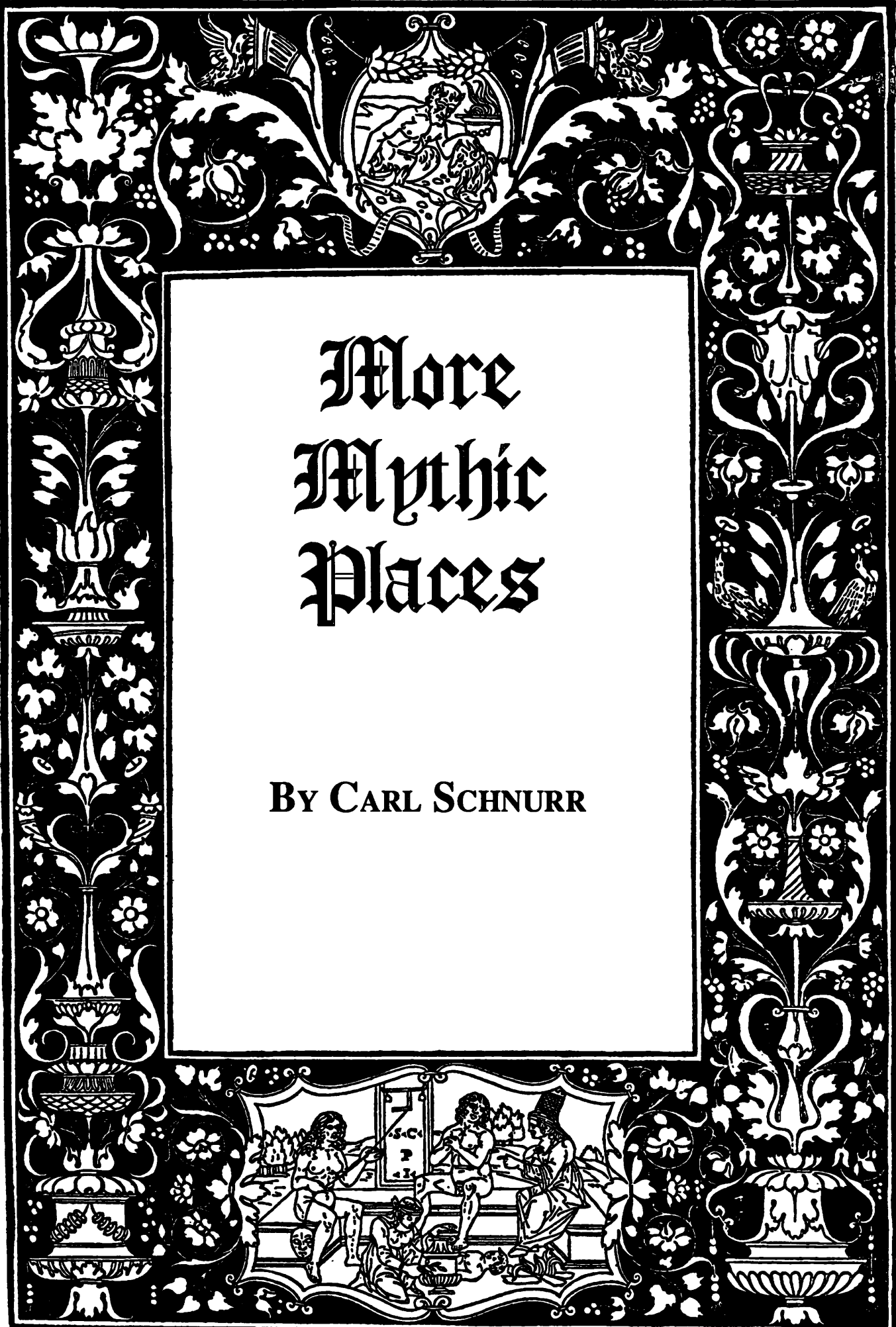


MORE



An Ars Magica™ Story Supplement

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More Mythic Places

BY CARL SCHNURR



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Eric "A book so nice I mapped it twice." Hotz, for always being there when he's needed.

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Wes "I ate all their Christmas food." Harris, for house sitting and helping himself.

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Dedicated to:

The Scribbling Primates.

More Mythic Places

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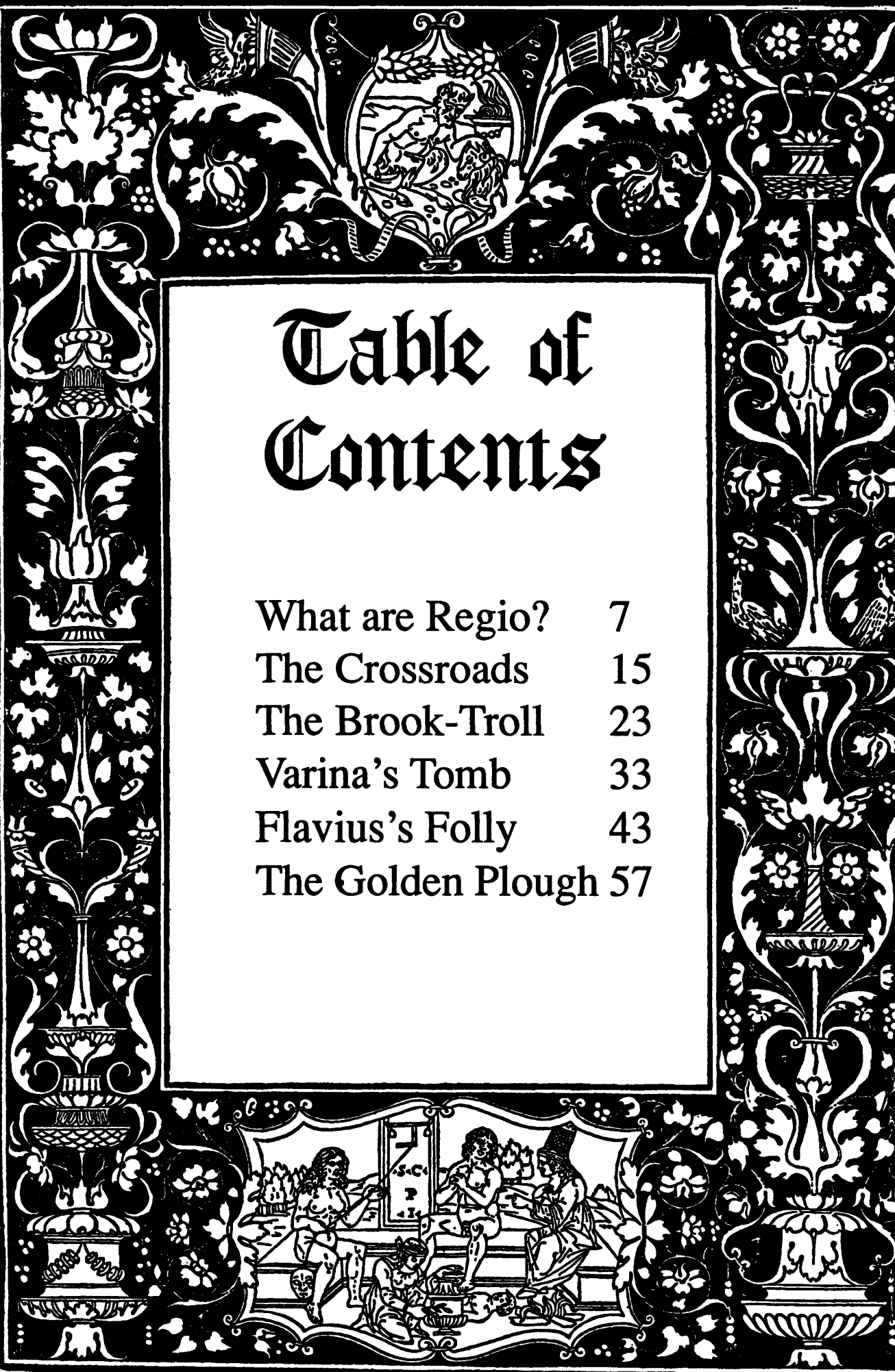
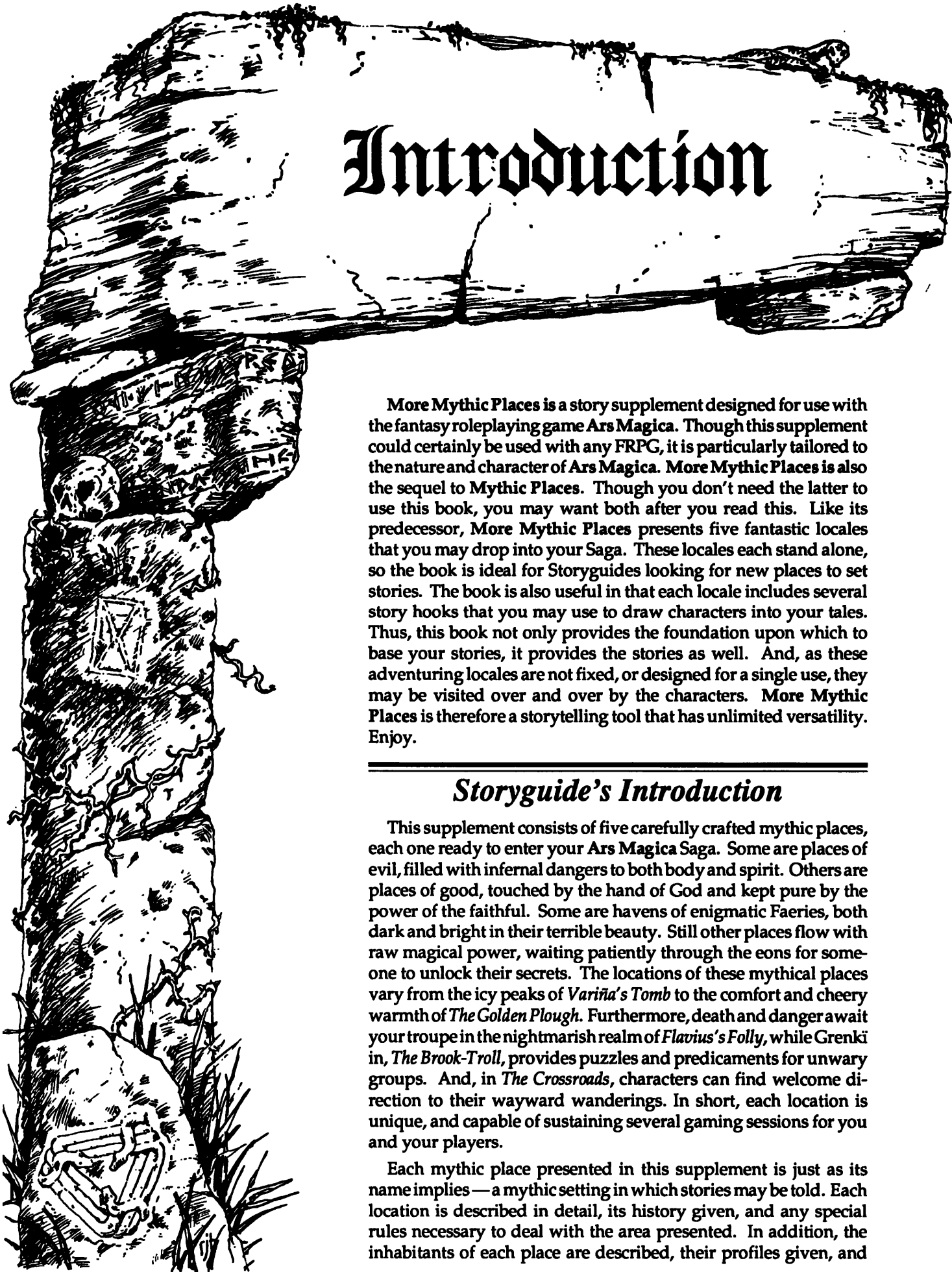


Table of Contents

What are Regio?	7
The Crossroads	15
The Brook-Troll	23
Varina's Tomb	33
Flavius's Folly	43
The Golden Plough	57





Introduction

More Mythic Places is a story supplement designed for use with the fantasy roleplaying game *Ars Magica*. Though this supplement could certainly be used with any FRPG, it is particularly tailored to the nature and character of *Ars Magica*. **More Mythic Places** is also the sequel to *Mythic Places*. Though you don't need the latter to use this book, you may want both after you read this. Like its predecessor, **More Mythic Places** presents five fantastic locales that you may drop into your Saga. These locales each stand alone, so the book is ideal for Storyguides looking for new places to set stories. The book is also useful in that each locale includes several story hooks that you may use to draw characters into your tales. Thus, this book not only provides the foundation upon which to base your stories, it provides the stories as well. And, as these adventuring locales are not fixed, or designed for a single use, they may be visited over and over by the characters. **More Mythic Places** is therefore a storytelling tool that has unlimited versatility. Enjoy.

Storyguide's Introduction

This supplement consists of five carefully crafted mythic places, each one ready to enter your *Ars Magica* Saga. Some are places of evil, filled with infernal dangers to both body and spirit. Others are places of good, touched by the hand of God and kept pure by the power of the faithful. Some are havens of enigmatic Faeries, both dark and bright in their terrible beauty. Still other places flow with raw magical power, waiting patiently through the eons for someone to unlock their secrets. The locations of these mythical places vary from the icy peaks of *Variña's Tomb* to the comfort and cheery warmth of *The Golden Plough*. Furthermore, death and danger await your troupe in the nightmarish realm of *Flavius's Folly*, while Grenki in, *The Brook-Troll*, provides puzzles and predicaments for unwary groups. And, in *The Crossroads*, characters can find welcome direction to their wayward wanderings. In short, each location is unique, and capable of sustaining several gaming sessions for you and your players.

Each mythic place presented in this supplement is just as its name implies — a mythic setting in which stories may be told. Each location is described in detail, its history given, and any special rules necessary to deal with the area presented. In addition, the inhabitants of each place are described, their profiles given, and

notes concerning their personalities and motivations presented. All this information is intended to help you, the Storyguide, portray area inhabitants as real, three-dimensional characters with feelings and thoughts of their own. Finally, each mythic place description concludes with a short selection of story ideas, intended to help you introduce the setting into your next *Ars Magica* game.

Note that this supplement is *not* a collection of complete, ready-to-run stories. Rather, each mythic place is a foundation on which stories may be built. Sample story ideas are certainly presented, but in the end, it's you who's left to decide how these primal and magical locations fit into your Saga. After all, it is your Saga and you, not some faceless author, are the inspiration behind it. You might use the locations presented here with little advance preparation, letting the group's actions and ideas completely determine the course of a free-form game session. On the other hand, you might concoct a carefully scripted, sweeping Saga, covering several decades of time, linking several separate mythic places into a gratifying whole. Yet again, you might simply use *More Mythic Places* as a source of ideas, browsing through its pages, heavily customizing places for use in your own stories and Sagas. In fact, no one says that the material in *More Mythic Places* must be used solely for *Ars Magica* — the locations presented here could easily be adapted to the roleplaying game of your choice.

How to Use This Book

The purpose of this supplement is to provide you with settings rich in story ideas for use in your Saga. Five such settings are included in this supplement. Each is based on the concept of *regio* (pronounce the *g* as in *go*: *REH-gee-oh*), an idea introduced in two previous White Wolf products, *Faeries* and *The Pact of Pasaquine*. For those not familiar with those supplements, a *regio* is simply a different way of looking at a place possessing a Divine, Faerie, Infernal or Magical Aura (these Auras are discussed in *Ars Magica*, p. 71-73). If you're not clear on the nature of *regio*, fear not. The first Chapter of this supplement explains them fully.

Once you understand the ideas and rules governing *regio*, you are ready to explore the rest of the supplement. Each Chapter details one mythic place, or concentration of *regio*. These places are not linked by a large, pervasive story (though they certainly could be), so the order you read them is not important. Try browsing through the book and reading about a few places that look interesting. Keep in mind, though, that if you read them all you won't be able to enjoy any as a player — you might want to set a few places aside for another Storyguide. Each Chapter in the supple-

ment begins with an overview of its mythic place, then moves on to detail the place's levels of *regio*, its inhabitants, and its history. Subsequent sections go over any special rules needed for the mythic place, and give brief notes on placing the *regio* within your Saga. Each Chapter concludes with a selection of story ideas. For more information, see *Format*, below.

Hopefully, one or more of the settings presented herein will appeal to you and beg to become part of your Saga. If you like, pick one such *regio* and familiarize yourself with it, taking careful note of any changes you might need to make in it — perhaps your Saga is set in Spain and you need to change the names of Storyguide characters to reflect that fact. Next you need to come up with a story idea to introduce the *regio* to your troupe. After reading the Chapter you might have some ideas of your own, or you can flesh out one of the story ideas provided. Of course, you don't have to use these *regio* as complete settings, you could just use one or more as a jumping off point for another story during the main course of your Saga. Or, you could take several of the *regio* and build a huge story, like an interwoven tapestry, that takes many years of play to resolve. Several of the *regio* could even be used as advantages or disadvantages during Covenant creation, making those mythic places part of the lands surrounding your Covenant.

In the end, of course, you know what your troupe's needs are and know how this supplement can best serve them. You might use each location intact and build only on the provided story ideas, or you might make such drastic changes in a location that the place become unrecognizable. However you decide to use *More Mythic Places*, we think you'll find something within these pages to both challenge and inspire your troupe.

Location and Time

In order to make these settings useful to you regardless of your Saga's location, care is taken to make each mythic place as general as possible. By doing so, it is hoped that the places are useful to characters located throughout Mythic Europe (or any other fantasy setting, for that matter). Thus, a *regio* is described as being "*on the pinnacle of a snowy peak*" rather than being located on a specific peak in a particular mountain range. To use this particular mythic place, simply find a mountain range near your Covenant and choose an appropriate mountain. Of course, not every Covenant has a mountain range nearby, in which case you may choose not to use the place or may modify it to suit your particular location. Nominally, these mythic places assume a generally European setting and climate, with deciduous and evergreen forests, hills, mountains, grasses, rivers and streams. That doesn't mean each

regio can't be adapted to fit into a unique Saga, say one located in east Asia or in a desert, but such adaptation certainly takes some work. For the most part, though, work required should be minimal.

As with location, the time of place settings is left undetermined. None of the settings presented in this book are tied to a particular time period, and they are suitable for use at almost anytime from the Fourth to Fourteenth Centuries.

Format

Each mythic place begins with a short listing of pertinent information, so that you can determine at a glance its general nature. These headings are:

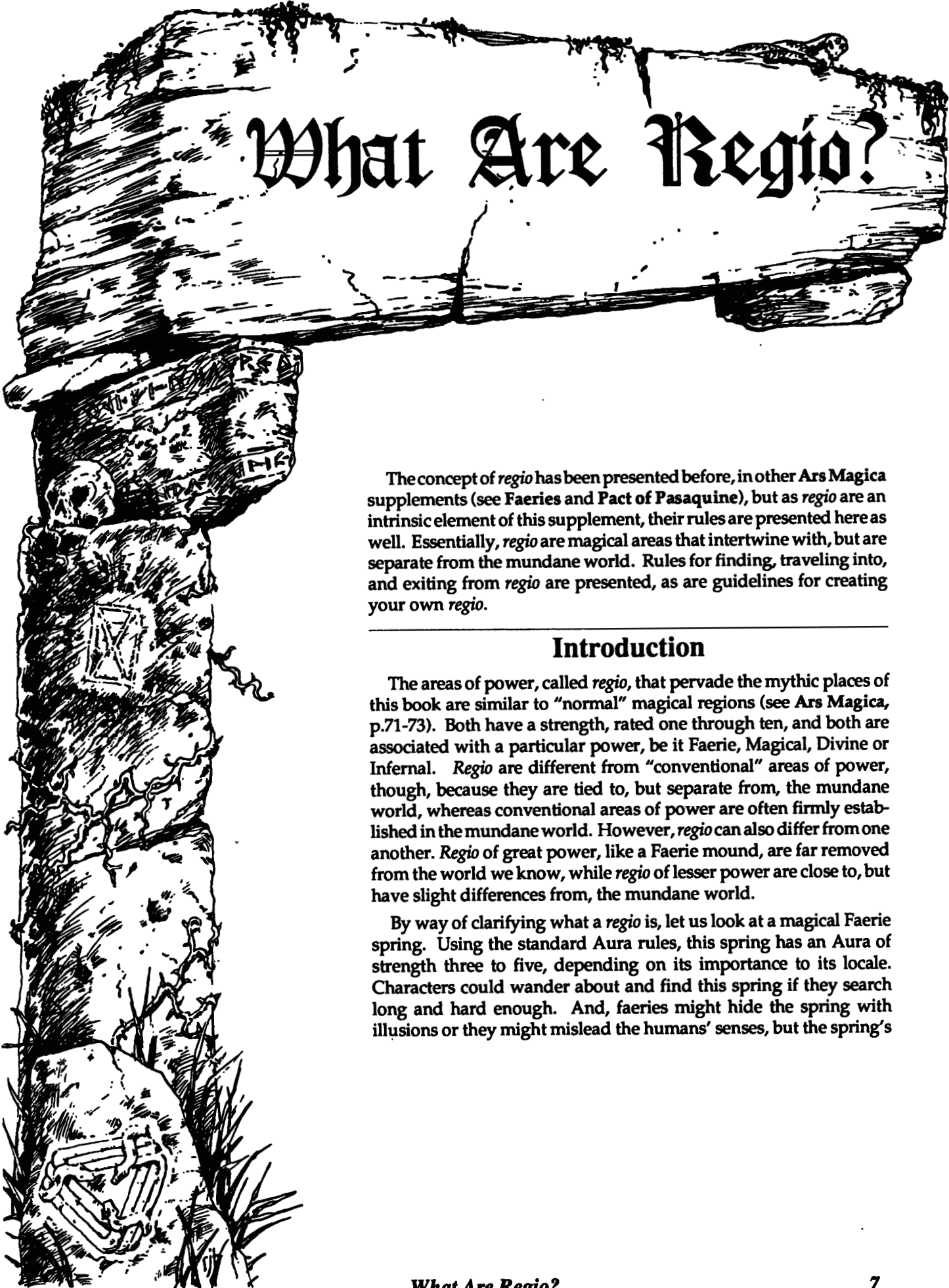
Type: This indicates the nature of the *regio*'s Aura. The choices are Divine, Faerie, Infernal, or Magical.

Focus: This is the source of the *regio*'s power, or the main feature of the *regio*.

Levels: This is a listing of the levels within the *regio*. M, 1, 3, for example, mean that the *regio* has a (M)undane level, a level with Aura strength 1, and a level with Aura strength 3.

Overview: This is a short description of the important features of the *regio*, and a brief note on where it's located.

After this listing comes a description of the main body of the *regio*. Most *regio* follow the same format, with a description of each level, from lowest to highest, then a brief history if needed (entitled *What Has Gone Before*), followed by notes on any inhabitants, any special rules needed for the *regio* (*Mechanics*) and a few brief notes on location. Each mythic place concludes with a short list of story ideas. Of course, every *regio* is different and the format varies as needed to present each in as clear a fashion as possible.



What Are Regio?

The concept of *regio* has been presented before, in other *Ars Magica* supplements (see *Faeries* and *Pact of Pasaquine*), but as *regio* are an intrinsic element of this supplement, their rules are presented here as well. Essentially, *regio* are magical areas that intertwine with, but are separate from the mundane world. Rules for finding, traveling into, and exiting from *regio* are presented, as are guidelines for creating your own *regio*.

Introduction

The areas of power, called *regio*, that pervade the mythic places of this book are similar to "normal" magical regions (see *Ars Magica*, p.71-73). Both have a strength, rated one through ten, and both are associated with a particular power, be it Faerie, Magical, Divine or Infernal. *Regio* are different from "conventional" areas of power, though, because they are tied to, but separate from, the mundane world, whereas conventional areas of power are often firmly established in the mundane world. However, *regio* can also differ from one another. *Regio* of great power, like a Faerie mound, are far removed from the world we know, while *regio* of lesser power are close to, but have slight differences from, the mundane world.

By way of clarifying what a *regio* is, let us look at a magical Faerie spring. Using the standard Aura rules, this spring has an Aura of strength three to five, depending on its importance to its locale. Characters could wander about and find this spring if they search long and hard enough. And, faeries might hide the spring with illusions or they might mislead the humans' senses, but the spring's

actual physical nature does not change; it's still a physical part of the mundane world.

The same spring, when thought of as a mythic place, is treated as a *regio*. The spring now exists on several interconnected but separate levels of differing Aura strength that *occupy the same space*. Each level is physically real by itself, though somewhat different from the rest. The highest level is most removed from the mundane world and has the highest Aura. There, the spring could be as the faeries made it; perhaps with a low, engraved marble wall surrounding it, and a fountain located in its middle. A lower *regio* level finds the Aura reduced and the spring less noticeably Faerie in origin, with the engraving faded and the marble wall looking more like a jumble of rocks. The lowest level of the *regio* is the mundane world, with *no* Aura, and the spring is just a plain spring with a few rocks strewn about its edges.

People and creatures normally exist on one level at a time within a *regio*, completely independent of the other levels. Exceptionally powerful beings might cast shadows across a few adjacent levels, and gross physical happenings on the mundane level can affect higher levels. If, for example, someone destroys the spring in the mundane world, the highest level's spring might begin to dry up. Likewise, if a faerie tears apart the marble wall in the highest level, the rocks might move in or disappear from the mundane level.

One way to picture a *regio* is to imagine a series of thin magical layers stacked upon each other in increasing order of strength. The layers rest on the mundane world with the layer of highest strength at the top. And, each successively higher layer (with higher Aura strength) is physically smaller than the level below it. Thus, a person wishing to travel from the mundane world to the highest level crosses into the lowest level, then into the next lowest, and so on until he reaches the level with the highest Aura. Or, that person might fail to enter one of the higher levels and remains on a level somewhere in the middle of the *regio*.

Creating Regio

Regio are associated with a power and have a strength rating from one to ten. Each individual *regio* is made up of one or more levels, each with a different Aura strength. One level is recommended for every few points of Aura strength (see insert), though this is only a guideline. Feel free to create *regio* with greater or fewer levels if you desire.

Once you have decided the power, strength, and number of

levels for your *regio*, draw an overall map showing the boundaries of each level. When finished, it should look something like a contour map, with each boundary clearly labeled with its strength for easy reference. Don't worry too much about the exact locations of the contours. They're magic after all, and can wander about depending on the time of year, the phase of the moon, or on your whim. See the maps provided for each mythic place for some sample *regio* designs.

