melif. Like Melif, its geography is mostly mountainous. It is composed of high mountains and deep valleys, it is veined with many precipitous torrents and, in wintertime, it is covered with ice and snow.

There are three boroughs in Paledale: Darthstone, Blackdraft and Whirlsow. They are the seats of the three tribes that rule Paledale.

Officially, Paledale is an "enlightened theocracy". If the priests are in control, they can only make a decision after having conferred with a panel of experts on the given matter (all members of the ruling families). The advantage of such a system is to increase political unity and efficiency. The priests are too feared to be suspected, but they rarely overstep their limits because their master is always keeping an eye on them.

This policy could have produced a prosperous economy if Selent had not guided his people down the path of isolationism. Indeed, Paledale's contact with other social and economic models would dissolve its own social and economic model. The Domain only produces for its own needs, no more. This policy was only suspended occasionally, by Selent of course, in order to offer a market or support when the barony of Melif needed it. Though Paledale is his creation, Melif remains Selent's homeland that he still wants to recover. For Melif, Paledale could be sacrificed.

CULT

The only tolerated religion is the cult of the Shadow Sovereign. It is a tradition that dates to Selent's arrival. Once he killed the three chieftains and united the clans, he chose to speak to his people only through the medium of the priests, who were far more educated than the other inhabitants.

PALEDALE

Regent: Selent
Population: 1,000 Dullen

Body: 5/0
Army: 6
Defense: 7
Denizens: 5
Organization: 5

Spirit: 5/0
Finance: 5
Information: 7

Soul: 2/0
Magic: 5
Diplomatic relations: 2

Nowadays, the function of the priests has not changed, though the tribes are sedentary and well educated. They are the intermediaries between Selent, who sometimes visits them in their dreams, and the rulers of the three villages.

Their caste is limited for there are only six priests in the Domain: the three celebrants and their novices.

TROOPS

In order to protect against any attack and also to preserve Melif, Selent requires the constant upkeep of an army. Every man and woman less than forty years old is compelled to serve in the military. The army is composed of fifty trained and armed soldiers, and Selent could gather up to four times as many recruits if he needed them.

SEASONLINGS

The atmosphere of Perfidy that permeates the Domain made all the seasonlings that lived in the region before Selent established Paledale flee. Since then, only five draaken tribes have dared to settle in the Domain. As Selent acknowledged the usefulness of these metamorphic Fallen, he came to terms with each tribe. In return for weapons and food, they have agreed to serve him by sending ten of their best warriors to Paledale. These warriors are used by Selent as spies in the bordering Domains. Odds are that if he required it, the draaken would fight on his side.

MAGIC

Selent does not trust magic. Therefore, he refused the establishment of the Cipher-sorcerer in his Domain. Except for the draaken, he is the only creature in the Domain able to use magic. Dancers avoid Paledale.

There are no Remains in Paledale. The atmosphere is too corrupt for it to be a pleasant Domain.



♠ Midwinter visions

After the Inspired meet Selent for the first time in Act One, the Inspired that bears his Flame will have sleeping disorders. He will have visions of another life. It is his Flame that has awoken as a result of contact with Selent. It remembers that incarnation and conveys those memories so that the Inspired may accomplish his destiny. The reality of the visions is such that the Inspired will not be able to rest during the nights that they appear to him. He will talk and toss about in his sleep.

We advise you, Eminence, to play these visions as any other scene of the Drama. You should confuse the concerned player by melting these dreams into his character's reality.

FIRST VISION

Selent is a child. His father takes him into the mountains. The air is pure and a sudden flight of birds fills him with wonder. His father shows him something: several men are hunting the birds. The child's heart is broken. He picks up a dead bird that is covered with blood and bursts into tears. His father hugs him in consolation. The next morning, he feels a presence in his bed. It is a pup that his father gave him to make up for the bird. The vision ends as he embraces his father.