The next step is to decide what the *regio* physically looks like at its various levels. Each successive level is slightly more attuned to the power (e.g. Faerie) behind the *regio*, so is physically different from the other levels. Remember, though, that the levels are related, so important physical objects in the highest level cast mundane "shadows" in the normal world, and vice versa. Essentially, the levels between the mundane level and that with the highest Aura demonstrate progressive development between those two extremes, either becoming more Faerie or more mundane, depending upon the "direction" of travel. Thus, if the characters decide to explore a level you haven't detailed, simply look at the two extremes of the *regio* (the mundane and the highest level), and create a level that lies somewhere between, having some characteristics of both.

Entering Regio

Most beings, unless native to a particular *regio*, cannot travel freely from level to level. Crossing from the mundane world to the lowest level of a *regio* often happens accidentally, especially during special times of the year like Midsummer's Eve. Normally, entry requires a strong will, a subconscious desire, knowledge of the boundary, or magic to help one across. Higher levels within a *regio* can be quite difficult to enter, as one must work upward from level to level to reach them.

Levels in Regio

Strength of Aura	Number of Levels	Aura of each level
1	1	1
2	1-2	2 or 1, 2
3	2	1, 3
5	3	1, 3, 5
8	4	1, 3, 5, 8
10	5	1, 3, 5, 8, 10

Thus, if a *regio* has a strength of eight, it has four levels: the first level has an Aura of one, the next an Aura of three, the next one of five, and the last and highest an Aura of eight.

The base chance to enter any *regio* level is two times the Aura score of the level being entered, plus six. For example, you need an 8+ to enter level one of a *regio* (2 x 1 + 6) and a 26+ to enter a level ten of a *regio* (2 x 10 + 6). Many things can modify this roll, depending upon the individual situation. A person's Characteristics, Virtues and Flaws, Personality Traits and Abilities may all help or hinder an attempt. A person tracking

something that goes into a *regio* may add her Per + Tracking score to the entry roll, for example. A short table of sample modifiers is presented below.

Normally, only one person, the guide or leader of a group, rolls to enter a *regio* with that roll applying to everyone in the group. If the group is separated, however, each person rolls individually and enters (or fails to enter) the *regio* separately. You may also decide

Modifiers for Entering Regio

This table lists the most common things that can modify a person's chance of entering or leaving a *regio*. It is by no means complete and is meant only as a guideline for possible modifiers. You may often have to make judgment calls on a case-by-case basis. An (F), (M), (I), or (D) symbol following a modifier indicates the bonus is only good for Faerie, Magical, Infernal or Divine *regio* respectively. For more specific modifiers that apply to different *regio*, see the individual mythic places. Remember that such modifiers add to or subtract from die rolls made to enter *regio*; the modifiers do not apply to the difficulty number sought to enter a *regio*.

Season or Particular Day:

- 5 for Winter (F) (M).
- +5 For Winter (I).
- 3 for Autumn (F) (M).
- +5 for Summer (F) (M).
- +10 for Midsummer's Eve, and proportionately less for other pagan holidays (F) (M).
- 10 for Christmas Day, and proportionately less negative for other predominantly Christian Holidays (F) (M) (I).
- +10 for Christmas Day, and proportionately less positive for other predominantly Christian Holidays (D).
- +10 for All Hallows' Eve (I)(F).

Time of Day:

- +8 for a full moon, down to no bonus for no moon (F) (M) (I).
- +5 for dusk or dawn (All, respectively — dusk, D; dawn, I).
- +3 for nighttime (F) (I).
- 3 for daytime (F) (I).
- 5 for high noon (F) (I).
- +3 for daytime (D).
- 3 for nighttime (D).

Weather:

- +1 to +5 for fog or mist (I) (F) (M).
- 2 for fog or mist (D).
- +3 for rain (F) (M).
- +3 for terrible storm (I).
- +1 for clear weather (D).

Previous Knowledge:

+1 to +10 for familiarity with the *regio* (previous visits, reading about it in books, etc.). A good rule of thumb is +1 for the first visit, and an additional +1 for every two visits thereafter to a maximum of +10.

Help/Hindrance From Others:

A variable modifier (+ or -) for the aid or hindrance of a being who is native to and can travel through the *regio* freely. Most beings can add or subtract up to half of their Might (i.e. Faerie, Infernal, Divine or Magical) score to another's at-

tempts to cross boundaries. Lower this modifier to one-quarter if the being imposing the modifier is not native to the *regio*.

Characteristics:

Per—for finding a boundary or following someone through at a distance.

Virtues and Flaws:

- +3 for Faerie Blood, Faerie Upbringing or Feral Upbringing (F).
- +3 for Magic Susceptibility (M)
- +5 for Susceptibility to Faerie Power (F), Infernal Power (I), Divine Power (D).
- +5 for Simple-Minded (All).
- 6 for Withstand Magic (M).
- +2 for Dark Secret (I).
- +5 for Diabolic Upbringing (I).
- 10 for Faerie Enmity (F).
- 2 for Hatred (D).
- +3 for every Faith Point (D).
- 3 for every Faith Point (I).
- 2 for every Confidence Point (D)
- +2 for every Confidence Point (I).
- +3 for Charmed Life (All).
- 1 for Offensive to Animals (F).
- +2 for Clumsy (F).
- +3 for Haunted (I).
- + Flaw score for Cursed (I).
- Flaw score for Cursed (D).
- +3 for Ghostly Warder or Guardian Angel (D) (F) (M).

Modifiers / Entering Regio, continued

+4 for Magic Resistance (All).

+3 for Ways of the Woods (F).

+4 for Tainted with Evil (I).

-4 for Tainted with Evil (D).

+ or - half Demon's Might score for Demon Plagued (I or D, respectively).

+ or - value of each Hermetic Virtue or Flaw possessed (M).

Useful Abilities:

Awareness Talents, Magic Sensitivity, Visions, Track, Concentration, Magic Theory, (Area) Lore, Faerie Lore, Legend Lore, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, Hermes Theory, Hermes Lore, Church Lore, and Occult Lore. Modifiers to regio entry rolls are equal to Ability score and may have a positive or negative effect (i.e. Occult Lore helps one get through Infernal regio, but impedes travel through Divine regio).

Useful Techniques and Forms:

Intéllego Vim (for finding and understanding regio), Rego or Muto Vim (for entering). Modifiers equal Technique and Form scores, but only scores from an appropriate Form and Technique may be applied at any one time. For example, if a

magus is using his mind to search out regio boundaries (i.e. InVi), his score in Muto does not help him cross those boundaries. For Muto score to apply, Muto must be utilized as a means to cross a boundary. You may decide whether such Muto use eliminates the influence of previous Intéllego use (i.e. Intéllego is no longer used as a modifier to boundary crossings).

Emotions:

variable modifier (+ or -) for strong feelings of loss, sadness, fear, anger, desperation, hope or cheer that make travel through regio easier, as long as those emotions coincide with the emotions of most regio inhabitants. Those feelings make crossing more difficult if they oppose those of regio inhabitants.

State of Mind:

variable modifier (+ or -) for a person in a contemplative or reflective state. She may find her feet unconsciously leading her to the peace of some regio (D) (F). Likewise, a person lost or paying little attention to where they are going may stray into a regio (any power). On the other hand, a person paying

close attention to her travels, or having a mind filled with everyday worries, is unlikely to leave the mundane world. And, a person occupied by holy or unholy thoughts, or by prayer, receives a modifier to enter Faerie, Divine or Infernal regio, as appropriate.

Magic Items:

variable modifier (+ or -) for magic items that may help one enter regio (all powers). Carrying charms or amulets against faeries, for example, hinders passage, while carrying certain flowers or trinkets helps to cross boundaries (F). If an item has an Aura rating, that score is the modifier to move through regio. If an item lacks an Aura rating, you must determine the passage variable.

Maps:

variable modifier (+) for a set of arcane directions, whether memorized or printed on parchment, which can help lead one into a regio. In certain cases such directions might make entry automatic (e.g. "Walk round the dying elm thrice, face the setting sun, and walk until you pass between a pair of oaks.")

when a leader's roll does not apply to the group, making all characters roll separately.

One can enter a regio either accidentally or deliberately. Examples of accidental entry to a regio include: following or tracking a being who enters a regio, stumbling upon a regio, or unknowingly being helped into one by a regio inhabitant. When a character comes to a border accidentally, simply have him roll a stress die, altered by any modifiers that seem pertinent. If the roll fails, the character remains in the mundane world and doesn't notice anything strange unless the charac-

ter is tracking someone, then tracks suddenly come to an end in open ground. If the character's roll succeeds, he enters the first level of the regio and may notice slight differences in his surroundings as compared to the mundane world (see *Noticing Regio*). Once in the lowest level of a regio, it is entirely possible for the character to continue to the next level, and onward. Each time the character comes to a boundary of the next highest level, roll to see if he crosses it as well. It is possible to work to the highest levels of a regio in this manner, though highly unlikely.

Exempli Gratia: *Entering Regio*

Róbert the forester wanders through his local forest all the time, normally in broad daylight. Every time he crosses a level one boundary, he must check to see if he enters it or remains in the mundane world. On a normal autumn day he must make a stress roll of 8+ ($6 + 2 \times \text{level of one}$) to enter, with his die roll modified by -9 (-3 for autumn, -3 for daylight, and the Storyguide determines his charms are good for -3). Thus, as long as Róbert stays away from the forest on pagan holidays, dusk, dawn and nighttime, he shouldn't have any trouble avoiding the regio.

Here's another example: A prince of Faerie (with Faerie Might 40) leaves his *regio* on Midsummer's Eve and chances upon a beautiful maiden. He takes a walk with her and, without her knowledge, wishes

to take her back to the heart of Faerie (Aura strength 10). The modifiers to the stress die are: +10 for Midsummer's Eve, +3 for Summer, +20 for his help (half his Faerie Might of 40) and +3 for the phase of the moon, for a total of +36. He needs to beat an 8+ to enter the first level, then a 12+, 16+, 22+ and finally a 26+ to get her all the way to the highest level (across the boundaries of level 1, 3, 5, 8, and 10). Our prince shouldn't have any trouble unless he botches. However, the girl probably notices something is amiss before the prince takes her too far (see *Noticing Regio*), unless he takes care to keep her distracted.

Let's say the girl wakes up the next morning and wishes to leave by herself. She needs to roll a 26+ to leave the highest level (what she needed to get in), modified by +9 (+3 for summer, +5 for dawn, and +1 for some familiarity [from a generous Storyguide]). It looks like she'll be wandering for a while unless her player gets lucky and rolls doubles.

Characters may also try to enter *regio* deliberately. The procedure for entering is the same as for entering unintentionally, except that characters probably use spells or some other means to aid their cause. You have to judge the effectiveness of such preparations on a case-by-case basis. Possible deliberate entry methods include: willing oneself into the *regio* (requiring Concentration or Meditation rolls to receive a bonus), saying certain arcane phrases or using charms learned from books or learned people, trying to attract faeries to help in the endeavor, or using Muto or Rego Vim spells. Be sure to take into account the time of day, the time of season, and any previous encounters had with the *regio*.

Leaving Regio

The rules for leaving *regio* are basically the same as for entering them. When a character comes to a boundary leading to a lower level, she must make a roll equal to six plus two times the level *the character is trying to leave*. Modifiers to the die roll are applied as normal with the exception that each time one tries to leave a level and fails, the difficulty of the succeeding attempt goes up by one. Beings who unsuccessfully try to leave a level find themselves inexplicably doubling back on their tracks, and all paths or trails lead in circles to keep the characters within the *regio*. It is possible for someone to become permanently trapped in a high level of a *regio* when he lingers too long (as decided by you). And, a person may find it easy to enter a high level of a Faerie *regio* on Midsummer's Eve, but find it difficult to leave the next morning. A common faerie trick is to aid an unwitting mortal into a high Aura level, and

then leave the mortal there to find his own way out. Fortunately, faeries soon tire of mortals blundering about in their realm and often lead them out before too much damage is done.

Some *regio*, however, bear mystical charms that make it difficult for people to leave of their own volition. Usually, this effect is restricted to the highest level of a powerful *regio* and not all people feel its effects. When a group enters the highest level of a *regio* that has an Aura of eight or more, you should carefully consider the demeanor of each character as well as noting the actions and reactions of each character to the *regio*. If any characters seem naturally drawn toward or fascinated by the area, those characters must make a Personality roll that equals or beats the level of the *regio* in order to leave. Examples of Personality Traits that could add to the die roll are: loyal, reliable, distrustful and practical. Examples of Personality Traits that subtract from the die roll are: easily charmed, gullible, curious and love of nature (F). Other Personality Traits certainly have value, depending on the power of the *regio*, and the motives of its inhabitants. You have to determine which Personality Traits apply on a case by case basis.

Noticing Regio

For a character to notice the fact that he has left the mundane world and is traveling in a *regio* requires a base stress roll of Per + Area Lore (or Faerie Lore, Church Lore, Occult Lore, Hermes Lore, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, or whatever is most applicable) of 10+. Add the Aura of the level the character is in to

Summary of Regio Rolls

Entering Regio: Rolled to cross any *regio* boundary. Stress die plus appropriate modifiers vs. $2 \times \text{level Aura} + 6$.

Noticing Regio: Rolled to determine whether a character realizes he's in a *regio*. Per + Area Lore (or other appropriate skill) stress roll of 10+. Add Aura of level to roll.

Spotting Others on Other Levels: Per + Alertness roll of 15+.

Spell Use in Regio: Aura of level occupied modifies spell rolls. Magi roll double the normal number of botches for spell use.

Leaving Regio: Rolled to exit a level, crossing its boundary. Stress die plus appropriate modifiers vs. $2 \times \text{Aura of level currently occupied} + 6$. For each failed roll, the next suffers a -1 modifier.

his roll. For example, if the character wanders into level one, add one to his roll, and if he enters level ten, add ten to his roll. Be subtle about successful rolls, especially if they occur on low levels. For example, describe how the light seems different, the colors brighter, the air sweeter, and indicate how characters feel they are being watched, or add any number of small details that subtly indicate characters' new surroundings. Characters may also feel a slight tingle or shiver up their spines when they cross a boundary.

Magic in Regio

Magic cast in a *regio* receives the bonuses (or penalties) for the Aura of the level the caster is on (see *Ars Magica*, p. 73). If, for example, a magus casts a spell on a level with a Magical Aura strength of five, five is added to his roll. But, if the magus casts the same spell on a level of Divine Aura, his spell roll suffers a penalty equal to the level's value.

It can be dangerous to use magic, especially *vis*, in *regio*. Magi are required to make twice the normal number of botch rolls when casting spells in *regio*. Multiple botches while using *vis* might result in the warping of the *regio*, briefly distorting reality or even trapping magi inside a *regio* "bubble." Another danger of magic use lies in the potential for attracting curious or angry creatures to magi — many beings in *regio* are closely attuned to magic and might sense its nearby use.

Time and the Senses in Regio

Time within *regio* is quite unpredictable. Sometimes, no difference can be detected between time passing in

the mundane world and in a *regio*, but large discrepancies often arise. Hours can become weeks, and years can shrink to minutes or seconds. How time flows in a particular *regio* is completely up to your whim, but it's recommended that the effects become increasingly severe as the characters travel into levels with higher Aura strengths (i.e. Rip van Winkle-type time effects should probably be reserved for strength ten Aura levels. If time discrepancies between mundane and *regio* levels are minimal, a person could wander in and out of the lowest level of a *regio* without realizing it. However, that same person might lose or gain a few hours or days when entering a *regio*'s higher levels, as time discrepancies there are extreme.

Also note that, though people who are in adjacent levels of a *regio* can not see each other directly, they might catch fleeting glimpses of each another (Per + Alertness rolls of 15+). This "shadow" effect is magnified for more powerful beings; Faerie Lords cast wavering images through several adjacent levels within a *regio* (add half the being's Might score to others' chances of noticing him). Magi can try spontaneous and formulaic spells (see *Appendix*) to see briefly across levels of a *regio*. Characters' necessity for die rolls and spell use contrasts the ease that *regio* inhabitants experience in looking across levels of their home.

Options

The preceding sections attempt to formalize and make rules for a common concept of folklore and mythology; that certain magical realms coexist with, but are magically separated from, our own. The best known example of such a realm is Faerie — a fantastic place filled with elves, nymphs and dryads, which mortals stumble into from time to time. Other examples include: mystical isles that only appear during a full moon; magical towers that can only be seen on a certain equinox; or, hidden glades that can only be reached by people wearing certain charms. Of course, many such places are presented in Mythic Places.

Any rules developed to deal with these diverse magical realms are, by necessity, of a general nature. The rules presented above are merely that; guidelines to help you deal with *regio* in a consistent and fair manner. If the rules need to be altered for a *regio* you have created, or need to be altered to reward a particularly creative player's idea, feel free. In fact, it is perfectly reasonable to change these rules slightly from time to time to keep the players guessing — *regio* are strange places and what works for characters one time might not work a second.

With all this in mind, here are a few examples of alternative rules concerning *regio*. Use them as you see fit.

Entering and Leaving

Many methods of entering and leaving magical realms can be found in fantastic literature and, while all are not appropriate to the world of *Ars Magica*, many can be transplanted to Mythic Europe with ease. Physically crossing a *regio* border is perhaps the most common way to enter a *regio*, and has already been discussed. Other important ways of reaching *regio* don't involve movement at all, but rather use magic of some kind to transport beings upwards or downwards through a *regio*'s layers. An example of this is a person inadvertently going to sleep on the mundane level of an important *regio*, and waking on some higher level. Another example involves magi casting spells from the mundane level of a *regio* to move upwards into the higher levels. Game mechanics for the latter are provided in the Appendix of this book.

Rules governing special entry cases can be extrapolated by you from the existing rules on a case-by-case basis (assuming spells used aren't already covered in this book's *Appendix*). You might rule, for example, that a person sleeping on mundane soil, within the bounds of a *regio*, must roll upon waking to see if he or she has been transported to a higher level. The roll is made normally, with appropriate modifiers for time, place and the person's mood. If the roll is lower than an 8 (the minimum needed to enter a level one *regio*), the person remains in the world which he is familiar with. If, however, the roll is 8+, the person enters the *regio* at the highest level allowed by the roll. For example, if the person rolls a 13, he wakes on level 3 (if it exists) because the roll needed to enter level three is 12+. Likewise, using similar rules, you may rule that it is possible for a person sleeping on a higher level of a *regio* to move down levels, into the mundane world.

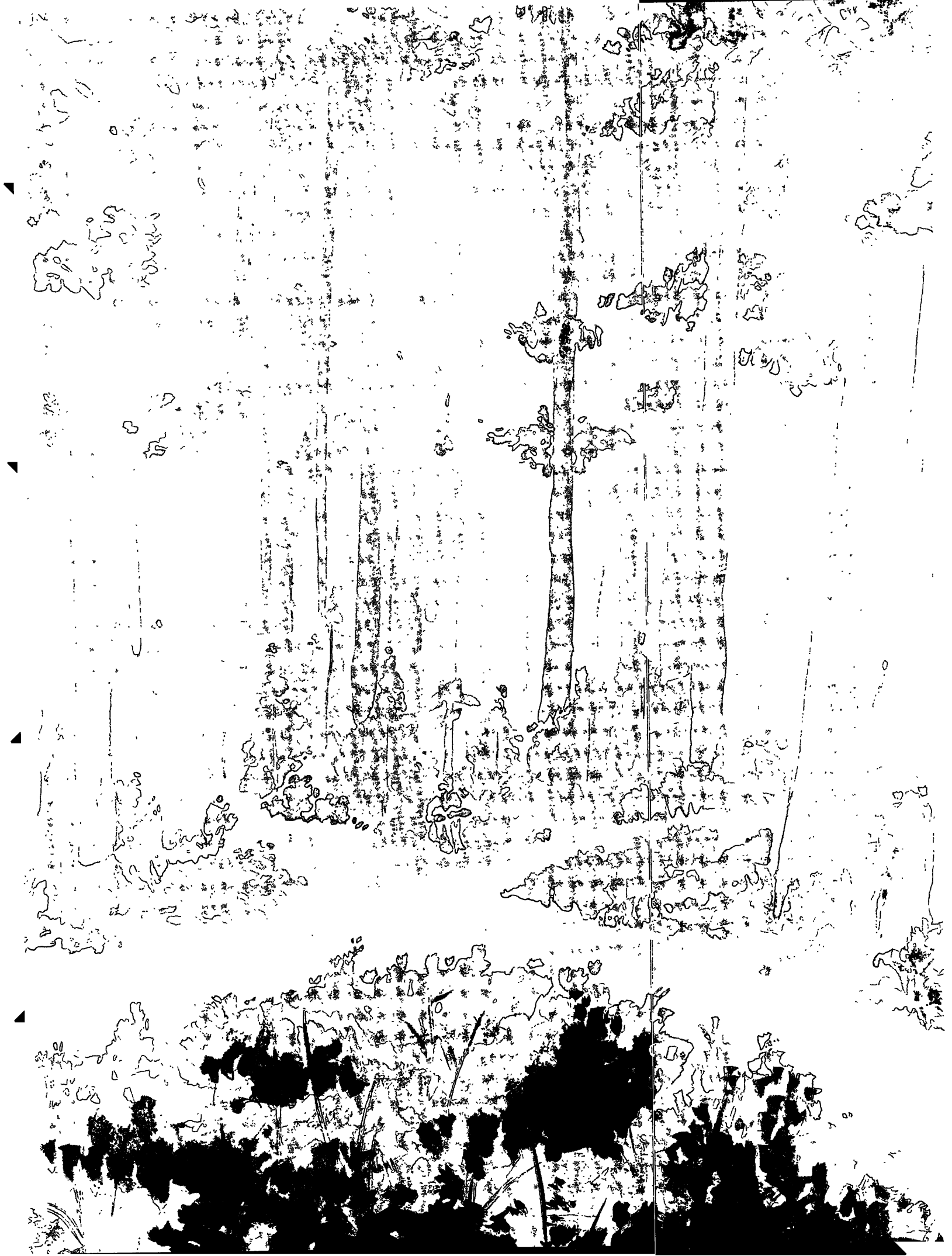
Exempli Gratia: *Entering Regio Without Moving Physically*

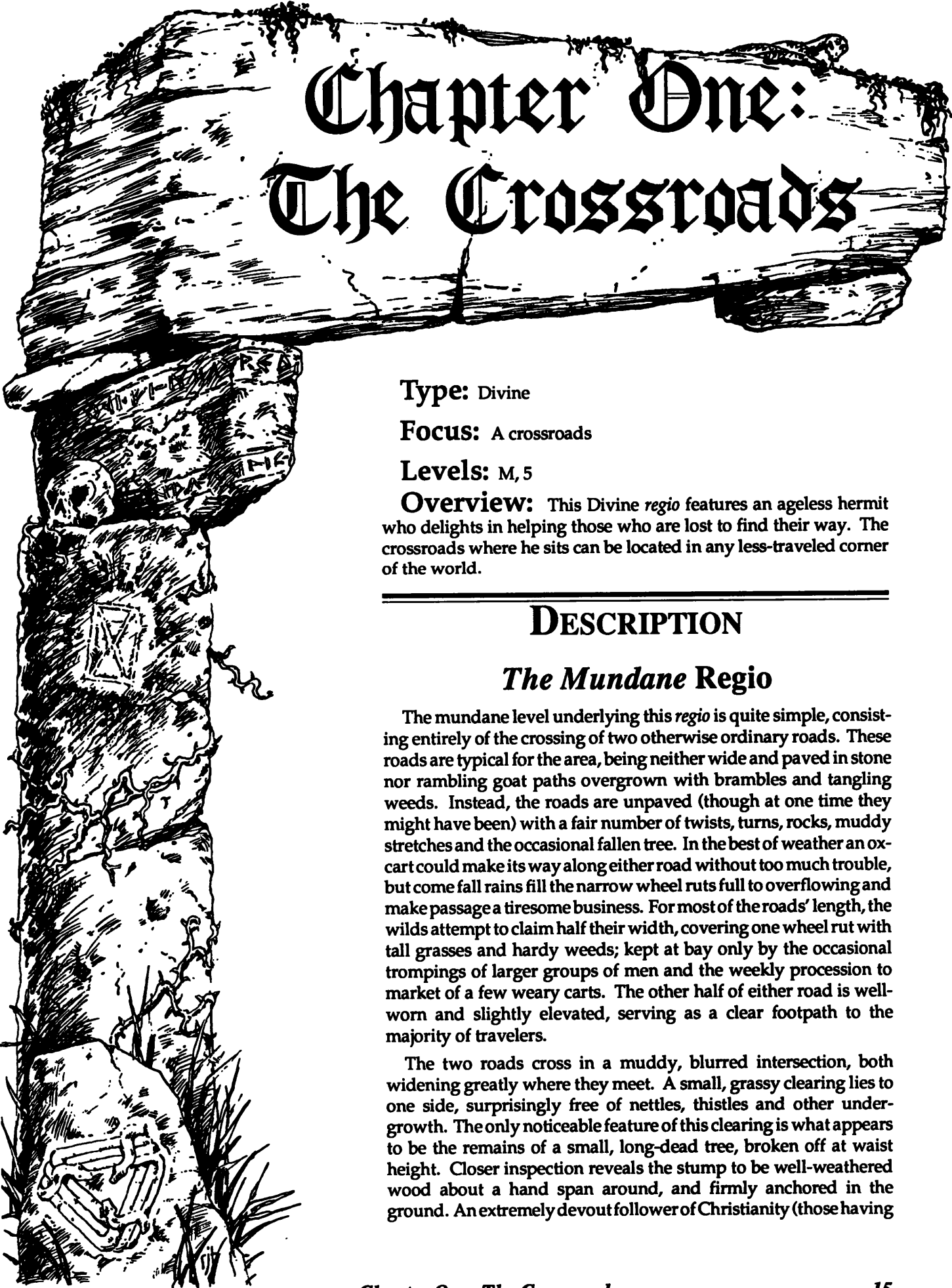
A group from a Covenant makes camp deep in a forest, directly below the center of a powerful *regio*. A curious elf-lord decides it would be entertaining to bring the characters to his home on level 8 of the *regio*. He makes his way to their camp, disguised as a bard, and offers to sing in exchange for his dinner. As he sings and strums his lute, the lord begins to try and make the entire group move upward with him into the *regio*. It is Summer (+5), at night (+3), there is a slight mist covering the ground (+1), the elf-lord tries to get his guests in the proper state of mind by singing stories of Faerie (the Storyguide gives this a +3 modifier), and the elf-lord is helping the characters' transition by way of his own will (half of the elf-lord's Faerie Might of 20 gives +10), for a total of +22. The Storyguide decides that the elf-lord must bring the characters into the *regio* one level at a time, in the increments of 1, 3, 5, and 8, but more than one level can be traveled with a single roll. The Storyguide also rules that it takes fifteen minutes of music to allow one roll.