SECOND VISION

Selent has grown up. He is training his martial skills with his father's soldiers. Even though they are valiant, they are having trouble overcoming him. Everybody loves him and life is wonderful. Moreover, he is no longer alone, for his mother has given birth to a little brother. Selent is now making a toy for his baby brother – the child loves shapes and colors. When he has finished carving it, he will paint it. A dragon – His brother will be delighted.

The vision becomes confused as his brother begins to play with the wooden dragon. His father is smiling while comparing Serwyn's dark hair to Selent's blond hair.

THIRD VISION

Selent is sad. His dog died yesterday. He knows the dog was old, but he loved him so much. He locked himself in his room. He even refused to play with his brother who wanted to comfort him. He is nearly a man now, and the future baron must not cry. He hears a noise next to the window. It is a sprite, who reached his window with a grappling hook. Mycelius, for that is his name, apologizes for his inconvenient entry. The sprite says he is a member of the Council of the Decans and that he must talk to the little boy. All night long, he reveals his Inspiration as well as the struggle between the Muses and the Master of the Sham.

In the morning, Mycelius leaves the way he came in; everything has changed for Selent. He beholds Harmundia with new eyes. He opens the door and goes out without noticing his brother who was sleeping in front of his door.

FOURTH VISION

It is the big day. Selent is getting engaged, as his father asked him. He does not really want to because his struggle against the Masque does not leave him enough time for ruling the Domain, let alone for a personal life. It is his father who chose the young maiden, Flamen, who is the daughter of a family friend. Selent hopes that she will be kind, and pretty. But what can he expect from an arranged marriage? Flamen approaches.

What a beauty! Her red hair is a stream of silk and her timid eyes are emerald green. She is now holding her head high. They look at each other... and understand. They are made for one another, kindred spirits who had been separated. All is said without a word. Selent should not have

worried. He will have to share his happiness with his brother for he had disclosed his anguish to him before the ceremony. Serwyn is happy, crying for his brother.

FIFTH VISION

Damned brigands! Autumn is approaching, and this hunt has lasted long enough. Three days. If it were not for that Invoker the bandits had with them, Selent would have let them go by now. Three days without Flamen. Three days without Serwyn also.

Fortunately, Serwyn is there. Ever since he became the ruler of Melif, Selent never has enough time. His struggle against the Masque and his love of Flamen took precedence over his seigniorial duties, which he put into Serwyn's hands. The latter takes care of the finances and day-to-day obligations. He manages the guards and has even hired mercenaries to hunt down the bandits. He would have been a good baron if he had not been the second. He should thank Serwyn. Alas, he does seem jealous of the deep love he shares with Flamen. His attitude has worsened ever since the birth of the baby.

Ah! The brigands, at last. He blows the mort. Tonight, the inhabitants of Melif will sleep peacefully.

SIXTH VISION

He is betrayed. It has to be true. But Selent had not noticed anything. He is now on a horse, his wrists are tied and a rope is around his neck. He is gagged. He cannot plead for his defense. Why defend himself? Flamen is dead, drowned in a lake with their baby.

His own brother, his best friend, betrayed him.

The snow lashes his face and he burns with rage. What did he get from his fight for Inspiration? Nothing. His own people think he is an invoker, and he is about to be executed for it. And Flamen is dead.

Damned be Inspiration. Damned be the Muses. The Masque created humanity, and it will be forever marked by him. He can have it then.

Serwyn says something, and the horse takes off. Held by the rope, Selent falls and his neck breaks. The vision ends. Forever.

and his body a trunk. He has evolved beyond the seasonling stage, deepening his bond with the plant kingdom. He is a living plant. Unfortunately, his harmony with nature was led astray by Velius'Perfidy.