After fifteen minutes of the elf-lord's singing, the Storyguide rolls a $3 + 22 = 25$, more than enough to bring the characters into the first level. At this time,

extremely perceptive characters might notice slight differences in their surroundings as per *Noticing Regio*, but no one rolls high enough. Similarly, the elf-lord's roll is high enough to bring the characters through level 3 and into level 5 without a problem. The characters are allowed Perception rolls on each level to realize they are "traveling." No one notices any change on the third level. However, on the fifth level things look different enough that one companion makes his Per roll and notices something unusual about his surroundings. The Storyguide tells the companion's player that trees look taller and a bit paler than they did a moment ago, that grass seems softer, and that rocks around the fire seem different somehow. The companion decides that these perceptions merely result from fatigue mixed with too much good wine, so he continues listening to the bard.

After another fifteen minutes (half an hour after the "bard" started playing), the Storyguide rolls a $5 + 22 = 27$ for the final step. The result is high enough for the lord to successfully bring the group to level eight of his *regio* (he only needed 22+). At this time, everyone in the group makes their Per rolls. Some notice that the stars are different, others that the trees are now enormous and silver, and still others that the fire now burns in a ring of carved rock. The characters jump up in alarm. The elf-lord lays down his instrument and welcomes the group to his realm.





Chapter One: The Crossroads

Type: Divine

Focus: A crossroads

Levels: M, 5

Overview: This Divine *regio* features an ageless hermit who delights in helping those who are lost to find their way. The crossroads where he sits can be located in any less-traveled corner of the world.

DESCRIPTION

The Mundane Regio

The mundane level underlying this *regio* is quite simple, consisting entirely of the crossing of two otherwise ordinary roads. These roads are typical for the area, being neither wide and paved in stone nor rambling goat paths overgrown with brambles and tangling weeds. Instead, the roads are unpaved (though at one time they might have been) with a fair number of twists, turns, rocks, muddy stretches and the occasional fallen tree. In the best of weather an ox-cart could make its way along either road without too much trouble, but come fall rains fill the narrow wheel ruts full to overflowing and make passage a tiresome business. For most of the roads' length, the wilds attempt to claim half their width, covering one wheel rut with tall grasses and hardy weeds; kept at bay only by the occasional trompings of larger groups of men and the weekly procession to market of a few weary carts. The other half of either road is well-worn and slightly elevated, serving as a clear footpath to the majority of travelers.

The two roads cross in a muddy, blurred intersection, both widening greatly where they meet. A small, grassy clearing lies to one side, surprisingly free of nettles, thistles and other undergrowth. The only noticeable feature of this clearing is what appears to be the remains of a small, long-dead tree, broken off at waist height. Closer inspection reveals the stump to be well-weathered wood about a hand span around, and firmly anchored in the ground. An extremely devout follower of Christianity (those having

True Faith, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, or those possessing one or more Faith Points) might detect a faint resonance of some sort while touching the wood (Per + Scan roll of 7+), but others notice nothing special. Beyond this unremarkable landmark, the crossroads is completely ordinary.

The Divine Regio (5)

The Divine level of the *regio* is a circular patch some two hundred feet across, centered on the crossroads. It differs little from its mundane counterpart, the few exceptions being in the aforementioned grassy clearing, nestled in the crux of the crossroads. The most obvious change is the transformation of the small tree stump into a full-fledged signpost. It stands tall, the shape, size and smoothness of a stout walking stick, with several sun-bleached wooden signs hanging in different directions from its notched peak. The signs are unreadable from a distance.

Beneath the signs, with his back to the post, sits a person so slight and unassuming that he is probably not noticed until travelers draw near to the crossroads itself. Then they notice an elderly man with wispy, unkempt hair tinged yellow with age. His hair floats around his lined, well-tanned face, which ends in a short salt-and-pepper beard. Set in his face lie two points of color, brilliant green eyes, sparkling in the

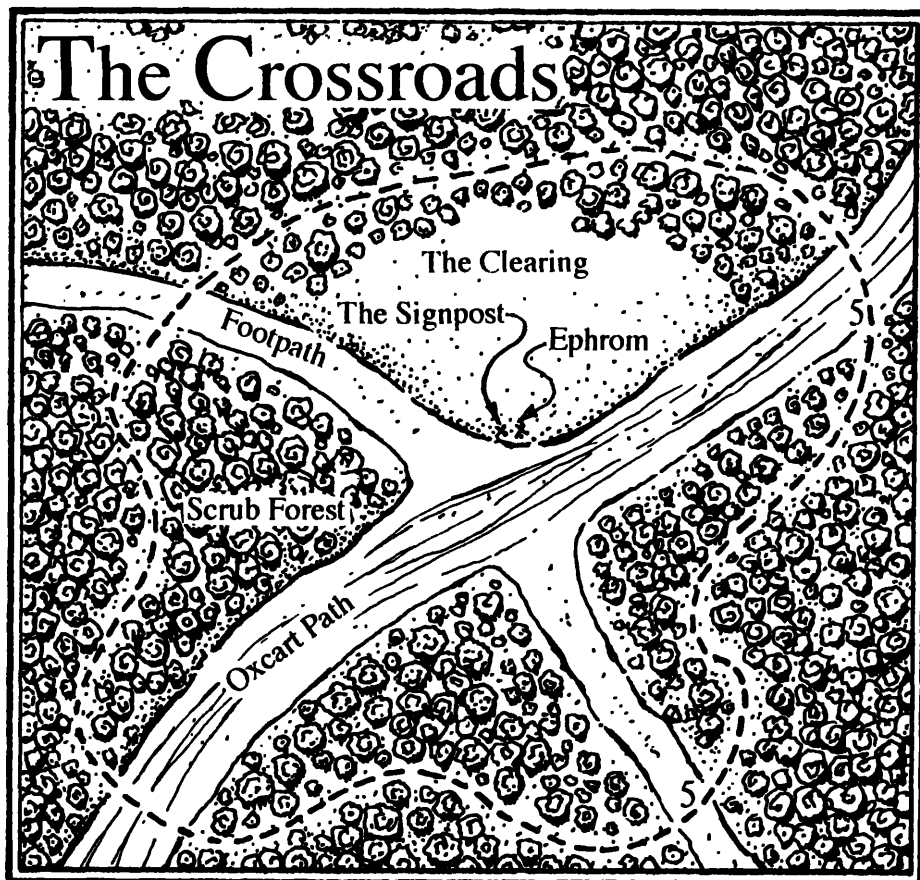
sun. The man is clothed in a simple, clean, though threadbare robe of undyed wool. Skinny arms loosely hug draped knees to his chest. Hidden among the grass at his feet lies a beaten bronze bowl and a simple clay mug. As travelers draw close, the man speaks in a cracked but resonant voice, "Good morrow, gentle wanderers. Have you a few morsels of food or a dram of summer's ale to share with a fellow pilgrim?"

What Has Gone Before

Many centuries ago, a man of great holiness traveled the roads and byways of Mythic Europe. His passing was little noted, for though he is named in the gospels as Joseph of Arimathea, he journeyed with but a small band of followers and never with pomp or grandeur. The reasons for his travels are the subject of much debate, but many believe that he carried the Lord's chalice (called by some the Holy Grail) to Bron, the Rich Fisher of misty England. On the way to those distant and alien shores, Joseph often dispersed his small group of followers to gather information and gain what converts they could through gentle talk and stories of the Holy Land. Thus, as was his want, Joseph often traveled alone, leaving a trail of tree-marks and rock-piles for the others to follow.

One day a lone and weary Joseph came to a dusty crossroads. Carefully scribing his sign on a piece of bark, he affixed it to his staff and drove the staff firmly into the ground as a sign to his followers. Then he made his slow but steady way down the long, long road. Thus did Joseph unwittingly create a *regio* with his holy staff.

Over a hundred years later, a wandering penitent named Ephram stopped to rest at the small crossroads. He was without companionship, tired, and completely lost. So, he made a comfortable place at the side of the road with his back to a post and sat, contemplating the beauty that surrounded him, praying, and waiting for a knowledgeable wayfarer to pass by. Eventually someone did pass by, also lost. Before he could explain that he, too, was lost, the other had asked directions and Ephram found he knew the answer. Later, another traveler chanced to pass, and again



Ephram answered his questions, though he had no recollection of such places himself.

The next day, this scene repeated itself a few more times, and each time Ephram found himself giving directions to places he'd never seen, much less heard of. It also became apparent that language was no longer a barrier, for though his visitors spoke many tongues, Ephram found he could always understand and speak clear replies. As the days turned to weeks, dreams of Ephram's own journey slowly slipped away, to be replaced by quiet anticipation each morning: "*What visitors will pass my way today, and what strange questions will they ask? And more, what will I answer — and therefore learn? Wondrous are the ways of God, indeed.*"

Weeks became months, and months years, and the years rolled by to become entire centuries, marked for Ephram by slowly changing peoples, clothes, questions and answers. Still he sits, unaging, endless in his wonder, awaiting lost travelers and the knowledge they bring.

Ephram's Magical Wards

If, for some unfathomable reason, characters attempt to harm Ephram, they find him well protected by his faith and the *regio* itself. First, remember that this is a Divine *regio*, so that any spells cast in it suffer a -5 penalty along with five extra botch dice. In addition, Ephram's faith and the power of Joseph's staff give him an effective Magical Resistance of 15, plus the result of a simple die (think of this as a virtue if you like). Furthermore, Ephram has no control over his protective power and has no concept of how it works, beyond that it results from the Lord's will. The threat of physical harm causes Ephram to do nothing more than close his eyes and begin praying, quietly and calmly.

In combat, Ephram's effective Defense is -5, and his Soak, due to his faith, is +10. He has normal Body Levels for a human, and if they are exceeded, his form disappears, going to its reward. Throughout an attack Ephram continues praying, ignoring all spells or physical attacks, until they cease and the perpetrators leave. At your discretion, Ephram can act, praying for a miracle with the results ranging from the simple removal of the characters from the *regio* (the old man slowly fades from sight as the group finds itself on the mundane level of the crossroads, incapable of returning to the Divine level until they repent their sins), to the summons of lightning bolts that strike the attackers dead (treat as *The Incantation of Lightning*, CrAu 35).

Be sure to point out the cold-bloodedness of characters' actions if they attack Ephram; he is an old, defenseless holy man, who is simply sitting and

Ephram's Profile

Int (Good Memory) +2

Per (Sharp-eyed) +1

Str (Feeble) -2

Stm (Wiry) -1

Prs (Glowing) +3

Com (Calming) +4

Dex (Arthritic) -2

Qik (Shuffling step) -3

Faith Points: 3

Age: 50-60 (apparently)

Personality Traits

Curious +3

Talkative +2

Helpful +2

Mysterious +1

Important Skills

Alertness (while meditating) 5

Charm (pilgrims) 5

Folk Ken (travelers) 6

Meditation (prayer) 7

Storytelling (parables) 5

Diplomacy (calming) 4

Area Lore (directions) 12*

Church Lore (ancient) 3

Speak Language (any) 8*

* These two extremely high skills are imparted by the Divine nature of the *regio*. Ephram's scores without the benefit of the *regio* are 6.

Reputations

Ghost/locals (3)

Saint/Christian travelers (2)

praying, bothering no one. Anyone who purposefully harms Ephram finds himself cursed upon leaving the *regio*. This curse causes the recipient to become permanently disoriented until he honestly repents his sins. In game terms, the person become always becomes lost whenever it is reasonable to do so — traveling to town, going through a forest — just don't overdo it. The best way to impose the curse is to afflict characters with a -10 penalty to all Per, Int or Area Lore rolls for location determination. And, if any botches come up, 3 extra rolls are made.

Characters who persist in attacking and succeed in destroying Ephram are punished terribly by the Di-



vinities. The characters are cursed (as per the -4 Flaw), never able to find their way in the world again. The characters also gain a reputation for being cold-blooded, with a value of 3, and are sensed as such by people wherever they go. Thus, the characters are forced to wander the world aimlessly, never being welcomed and never receiving aid. The only way to lift the curse is to seek out a follower of God who has spiritually lost his way — he has fallen from the higher faith. If that person's faith in the Lord can be restored by cursed characters, they redeem themselves and are allowed to live out their remaining lives in peace. Thus, characters may seem doomed after destroying Ephram, but they may still partake of different stories in search of a fallen holy man. Of course, the characters may not learn the solution to their curse right away, but the discovery of that solution can be part of the cursed characters' stories.

Ephram, the Holy Man

Ephram is the sole inhabitant of the *regio* and can always be found sitting at the base of the signpost, with a faint smile upon his lips and his ancient bronze bowl and earthen mug at his feet. He passes his days thusly: humming hymns forgotten elsewhere in the world,

meditating deeply upon the Lord's bountiful and mysterious ways, or reviewing particularly interesting visits from long dead travelers in his sharp mind. Ephram has little need to move, though he stretches and makes a short circuit of his small domain several times a day. Food and water are no longer essential to him, but he still enjoys their taste and often breaks his fast with generous travelers.

The travelers who find their way into this *regio* have usually lost their way or are looking for someplace that has eluded them for some time (see *Mechanics*, below). Ephram almost always senses travelers' coming, and ceases meditating, straightens his robes, and moves his bowl and mug to an obvious place in preparation. He appraises the travelers briefly, then says, "Good morning, gentle wanderers. Have you a few morsels of food or a dram of summer's ale to share with a fellow pilgrim?"

What follows depends entirely upon the travelers' reactions. Those generous with food and drink find Ephram a kind and gentle person, ready with entertaining tales of far off lands, and helpful with his unerring directions to places known and unknown. He speaks in a dry but strangely musical and compelling voice, and always seems to hesitate briefly before answering questions, leaning his head back slightly and closing his eyes as if lightly meditating. After

speaking, especially if the travelers ask directions to a particularly odd or out of the way place, or if they speak in a seldom-used tongue, Ephram's face breaks into a broad, gapped-tooth smile as he absorbs new information offered him. Perceptive people (Per + Scan roll of 9+) might notice after asking directions that one of the signs on the signpost now points the proper direction and bears barely readable archaic script naming the desired location. Anyone touching the staff, on the Divine level of the *regio*, feels a sense of quiet power (Per roll of 4+ to do so), unless that person is evil (a judgment call on your part) in which case he feels an almost overwhelming sense of disorientation, loss and sadness.

Note that Ephram does not simply answer every question put to him. Those who ask questions concerning their own travel are answered clearly and with little delay, but those requesting directions to any other locations are questioned in turn about their reasons for desiring the knowledge. Ephram withholds any knowledge to be used for flagrant personal gain, military conquest, or to be used to bring harm to others.

The group also finds Ephram exceedingly knowledgeable about all facets of geography, but strangely out of date with world events, even important things like names of countries and popes. To anyone questioning Ephram about his life he replies, *"Oh, I've been here a long, long time. Maybe ten or twenty years? Before that I wandered, spreading the word and visiting holy places."* If pressed, he drops some hints letting knowledgeable folk (Int + Appropriate Lore roll of 6+) know that he is *very* old indeed. He might, for example, mention the Emperor's new city, Constantinople (built in 330 AD) and how he thinks it will never last. *"Rome, now there's a grand, but dark, place. Never have I seen such beauty and depravity so intertwined."* If asked about how he manages to survive, he says, *"Well, the winters don't seem to reach this far south, the Lord sustains my soul, and there's always travelers like yourself to help my body along."* If pressed logically on any issue concerning his age, existence, or the *regio*, Ephram simply smiles and shake his head, responding: *"In my travels, I have encountered many strange things, and always I have looked to God and said thanks for giving us such wonders. For wouldn't the world be a dull place without them? What you say is true; this is a special place and time does seem a fickle thing, but why question what we see? It simply is. I sit here, you sit there, we eat, drink, and enjoy each other's company. People are too curious for their own good, sometimes. Trust in the Lord and he will guide and provide for you."*

Ephram acts quite differently towards those who are initially belligerent, stingy, or otherwise unfriendly. He gives them directions, cheerfully wishes them good journeying with God's blessing, closes his eyes, smiles, and goes back to his meditations. Groups changing

their approach at this point now have to work to gain Ephram's acceptance, though it can be done (a Com + Charm roll of 7+ starts things off). Just remember that Ephram is a man of God, and of a kind heart; he is willing to forgive those who act in haste if they seem truly repentant.

On a completely different tack, you might allow Ephram to reaffirm the faith of someone who's fallen from grace; you might have him put a character back on the road to God. A character being helped in this way must have at one time possessed True Faith or have had Faith Points, but has lost them since. Such a character may be treated as physically lost in terms of Ephram's willingness to help him. By hearing out the character's doubts in the Lord, Ephram can indicate how the character's faith can be restored, thereby reviving the character's True Faith Virtue, or Faith Points (though only 1 is initially gained) if the character takes Ephram's advice. The spiritual affirmation that Ephram offers depends on the nature of a lost soul's doubt. You must decide what advice or proverb can restore a particular character's faith in the Lord.

Roleplaying Tips

Play the kindly old grandfather type as best you can. Just remember that while you are physically weak, your mind is still razor sharp. You truly enjoy what you do, and love to talk with people of their travels. Intersperse your speech with bits of scripture and common sense, but don't be too preachy. You needn't be friendly to rude or offensive people — simply ignore them.

Mechanics

This *regio* is very difficult to enter unless one is lost, physically or spiritually. Those who are receive a bonus of +5 to +10 on their roll to enter, depending on just how lost they are. Travelers who are not lost may roll normally to see if they cross into the *regio*. Ephram also has some control over those who enter and leave the *regio*. He may add or subtract up to 10 to or from any attempts to enter the *regio* that he is aware of. Effectively, this means that only those who are truly lost find their way to the signpost, and those wishing to leave have no problem doing so with Ephram's help.

This *regio* has one other important feature: no one who specifically looks for it ever finds it, no matter how hard they search. Otherwise, Ephram would be besieged by hordes of scholars, merchants and explorers, all asking for directions to hidden treasure troves or lost cities. One way a clever troupe could sidestep this restriction would be to send unknowing covenfolk on errands near the crossroads, ensuring that they get lost before reaching it. Such tricks work, at your

discretion, but Ephram soon catches on if they're used repeatedly. Depending upon the circumstances, Ephram might find the whole deception funny and welcome the confused visitors, or he might use his powers to ensure that they are unable to enter the *regio*.

If you feel the above restriction on searching for the *regio* is too strict, you can allow extremely pious, good or needy people, who pray for the Lord's guidance, to find the *regio* and receive Ephram's help on request.

After entering the *regio* characters might want to do it harm, so rules are needed to contend with the theft of Joseph's staff. To steal the staff characters must first destroy or magically restrain Ephram. Otherwise, he forces them from the *regio* before the characters' dark task is complete. He might also call for miracle to have the characters stricken down before they can steal the staff. Furthermore, those who steal the staff become subject to the Lord's wrath, as if they had killed Ephram (see above). Thus, though stealing the staff might have destructive effects upon the thieves, those commanding the thieves, Demons say, not only see the Divine *regio* ruined, but avoid personal harm in the process.

The staff if effectively invulnerable to magical and faerie spells. The only thing that can uproot or destroy it is an Infernally charged weapon, tool, or item of Aura 6+ (a level higher than that of the *regio* itself). If the staff is uprooted or destroyed the *regio* at the crossroads is ruined and Ephram is allowed to find his final rest in the Promised Land. However, if a character with holy intent, True Faith or Faith Points recovers the staff and restores it to its former position, the *regio* is restored. Ephram does not return, though. Rather, the *regio* awaits the arrival of another lost traveler willing to settle at the crossroads. If she wishes, a character may assume Ephram's holy seat. While overseeing the crossroads, Ephram's replacement is removed from your game sessions, but may return in cameo appearances and may return to the Covenant for good is she in turn is replaced. Of course, the

returning character does not age a day, and is much wiser about the world (you may grant her Virtues like Well-Traveled and True Faith, also awarding 5 Faith Points).

Location

The crossroads can be placed in almost any area of Mythic Europe that Joseph of Arimathea might have traversed while making his way from the Holy Land to Britain (if you believe the legends, he was seen practically everywhere in western Europe). Preferably, the crossroads should be placed in an area of low to moderate traffic, far from many major cities. Ideally, the crossroads should be fairly remote with only one or two villages within a day's journey. It might even be located near the character's Covenant, waiting to be discovered by some drunk grogs or a lost redcap.

Some more suggestions include:

- Place the *regio* at a specific location within your Saga, and wait until it is discovered by the characters. This discovery could happen first-hand, if some characters happen to be lost in the right place, or second hand, by characters hearing stories of its existence from locals in a tavern or from gossiping clergymen. In any case, people who live near the *regio* are likely to know that lost travelers often find a strange old holy man at the crossroads. They might even go so far as to ask people coming from the crossroads' direction if they met "the old hermit."
- Place the *regio* near the Covenant. Occasionally have visitors mention that, "I had a bit of trouble finding the place, but that old holy man helped me out." If visitors mention this man frequently enough, the characters may catch on to the *regio*'s existence. Of course, any search for the mysterious holy man comes up empty, but a few covenfolk might recall having met the hermit in the past (i.e. drunken grogs returning to the Covenant or grogs returning during bad weather). It could also be fun to have a simple-minded resident of the



Covenant say, "*I've met the nice old man lots of times. He's my friend.*" An exhaustive search of Covenant records might even indicate that the hermit has been around for centuries, but his existence has never been proven by the magi and has been passed off to overactive imaginations. If handled properly, this elusive *regio* could become quite a frustration for the Covenant, to magi because their magic cannot locate the elusive hermit, and to grogs because their patrols fail to locate him. The crossroads could even be a carefully guarded secret of the Covenant, kept quiet for fear of reprimand by the Order for fraternization with Divine powers.

- Keep the *regio* in reserve, and place it when needed to add a special touch to an ongoing Saga or to help out a group who is lost and needs a bit of help. This option has the advantage of insuring that the group actually gets to experience the *regio* firsthand rather than just hearing about it. It also gives you a way to put lost characters back on track without resorting to a series of die rolls. Of course, placing the *regio* in this way, you can only use it once, unless the characters happen to get lost in the same place at a later date.

- For those seeking a truly "mythic" touch, the *regio* could move from place to place, summoned to different crossroads throughout the world by the very fact that people are lost and in need of Ephram's help. In this case, encountering the *regio* is almost certainly a one-time affair, as the *regio* moves constantly from one crossroads to another. This option also allows you great flexibility in deciding when and where the *regio* appears.

Stories

While this *regio* is certainly of interest to the characters once discovered, its small and elusive nature should ensure that it is never the focus of an entire session unless you decide to make it so.

Some options for this *regio*'s use include:

- Ephram desires to visit the Holy Land once more before he dies and seeks someone to take his place at the crossroads. A companion or grog at the Covenant

might prove worthy, especially if that person has met Ephram and made a good impression.

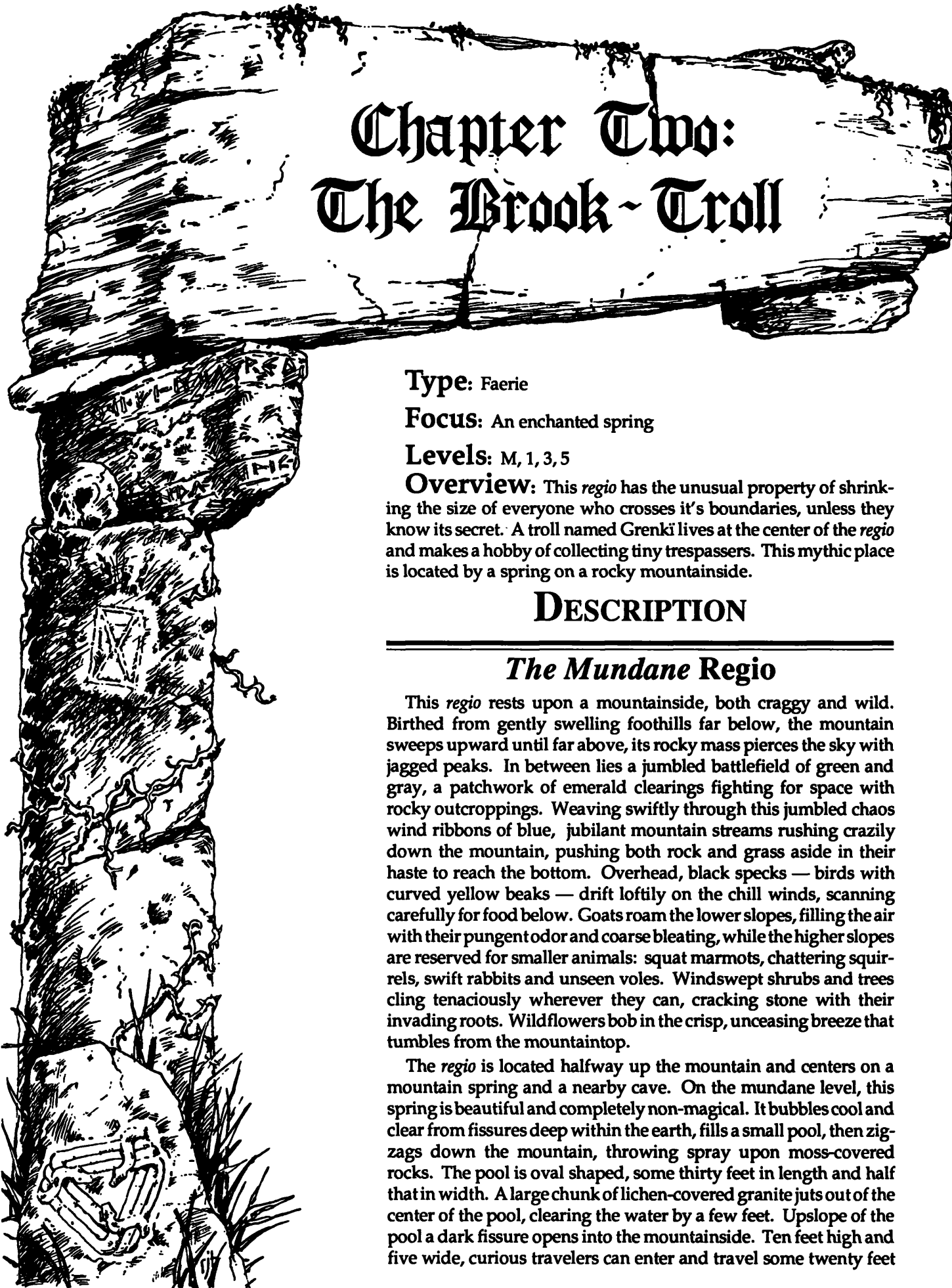
- Someone wants Joseph's staff (it has legendary powers — left to you to create) and is searching for it far and wide. The possibilities of this seeker's identity include a particularly ambitious clergyman or scholar (or even some magus). The seeker has heard rumors of the staff's location and seeks the characters' help in finding it. The characters may be willing to join in, or may refuse, hoping to preserve the crossroads. In the latter case, the supplicant could use money, blackmail, or political pressure to make the magi comply to his demands. Alternatively, the magi might desire the staff for themselves, intending to study the nature of the Dominion in a laboratory setting. Whether the person seeking the staff is willing to relinquish it is another question. Maybe the characters have to turn the tables on him, blackmailing him in order to get the staff.

- A Demon seeks the staff in order to warp or destroy it, but cannot enter the *regio* due to its powerful Divine Aura. To meet his ends he seeks the aid of mortals. There are many ways to draw magi into the story. The Demon, for example, could make the staff's acquisition part of a bargain after a botched summoning attempt, or through an insidious deal with a practicing diabolist within the Covenant. Alternatively, a Demon might offer a damned person her soul back in return for the staff (but its doubtful the Demon intends to fulfill the bargain). Or, true to fantasy tradition, the Demon could gain the aid of a group of diabolists who seek the staff, and the characters must stop them.

- Perhaps a person need not be physically lost to find the *regio* — what about those morally or spiritually lost? A troubled magus, companion or grog who is struggling with a moral or spiritual dilemma might stumble across Ephram's crossroads. Through talk and companionship with Ephram the character might end up turning to the Church, becoming "found."

Also keep in mind that the concept of being "lost" could be developed to apply to many situations. Characters might need help with a lost goal, lost love, lost youth, or lost health. The list of situations that the crossroads could apply to is limited only by your imagination.





Chapter Two: The Brook-Troll

Type: Faerie

Focus: An enchanted spring

Levels: M, 1, 3, 5

Overview: This *regio* has the unusual property of shrinking the size of everyone who crosses its boundaries, unless they know its secret. A troll named Grenkī lives at the center of the *regio* and makes a hobby of collecting tiny trespassers. This mythic place is located by a spring on a rocky mountainside.

DESCRIPTION

The Mundane Regio

This *regio* rests upon a mountainside, both craggy and wild. Birthed from gently swelling foothills far below, the mountain sweeps upward until far above, its rocky mass pierces the sky with jagged peaks. In between lies a jumbled battlefield of green and gray, a patchwork of emerald clearings fighting for space with rocky outcroppings. Weaving swiftly through this jumbled chaos wind ribbons of blue, jubilant mountain streams rushing crazily down the mountain, pushing both rock and grass aside in their haste to reach the bottom. Overhead, black specks — birds with curved yellow beaks — drift loftily on the chill winds, scanning carefully for food below. Goats roam the lower slopes, filling the air with their pungent odor and coarse bleating, while the higher slopes are reserved for smaller animals: squat marmots, chattering squirrels, swift rabbits and unseen voles. Windswept shrubs and trees cling tenaciously wherever they can, cracking stone with their invading roots. Wildflowers bob in the crisp, unceasing breeze that tumbles from the mountaintop.

The *regio* is located halfway up the mountain and centers on a mountain spring and a nearby cave. On the mundane level, this spring is beautiful and completely non-magical. It bubbles cool and clear from fissures deep within the earth, fills a small pool, then zig-zags down the mountain, throwing spray upon moss-covered rocks. The pool is oval shaped, some thirty feet in length and half that in width. A large chunk of lichen-covered granite juts out of the center of the pool, clearing the water by a few feet. Upslope of the pool a dark fissure opens into the mountainside. Ten feet high and five wide, curious travelers can enter and travel some twenty feet

Small People

All beings who visit this *regio* shrink in size each time they cross a boundary, getting smaller and smaller as they journey towards the center. Not only do they shrink, but all items, worn or otherwise, shrink as well. But how to deal with a shrunken person in game terms? First off, shrinking only affects physical activities, not mental (except for spells — see below), so many things remain the same. For the things that do change, use your common sense as a Storyguide and adjust difficulty levels accordingly. Just ask yourself, "How difficult would this be if the person were normal-sized and attempting the same feat in a similarly scaled world?" Say, for example, an eighth-sized grog (about nine inches high) wishes to scale a five foot cliff using a grappling hook and line. The Storyguide thinks for a moment, then pictures the normal-sized grog in front of a forty foot wall. She assigns a difficulty of 9+ to anchor the grappling hook properly, and calls for two climbing rolls of 6+ for the grog to ascend to the top.

If two beings in different states of "shrunkeness" fight, their combat statistics (Parry, 1st, Atk, Dam,

and Soak) should be reduced by the same fraction as their size. That is, if our nine-inch grog meets a normal-sized rat, each of the grog's combat statistics are divided by eight (remember, he's one-eighth normal size), all fractions rounded up. Alternatively, the rat's statistics could be multiplied by eight and the grog's left alone. Note that the above methods do not work for negative scores. In their case you should simply adjust the score, whether a character shrinks or a creature "grows," by an amount you feel is appropriate. If you're in a generous mood you might also award a bonus of +1 to +6 to small characters' Dodge skills, depending on the circumstances.

Mundane skills are not the only ones that scale with size. Magi find their spells scale as well, with a half-sized magus casting spells having half the range and half the area of effect. Note that many spells may not be affected (those with the range of *eyesight*, for example, assuming the caster has a high vantage point that puts him on eye level with his full-grown self). Spell durations are not affected in any way. At your option, a spell's Penetration total can be scaled as well to further limit the abilities of tiny magi.

into its damp, slanting interior before the way becomes too narrow. A cranky old marmot makes the cave his home and barks stubbornly at any who come too close (though this marmot does not exist on upper, Faerie levels). Those following the winding stream down the mountain find a trace of a goat path, which crosses and recrosses the stream on rocks and waterlogged tree trunks. Perceptive folk might notice (Per + Area Lore roll of 8+) that these tree trunks are a bit large for this part of the mountain — trees that large are only found lower down.

A Note On Upper Levels

This *regio* has a unique property; those who cross its boundaries without performing a secret ritual (see below) physically shrink, along with all their belongings, to a fraction of their current height (specified by each level of the *regio*). This change is an innate and inexplicable property of this Faerie *regio* and it affects all who do not perform the ritual, regardless of Magic Resistance. Instantaneous and undetectable except for a brief moment of disorientation, the change is so swift and so far from normal experience that characters shouldn't immediately be told what has happened, but rather should be allowed to discover it on their own. To help them toward that end, be sure to fully describe experiences from a small character's perspective, without directly revealing the fact of the character's new size. You might say, for example, "*On this side of the stream the goat-path becomes wider; it's probably more*

traveled. The grass is taller and the ground much bumpier. Looks like there was a major avalanche here recently, there's some big rocks strewn about." Slow players might not realize anything has changed until they've crossed a second boundary, or until they see a "giant" bird or animal.

The shrinking process is completely reversible; one merely has to cross back over a boundary to regain previous size. If the crossing ritual mentioned above is performed while crossing back, size remains unchanged. Thus it is possible to return to the mundane world a fraction of one's former size. The power of the *regio* can never make anyone *larger* than their natural size, however, it can only shrink or return people to their normal size.

Option: You may wish to allow Magic Resistance rolls to size changing effects. In this case, after rolling to see if a character has crossed a boundary successfully, roll Magic Resistance (MuCo) vs. 25 + 3x the level of the *regio*. A successful Resistance roll means the character retains her current size and *remains on the current regio level*, counteracting any roll made to enter the next level. If you choose this Magic Resistance option you should have each character roll separately for entering a *regio*, and should be prepared to have the group separated. The *only* way to cross into a level of this *regio* without shrinking is to know the secret ritual. If characters perform the ritual, they may cross *regio* boundaries without making Resistance rolls, if any are used.

The Ritual

Anyone performing the following ritual while crossing a boundary retains his current size. The ritual involves leaping across the stream while saying a "magic" word. In addition, the person must rotate a full revolution while in the air, either spinning once (like a top) or flipping head over heels. Needless to say, most humans who learn the ritual opt for the spinning leap. It is important to note that, because of the requirement of leaping the stream, the ritual only works where the boundary of the *regio* and the stream coincide. Performing the ritual in the absence of the stream or a level boundary does nothing at all.

The "magic" word uttered while leaping the stream is not set in stone. In fact, any word works as long as it follows this simple rule: *the first and last letter in the word must be the same*. The word need not make any sense, either (i.e. loobalool, ballyrab, and askala are just as valid as knock, scissors, or medium).

Any visitors to the *regio* can learn of this ritual by observing Grenkī, or any other faeries, cross boundaries in the *regio*. Faeries often come out to meet and travel alongside newcomers, to tease them and watch their reactions as they get small. Be sure and make a point of the faeries leaping about and muttering nonsense words (the ritual) as they cross the stream, but have each faerie say a different word every time. Eventually, the characters should catch on.

Remember that Magic Resistance can be conferred onto those who lack protection by magi who share their *Parma Magica* score. See *Parma Magica* in the rules, p. 42, for more details.

The Faerie Regio (1)

This layer of the *regio* is slightly oval in shape, and about a mile in width. The pool is located near the upslope end of the level and is centered from side to side. While it is possible to enter the level at any point along its boundary, entry is almost guaranteed if visitors follow the goat path up the mountain and cross the stream on the broad tree trunk (see *Mechanics*, below). You may even require a Dex + Perfect Balance test of 6+ to cross the log without falling into the stream. Those entering the level without the proper ritual may soon find their current size reduced by half.

The features of this layer are much the same as those of the mundane one, though the wildflowers are a bit brighter, the wind cooler, the bird calls sharper, and the sky bluer. Almost all of the creatures on the level are half-sized. Though bored and mischievous faeries

occasionally help full-sized creatures into the *regio*, Grenkī wastes no time in driving them from his kingdom. Still, characters are certainly shocked if you allow them to meet a "giant" goat or marmot on this level. But, such an encounter runs the risk of warning characters of what's really happening to them, before they get to the higher levels. Few faeries actually make the first level of the *regio* their home, though many visit it to cavort and watch for newcomers.

The Faerie Regio (3)

Like the previous level, this one is oval-shaped with the spring near the top. The level measures about a half-mile across at its widest point. The stream gushes happily along the lowest part of the level's border, and travelers crossing the stream on the conveniently piled rocks are almost assured of entering the level without difficulty (see *Mechanics* for more). Anyone entering the level finds their current size halved. This is cumulative with any previous size effects, so at this point most characters are one-quarter their normal size.

This level is a bit more faerie-like, and astute observers (Per + Faerie Lore of 8+) notice subtle traits of Faerie in the surrounding landscape, perhaps a tiny ringlet of woven grass and flowers, or a pair of miniature shoes made from blades of grass. Most of the *regio*'s faeries make this level their home, because Grenkī doesn't like them playing with his tiny "visitors" on the next level. Nothing escapes the faeries' attention and all newcomers are carefully watched if not actively approached.

Few mundane creatures live on this level. Most that do are one-quarter normal size, though a fair number are normal-sized (brought over by the faeries to annoy Grenkī).

Those characters who reach the center of the *regio*, but remain on level 3, find a deep, clear mountain pool, fed by a spring which bubbles from cracks in a large granite rock at the pool's center. The pool is filled with a variety of large mountain fish, and the faeries like nothing better than to snip lines and break the hooks of pesky fishermen.

The Faerie Regio (5)

This level is home to Grenkī, the troll. The stream lies at the level's boundary, on the downslope side, and is crossed by a miniature stone bridge (built by Grenkī and designed for those about one-quarter normal size). Those crossing the bridge almost certainly enter the *regio* (see *Mechanics*) and find their size quartered, thus making most visitors one-sixteenth their normal size. The level is a rough oval centered on the spring and is several hundred yards across at its widest point (in "real world" measurements).

As its counterpart in the mundane world appears, the pool occupies a natural fissure in the mountain,

about thirty feet long, fifteen feet wide and of extreme depth (all in real world measurements). A jagged piece of tapering granite juts from the still surface of the pool like a dark, immovable iceberg. It clears the water by about five feet and has a similar width (again, "real world"). At a distance, visitors note that the rock's sides gleam wetly. Those coming closer see water trickling down from numerous openings in the stone. Those coming closer still observe a hodgepodge of miniature houses nestled on top of and clinging to the rock face, connected by a series of rope and twig ladders, and tiny roads. Depending on how successful Grenki's collecting has been the last few months (see below), perceptive characters (Per + Scan roll of 8+) might even see a few four-to-five inch people wandering the rocky island, herding goats and sheep the size of a silver penny (assuming visitors are full-sized). Of course, if visitors are one-sixteenth their normal size, the pool's rock seems eighty feet tall and inhabited by ordinary people.

The pool is dammed at one end by a pile of carefully placed rocks, mud and moss. This keeps the inhabitants of the lake, a baker's dozen of large mountain pike (the size of whales to people at one-sixteenth size), from escaping into the stream below. A well-worn path winds its way around the entire pool, another path branching from it at one end to follow the stream and another path at the other end to enter Grenki's cave.

The cave's moss-covered opening is triangular, five feet wide and ten feet high. The floor is sand-covered rock, and is covered with Grenki's large, three toed footprints. A sickly-sweet aroma of smoke, sweaty troll, and herbs greet anyone brave enough to venture inside. On all sides the walls are covered with crude stick-drawings in various shades of brown and red. Most show a giant of enormous ferocity and great strength defeating and eating numerous mythical foes, including wizards, faeries, giants, a whale, and a handful of dragons. Other scenes depict this same giant terrorizing a town, popping huge handfuls of scream-

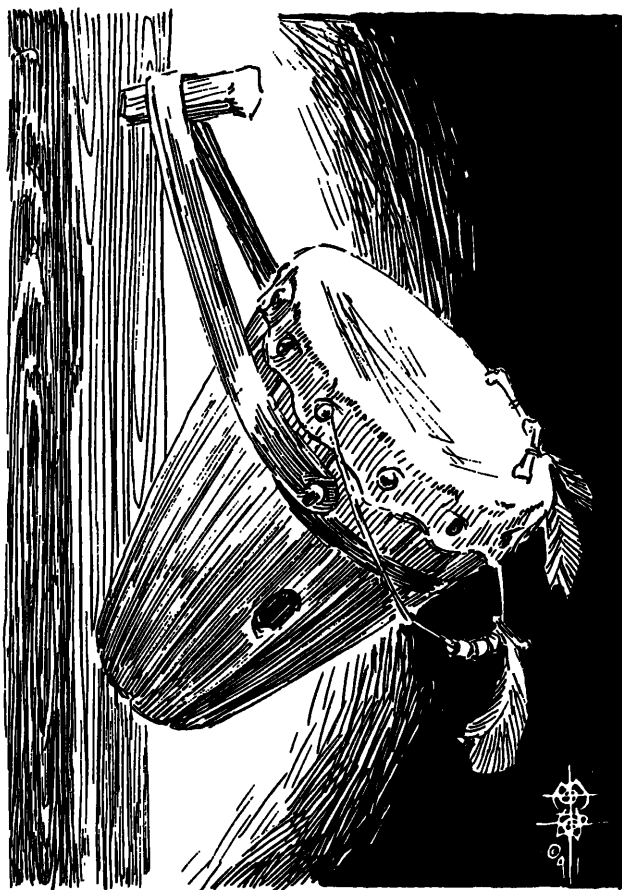
ing peasants into his mouth with apparent relish. Perceptive people note a certain resemblance between the giant depicted on the cave walls and Grenki (Int + Alertness roll of 6+ to make this realization), assuming the characters have already seen Grenki.

Those pushing deeper into the cave come to Grenki's living quarters, at the back. On the floor in one corner lies a shallow clay and moss-lined depression, apparently Grenki's sleeping spot. A few crudely made, soft clay jugs lean in one corner while a handful of finely woven wicker baskets occupy the other. A large fire-

pit, lined with polished stones and filled with charcoal, takes up the rest of the cave floor. On a long rope over the fire-pit hangs a battered bronze cauldron. The walls are covered with a bewildering assortment of odds and ends hanging from hooks or stuffed into cracks, nooks and crannies. Much of the material seems to be dried or drying vegetables, berries, herbs and seeds, though close inspection (Per + Search roll of 6+) reveals several jars full of tiny clothes, hats, farm implements, weapons, armor, and jewelry. Scattered throughout the dried plants are 14 pawns of Herbam *vis* (found on the same Search test as above).

Outside the cave, a narrow and rocky path leads a short distance up the side of the mountain to a shaded clearing about forty feet across and eighty

feet long (real world measurements). Within lies a carefully-tended garden filled with a huge variety of herbs and vegetables, both faerie and mundane. A few crude wooden tools lean against a nearby rock. This garden is clearly Grenki's, for his distinctive three-toed footprints are deeply embedded in paths that weave crazily throughout the greenery. Anyone knowing her herbs and plants stares in amazement at the collection; it is quite complete, containing representatives of almost every local medicinal and edible plant, as well as a large selection of herbs from distant lands. Unfortunately, the chaotic pattern of the garden makes finding specific plants within it difficult; anyone who wishes to search for a specific plant must



Grenkī's Profile

Faerie Might 21*

Int (immature) -1

Per (paranoid) +3

Str (hearty) +2

Stm 0

Prs 0

Com 0

Dex (fidgety) +4

Qik 0

Size 0

Staff: 1st +14 Atk +11 Dam +12

Net: 1st +8 Atk +9 Dam Special

Fat +2 Def +11 Soak +14**

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

*Grenkī's Magic Resistance is +10 vs. water-based spells.

**Grenkī's Soak is reduced by five for fire-based attacks.

Personality Traits

Child-like +4

Boastful +2

Cruel -1

Important Skills

Green Thumb 4

Grenkī's Powers

As a brook-troll, Grenkī has many powers, most of them associated with water. He can use one power per Round and his Might replenishes nightly. The powers listed below are just a sampling; feel free to give Grenkī any powers that seem appropriate.

- **The Listening Stream** — At a cost of 1 Might point per five minutes, Grenkī can stick his head in the stream and hear sounds as though his head were at any point along the stream's length. Treat this as an acoustic variant of *Visions of the Wandering Eye* (InMe 45). This is Grenkī's main technique of locating newcomers to the *regio*, and it also allows him to track down escapees.

- **Speak to Fish** — For 1 Might point per minute Grenkī can communicate with any fish in the stream. Again, his head must be submerged for this to work.

- **Summoning the Watery Creatures** — Using this power, Grenkī can selectively summon any water creatures within five miles. Most creatures so summoned probably follow Grenkī's directions, especially if offered food (small people). The cost of a summons varies depending upon the size of the

creatures called. For 1 Might point Grenkī can call two trout, or one pike, or half a dozen crayfish, for example. You are free to draw up profiles for creatures summoned. Though a pack of angry crayfish might not be a threat to full-sized people, they certainly are to people that are five inches tall.

- **Summoning the Watery Faeries** — Using this power Grenkī can selectively summon water faeries within one mile. Faeries must be convinced to do his bidding. The cost of summoning is 1 Might point per 10 Faerie Might points of the summoned creatures. Again, you are free to decide what faeries respond, and may give them whatever powers and profiles you like.

- **Water Control** — Grenkī has some control over any water nearby. At a cost of 1 Might point, for example, he can make falling rain swerve to avoid him, can cause a spout of water to shoot fifteen feet into the air, or can levitate a ball of water into the air. He often uses these effects to impress visitors. More powerful effects include: stopping the flow of the stream for one minute (5 Might), or making the stream run uphill for a minute, or making the stream leap from its bed for a short time (10 Might). If a magus uses water against Grenkī, the troll may try to take control of that water. Such an action requires a Penetration attempt from Grenkī (current Might score + 10) against the magus's Magic Resistance total. If the magus has the higher score, he may continue his attack against Grenkī. If the troll's total is higher, the magus loses control over the water before his spell takes effect. Of course, to take control of water that a magus is using, Grenkī cannot have acted yet in the Combat Round.

Grenkī's Drum

Grenkī's constant companion is a magical drum he calls Gölga. Made of aged Faerie-Oak, it tapers gracefully from a worn leather head, two hand-spans across, to an opening slightly larger than a closed fist, two feet below. Except for a few colored feathers and small bones that Grenkī has affixed to the top of the drum, it is unadorned. Two small metal hooks provide purchase for Grenkī's shoulder strap and there is a small, round opening half way down one side of the drum. Gölga is a talking drum, capable of whispering quietly, or strengthening and adding magic to words spoken into the hole at its side. Spending his own Faerie Might, Grenkī uses the drum to do the following things:

- **The Bellowing Drum** — For 1 Might point the drum amplifies any word spoken into it to a mighty roar. This effect does no damage, it just carries sound twice as far as it would normally travel.

- **The Whispering Drum** — For 1 Might point the drum quietly carries words spoken into it to a target

up to a mile away. The target does not need to be in sight. Grenkī uses this power to communicate with distant faeries and to tease tiny humans.

- **The Charming Drum**—For 2 Might points per five minutes, the drum adds a charming effect to any beat played upon it. People hearing the song become intrigued by its sound and must try to find its source unless successful with a Magic Resistance roll of 18+ (ReMe). Any song played can be heard in levels of the *regio* adjacent to that occupied by Grenkī. Soft words must be spoken into the side

of the drum while this ability is used. Grenkī often uses the power to draw visitors into the heart of the *regio* so he can catch them.

- **The Angry Drum**—For 2 Might points, the drum plays so loudly it can damage hearing and possibly stun listeners. Treat the effect as *Jupiter's Resounding Blow* (ReAu 10), with the addition that those missing their Stm roll must make another identical roll to see if they are stunned for 1 Round. A stunned character can do nothing for that Round. At your option, this power could have additional devastating effects on tiny ears and bodies.

make a Per + Search roll of 20+ every fifteen minutes of hunting. The difficulty number is reduced by 2 after each attempt, reflecting gradual headway. Only those who know something of plants may search for one. To everyone else the plants all look the same.

At your option, magical plants make their home here as well, though Grenkī is largely unaware of their powers. You are encouraged to come up with a variety of interesting and useful types of plants for the characters to discover. Some, for example, might contain *vis* and add to Lab Totals if used to make potions. Some might even allow shrunken characters to resume full height, but the plants must be made into a stew before they're useful. At most, the garden produces five pawns of *Herbam vis* a year.

Grenkī, the Brook Troll

At a distance, many might mistake Grenkī the troll for an oddly proportioned peasant of the homeliest sort. While his torso is long, his legs are short and his gangly arms hang almost to his hairy knees. When standing still, something Grenkī rarely does, his frame almost stretches to five feet — unusually short for a troll. His head is round like a pumpkin, and carpeted with a thick tuft of wild brown hair. His face is flat, with widely flaring nostrils and tiny black eyes set under an imposing brow. Short, curly brown hair sparsely covers his face in no perceptible pattern. Odd looking though it is, Grenkī's body is supple and strong, possessing a rubbery resiliency that often catches foes unaware. His knobby knees and bony elbows stick out from beneath the edges his strange garments, apparently made of patched-together doll's clothes of varying sizes (actually the garb of tiny trespassers). Poorly stitched together, these clothes do little more than provide a colorful contrast to Grenkī's uniformly hairy body. Over one shoulder, on a well-worn leather strap, Grenkī carries an oddly shaped drum (for more details, see *Grenkī's Drum*).

But for his height, Grenkī might have been a normal troll, busy doing trollish things like stealing livestock and pestering travelers. Instead, once it became appar-

ent that he would never grow anywhere near a respectable size, he was ridiculed and driven with his magic drum from his troll-tribe. Luckily, he stumbled upon the *regio* and found his salvation.

At first, Grenkī's mind snapped when he entered the *regio*, finding himself smaller still, and he ran crying and screaming across the mountainside (or a very small part of it, at least). Eventually the local faeries tired of playing pranks upon the tiny, pitifully sobbing, inconsolable troll and told him of the *regio* and the secret ritual. Grenkī soon cheered up, regained his normal size, and in the months that followed began storming about the mountainside, taking great pleasure in towering over miniature goats, squirrels and sheep. The first mundane to stumble into the *regio* drove Grenkī into throes of ecstasy, for the hapless, tiny shepherd was horrified by the grotesque, hulking *giant* dancing and cavorting in front of him. Grenkī promptly made a wicker basket to carry his new treasure in, subjecting the peasant to bouts of giantish boasting and feats of intimidating strength whenever he felt the slightest bit blue.

By the end of the year, the *regio* was Grenkī's home. He cleaned out the cave, started his garden (he's a vegetarian) and dammed up the stream to make a pool. Later, he used a bit of water magic to convince some large fish to move into the newly created pond. Now he keeps his small mundane victims safely tucked away on the craggy island, surrounded by a watery moat filled with hungry fish just waiting for a few tasty morsels to swim their way.

At heart, Grenkī is a loving, gentle being, though few have seen this side of him. Unfortunately, his obsession with appearing tall dominates everything he does. A typical day for Grenkī involves waking up, eating a quick breakfast of fruit and fresh vegetables, then hurrying off to see how his charges on the island are doing. After making sure that all are healthy and none have escaped, he dips his head in the pool for a quick listen along the stream (see *Grenkī's Profile*, above) to see if there are any new visitors to his kingdom. If not, he heads up the hill and tends his garden for a bit while thinking of morning amusements for his tiny

"guests." Then it's back down to the island and pool for an invigorating bout of yelling, leaping about, creating water spouts, and otherwise intimidating the tiny folk. Afterwards it's time to play, which usually involves making his guests perform various roles or making them engage in contests against each other. Sometimes Grenkī makes them a mud village, which they populate and he destroys. Other times he makes them perform plays in costumes made from bits of vegetables and greenery. When he has enough guests, he likes to play army, with the two sides fighting each other with twigs and pebbles until the giant (guess who?) shows up and drives both from the field. Then, he puts his "toys" away and wanders the *regio* in search of newcomers, or tends his garden again. After a dinner of moss and vegetable stew, perhaps with a bit of fish, Grenkī checks his charges one last time, then settles down for the night.

During his play sessions he tries hard not to damage his small friends so they can play with him again the next day, but sometimes harm happens accidentally; occasionally Grenkī loses his temper and squashes a person or hurls one high into the sky. The best way to play it safe with Grenkī is to take part in his games, however humiliating, to always feign fear of him, and to address him with flattering honorifics like "*most terrible giant*" or "*king of titans*."