His head now looks like a grinning face ring of flowers from which the stench of putrefaction emanates. His face only echoes his past harmony. It is now deformed by a knar, and his multicolored eyes only express madness and pain. His left arm is blackened and stunted but his right arm ends like a dead branch with, at



The Monarch of the Jonquils

Appearance

The Monarch of the Jonquils is an extremely odd creature. His overall appearance is that of a six foot-tall sprite. His limbs resemble roots

THE KINGS OF THE SEASONS

All seasonling legends acknowledge the existence of mythic beings linked to their Ladies. These creatures represented the glory and the power of their season. They were the embodiments of their Ladies on Harmundia.

Their number is unknown, some say one for each season, others say one for each Decan. One fact is certain – these creatures were all defeated and imprisoned during the Season Wars.

As incarnations of the power of the seasons, these lords cannot be destroyed by another being bonded to the seasons, only imprisoned or disabled. Thus, the Kings of the Seasons are probably alive, but dormant in remote sites.

If the Monarch of the Jonquils is not killed by a human or by an Obsidian, he will merely sink into inactivity, like the bulb Adeln discovered. One day he may again become a heavy burden for those who might find him.

the last part of its boughs, two-inch long bramble thorns. His colored body is covered with bright flowers from which ooze a yellowish liquid pollen. Dark red fruits hang from his back and drop on the ground.

♣ Story

The Monarch of the Jonquils is a mythic creature that comes from the depths of time. Son of Spring, he represents the bond between the sprites and nature in a more profound way than Sap. His entire body is vegetation. Through his roots, he is able to control nature.

It is his eager will that compelled the Lady of Spring to make him her King. Up until the Season Wars, he represented sprites and spriggans in Harmundia, sowing forests for the glory of Spring, fertility and beauty.

When the Season Wars led his people into combat, his only choice was to become one of the greatest wea-

pons of Spring. He ordered forests to fight the henchmen of Summer, Fall and Winter. Fortresses of vegetation rose to cut off their enemy's retreat and the Elder Roots made the earth shake.

His defeat at the hands of the allied champions of Fall and Winter was a deliverance for this guardian of peace and life. Imprisoned as a bulb in the ice of the dwarven fortress of Melif, he relished a well-deserved rest.

Resuscitated by Adeln, he is only a suffering creature. Perfidy has broken his bond with the Elder Roots, and his mother, the Lady of Spring, no longer hears his prayers. A weary body, and a need to purge his suffering through death are all that is left of him. Fortunately for the Inspired, the corruption of the Monarch has been so debilitating that it is now possible to kill the former immortal.

♣ Destiny

The fate of the Monarch of the Jonquils is a complex matter. Only a being not linked to a season can destroy him forever. His complete death requires a human, a seasonling who is no longer vassal to the seasons (100 Darkening points, 100 Perfidy points or a special Sorrow, like Break the Cycle), or an Obsidian. If not, the corrupted seed of life will remain in the body of the King. It will then be possible for one who finds this seed, to plant it and breathe new life into the Monarch of the Jonquils. Could there be hope for the Monarch of the Jonquils? Can the seed be purged or should it be destroyed? It is your decision, but such a quest would be an adventure worthy of the greatest heroes of Harmundia.



THE MONARCH OF THE JONQUILS

Height: 8'7" (SIZ + 1)

Weight: 421 lbs.

Perfidy: 100

Engendered corruption: 1d10 + 10

Attributes

AGI: 5

DB: +18

HP: 100

MEL: 8

MOV: 2

PER: 3

STA: 15

STR: 15

SWT: 33

CWT: 50

Skills: Weapon (claws) 8, Alertness 6, Dodge 7, Season (spring) 10

Armor

Bark: 5 protection point with no encumbrance (fire causes double damage)

Note: In combat, the Monarch will only attempt to attack with his claws.

He will never try to parry and will only dodge fire and light attacks. During the combat, the surrounding nature will defend the Monarch as if it were affected by the "Plant hostility" Violopus (Threshold: 15, see AGONE rulebook p. 219). It causes 1d10 damage to one target attacking the Monarch each round, focusing first on those that use fire. The Monarch's body is covered with a pollen that has the same effects as the contact poison "Stiffal" (see AGONE rulebook, p.177).

Weapons	Init.	Att.	Def.	Dam.	SIZ	Range
Claws	8	+16	-	+19 (S/C)	-	-

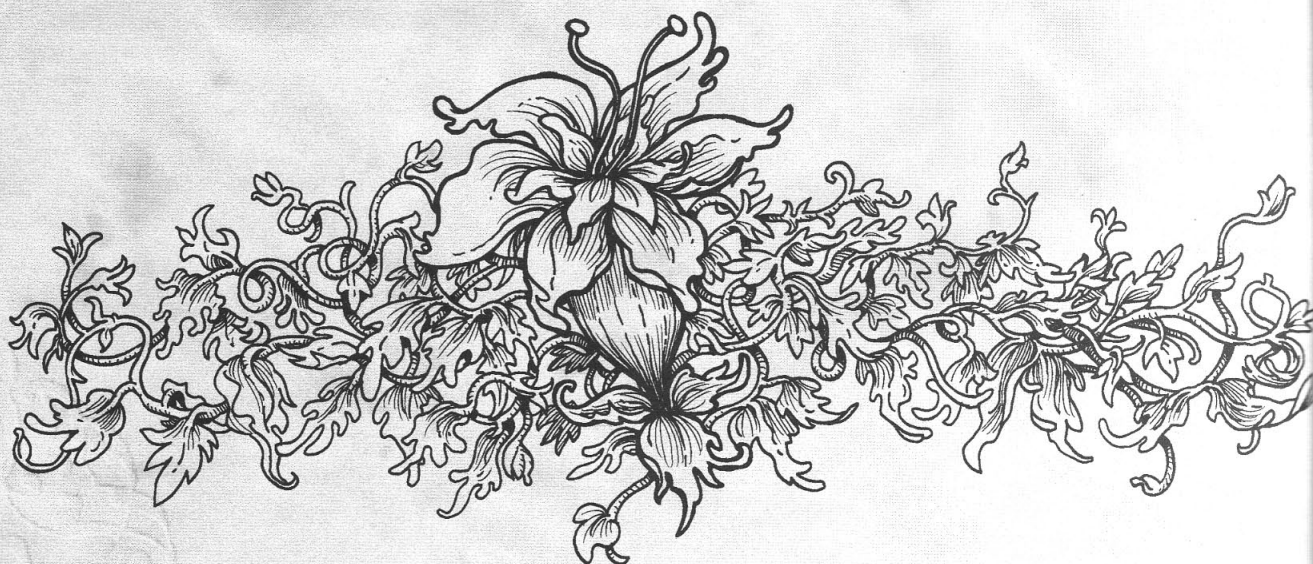
Advice

This Drama only requires the AGONE rulebook to be staged. However, it could be embellished by the use of *The Gray Papers*, a sourcebook that deals with Domains. The Domains described in this Drama use the rules of that book.

The Drama has used for its base an Urgamish Domain, as the Domain of Roundrock (AGONE rulebook, p. 270). Nevertheless, it is possible to adapt the Drama to any other Domain, in any other kingdom. The only sites described are the Domain of Melif and the city of Murk.

The Domain of Melif is located in the Draaken Mountains, but it can easily be located in any of the kingdoms of Harmundia by using the chain of mountains that splits the map in two. Then, merely changing the names will be all that is necessary to add local flavor.

The city of Murk will not move, as it is specifically located on the border between the Mercenary republic and the Widowlands. Eminence, you should pay attention to the length of the journeys of the Troupe in order to track events in their Domain while they are away. Many things can happen in a couple of months.