Grenkī is full of nervous energy, and has a hard time standing still for long. He rarely walks, but rather capers and dances from place to place, humming bits of nonsense songs or talking to his drum, Gölga. He is especially careful to dance and caper before and after crossing a *regio* boundary so that any mundane observers do not learn of the ritual. When hunting for trespassers, Grenkī takes his drum, a few wicker baskets, and a staff with a hoop net attached to the end (think of it as a large butterfly net). He usually uses *The Charming Drum* (see above) to draw people into the highest level of the *regio*, then starts the hunt. He loves a good chase, and often teases his prey into thinking they have escaped before scooping them up and popping them into a basket.

Roleplaying Tips

Play Grenkī as a spoiled child who wants and expects to get his way with everything. Constantly move, bobbing your head up and down, waving your arms. You might even jump around. Your attention span is incredibly short, so become bored (and perhaps angry) if people try to talk at you about anything you don't like. Things you like include: gloating over small people and making them scared, hunting and "collecting" visitors, playing games, running around, and gardening (you're somewhat embarrassed about that last one). Things you don't like: sitting still, the teasing faeries, lectures (especially from small people), and anything bigger than you.

Mechanics

As described above, anyone crossing a *regio* boundary without performing the ritual shrinks (if going to a higher level) or grows (if going to a lower level). If you allow Resistance Rolls to avoid size change, each character should make the rolls individually. Those who make them retain their current size and do not enter a level. The chances of entering a level are rolled normally (see the introductory *Regio* Chapter), with appropriate bonuses and penalties for a Faerie *regio*, unless a crossing is attempted at one of the special spots mentioned in the text. These are: the large tree trunk (level one), the pile of rocks (level three) and the small bridge (level five). Entry at these points is automatic, and no Magic Resistance rolls are made if they are used.

Location

This *regio* is best located on a mountainside, some distance from any human communities and roads.

Stories

Most stories involving this *regio* typically progress through three stages. First, the group discovers the *regio*, be it accidentally or otherwise. Second, they realize their predicament and some, if not all, of the group is caught by Grenkī. The last stage involves dealing with Grenkī and escaping. Doing so almost certainly relies on quick wits and tongues, rather than brute force and strong magic. Several methods for drawing the group to the *regio*, as well as escaping from it, are discussed below:

- The magi have offended and belittled a hedge-wizard or healer, that lives near Grenkī's *regio*, once too often. That person knows of Grenkī and the effects the *regio* has on people. The next time the magi happen by, the hedge-wizard mentions that a rare, magical creature (a unicorn, a living tree, a salamander — anything that makes the magi go and investigate) now makes the mountainside its home. Not only must the characters contend with Grenkī, but they must deal with the hedge-wizard who's set them up. Who knows what the hedge-wizard plans? Maybe he intends to invade the *regio*, hoping to crush the tiny characters. Of course, his plans backfire if he's reduced and captured by Grenkī as well. In that situation, the characters and their enemy must work together to be free.

- One day while at a large market, the magi come across a dwarf-sized merchant who has an amazing collection of miniature things: clothing, weapons, jewelry, clocks, rugs, food, and even animals like sheep, pigs and birds. The workmanship of these items is exquisite and their detail is beyond belief. The dwarf is a friend of Grenkī's (because of the man's size) and

makes frequent trips to the *regio* to shrink things down for sale. Curious magi certainly inquire as to how or where the merchant acquires his goods. If something more is needed to interest the group, they might actually recognize something the dwarf has for sale — a tiny sheep or goat with Covenant markings, for example. If you like, this one encounter could be all the characters experience of the *regio* for a while. Many sessions later, you could run a story in Grenkī's *regio* and see if your players make the connection to the previous game. Perhaps the characters even run into the merchant again.

- While at market one day, characters notice a marionette show that has drawn a crowd. The marionettes are quite lifelike, and their handlers skilled beyond anything the group has seen before, even down to the dolls' tiny voices. After watching for some time, something suddenly hits the characters — they know one of the marionettes! One bears an uncanny resemblance to a good friend the characters once knew, but that person went missing some time ago. As the characters move closer to investigate, the marionette seems to recognize them as well. In fact, it cries out their names and begins struggling against its ropes. The curtain then comes down and the show comes to

a end. The characters can hear curses from behind the small stage. What do they do?

A clever, but evil man learned the trick of Grenkī's *regio* and steals people away, shrinking them down to use in his marionette show. He keeps his tiny cast from crying for help with threats — if they misbehave, he feeds them to his pet rats. He has carried through on this threat often enough that most of the tiny people obey. The person that the group notices should be someone well-liked or someone important (perhaps a beloved grog leader or companion) that never returned from a routine journey, perhaps a year ago. Or, maybe that person went forth from the Covenant to seek his way in the world and has not been heard from since. If rescued, no mortal magic restores the friend's size, for his condition was brought about by strong faerie-magic. The magi now have to hunt for the *regio*, tracking down rumors of tiny creatures, or have to find and interrogate the evil puppeteer. Maybe Grenkī even knows of the puppeteer and hates him, so works with the characters to capture him. Of course, the characters must first run the gauntlet of Grenkī's *regio* before the troll can be allied.

- Escaping from Grenkī can be tough. Clever groups undoubtedly manipulate Grenkī into choosing con-

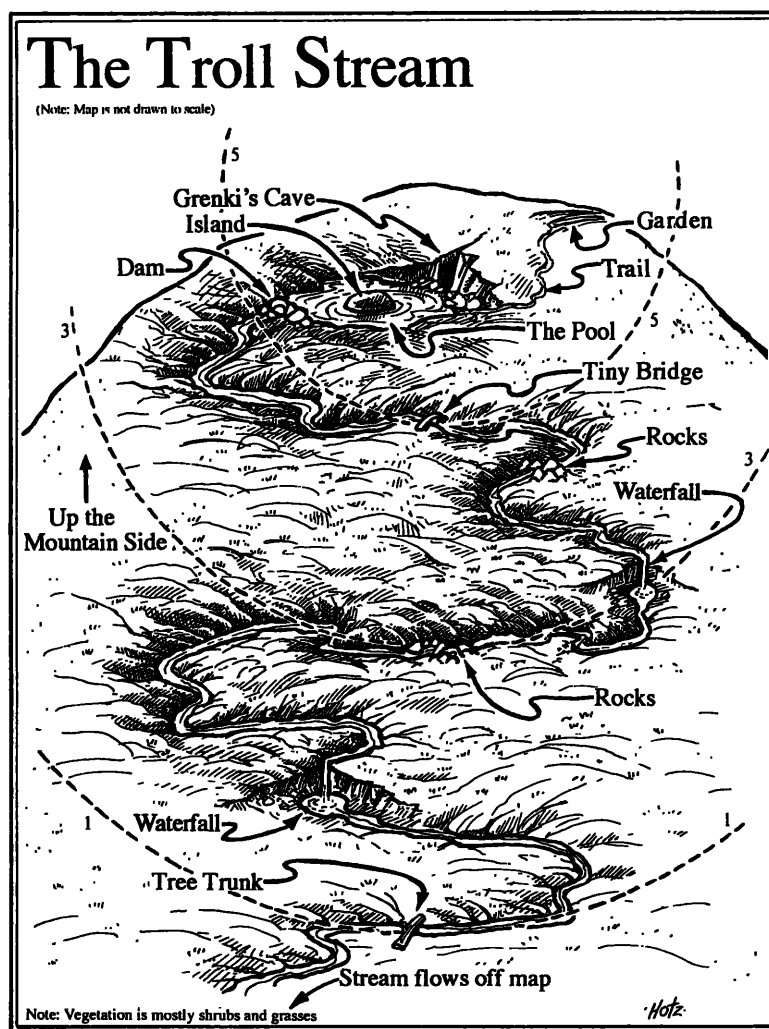


tests, those which Grenkī imposes as part of his games, which allow them a chance to slip away. Examples include: a boat race (making a break down the stream), a game of hide-and-seek (or any other game that requires Grenkī to close his eyes), or even a magic show of some kind, during which the characters escape one by one. Keep in mind, however, that while Grenkī has many faults, he is not stupid.

- A group who has unsuccessfully tried to escape from Grenkī several times might finally be saved by a visit to the *regio* by a group of High Faeries. It behooves a particular High Elf to visit the *regio* from time to time. He enjoys making Grenkī's tiny mortals grovel and plead for their freedom before him. Grenkī, under the High Elf's influence, sometimes sets his "toys" free, though always at some cost. To convince the High Elf to have them released, the characters must bribe him as well. That means the characters have two greedy faeries to satiate. Sometimes bribes consist merely of a good story or two, while at other times characters might be released apparently scot-free, only to find they have been cursed with Faerie ears, or to find that their hair turns bright blue.

- Don't neglect the presence of other prisoners on the island — some might lead to further stories once the group is captured or when it escapes. Feel free to create identities for the other prisoners, also accounting for the history behind capture. All prisoners hate Grenkī, though some may interfere with escape attempts out of fear for the troll. One prisoner, for example, might be the son of a noble, whose weird chivalric attitudes demand that he warn Grenkī of an escape attempt before it's made. If the young noble is freed, the magi may gain an important contact — his father — in the outside world. On the other hand, if the young noble is lost, his father may become an enemy of the Covenant.

Another interesting choice is to imprison the magi with a known enemy, perhaps a local religious figure.

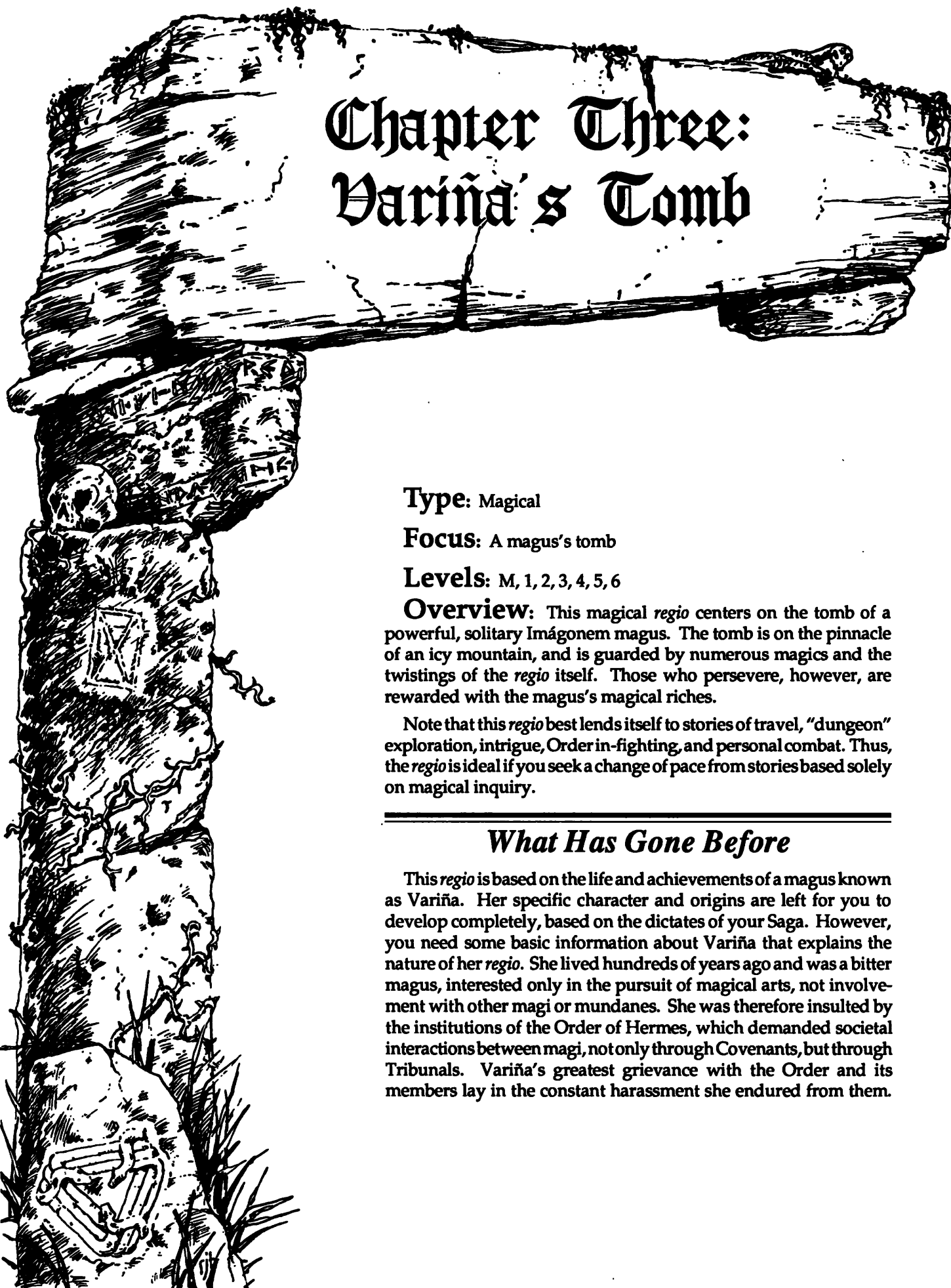


Do the enemies overcome their natural enmity and work together to escape?

A Short Note

Stories involving this *regio* need not be run with a standard mix of magi, companions and grogs. The latter two may enjoy the *regio* on their own. Since magic is severely reduced in effectiveness (assuming the characters are captured by Grenkī), it makes little difference whether the group contains magi or not, though their presence can make for interesting group dynamics as magi have to rely on their wits and assistants, rather than their magic.





Chapter Three: Variña's Tomb

Type: Magical

Focus: A magus's tomb

Levels: M, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Overview: This magical *regio* centers on the tomb of a powerful, solitary Imágonem magus. The tomb is on the pinnacle of an icy mountain, and is guarded by numerous magics and the twistings of the *regio* itself. Those who persevere, however, are rewarded with the magus's magical riches.

Note that this *regio* best lends itself to stories of travel, "dungeon" exploration, intrigue, Order in-fighting, and personal combat. Thus, the *regio* is ideal if you seek a change of pace from stories based solely on magical inquiry.

What Has Gone Before

This *regio* is based on the life and achievements of a magus known as Variña. Her specific character and origins are left for you to develop completely, based on the dictates of your Saga. However, you need some basic information about Variña that explains the nature of her *regio*. She lived hundreds of years ago and was a bitter magus, interested only in the pursuit of magical arts, not involvement with other magi or mundanes. She was therefore insulted by the institutions of the Order of Hermes, which demanded societal interactions between magi, not only through Covenants, but through Tribunals. Variña's greatest grievance with the Order and its members lay in the constant harassment she endured from them.

Being a powerful and competent magus, her services were constantly sought by her "peers." Accordingly, she had little time to invest in her own magics for lack of personal, uninterrupted study time. Finally, Variña forsook the Order and sequestered herself into an existence of solitude, disappearing to some unknown sanctum. Of course, members of the Covenant to which she belonged claimed that their possessions had been stolen in Variña's flight. But, what justice could they find when the magus was no where to be found? You may decide whether Variña actually stole those items, or whether they were really hers all along, and were only sought after by some other bitter magi.

Living in isolation and study for some time, Variña sought to forget the Order and its ways, but could not. Her mind still burned with the abuses she endured in it, and she resented the time she had lost in its service. Thus, when the magus recognized her time of passing, she made her sanctum into an irresistible jewel that the Order would certainly seek out. Her hope was to get revenge on Hermes by doing it the injustices it had done her, turning its magi against one another in an effort to gain mere power. Today, the characters, as members of the Order, may seek out the tomb, but subject themselves to great danger and treachery in the process, just as Variña would have them do.

DESCRIPTION

The Mundane Regio

The mundane basis for this *regio* is a rocky pinnacle, windswept and desolate. Its sides are sheer, dropping almost vertically for a hundred yards from its icy peak to the rest of the mountain below. Someone looking at the mountain peak from the mountain's base sees nothing to suggest anything magical about the place. In fact, the mountain peak is indistinguishable from the others that comprise the mountain range in which the *regio* is set. Anyone wishing to scale the mountain only does so with great difficulty, for the closest road is some fifteen miles away, separated by several jagged peaks. But, someone actually making it to the base of the mountain can climb it, given a few days and the proper equipment. Those who do so must make five Dex + Climb rolls of 6+, five rolls of 8+, and two rolls of 10+ to reach the top. One roll is allowed for each daylight hour of climbing. About six hours of climbing are possible a day, making the whole task one of two days. Fatigue rolls (long-term) must also be made every hour starting with the third roll (hour) of each day. Results of lost Fatigue rolls accumulate to modify each day's climbing rolls. A missed climbing roll requires a Qik + Athletics roll of 6+ to keep from falling, and a Str + Athletics roll of 7+ to pull one's self

The Great Snowy Owls

Cun (sharp minded) +4

Per (keen-eyed) +4

Str (big) +1

Stm (hearty) +2

Prs (awesome) +3

Com na

Dex (precise) +3

Qik (swift) +2

Size +2

Talons (2): 1st +9 Atk +12 Dam +10*

Beak: 1st +7 Atk +10 Dam +12

Fat +4 Def +11 Soak +7

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

* See notes.

Personality Traits

Majestic +3

Protective +2

Notes: The owls may make two attacks every other Round with their talons (they must circle around before attacking again). Anyone hit while climbing must make a Str or Dex (their choice) + Climbing roll of 6+ to keep from being thrown from the wall. If hit two times in a Round, a climber must make both rolls of 6+ and then one of 9+ to stay on the wall. Other than their great size, and their magical essence (they each have 6 Auramvis in their wings) the owls behave as ordinary creatures. They are not aggressive by nature, but attack anyone who comes too close to their nest (i.e. anyone scaling the tower walls). If wounded to a -3 Body Level, an owl retreats to a safe distance. If, however, one owl is killed, the other goes into a frenzy (+3 to all combat rolls) and attacks until killed itself. If, however, the owls can be talked to and convinced that the intruders are not interested in their nest (Com + Animal Ken or appropriate Social Skills roll of 10+), some kind of agreement might be reached. The owls are quite comfortable moving between the mundane world and their level of the *regio*.

to a position of safety. If either roll fails, the climber falls. You may decide on damage suffered by a character who falls, based on how difficult you want to make access to Variña's tomb. A fall could be a short one, halted by a ledge (simple die + 5 damage, modified by Soak but not Defense), or a fall could be long (simple die +20 damage, again with no Def). Logically enough, falls at high elevation cause more damage than those at low elevation, and may require that some

Variña's Tomb

(Exterior)

Giant Owl's Nest

10ft

Trap Door

30ft

30ft

Sarcophagus

Position for Columns
(Columns not shown)

SIDE VIEW

Level 1
Regio

ROOF

TOP
FLOOR

BOTTOM
FLOOR

MOUNTAIN
PEAK

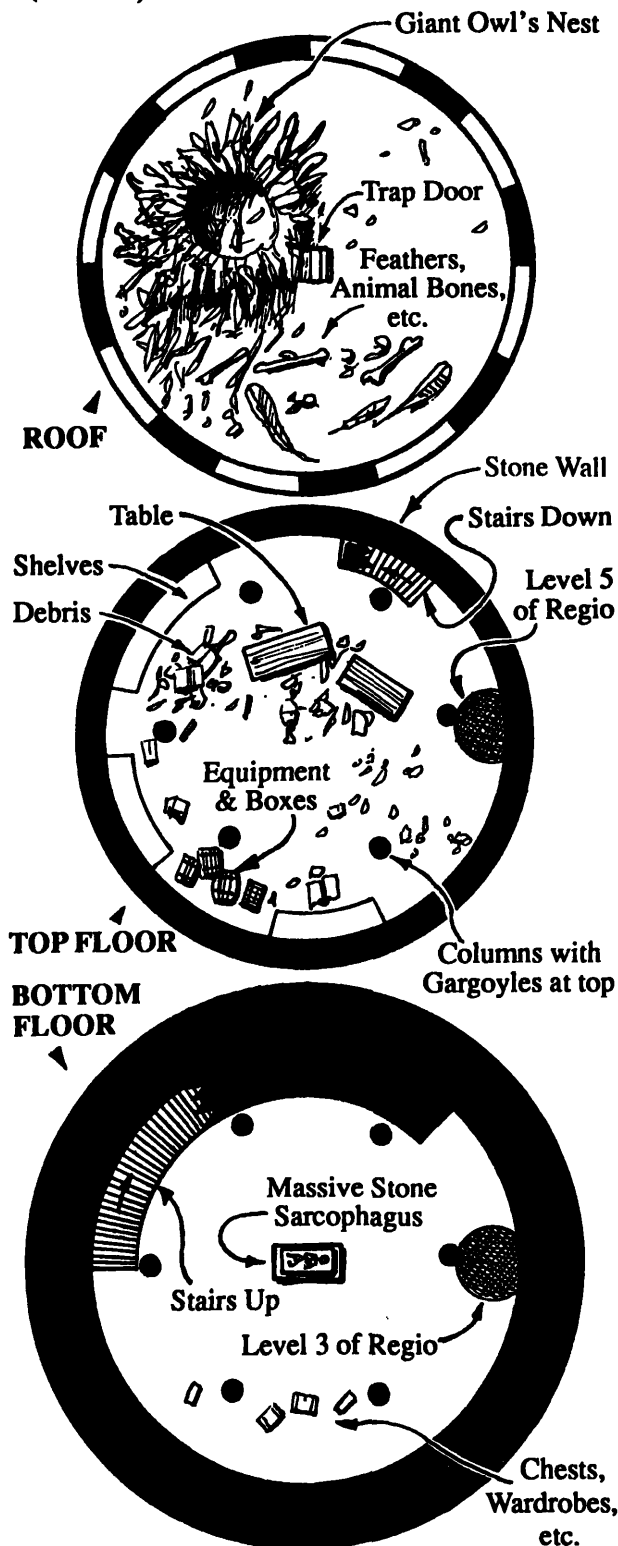
Level 5
(Small Cylinder
Behind Column)

Level 3
(Small Cylinder
Behind Column)

Level 2, 4 & 6
Follows Outer Wall

Variña's Tomb

(Interior)



Note: Levels 2, 4 & 6 of regio follows the outer walls

of the later climbing rolls be repeated as ground is lost. Wise characters probably have climbing apparatuses, like rope, to stop climbers from falling far. Such equipment usually requires that other climbers make Str + Climb rolls of 8+ to hold on themselves, though (assuming characters are roped together).

Those reaching the top of the mountain find a spectacular view, but little else, unless they manage to enter the Magical regio.

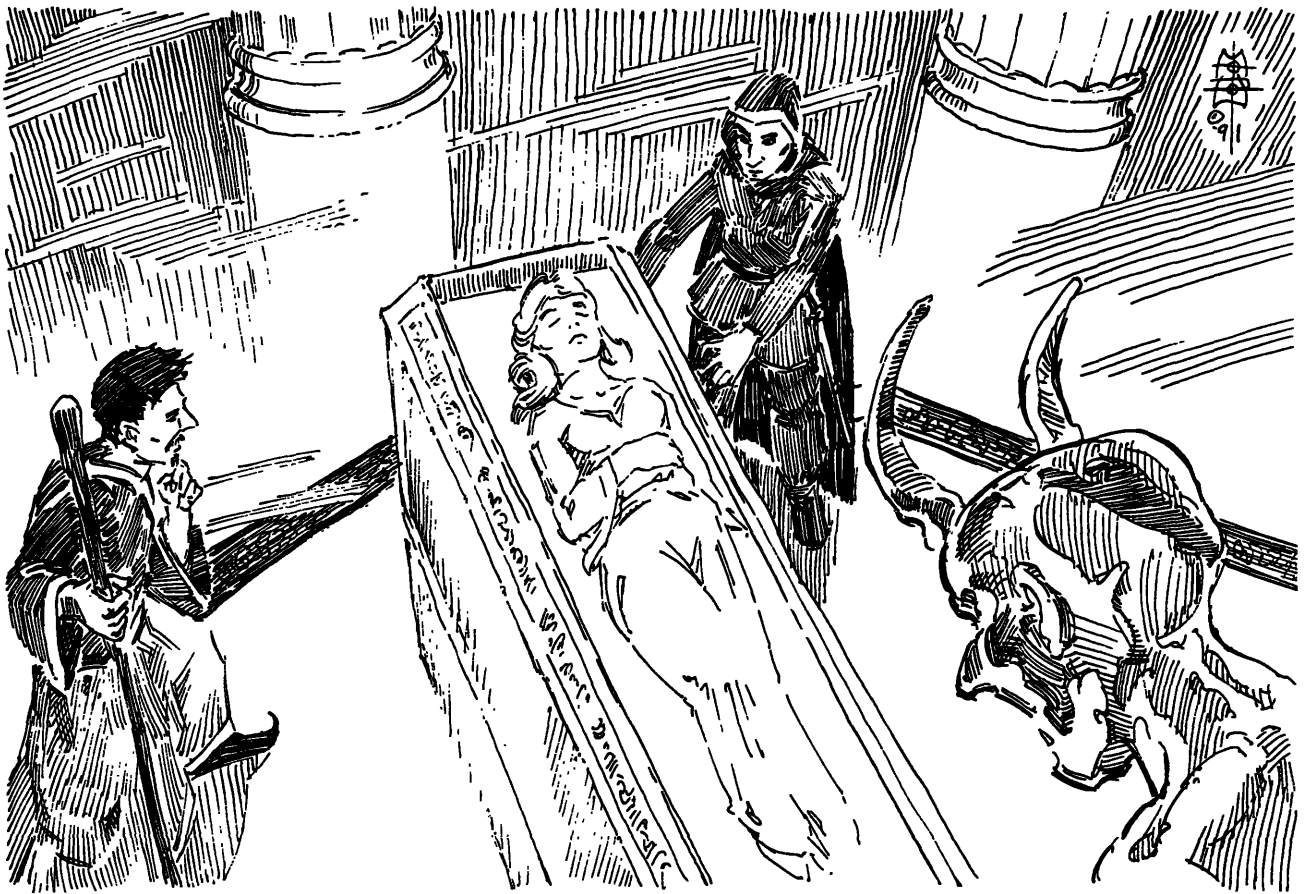
The Magical Regio (1)

This level is a sphere about a hundred yards across centered on the mountain peak. Those entering it can see that what was the mountain peak in the mundane level is now a small, round tower made of nondescript gray stone. This tower is narrow, about forty feet across, and about seventy feet high from the top of its crenellations to the point where it blends into the rock below. No windows or doors are visible anywhere along the tower's smooth sides, and climbing it is quite difficult (two rolls of 14+ required). Additionally, two great, magical snowy owls (they have 12 foot wing-spans) make their nest on top of the tower and attack anyone making it to the side of the tower. Those who get to the tower's top may discover a trapdoor leading inside. The door is located under the owls' nest (Per + Scan or Search roll of 8+ to find it).