Handouts

HANDOUT 1: LETTER FROM MELIF TO THE INSPIRED

My friends,

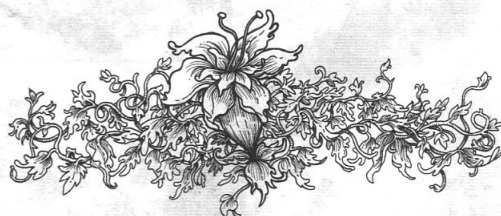
It is a man in need that begs for your help. I am your neighbor, the Baron Tharon of Melif, and I have heard much of your feats from the town criers.

I call on your help because I have no more hope. My family is victim of an ancient malediction that takes the life of each baroness of Melif on her thirtieth birthday.

I love my wife more than all else. She will be thirty years old on the 7th day of Hydra-tide this year. I am willing to offer you all you may dream of if you can save her.

Please answer promptly,

Tharon of Melif



third day of fall

the BARON tharon of melif
informs
by the present letter...

whosoever manages to end the curse
that besmirches his family and its
honor for the last seven hundred
years will be granted five hundred
gold pieces as well as arable lands
in the barony.

whosoever is interested should
proceed to melif manor above
gloomwind on the first days
of hydra-tide.

order and winter,
melif remains.

HANDOUT 3: INVITATION

My dearest friends,

It has been so long since we've met that I have almost forgotten all about you. Please forgive me, and, so that we can speak of our dim past, please meet me at the celebration of our Coronet's last year. The messenger who brought you this letter will take you to purchase an appropriate costume for the Crowned Palace's ballroom.

You can imagine how much I would have been delighted to accompany you, but alas my eyes are old now and I would be embarrassed if I were dazzled by all the lights and I tore my dress.

Trust Vel, my page, as you would myself. He wears my colors and his word is mine.

Until this evening,

S.

HANDOUT 4: LETTER FROM THE UNVEILED REGENT TO THE CORONET

Salutations from the Underneath.

Don't be angry, my brother from the upper layers, if I am frank with you, but this is how one should speak to a dying person. Be aware, your reign is coming to an end. You still have another year, but you should be careful during this remaining time. It is rumored that the troops that come to the Lower return with strange diseases that infect their company, their officers and their entourage.

I know you are cautious, and I know you will not take any foolish risks this coming year.

To show you how much I care for you, here is a bit of useful information. There is an uncontrolled element in your court: a woman. You probably haven't even noticed her, but she is always there and she has much more influence than Engarand. She invited some of her friends tonight. They have a story to tell. I advise you listen to it. They could support you next year.

As you see, this year will be entertaining. If you want to get in touch with me again, the rumor just has to circulate. My agents are everywhere.

Happy new year.

HANDOUT 5: SELIMONA'S LETTER

My dearest friends,

I apologize for the briefness of our discussion, but an old lady such as I must never neglect any of her friends. I thank you for your kind letter. Here is the legal text for uncle Janus. Since it is a very ancient parchment and an extremely important text, please understand that there are precautions to take in its use.

It can be opened only once. You should do so only at the scene of the crime, otherwise, there will be no result at all.

Do not seek me; recent news forces me to undertake a journey for my health.

Hoping to see you again.

S.

HANDOUT 6: SENTENCE OF JANUS

*Inasmuch as the Cycle ever repeats itself,
 Inasmuch as the Three are allied against the Fall,
 The persistence of Spring transgresses
 The will of the Ladies of the Seasons.*

*The litigation is settled.
 Will penetrates the iniquitous Season
 And Summer enters its heart
 To restore the natural progression of time.*

HANDOUT 7: SELENT'S CALL

My dear friends,

You possess something that I cherish above all else,
While I now have your precious Edict.

I suppose that restores a certain equilibrium to
things, doesn't it?

We shall meet where we last fought to settle,
Once and for all, our little problem.

It shouldn't take very long.

Yours sincerely,

Selent

Chart of seasonling demographics (see next page):

Very rare: These seasonlings avoids this region for specific reasons. The presence of an Inspired of this race would elicit a strong reaction from locals.

Rare: There are only a few isolated seasonlings present.

Scarce: The race is present in this region, however, it is rare to encounter one.

Uncommon: Seasonlings no longer draw attention, but those with an Office are rare.

Frequent: The race is completely integrated in the region; seasonlings have easy access to Offices.

Common: Seasonlings are an unavoidable part of the Realm.

Majority: The majority of the population of this land consists of this race.

	HUMAN	SPRITE	SPRIGGAN	SATYR	OGRE
PRINCELY COMMUNES	COMMON	RARE	FREQUENT	FREQUENT	UNCOMMON
LYPHAN	COMMON	RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE
WILD REACHES	COMMON	UNCOMMON	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	SCARCE
BUCCANEER HAVEN	COMMON	SCARCE	UNCOMMON	SCARCE	UNCOMMON
EMPIRE OF KESHE	COMMON	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	SCARCE
WIDOWLANDS	COMMON	SCARCE	RARE	UNCOMMON	RARE
MODEHAN MARCHES	COMMON	FREQUENT	RARE	FREQUENT	RARE
MERCENARY REPUBLIC	MAJORITY	VERY RARE	UNCOMMON	VERY RARE	FREQUENT
URGAMAND	COMMON	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	SCARCE	UNCOMMON
JANRENIA	MAJORITY	RARE	SCARCE	UNCOMMON	SCARCE
LITURGICAL PROVINCE	MAJORITY	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE
ABYSM	MAJORITY	SCARCE	FREQUENT	VERY RARE	SCARCE
HORNS	RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	RARE	RARE
BOKKOR	?	?	?	?	?

	MINOTAUR	GIANT	BLACK FEY	DWARF	MEDUSA
PRINCELY COMMUNES	RARE	SCARCE	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON
LYPHAN	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	FREQUENT	RARE	RARE
WILD REACHES	SCARCE	FREQUENT	VERY RARE	FREQUENT	RARE
BUCCANEER HAVEN	UNCOMMON	RARE	RARE	SCARCE	SCARCE
EMPIRE OF KESHE	RARE	FREQUENT	RARE	UNCOMMON	SCARCE
WIDOWLANDS	UNCOMMON	RARE	FREQUENT	VERY RARE	COMMON
MODEHAN MARCHES	VERY RARE	UNCOMMON	SCARCE	SCARCE	VERY RARE
MERCENARY REPUBLIC	UNCOMMON	VERY RARE	RARE	RARE	SCARCE
URGAMAND	FREQUENT	RARE	UNCOMMON	UNCOMMON	RARE
JANRENIA	RARE	SCARCE	SCARCE	VERY RARE	UNCOMMON
LITURGICAL PROVINCE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	SCARCE	VERY RARE
ABYSM	UNCOMMON	VERY RARE	SCARCE	UNCOMMON	RARE
HORNS	SCARCE	RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE	VERY RARE
BOKKOR	?	?	?	?	?

King of Spring

With the coming of winter, all doors and shutters in Gloomwind are locked tight. The inhabitants live alone with their fear, as their baron suffers from his curse. The pall of death has fallen upon the Barony of Melif once again...

With the coming of winter, the seasonlings of Spring and Summer are weakened by the bitter cold of the Draaken Mountains. Yet, war is imminent. The Decans have awoken ancient enmities.

With the coming of winter, the eminences grise ensconce themselves in safe hiding places and exchange dark secrets. They plot the destiny of Harmundia and its rulers. Perhaps, they may deliver a Sentence from the immortal Janus to restore peace to the land.



*The King of Spring is a ready-to-play Drama
for a Troupe of four to six Inspired.*

As the Troupe goes to the assistance of the Baron of Melif, the Inspired have many strange encounters and attract the attention of unexpected enemies to their Domain. War is at their gates. The Legions of the Seasons begin to confront one another openly, and to target the members of the Troupe.

*What did the Inspired do?
Are they victims of someone's sinister machinations?
Or of destiny itself?
How can they overcome their unknown enemy?*



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