Those entering the tower, but failing to enter higher levels of the regio, find the tower completely barren. It consists of two stories, each some twenty feet high, connected by a stone staircase that follows the exterior wall. Nothing can be found in the tower, except for a thick layer of dust and a few feathers from the owls above.

The Magical Regio (2)

This level follows the outlines of the tower exactly, and may be entered through the trapdoor on the roof (or any holes magi make in the tower walls). On this level, the interior of the tower looks like it was plundered quite a while ago. The upper floor appears to have been a combination laboratory/library; crumbling books lie strewn about, bookcases are smashed and toppled, and glassware and other shattered paraphernalia litters the floor. The lower floor looks to have been living quarters, though the middle of the room is dominated by a massive, stone sarcophagus, its lid thrown off and cracked. The sarcophagus is completely empty except for the bones of some mice. Nothing else of interest can be found on either floor. Anyone tearing up the floor in the lower level finds only rock below.



Six columns strengthen the tower, each standing a few feet from the outside wall. For the most part, these columns are simply decorated, though near the top of each is an especially ugly gargoyle, perched on a stony pedestal, facing toward the room.

Note: This *regio* level was purposefully decorated by Variña to fool any would-be robbers. Someone making a careful search might come to this conclusion on an Int + Search roll of 12+.

The Magical Regio (3)

This *regio* level is quite small, being only a few feet across. It extends from floor to ceiling between one of the columns (see map) and the wall on the lower floor. Its sole purpose is to provide access to level four of the *regio*. Thus, to enter level four (remember that levels must be entered sequentially) a person must enter level one when approaching the tower, and then level two when entering the tower. To enter level three a person must come downstairs and pass behind the proper pillar. If, once behind the pillar and in level three, a successful entry roll is made for level four, the character emerges from behind the pillar in level four.

The level three *regio* behind the pillar may be found magically, or may be discovered by accident (a character traveling behind the pillar, rolling well, and emerging to discover her friends gone). Those who fail

to discover level three learn nothing more about Variña tomb, and may assume nothing more is to be found there. Them's the breaks.

The Magical Regio (4)

This *regio* level is much like level two, in that its shape follows the perimeter of the tower walls. Its contents, however, are much different, for this is where Variña lived and worked on a day-to-day basis. The upper floor contains a neat and tidy laboratory, with everything a magus could desire. Tall, sturdy oak shelves line the walls, filled with books from around the world. Close examination reveals that magical texts are conspicuously absent, though alert people (Int + Scan roll of 8+) might see evidence that some books (about a shelf-full) have been removed, and others moved to their place. Magical texts or not, this library is a valuable find, with a wide variety of books on all sorts of topics. Of particular interest to magi are *Of Faerys*, and *Daemons and Beasts, a Treatise in XVII Volumes*, both which contain appropriate Faerie, Occult, and Fantastic Beast Lore values of 6. Taken as a whole, the library embodies all Casual and Formal Knowledges at value 4, including information on speaking and scribing Latin, Greek, Aramaic, Italian, some Norse runic alphabets, and Chinese (very rare). It takes about a week and an Int + Scribe roll of 6+ to accumulate all the library's complete references on any

given subject. After that assimilation is complete, learning may commence.

Against one part of the library's wall lie several casks and boxes half full of food, now completely dried. Observant magi note (on a Int + Hermes Lore roll of 4+) that some lab equipment was used to cook food (a common practice among magi at work).

The lower floor of the tower, still on *regio* level 4, contains a massive, lidless sarcophagus, and several wardrobes and chests filled with a wide variety of woman's clothing. Apparently Variña used the sarcophagus as a bed, for it is lined with regal wool and down bedding.

Note that on both levels of the tower small, crystal-line orbs ornament the walls every few feet just above eye level. If the word "*illuminare*" (brighten) is spoken, they illuminate the room with a soft, shadowless glow. The orbs are turned off by the word "*obscurare*" (darken). Magi looking through lab equipment can recognize the tools that were used to make the orbs, and realize how the orbs operate on an Int + Magic Theory roll of 8+.

The Magical Regio (5)

This level is much like *regio* level three, for it exists only to pass into a higher level, in this case level six. Level five is only a few feet across, and is located between a wall and pillar on the top floor of the tower. For notes on how to use this *regio* level in the game, see *The Magical Regio* (3), above.

The Magical Regio (6)

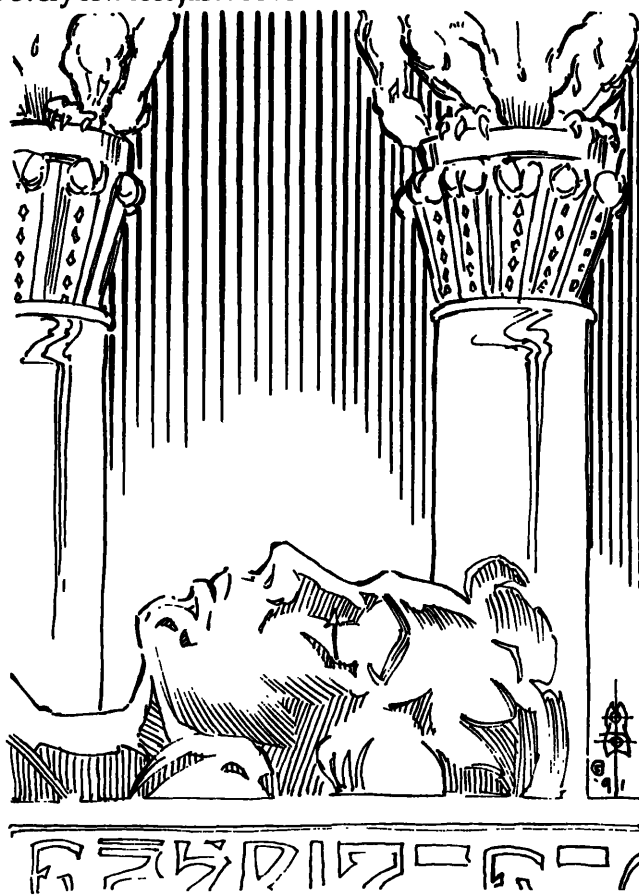
This *regio* level also follows the outside walls, just inside levels two and four. The upper floor of the tower in this part of the *regio* contains some extremely clever lab equipment (+3 to Lab Totals if used) and Variña's store of magical books. These have all the appearance of being hurriedly dumped, for they lie in a heap in the middle of the floor. The books are:

Hermes History (6, with a special section on the Schism War), Hermes Lore (5), Magic Theory (7), Creo (14), Intéllego (16), Muto (12), Rego (19), Auram (26), Imágonem (21), Mentem (14), Terram (14), and Vim (17). In addition, Variña's own spellbooks are present, containing four hundred Levels of spells (almost all Auram and Imágonem). Needless to say, these books are massive as well as old — they do not survive much rough handling, which can be a means of disposing of many of them if you don't want the characters getting all of them.

Anyone disturbing these books is attacked after a few moments by the gargoyles on the pillars (see insert). It's quite possible that some of the books are damaged beyond repair during the fight, be it by sword-blows or clumsy feet. If you're cruel you may let the group have just enough time to find out what a wonderful treasure they've found before the gargoyles attack.

The lower floor of the tower, in level six of the *regio*, contains Variña's tomb. Once again, the six stone gargoyles inhabiting this floor attack if visitors do anything more than look around. The sarcophagus is massive, measuring five feet high, five feet wide, and ten feet long. Nothing else occupies the room. The lid of the sarcophagus is marble, and carved in the likeness of a beautiful, robe-clad woman, cold and austere. This is an image of Variña. The lid is quite difficult to move and requires magic or the efforts of over a

dozen strong grogs (totaling Str 20+). Once the lid is removed, the group sees the body of a woman, the same beautiful woman who's image is carved on the lid. This body is actually an illusion, placed by Variña to disguise her genuine appearance of decayed bodily remains. Anyone trying to dispel the illusion (Penetration of 45+ required), or disturbing it by reaching physically through it triggers a waiting spell, *Infernal Smoke of Death* (MuAu 40). The poisonous cloud released billows from the sarcophagus and remains on the lower floor for more than a week before dissipating. This cloud is released each time the body or image is disturbed, up to six times.



The Stone Gargoyles

Magic Might 21

Cun (sly) +2

Per (vigilant) +1

Str (strong grip) +4

Stm na

Prs (fierce) +3

Com na

Dex (clumsy) -1

Qik (lumbering) -2

Size -1

Claws (2): 1st +4 Atk +6 Dam +13

Bash: 1st +3 Atk +9 Dam +9*

Bite: 1st +2 Atk +6 Dam +7**

Fat na Def +2 Soak +24***

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1/-1, -3/-3, -5, Shattered

* Can only use after diving. Opposed Str rolls for victim to stay upright.

** May bite only after a successful bash or two successful claw attacks in the previous Round. The bite is poisonous, but only takes effect if the victim loses Body Levels in the attack. The victim must make a Fatigue roll of 6+ every two hours, or lose a long-term Fatigue Level. A night's rest does not restore those Levels lost. Once all Fatigue Levels are lost, Body Levels are lost in the same way. The poison may be counteracted magically (MuCo spell of Level 20+) or by a healer (Int + Chirurgy roll of 10+), or the poison's spread may be stopped if the bitten body part is dismembered within a Round of the bite (delegate damage as seems appropriate).

*** Harmed only by magic and metal weapons. Soak versus metal, blunt, smashing weapons is 16.

Personality Traits

Relentless +3

Emotionless +2

Powers

• **Piercing Scream** — For 3 Might points, a gargoyle can emit a piercing scream. This scream makes everyone instinctively clasp their hands over their ears, dropping what they hold in their hands unless an Int + Fantastic Beast Lore roll of 6+ is made, in which case listeners may behave ordinarily. Those not protecting their ears are stunned for one Round (able to parry, but not attack, and magi must make a Concentration roll of 9+ to cast spells in that Round) unless they can make a Stm roll of 5+. After everyone has heard the scream once, they may choose to cover their ears or not if it is heard again.

Notes: Six stone gargoyles roost at the tops of columns on each floor of the tower. They attack anyone who enters their floor and begins disturbing its contents. However, if one of the intruders looks like Variña (a tall, auburn-haired, aquiline woman wearing white, flowing robes), the gargoyles remain on their perches.

On the first Round of an attack, the gargoyles dive from the ceiling and attempt to bash victims, followed by clawing attacks in the next Round. If the bash is successful, an opposed Str roll is required for victims to stay on their feet. In Rounds following the bash and claw attacks, they try to bite, or climb, circle, and dive again, unless they are being harmed by magic. In that case they converge on the magus and attempt to bite. If any gargoyle is reduced to its second -3 Body Level, it withdraws, returning to its stony perch. That gargoyle is completely healed after one sunrise and one sunset have passed. Note that gargoyles who are shattered or are kept from returning to their roost do not heal. Each gargoyle's body contains 3 pawns of Terram, and 3 pawns of Rego *vis*.

Next to Variña, within the sarcophagus, lie several magical items of moderate power. Their exact nature is left to you to determine, so that you may maintain Saga balance. However, it is suggested that one item deal with wind control (ReAu), one allow a shapechange into a bird (MuCo), and one help with traveling through *regio* (ReVi; it gives a +10 bonus to all entry and exit rolls).

Mechanics

Few special rules are needed for this *regio*. The only one that needs discussion involves the entry of characters who have malicious motives. Variña seeks to lead magi into confrontation with one another at her tomb. Thus, magi and *custos* who approach and enter the *regio*, with the intent of fighting others in the Order to

get Variña's treasure, receive a +5 modifier to level entry rolls.

Note that Variña's actual tomb is quite difficult to find. However, if exploring magi are well-versed in *regio* and know some spells useful in dealing with them, they may have some success in discovering the tomb.



all: find me in my final retreat and you may call my worldly possessions your own. However, I warn you this, do not disturb my body. Good luck." With a laugh and a smirk, the image vanishes. Variña always disliked the politics of the Order, and is hoping that several magi, if not Covenants, go to war over her possessions. Her intent is to show them the futility of their diplomacy and posturing, making them reveal their true, greedy, selfish selves.

Location

The tomb should be located on an icy mountain peak. It should be fairly difficult to reach, being far from traveled roads and passes.

Stories

Stories concerning Variña's tomb should be fairly straightforward. First the magi must somehow hear of the tomb and decide to find it. Then, they must travel to the tomb's area and actually locate it (no mean feat in itself). Then, the characters must navigate the *regio*'s maze and defeat the tomb's guardians to find Variña's treasure. Finally, the characters have to get the treasure home! A quest of this nature might take several sessions to resolve, and there's certainly no guarantee that the characters find the treasure.

If you wish to embellish upon this tomb, placing waiting wards and glyphs for the unwary, feel free.

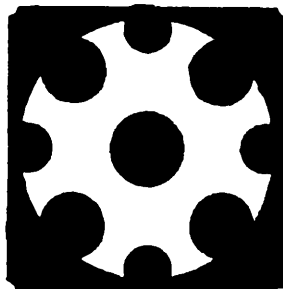
Also, feel free to adjust the levels of Variña's spell books to ensure the balance of your Saga. Variña's treasure could also be cursed in some way, further expression of Variña's revenge against the Order. So, in acquiring the treasure, characters may believe they've won a prize, but they've really done themselves harm in their greed. Aside from these alteration tips, here are some story ideas for the tomb:

- One hundred years after the death of Variña, a ghostly image of the magus visits the council chambers of every Covenant within two thousand miles of her tomb. The image gives a simple message: *"I, Variña, once mistress of the airs and images, have succumbed to final death. As I was solitary in life, so was I solitary in death. Now that I am gone my remains turn to dust, my books lie unread, my items unused, and my vis uninvested. This fills me with sorrow (Per + Folk Ken rolls of 6+ to note heavy sarcasm). I challenge you*

The Order is thrown into an uproar by Variña's message, for she was famous and her library renowned. It takes some time for each Covenant to realize that many others received the same message, and by the time the characters make that realization, Tribunals are called everywhere to deal with the problem in "an orderly fashion." Of course, every Covenant sends off a search party in secret, while buying time with delaying tactics in Tribunal council chambers. Magi characters can get involved in the intrigue in one of two ways. They may play the political game, trying to interfere with other Covenant's activities in hopes of getting Variña's treasure for themselves. Or, the magi may try to find the tomb themselves, a task that is fraught with dangers of its own, and those dangers are only added to by the threat posed by rival Covenants. If you're feeling generous you may provide the characters with some hints to go on, ferreted from an old text that mentions Variña's

sanctum being in the mountains. How much information the characters know and how it is revealed is left to you. If you're devious you may have each of the visiting images of Variña give a different hint to each Covenant. Thus, if magi from different Covenants can't find the tomb on their own, they may pool their knowledge, but who knows what treachery occurs once the tomb is finally found.

- The feathers from a giant owl are needed for a potion or item and the magi hear rumors that a pair of such owls nest in a nearby mountain range. The characters find the owls after a long search, and incidentally discover the tower. What do they do with their find? It's possible, if the characters' Covenant is old and well-established, that the characters could steal those items discovered, arguing that they were stolen from their Covenant by Variña in the first place. Alternatively, those items really could



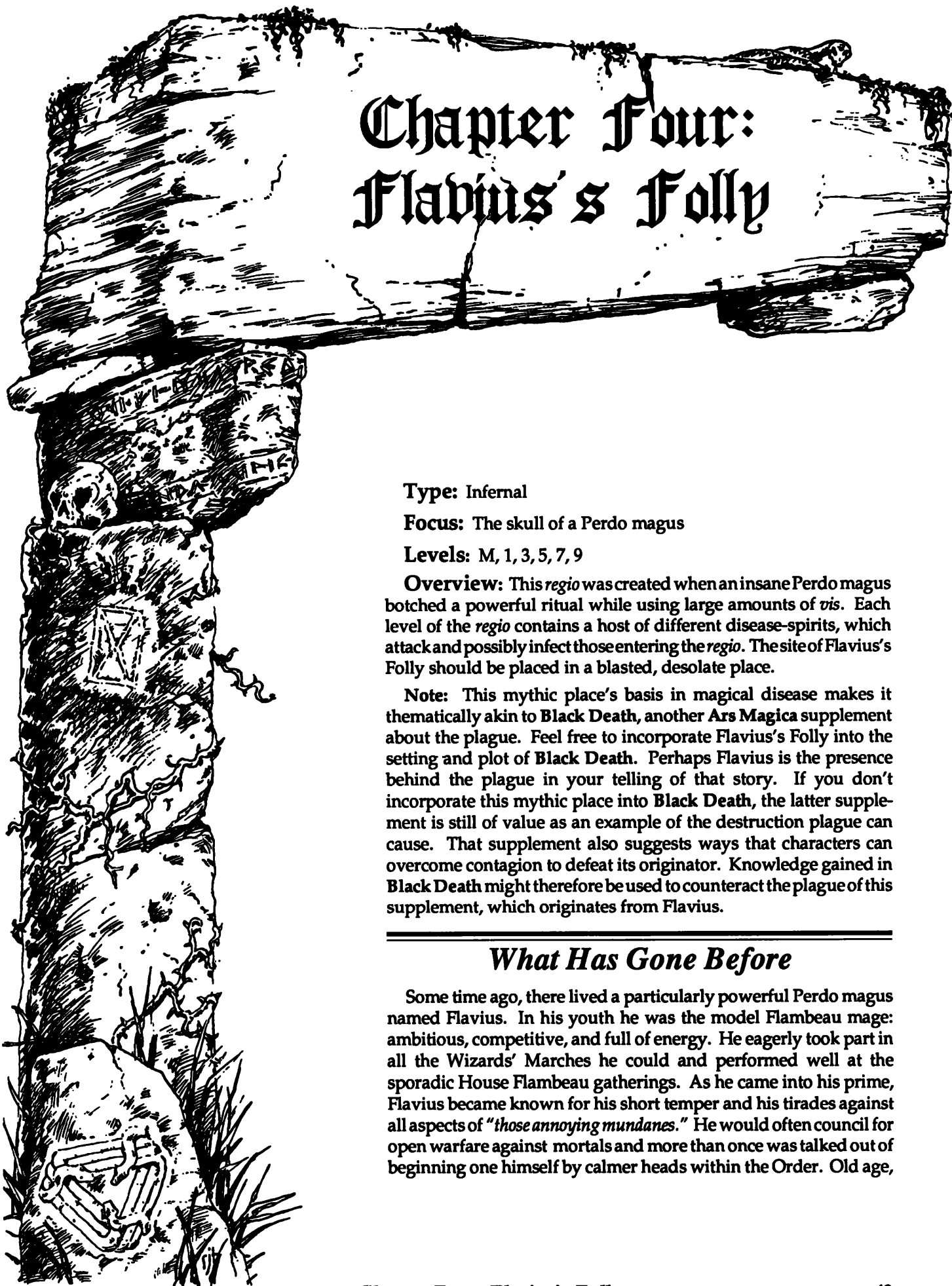
have been stolen from a Covenant, and magi from that fortress want their possessions back. It's up to the characters to return those items or keep them for themselves. However, if the stolen items are found in the characters' Covenant, the other's magi are outraged and a Wizard War may ensue.

- The magi find an ancient book, describing the location of Variña's tomb. The book was actually planted by an enemy Covenant. The rivals plan to

follow any characters that investigate the tomb, letting the characters do the dirty work, and then plan to attack the characters when they emerge from the tomb. The rival magi justify their attack, saying the characters are stealing treasure rightfully theirs (if the rivals belong to the same Covenant Variña did), or claim that the characters are stealing treasure that belongs to another Covenant, and that they are just seeing that it's properly returned.



More in pieces



Chapter Four: Flavius's Folly

Type: Infernal

Focus: The skull of a Perdo magus

Levels: M, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9

Overview: This *regio* was created when an insane Perdo magus botched a powerful ritual while using large amounts of *vis*. Each level of the *regio* contains a host of different disease-spirits, which attack and possibly infect those entering the *regio*. The site of Flavius's Folly should be placed in a blasted, desolate place.

Note: This mythic place's basis in magical disease makes it thematically akin to *Black Death*, another *Ars Magica* supplement about the plague. Feel free to incorporate Flavius's Folly into the setting and plot of *Black Death*. Perhaps Flavius is the presence behind the plague in your telling of that story. If you don't incorporate this mythic place into *Black Death*, the latter supplement is still of value as an example of the destruction plague can cause. That supplement also suggests ways that characters can overcome contagion to defeat its originator. Knowledge gained in *Black Death* might therefore be used to counteract the plague of this supplement, which originates from Flavius.

What Has Gone Before

Some time ago, there lived a particularly powerful Perdo magus named Flavius. In his youth he was the model Flambeau mage: ambitious, competitive, and full of energy. He eagerly took part in all the Wizards' Marches he could and performed well at the sporadic House Flambeau gatherings. As he came into his prime, Flavius became known for his short temper and his tirades against all aspects of "*those annoying mundanes*." He would often council for open warfare against mortals and more than once was talked out of beginning one himself by calmer heads within the Order. Old age,

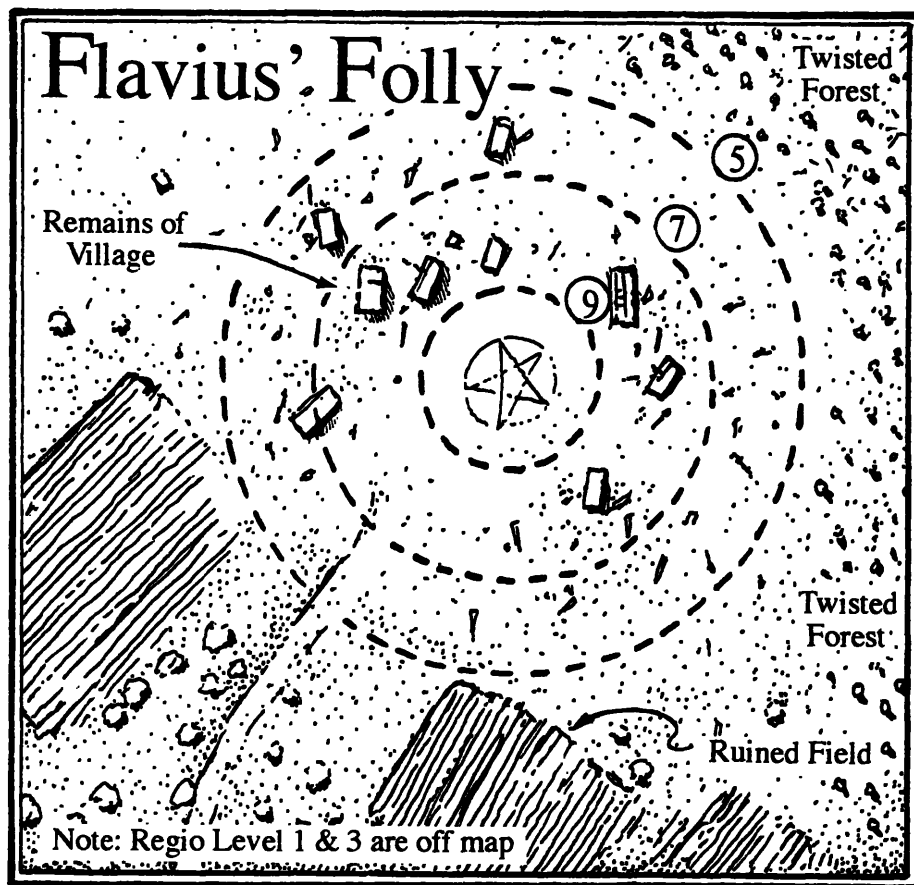
however, appeared to mellow Flavius, for he slowly divested himself from politics and ceased to attend the Flambeau gatherings once so important to him.

Flavius became a recluse, seldom leaving his laboratory except to gather ingredients for spells or to borrow an arcane book from a nearby Covenant. Most thought he had finally calmed down and was devoting his time to the more esoteric aspects of his Art. They were wrong. Not only had Flavius not given up his personal agenda of destroying mortals, he had become obsessed by it. If the Order frowned upon wars and the overt destruction of mortals with fire and lightning, he

diseases of his own making, taking careful notes on their effects. Finally, after decades of research, his masterpiece was ready.

Flavius, now quite elderly and somewhat insane, made his plans, chose a secluded village, gathered up his huge stores of *vis* and set off. The initial preparations went well, with Flavius putting the villagers to sleep so that he could work the long ritual undisturbed. All through the night Flavius chanted and yelled and gesticulated, drawing arcane symbols in the air and on the ground, throwing piles of bones and bits of dried flesh into braziers that gave off a thick, foul

smelling smoke. The power swelled and took form about him, evil forms coalescing from the darkness, hungry for shape-giving *vis*. At first, Flavius used the *vis* sparingly, according to the strict demands of the ritual, but as the hours passed and the maladies passed from simple colds and fevers to powerful afflictions, Flavius faltered. His mind slipped, and the complex images held so rigidly in his mind twisted momentarily, slipping from his grip. The diseases waned, their lovingly shaped forms threatening to dissipate into the coming dawn. Desperately, Flavius fed them more *vis*, and the ritual held momentarily before lunging outward again. This immensity of the shapes escalated quickly as the growing pestilence required ever increasing amounts of *vis* to maintain its form. Within moments Flavius's carefully crafted ritual raged almost completely out of control. And,



decided to find a way to destroy them slowly and quietly, leaving no trace of his work. So he delved into his books, and after studying and discarding numerous methods, finally settled upon something subtle and deadly — disease.

Flavius's crazed dream was to create a disease so potent, so deadly, that all mankind would succumb to it and lie dying in heaps in every corner of the world. He started with simple afflictions: colds, headaches and warts, and then moved on to more complicated and terrible maladies. As the years passed and Flavius's knowledge increased, he caught sight of his goal. He began testing his research, traveling incognito to secluded habitations, striking down families with new

just as his masterwork appeared in all its horror, a glassy-eyed Flavius collapsed, becoming one with the swirling vortex that was his creation.

The vortex whirled around Flavius and his stores of *vis*, gathering strength and knowledge. Leaving Flavius's dried husk behind, it swept across the village, striking the hapless peasants with a multitude of sickness as they slept. Finished with the peasants, it turned on the oxen, goats, and other animals. Still not sated, it struck the trees and grasses with hosts of crawling worms and swarming bugs and still looked for more. The magic grew until a maelstrom of pestilence thundered around the body of its creator, and

then, the maelstrom abruptly disappeared. In its place stood a *regio*, filled with the echoes of Flavius's magic.

The morning sun rose upon a devastated village.

DESCRIPTION

The Mundane Regio

The mundane foundation of this *regio* is the crumbling remains of a long abandoned village, once called Raelon. A quick study of the immediate area reveals little life: a few shrubs, some creeping vines, and a handful of scrawny thornbushes. The remains of a few trees can also be seen, their charred trunks a silent testimony to a great fire some years past. Little of the village remains, a few blackened timbers here and there, a rusted pot filled with muck, and the odd pile of stones are all that's left. Anyone searching carefully

among the ruins might find (Per + Search roll of 6+) small objects like cooking utensils or buttons, but nothing sheds light on the mystery of the village's demise. Extremely perceptive people (Per + Scan, Magic Sensitivity or Sense Holiness and Unholiness roll of 15+) notice that a particularly bare section of earth lying in the center of the village is shaped roughly like a pentagram. A spell such as *Sense of the Lingering Magic* (InVi 30) cast in the vicinity highlights this area as the focus for an old but powerful ritual.

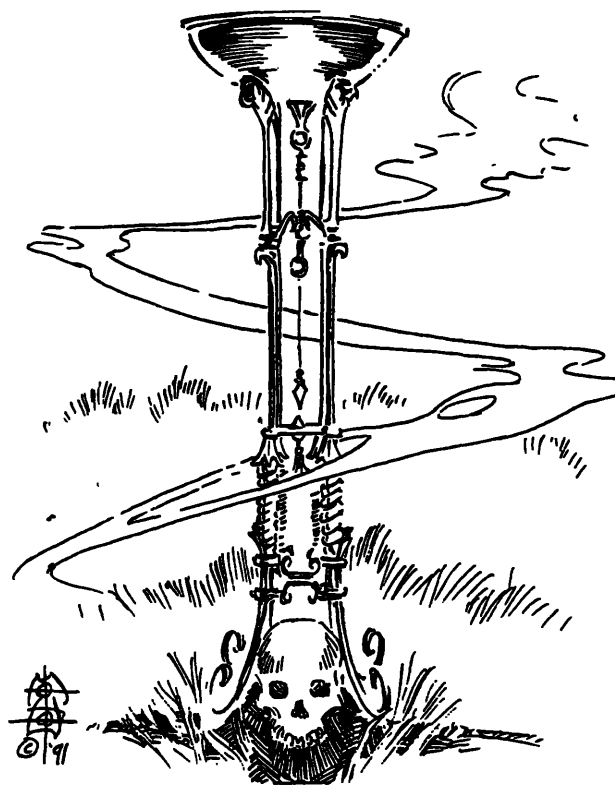
The entire area of the mundane level feels somehow *wrong*, especially to those possessing the exceptional talents of Empathy, Premonitions, Second Sight, Sense Holiness and Unholiness, or Visions (Per + appropriate Skill roll of 10+). The air hangs still and damp, carrying no sounds of life beyond those made by the group — no animals rustle, no birds chirp.

The fields surrounding the village are a patchwork of weeds, bare earth and scrawny shrubs. Anyone who knows the area (Int + Area Lore roll of 6+) knows that this is unnatural; normally fields left to themselves become wild with growth in a few short years. Digging an inch or so into the soil reveals a layer of ash. Little else of interest can be found here.

Diseases in the Middle Ages

Diseases are a mysterious thing to the medieval mind. Everyone, from high-born King to lowly peasant, lives in fear of disease throughout his life. It is a constant companion, responsible for high infant mortality, and responsible for bringing many an elderly person (anyone over forty-five years old) to their final resting place. Lacking a modern understanding of bacteria and viruses, medieval people attribute the causes of disease to all manner of things, ranging from tiny, gnawing worms (toothache) to possession by Demons (epilepsy). Diseases could likewise be caused by an imbalance of the four humors (melancholy, phlegm, sanguine and choler) or by witch curses, faerie curses, the vengeance of God, improper diet, the gaze of snakes, the touch of toads, or by evil vapors which waft upon the night breezes of All Hallow's Eve.

The cures are equally varied: herbal remedies are popular, as are bloodlettings, prayer vigils, incantations, and different combinations of all four. Pilgrimages to shrines both Christian and Pagan are also thought to cure those in need, and are thought to prevent sickness. Practitioners of healing range from Doctors of Medicine from esteemed Italian schools, down to lowly midwives and hermits. In mainland Mythic Europe, many healers are clerics, and many centers of healing are located near monasteries and churches.



The Infernal Regio (1)

This level of the *regio* is roughly a mile across, and is centered on the ruined village. It differs little from the mundane level on which it rests. The plants are more sparse, the remains of the village a bit bleaker, and the fields more bare. The disease spirits inhabiting this level are those of Colds, Headaches and Warts.

A large number of spirits inhabit this level — each person entering the level is initially attacked by one to four spirits. People staying on this level for long periods of time (more than an hour) should be attacked again. Note that a number of minor spirits can inhabit a body, causing more severe disease effects because of duplication. For example, a person with two headache spirits within her has a splitting headache (-2 to actions), one with three might have a migraine (-3 to actions).

The Infernal Regio (3)

This level is almost a half mile across, and is centered on the ruined village. The village is barer still, and what trees and plants exist in it are sickly. The pentagram in the center of the village is more obvious (Per + Scan or appropriate Skill roll of 8+ to notice). The disease spirits that inhabit this level are those of Fever, Skin Rash, Toothache and Ulcer.

This level also contains a large number of disease spirits. Each person is attacked by one to four random spirits. Those characters staying on this level for more than an hour are attacked again by the same number of spirits.

The Infernal Regio (5)

This level is two hundred yards across, centered on the pentagram. No trace of life can be found here, and the air is stale and musty. A faint smell of death hangs in the air. The outline of the pentagram at the center of the village is fairly obvious now (Per + Scan or appropriate Skill roll of 4+ to notice). The disease spirits of Falling Sickness, Consumption and Pneumonia make this level their home.

This level has fewer disease spirits. One to two initially attack each person. Persons lingering on this level for half an hour or more are attacked by another wave of one to two spirits.

The Infernal Regio (7)

This level of the *regio* is a rough circle about fifty yards across. No signs of the village exist, beyond a

few piles of rocks. The stench of rotting meat and vegetation hangs in the air. Clouds of insects buzz happily about the bloated carcasses of oxen, goats and sheep that lie throughout the level. The pentagram is well marked and emanates a smell of death which is almost unbearable. Anyone staying on this level for more than five minutes must make a Stamina roll of 5+ to keep from becoming nauseous and throwing up. Many powerful disease spirits make this level their home: Leprosy, St. Anthony's Fire, The Pox and Syphilis.

The numbers of disease spirits on this level are such that each person is attacked by one to two spirits. Those remaining on the level for more than fifteen minutes are attacked by another wave of one to two spirits.

The Infernal Regio (9)

This level is a mere fifty feet across, centered on the pentagram at the center of the village. Anyone brave or foolish enough to come here without magical protection almost certainly dies, for this is the home of Flavius's masterpiece: the Black Death. The stench in the air is so thick it makes one's eyes water. Around the edges of the level are piles of bodies, all horribly decayed and showing signs of death by plague. All but the bravest character quakes and runs (Bravery rolls of 8+) at the sight, and all but the stoutest (Stm rolls of 8+)

Disease Spirits, What Are They?

In the world of *Ars Magica*, disease has many causes, one of which is the disease spirit. These spirits roam the world, mindlessly looking for someone to infect with their particular affliction. Many believe they are sent to punish sinners, while others believe they are attracted to putrid smells, decaying refuse, and other sources of uncleanness and evil. No one really knows where disease spirits come from or how they are created, but some claim they spawn from the bodies of those not given a proper burial.

Each disease spirit is a manifestation of a single disease or malady. This malady can be as mild as warts or the common cold, or as deadly as the Black Death. Normally, disease spirits cannot be seen except by those gifted, delirious, or near death. When disease spirits are seen, their appearance varies from an insubstantial, ghostly wraith to a gruesome, real person bearing an extreme case of an affliction. These spirits spread their particular disease by entering a person's body, making it their

home. Shortly thereafter, the victim shows outward signs of the spirit's presence. The spirit's length of stay can vary considerably, depending upon the actions taken against it. Some spirits tenaciously cling to the host until death (syphilis, warts and arthritis) while others are fickle and are easily driven out or often wander off on their own (colds and some fevers).

Rules for Disease Spirits

In game terms, disease spirits are mindless lesser Demons, and are subject to the same restrictions placed upon their more powerful brethren; they can be affected by magic as well as by prayers and other manifestations of the Dominion. At your option, they may be summoned and bound normally, though they have no intelligence and are completely driven by instinct. Like Demons and ghosts, they have a Spirit Might score, ranging from 5 (common colds) to 30 (the Black Death). The average disease spirit has a Might score of 15-20. For more examples, see below.

As disease spirits are new to *Ars Magica*, they require special game treatment, as follows:

Attacking: Disease spirits are drawn to the living and are driven to inhabit their bodies whenever possible. When a disease spirit tries to enter a person, roll Spirit Might vs. 10 + the victim's Stamina (stress). Magi receive their *Córporem* score as a bonus. Likewise, those possessing the talent of healer may add their skill score to their roll, or to the rolls of others that are treated. A victim's failure in the roll indicates the spirit moves into the person's body—the victim has now "contracted" the disease. Failure means the spirit is rebuffed with no ill effects to the person attacked. A failed attack also weakens the spirit, costing it 5 points of Might. Ties indicate that the spirit enters the body, but does not harm the person in any way—the person is immune but carries the disease. At any later time the spirit may freely leave and attack someone else. In addition, the carrier becomes immune to all effects of the spirit's particular disease from that time forward. This is the only way that natural immunity can be gained.

Note that penalties resulting from Fatigue and Wounds *do* affect these rolls.

Effects: The effects of disease spirits have endless variety. They run the gamut from the annoying but harmless headache, to the extremely contagious and deadly Black Death. In game terms, most diseases cause either a reduction to particular statistics or a reduction to all actions. A strong bout of

the flu, for example, might cause a temporary reduction of Strength and Stamina by -4, and gives a general modifier of -2 to all actions. In many cases, these modifiers get worse the longer the person is sick. See below for examples. Also, remember that any statistic reduced to -6 or lower indicates the character is bedridden.

Recovery: Recovery from a disease spirit involves driving the spirit from the person's body. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways and is highly disease specific (see below for examples). In any case, each attempt involves another roll of Spirit Might vs. 10 + the victim's Stamina. Bonuses may be awarded either way depending upon the treatment used and the state of the patient (e.g. near death, still healthy). Generally, the attendance of someone with the talent of Healer or a knowledge of Medicine allows the patient one roll every week with the attendant's skill level as a bonus. Likewise, the attendance of devout holy people and the strong presence of the Dominion allows recovery rolls with bonuses equal to the level of the Dominion plus five times the Faith Points of the people praying.

A successful recovery roll means that the spirit is driven from the body and the person may begin to recover. Usually, recovery from serious maladies takes an amount of time given by a roll on the Wound Recovery Chart (see sample diseases for details), assuming Light Wounds. During this time any penalties due to sickness alleviate until pre-sickness levels are reached. Note, however, that many diseases have permanent effects. The pox, for example, can lower one's Com and Prs by -1 to -3, permanently. Whether or not recovery gives immunity to future attacks by similar disease spirits is up to you.

A failed recovery roll indicates the disease's continued presence, and possibly, a worsening of the patient's condition. A botch while recovering indicates death or coma for serious diseases, and a drastic worsening of condition for other diseases. If appropriate, a point of Decrepitude should be imposed.

In addition to traditional healing, magi can try their hand at driving out or destroying a spirit with magic. In general, a spell is effective if the spell's Level is greater than a combination of the spirit's Might and the result of a simple die.

Detection: Invisible or elusive disease spirits may be located by magi using a spontaneous *Intéllego Córporem* spells of Level 10 or more. If the spirit is in a person, it can be detected by standard spells like *Physician's Eye* (InCo 5) or *Re-*

vealed Flaws of the Mortal Flesh (InCo 10). At your discretion, those possessing exceptional talents like Healer, Second Sight, or Sense Holiness and Unholiness might see them as well (on a Per + Skill Score roll of 10+). If a spirit is wandering freely, it can resist spells that attempt to make it visible with its Might score plus a simple die roll, considered a Magic Resistance roll.

Note: In the *regio* at Flavius's Folly, disease spirits are visible to the naked eye. The conditions allowing disease spirits to be seen so are unique to the *regio*. Usually disease spirits are invisible unless magic is used.

Propagation: Normally, disease spirits who leave their host for whatever reason simply move on to a new victim as soon as possible. They may be discouraged from picking someone nearby by a variety of means, including magic, specially prepared incense, avid prayer, or an unpleasantly strong Aura of the Dominion (3+). A spirit confronted with such things upon leaving its host almost certainly looks for easier game elsewhere.

One situation that deserves special mention is when the host dies while possessed by one or more disease spirits. If the body is completely unattended to after death, or simply burned or buried without any ritual, the person's soul transforms into a disease spirit identical to that which inhabited the body. If more than one spirit inhabited the body, the person's soul becomes like that which had the highest Spirit Might. Thus are new disease spirits born. This terrible fate can be avoided if the person is given a proper burial with a priest of the deceased's religion in attendance. In addition, a proper burial traps the original disease spirit within the body for a time, keeping it from spreading to others until such a date as the body's burial grounds lose their Christian Dominion (i.e. the grave is desecrated).

Keep in mind that disease spirits may not be destroyed outright. However, if you are kind, you may allow spells that permanently "lay to rest" disease spirits.

End Note: Disease spirits are simply one of a myriad of ways to represent disease in *Ars Magica*. You are encouraged to use a variety of causes for contagion throughout your Saga, so characters don't become complacent about such a hard fact of medieval life.

become nauseous. Those failing their Bravery rolls flee in a random direction, undoubtedly running the gauntlet of the lower levels of the *regio*. Another Bravery roll is required to regain resolve, rolled for each Round of flight. Of course, fleeing characters can be physically restrained with magic or force. Those so restrained regain their composure after a few moments. Characters failing their Stamina roll lose a Round of action to sickness. Those possessing exceptional talents related to the arcane (e.g. Magic Sensitivity, Sense Holiness and Unholiness) experience a strong, almost overwhelming feeling of evil in this level.

Buried among the bodies at the perimeter of the level are fetid black sacks of flesh containing 3 pawns of *Perdo vis* each. A complete search of the body piles (requiring thirty minutes or more) reveals 8 bags of these disgusting magical remains (for a total of 24 *vis*). This *vis* may be harvested once a year if the *regio* remains intact.

The piles of bodies are also the preferred resting place of the diseases inhabiting this level, The Black Death and Tarantism. Thus, when the spirits arise and attack, they appear to come from the piles of bodies. Both of these diseases are uncommon to the world and are rarely found outside this *regio*. The first was discovered and harnessed by Flavius and the second is an unexpected offspring created in the lab. You should carefully note the fate of any disease spirits that manage to escape this level of the *regio*, within a host, and make their way into the mundane world. Those spirits could cause the spread of the plague elsewhere.

If you plan to tell the story of Black Death, you could have Flavius's plague be the inspiration for the disease of that story. In fact, characters could learn from the spirits of Flavius's area of destruction, applying remedies to the plague learned there to that of Black Death. There are all kinds of ways to combine Flavius's Folly and Black Death. Of course, choose the one that best suits your Saga.

In the center of this level of the *regio* lies the pentagram, just as it was drawn the day of Flavius's fateful ritual. Braziers stand at the five corners (about ten feet apart), still smoldering and weakly giving off a foul smoke. Various magical implements are scattered within a protective circle in the middle the pentagram. A similar circle encompasses the pentagram itself, drawn on the bare earth with a reddish paste now dried to dust. Those inspecting the arcane script running along the edge of this circle might note (Int + Magic Theory roll of 12+) that the main art and technique used was *Perdo Córpo rem*. A roll of 15+ indicates a requisite of *Creo* as well. It is obvious to all practitioners of the Art that this was the sight of a powerful ritual with diabolical overtones.

Disease Spirits of the Infernal Regio

The diabolical levels of this *regio* contain disease spirits (see insert) of varying strengths. Some were summoned by Flavius. Others were created from the villagers' souls, the victims of Flavius's attack, after they died without proper burial. Different disease spirits freely roam each *regio* level, hungering for life to feed upon, and they attack any living thing that enters their domain. All of the *regio* levels have a large number of disease spirits within them, so it's almost impossible to avoid encountering them. Within a few minutes (20-50 Rounds) of entering each level, the spirits sense a presence of life, stir, and begin searching for its source. After a few minutes more, a spirit finds the intruders and attacks, attempting to enter a person's body. This attack draws other spirits to the characters' location, until the trespassing mortals are swarmed by frenzied disease spirits. The specific number of spirits that attack each person is given in the level descriptions. If the characters do not leave the level they're on after the first spirit attack, the spirits attack again as new spirits make their way to the characters' location. Essentially, the spirits continue to attack in waves until the characters depart or die.

Every spirit is tied to a particular level and may not chase mortals across a boundary. It is possible, however, for a disease spirit to "hitch a ride" and leave a level within the body of a host it has successfully entered. This is the only way that disease spirits may escape their level.

Because of the nature of this *regio*, many of its disease spirits are visible, even to those who are not sick or delirious (see below for spirit descriptions). Once seen, they may be dodged, run away from, or even attacked. Physical attacks don't affect many of the spirits, but magic can affect them. Treat the spirits as a type of Demon, not ghost, for these purposes. Note that actually destroying a disease spirit is quite difficult; magical attacks simply drive them away or reduce their Spirit Might score for a time. Fire, on the other hand, drives away many of the disease spirits, and destroys some of the lesser ones (at your discretion).

If a person becomes infected with several diseases at once, add together the Might of the appropriate disease spirits. If the total is greater than 30, weaker spirits are forced out until the total Might in the unfortunate's body is less than 30. Thus, a person could have a toothache, a headache, and a fever all at once, but if this same person is infected with Falling Sickness, the head and toothache have to go. See the insert for Might scores and descriptions of disease spirits.

Note: Remember to add the level of the *regio* to the disease spirits' Might scores. The value of each level affects spirits' chances of attacking and resisting spells, among other things.

In the exact center of the pentagram lies a skull. It appears to be in perfect condition and shows no signs of age. If anyone comes within ten feet of the outermost circle, the skull's eyes begin to glow a hellish red hue. A few moments later, characters begin to hear a faint whisper coming from the direction of the skull, accompanied by slight movements of its jaw. Perceptive people listening closely (Per roll of 6+) hear the whispered words, "*finally you are here... help... free me...*," repeated again and again. This is the skull of Flavius, now the focus of his crazed ghost (see below).

Flavius, Destroyer of Men

Spirit Might 53

Description

Flavius can appear in two distinct forms. One is the hazy image of an emaciated elderly mage, his skin covered in boils and weeping sores. He is clothed in tattered robes. Normally, however, Flavius simply

appears as two glowing red eyes within his skull, at the center of the pentagram (see below for more).

Flavius, like many ghosts, is under the delusion that he is still alive. He believes that his ritual worked, but was so successful that the disease spirits overcame even his own mighty magic resistance. When he "awoke," he found himself recovering from an almost mortal illness, immobilized in the center of his pentagram. Looking around, he saw the effects of his spell and rejoiced. It had worked! The bodies of the peasants, the bloated animals, and destroyed village were exactly the results he had dreamed of for so many years. As time passed, Flavius began to "recover" and was able to move about some, but found that through a minor miscalculation in the ritual (so he assumes), he was trapped within his own pentagram. Based on what he could see, and the fact that no mortals came to inspect the ravished village, Flavius came to the conclusion that his spell had worked as planned and that few, if any, mortals remained to walk the earth.



Now, Flavius waits patiently for magi to discover his location, for he is sure that they are searching diligently for the mighty magus who performed such a great service for the Order. He fully expects to be revered, perhaps even installed as the supreme magus of the Order, once he is found. Flavius has decided that he will magnanimously decline the position when it is offered, for he is a simple, hardworking magus and he wouldn't presume to disrupt the current Order.

Anyone approaching the pentagram is met with the following preconceptions: Flavius assumes that all are magi, that they know of him and his work in destroying the mortals, and that they are there to free him and bring him back in triumph. At first, Flavius is "resting," sleeping on his pillow (which happens to be a skull — his). Once awakened by the presence of strangers, he excuses himself for not getting up. *"I'm still recovering from a long sickness, and it tires me to move about,"* he says raspingly. In fact, Flavius is normally bound tightly to his skull, and may appear as a ghostly image only by expending one Might Point per minute. When he lies down to "rest," his image dissolves and he once again becomes glowing red eyes in the skull.

Flavius happily chats with people who come near the pentagram, waiting for them to hail him as a hero. When this doesn't happen, he "gets up," appearing as described above, and begins to get angry. *"Don't you know who I am? I am the one responsible for all of this!"* indicating the bloating corpses with a sweep of his

arm. He expects his visitors to release him by physically destroying part of the circle and the pentagram (see below for the effects of doing so). If the visitors don't promptly comply, Flavius becomes enraged; some of his old self shows through. He becomes further agitated if characters question his convictions (e.g. that the destruction he's caused is not magnificent, but deranged, or that mortals still walk the land). In fact, he's inflamed to the point of throwing a frenzied temper tantrum, hurling ghostly *Balls of Abysmal Flame* or *Pilums of Fire* against the invisible shield of the pentagram's protective circle (the pentagram does not allow his spells to penetrate it). Once Flavius has calmed down, he uses whatever tactics he thinks prudent to convince his magi friends to release him. Clearly he is quite insane, for he alternates between screaming and calling himself the *"Lord of all Magi,"* and calmly asking for his freedom so he can observe the piles of mortal bodies he imagines to cover the earth. *"Or are they all gone by now?"* he says, *"I do hope some are left."* If characters request compensation for Flavius's rescue, he promises gifts of *vis*, instruction, or powerful spell books, *anything* in return for his freedom. Of course, he cannot deliver on any of these promises, but doesn't know that.

If someone crosses into the pentagram without physically breaking it, Flavius does not hesitate to try and possess that person (as per the ghost rules in *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*, p. 24-25). Once in

The Black Death and Tarantism

Historically, the Black Death is believed to have begun in China and made its way into the Western world along the trade routes. It reached Sicily and Cyprus in 1347, on the boats of Genoese traders, and within the year had spread to France, Italy, Germany, and England. In 1349 a third of England's population lay dying and the plague had spread to Poland, Scandinavia, and Scotland. The scourge swept through Russia in 1351. In four short years, the Black Death killed one out of every four Europeans.

If you like, Flavius's calamity could be the Mythic European source of the Black Plague, but if that's the case, the plague spread in the Black Death supplement needs to be rationalized in terms of Flavius's creation.

Tarantism, also known as the dance of St. John or St. Vitus, first appeared some twenty years after the Black Plague when some travelers from Germany arrived in a small French town and began leaping and cavorting in the town square. They danced wildly, foaming at the mouth, until they collapsed from exhaustion. In later years, groups of those dancers traveled from town to town, gathering numbers from weary peasants or workers who dropped what they were doing to join in the frenzy. Popularly, this mental disease was thought to be caused by the bite of the Tarantula, hence the name. While modern scholars do not agree on the origins of these outbreaks of tarantism, many feel that they were a response to the mental stress of living through the plague.

In Mythic Europe this disease, like the Black Death, could originate at the site of Flavius's Folly.

control of a body, Flavius attempts to leave the pentagram and succeeds at the cost of 15 Spirit points. Once outside, he begins blasting the group with spells for their impertinence (*Perdo Córpoem* and *Creo Ignem* are his favored combinations). If given enough time, he also discovers that he can command any disease spirits within sight at a cost of 3 points per spirit controlled. He can control a number of spirits equal to his current Might divided by 5. Flavius continues to attack the characters until they are driven off, or until his Might drops below 15. Then he flees to other levels of the *regio* and tries to make his way to the mundane world. He can cross boundaries at a cost in Might equal to the level being entered. Flavius cannot enter the mundane world, no matter how hard he tries, however, for he is an integral part of the *regio*. At your option, his attempts to leave the *regio* could shift its position in the mundane world, thus devastating new

areas. Once Flavius is free of the pentagram, and realizes that he cannot leave the *regio*, he becomes completely unhinged and spends his time harassing those who enter the *regio*. It takes him two full days to recover any Spirit Might spent.

The Pentagram

The pentagram and Flavius can be handled in several ways.

- Entering the pentagram without disturbing it (described above). This allows Flavius the chance to escape the confines of the pentagram within another person. He can't escape the *regio* through a host, though.

- Destroying part of the pentagram. This has the effect of breaking the boundaries between the *regio* and the real world. The *regio* effectively collapses onto its mundane base and all the disease spirits are loosed into the world. Flavius is also free to move beyond the confines of the pentagram, but must stay within one mile of his skull.

- Destroying the skull sends Flavius to rest and sends the disease spirits into a frenzy. Double the number of attacking disease spirits on each level. The boundaries of the *regio* also become unstable and begin to expand, doubling in size every month. If the *regio* is not dispelled after a year, it collapses as in the previous entry. However, by that time the expanded *regio* has caused widespread destruction, all at the hands of the characters.

Note that spells must have a Penetration total of 50+ to pass through the protective circle of the pentagram. If magi intend to somehow disrupt the *regio* with spells, they must use powerful ones.

- Laying Flavius's soul to rest magically has the same effect as destroying his skull.

- Some magi might think of dispelling the disease spirits within the *regio* one by one. This could take quite a long time, as there are upwards of 300+ spirits in the entire *regio*. It is left to you to determine whether such a tedious solution is effective, or whether the spirits regenerate somehow after time.

- Safely dispelling everything within the *regio* all at once is quite difficult. It requires an elaborate ritual, which involves the drawing of a protective circle around the entire *regio*, and then involves laying Flavius to rest, either with magic or by destroying his skull. The details are left to you, but it is suggested that the ritual take several seasons of study to come up with, the cooperation of many magi (perhaps more than one Covenant's worth) to perform, and many, many pawns of *vis* to implement. The use of such a ritual should be left to the players to come up with. If they don't think

of it, they'll have to utilize less effective, more tedious methods of dealing with the *regio*.

Note: Destroying or dispelling the *regio* also destroys its source of yearly *vis*.

A Note On This Regio

Unlike most of the *regio* in this supplement, this one is quite deadly, especially at its upper levels. Dealing with the *regio* is not meant to be easy. Quite the contrary, it is meant to offer a challenge that takes many visits over the course of years or decades to overcome, if ever. Some groups of characters may visit the *regio*, learn something of its disease spirits and promptly leave, never to return. Other groups, tempted by rumors of large stores of *vis*, might mount serious assaults upon the *regio*, armed with specially formulated spells and magic items, succeeding only after several attempts. Those succeeding in this dangerous endeavor find a large source of yearly *vis* (24 pawns). Note, however, that no one *forces* the characters to explore the *regio*; they may choose to ignore it completely.

Mechanics

Entering the higher levels of any *regio* is difficult, and this one is no exception. One thing to keep in mind is the *regio*'s diabolical nature and the bonuses and penalties to crossing boundaries that this might entail. Essentially, this nature means that those trying to enter the *regio* on nights of evil influence have a much easier time of things. Some suggested bonuses: +5 for a full moon, +5 for nighttime, -10 for broad daylight, +2 to +8 during severe storms, +15 for All Hallow's Eve, and +3 for the thirteenth of the month. Feel free to make up further modifiers of your own. At your option, one evening a year (perhaps the anniversary of the creation of the *regio*) the boundaries become quite weak and mortals may move freely between levels, without rolling. Otherwise, magic can be quite useful in reaching the higher levels. Those truly desperate to enter the *regio* might try summoning Demons to help them (Demons can add up to half their Might to any boundary rolls).

Leaving the *regio* is just as difficult as entering it — unless a person carries a disease spirit within himself. The spirits are tired of their small prison and once within a human host, add half of their Spirit Might score to any attempt to cross a boundary to a lower level. If you're nasty you might have characters roll separately to leave the *regio*, once someone has become infected. By imposing this rule, you can arrange for the characters to become split up as the diseased easily cross boundaries and the uninfected lag behind, thus subjecting the latter to further attacks.

Location

This *regio* should be placed on the site of a former village that has little connection to the outside world. Ideally, the site should be enclosed on several sides by forest, mountains, or other isolating terrain and should have only one overgrown road leading to it from a neighboring village. By these means the village can remain "haunted" and unexplored for quite sometime.

If a more populated and accessible location is chosen, be sure and have lots of legends and rumors about the area at your disposal — perhaps travelers never go there at night and even during the day hurry through the site while mumbling prayers and chanting charms to ward off evil.

Stories

You may be asking the question, "Why would my troupe want to explore any part of this *regio*, much less the higher levels?" The answer is simple: many won't, not without proper incentive. Even so, some characters, after experiencing the horror of the lower levels may refuse to return, regardless of the bait. That's okay, and you shouldn't feel compelled to entice reluctant characters to return and explore the *regio* further. Likewise, the danger of this *regio* should not be lessened to account for foolish or rash actions, especially if they occur during a second or third trip to the *regio*.

However, there's a lot of story potential to be harnessed in Flavius's Folly, and it shouldn't be too difficult to lure characters to the site. Once there they may not want to proceed into the *regio*, but the situation that's brought them there may demand self-sacrifice. Here are some ideas to get the characters interested in the *regio* in the first place:

- Magi are always interested in *vis*, and rumors could reach them telling of an evil place containing vast stores of replenishable *vis*. These rumors could come from numerous sources, maybe even old decaying tomes within the Covenant's library. Perhaps the founding members of the Covenant discovered the *regio*, but felt it was too dangerous to deal with or destroy. The magi swore themselves to secrecy, then destroyed (or so they thought) all references to the expedition. Now that the contemporary magi are intrigued, they must locate and travel to the site of Flavius's folly. Unfortunately, as many tomes referring to the *regio* were destroyed, there's nary a scrap of information to warn characters of what dangers to expect there.

- The *regio* could be newly created, perhaps even by an elderly member of the characters' own Covenant. In this case, the magi may feel obliged to investigate

the old magus's disappearance and to dispel the *regio* if possible. Failure to do both (and quickly) might result in problems for the Covenant in the form of political pressure from both the Church and the Order. Regardless of whether the characters track down their rogue brother and dispel his creation, the *regio* has already done its damage, destroying a village. Accordingly, the characters are undoubtedly blamed for the destruction of the village and have to do some fast talking to maintain peaceable local relations.

- Perdo magi may wish to investigate the *regio* for purely intellectual reasons, perhaps hoping to learn the fate of the great magus Flavius and to learn some of his secrets.

- The Covenant knows of the *regio* and years ago decided to have as little to do with it as possible. Now, however, the Covenant has heard that some people have moved back to the village and are even farming again. What is going on? The magi investigate and find a coven of demon worshippers; their dealings with Demons provide protection against the disease spirits. If the magi attack, the diabolists simply retreat higher into the levels of the *regio*, where the magi may be reluctant to follow. If this coven is allowed to prosper, it could cause quite a few problems for the Covenant in the future.

Sample Disease Spirits

Note: Many of the spirits below show a dodge rating that characters must meet to avoid contact with a spirit. Such rolls are made each Round against each attacking spirit and are based on Qik + Dodge. These rolls are completely free, and are allowed after all a character's other defenses (e.g. spells) are tried against a spirit. Thus, Dodge attempts are a last ditch defense, and some people's only defense. If a Dodge attempt fails, the character becomes subject to a spirit's contagion, assuming his roll to resist its power fails (see above).

It's also possible to outrun some spirits, as indicated in those spirits' profiles. To outrun a spirit, a character must recognize its approach (make a successful Per test), and may then make a Qik roll. A failed Qik roll indicates that the character does not get away in that Round. When running from a spirit, a character can do nothing else for the Round. Spending a Round running away, a character puts himself one Round's worth of travel from a spirit (meaning the character has a Round in which to act before the spirit catches up with him). Though running is an effective defense against a single, recognized spirit, it's less effectively when a number of spirits attack from different directions, and is useless if a spirit's approach goes undetected.

Furthermore, if a character falls ill to a disease spirit, she does not necessarily demonstrate symptoms right away. True, minor spirits, like Fever and Headache have immediate effects, but more powerful ones don't. Rather, powerful diseases take effect months or even years after a spirit's attacks. However, when characters are attacked by such a spirit, they know they have become infected, being able to see the spirit. Though a particular disease may not have immediate effect, the carrier knows that he's living on borrowed time and undoubtedly searches high and low for a cure before he dies. Such a search just screams of future stories for you and your troupe.

Cold

Spirit Might 5

Appearance: Not visible

Effects: Gives the afflicted a common cold within a few hours. -1 to all actions. While sick the target is always Winded (see Fatigue, *Ars Magica*, p.54).

Recovery: Roll for recovery after every good night's rest. Roll every week when no rest is found.

Headache

Spirit Might 8

Appearance: Not visible

Effects: Immediately gives the host a bad headache. -1 to all actions.

Recovery: Roll every morning for recovery, with a +1 modifier for every consecutive day afflicted.

Warts

Spirit Might 6

Appearance: Not visible

Effects: Makes a large wart begin to grow on the affected person. -1 to Presence if the wart is in a prominent place.

Recovery: The wart must be physically removed, then a recovery roll is made—failure means the wart returns.

Fever

Spirit Might 12

Appearance: A faint, fleeting image of a small dancing flame. Per + Alertness roll of 9+ to notice it.

Effects: The host develops a low temperature within ten minutes. While feverish, the subject is always Weary (-1) until cured. If the fever lasts for more than a week, the victim loses 1 point of Int permanently, unless a Stamina roll of 6+ is made.

Recovery: One recovery roll is allowed after each complete day of rest with appropriate foods. For each day of consecutive rest, a cumulative +1 modifier is applied to recovery rolls.

Skin Rash (Scrofulus)

Spirit Might 10

Appearance: An almost transparent swarm of red dots. Per + Alertness roll of 8+ to notice. May be Dodged with a roll of 11+.

Effects: The victim develops an itching skin rash covering half of a limb or its equivalent within an hour. -2 to all Com and Prs rolls if the rash is visible. -3 to all lengthy stationary actions (because of itching).

Recovery: One roll per week is allowed, and two more are allowed if the rash is treated with soothing salves. A cumulative +2 bonus to rolls is gained per consecutive week of affliction.

Toothache

Spirit Might 10

Appearance: A small, black, floating worm. Seen with a Per + Alertness roll of 9+. May be dodged each round with a roll of 8+.

Effects: Enters the host's mouth and causes her to develop a painful toothache within the hour. A -2 modifier to all mental activities results.

Recovery: No recovery rolls are allowed without some kind of treatment. Removing the tooth automatically dispels spirit, but the unhappy soul must roll on the Wound Recovery Table, as though receiving a Light Wound, to determine how long his wound takes to heal (during which time all mental activities suffer a -1 modifier). Other treatments (e.g. herbal) give a +1 to +5 bonus to recovery rolls.

Ulcer (Fistula)

Spirit Might 9

Appearance: A small, dancing red dot. Requires a Per + Scan roll of 8+ to notice. If seen, it can be dodged with a roll of 9+.

Effects: The dot enters the host at stomach level with a faint twinge. It manifests itself as an ulcer during the next meal. -1 to all actions per month of affliction to a maximum of -3. The subject is also Winded (-0) until cured.

Recovery: Monthly recovery rolls are possible if the host follows a diet of porridge and milk.

Falling Sickness (Epilepsy)

Spirit Might 16

Appearance: A wavering, quaking distorted image that is vaguely man-shaped. Per + Alertness of roll 6+ to notice. May be dodged (8+ each Round).

Effects: After this spirit enters a person's head the victim immediately has an epileptic fit. No actions are possible during the fit. The fit causes four Fatigue rolls at -3 (against a value of 6) and the automatic loss of a Body Level if the victim is not restrained. If held, the victim must still make a Soak roll of 6+ (no armor) or lose a Body Level. In the future, whenever the character finds himself in a stressful situation (as determined by you) he must make a stress Stamina roll of 5+ or have another fit.

Recovery: No natural recovery rolls are allowed. After a cure has been tried, you may allow a recovery roll.

Pneumonia

Spirit Might 15

Appearance: A slow moving ghostly gray cloud. Per roll of 5+ to notice. Dodge on a 7+ each Round. May be outrun easily (Qik roll of 4+).

Effects: The cloud enters a victim's chest. Within a few hours the victim develops a cough, and experiences alternating waves of fever and chill. The victim quickly reaches a Fatigue Level of Tired (-3) and stays there until cured. While sick the -3 penalty applies to any Fatigue or Soak rolls.

Recovery: Each week of bed rest with additional treatment allows a recovery roll. The roll is modified by -2 for each sick

week. If recovery is successful, roll on the Medium Wounds Table to see how long it takes to fully recover.

Consumption (Tuberculosis)

Spirit Might 15

Appearance: A rotting black ball about the size of an apple. Per roll of 4+ to notice. May be dodged with an 8+.

Effects: Within a few hours of the disease entering the chest, the host becomes short of breath and loses 1 Fatigue Level until cured. Each successive month of sickness causes the loss of another Fatigue Level. After Fatigue Levels are gone, Body Levels are lost until dead.

Recovery: Bed rest is required, as is attention from a healer. Each month of attention allows one recovery roll, starting with a penalty of -5. Each successive month of rest allows a +1 bonus to this penalty, until it is negated.

Leprosy

Spirit Might 18

Appearance: This spirit looks like a week-dead corpse, complete with rotting flesh. It gives off a powerful stench. No roll needed to notice. The spirit can move at a fast walk. It can be physically attacked, with a Defense of 12 and a Soak equal to its current Might. Each Body Level of damage causes it to lose five points of Might. When its Might is reduced to 0, the spirit is driven off. Bravery rolls of 8+ are required not to run from this apparition. The spirit's attempts at infection can be dodged on a roll of 6+. The spirit can also be outrun (Qik roll of 6+).

Effects: A full year passes before the first symptoms appear. Initially a skin rash (see Scrofulus, above) in the extremities, it worsens to include loss of feeling and general weakness. -1 to Quickness per year infected. In addition, -1 to Stamina, Strength, or Dexterity is suffered per year of suffering (your choice). Also, unless extreme care is taken, fingers, toes and other extremities are lost due to accident and gangrene, with results determined by you.

Recovery: No rolls allowed without magic, a healer or a practitioner of medicine with a skill score of 4+. Then, one roll is allowed, with a one roll per year maximum. Lost Characteristic points are not regained.

St. Anthony's Fire (Erysipelas, Ergotism)

Spirit Might 22

Appearance: This spirit appears as a ball of pulsing fungus. Per roll of 5+ to notice. It may be dodged with roll of 6+ each Round, but it is difficult to outrun (Qik roll of 10+ to succeed). It may be physically driven off (as per the spirit of Leprosy).

Effects: Within a few hours of the ball entering the victim's mouth, the victim becomes immobilized with vomiting, cramps, and diarrhea. Make four Fatigue rolls at -4 when immobilization occurs. A few hours later, the extremities begin tingling and twitching. The victim loses 1 point of Strength and Stamina per day afflicted, until cured. Death occurs if a Characteristic drops to -8.

Recovery: One recovery roll (stress) is allowed at the end of the first day. A failure means natural recovery does not occur. If treated by a healer another roll may be made each day, with a -1 penalty per day sick. If a recovery roll is successful, roll once on the Heavy Wound Recovery Chart to see how long full recovery takes.

Syphilis

Spirit Might 20

Appearance: This disease appears as a ghostly peasant covered with sores. It may be driven off (as per the Leprosy spirit), and dodged (roll of 5+) and outrun (Qik roll of 8+). The peasant spirit has average stats for movement purposes. Bravery rolls of 5+ may be necessary for grogs to stay and confront this horror.

Effects: Within a few weeks of contact, the victim develops open sores. If in a prominent place, they may reduce Com and Prs by -1 to -3. A few weeks later glands become enlarged and sores spread across the body. If not cured within a few months, the patient begins losing a point of Int, Qik, or Dex (your choice) each month. If a Characteristic drops to -5, the victim dies.

Recovery: Recovery is not possible without the aid of a healer or doctor. Then, one roll is allowed per month. Characteristic losses are not regained when cured.

The Pox (Smallpox)

Spirit Might 25

Appearance: This spirit looks like a pox-covered person. It may be driven off or avoided as the Syphilis spirit can. Bravery rolls of 6+ are required to confront this spirit.

Effects: Two weeks after infection, the host is beset by chills, headache and fever (for effects, see Cold, Headache and Fever, above). A few days later, these symptoms disappear and the pox appears, covering the victim's body with numerous lesions. During this time, subtract 5 from Com and Prs.

Recovery: If not treated somehow, the person may make a recovery roll a week after the appearance of the pox. Success means he heals, though a penalty of -3 to Com and Prs is permanent. Failure means death in a few months, unless further treatment is attempted.

St. Vitus' Dance (Tarantism)

Spirit Might 20

Appearance: This spirit appears as a wildly dancing peasant, eyes rolling, mouth frothing, and limbs jerking spastically about. This spirit aggressively chases and attacks

any living thing that it can see. It may be avoided and driven off as can the Syphilis spirit.

Effects: Anyone becoming host to this spirit begins leaping, cavorting and dancing wildly about to the exclusion of all else. Make a Fatigue roll (6+) every half hour until the host collapses from exhaustion. As soon as the person wakes up, she begin dancing again. Note that victims might die of starvation or dehydration if not fed between bouts.

Recovery: The victim is allowed a recovery roll each time he collapses, starting with a -5 penalty, and gaining a bonus of +1 each successive time to a maximum of +5. Restraint causes the person to harm himself unless he is also calmed with quantities of ale or a sleeping draught.

The Black Death

Spirit Might 30

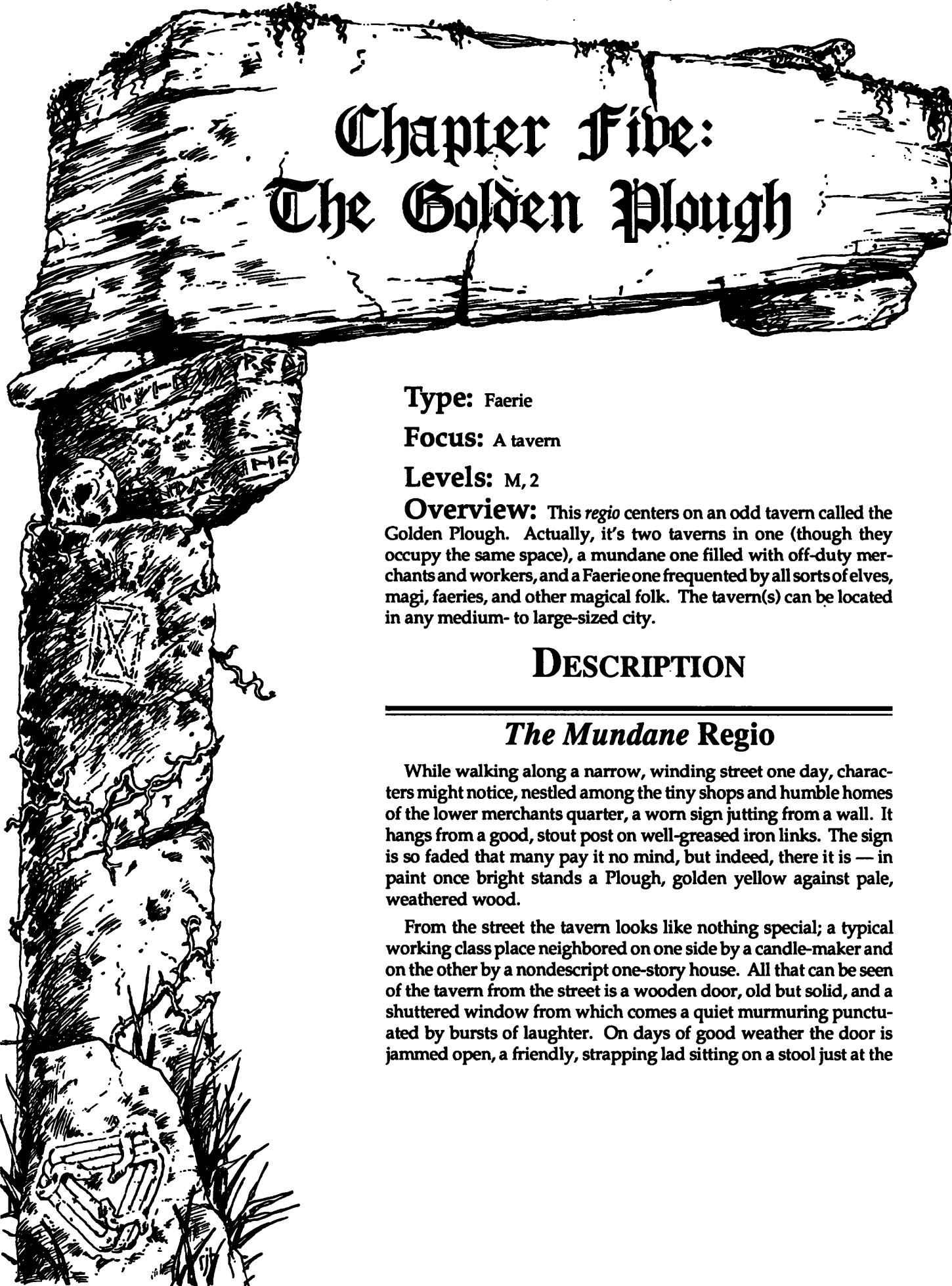
Appearance: The Black Death appears as a corpse of one of its victims. Swollen and ungainly, it tries to grapple and enter the body of any living person it sees. This spirit may be driven off, but only with fire (after doing 2 Body Levels damage) or holy items (Divine Aura of 4+, produced immediately before the spirit). Physical attacks upon the corpse result in the the eventual collapse of the body (treat as a zombie, *Ars Magica*, p.127). Upon hitting the ground it breaks open and releases a swarm (2d10) of rats (treat as a cat, *Ars Magica*, p.117). Those bitten by the rats may become infected as well. The infection attempts of the spirit can be dodged on a roll of 6+. Qik rolls of 6+ are needed to outrun the spirit.

Effects: A few days after infection, the victim's neck and underarm glands swell painfully. This is followed by high fever, which leads to delirium, shock, coma, and death. The whole process takes anywhere from a few hours to a few weeks. Essentially, reduce all Characteristics by 1 or more per day until recovery or death occurs.

Recovery: If medically tended, one recovery roll (stress) is allowed. A success means full recovery within a number of days given by a roll on the Heavy Wounds Recovery Table (ignore all death results). Characteristics recover to within 1 point of their original level after recovery is completed, but never reach their former level. Failure to recover means death unless the spirit is driven magically from the body.



More Mythic Places



Chapter Five: The Golden Plough

Type: Faerie

Focus: A tavern

Levels: M, 2

Overview: This *regio* centers on an odd tavern called the Golden Plough. Actually, it's two taverns in one (though they occupy the same space), a mundane one filled with off-duty merchants and workers, and a Faerie one frequented by all sorts of elves, magi, faeries, and other magical folk. The tavern(s) can be located in any medium- to large-sized city.

DESCRIPTION

The Mundane Regio

While walking along a narrow, winding street one day, characters might notice, nestled among the tiny shops and humble homes of the lower merchants quarter, a worn sign jutting from a wall. It hangs from a good, stout post on well-greased iron links. The sign is so faded that many pay it no mind, but indeed, there it is — in paint once bright stands a Plough, golden yellow against pale, weathered wood.

From the street the tavern looks like nothing special; a typical working class place neighbored on one side by a candle-maker and on the other by a nondescript one-story house. All that can be seen of the tavern from the street is a wooden door, old but solid, and a shuttered window from which comes a quiet murmuring punctuated by bursts of laughter. On days of good weather the door is jammed open, a friendly, strapping lad sitting on a stool just at the

sill. Stopping for a moment, characters detect the smell of spiced stew and fresh bread that wafts by — added temptation to go inside.

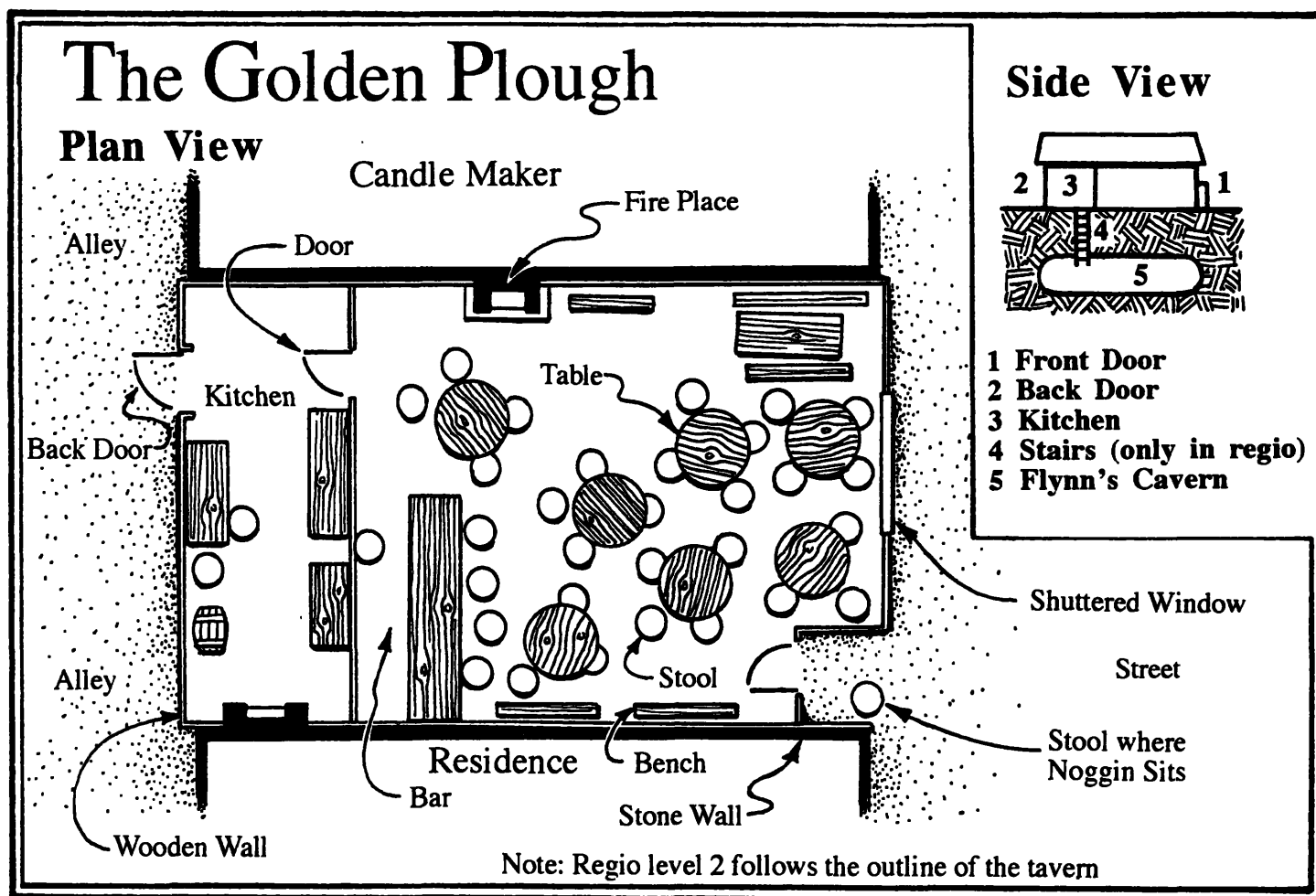
The lad at the door smiles as patrons enter, pulling his knees to one side to let them by while opening the inner door to the tavern proper with his meaty hand. Inside, entrants are greeted by a few turned heads and a strengthening of the stew's aroma. The tavern seems mostly filled with working folk, simple and honest, swapping stories or catching up on the latest gossip while downing pints.

The layout of the tavern is simple, a narrow rectangle, with the street entrance at one end and the bar at the other. Rough-hewn but smooth-worn tables, stools and benches fill the rest of the room. The walls are plain wood, aged with the soot of torches scattered along their length. Making way to the bar in back, characters see several bowls (mostly empty) of what must produce that wonderful aroma, so enticing to a growling stomach. A slightly bald, cheery looking fellow with a respectable paunch stands behind the bar. "I'm betting you'll be wanting a bowl of stew and some of my summer's best," he says with a smile and a wink.

The ale is excellent and the stew quite tasty, by the way.

The Faerie Regio (2)

A person entering this level of the *regio* might not realize where he is for quite some time, so closely does it resemble the mundane tavern upon which it rests. The same walls, tables, benches and bar greet the first time visitor, though they somehow seem cleaner and fresher. The tavern also appears the same size, though now it inexplicably feels less cramped. The aroma of beer and stew are still in the air, but perceptive noses note the absence of the stale and sour base that normally underlies taverns and marketplaces (Per + Alertness roll of 5+ to make this realization). The straw on the floor of the Faerie *regio* is also fresh, not muddy. The clientele of the Faerie *regio*, on the other hand, is quite different from that of the mundane level. Instead of a room full to bursting with workers, the Faerie tavern is scattered sparsely with an odd bunch: a couple of old men wearing colorful robes talking quietly in the corner, a handful of wandering musicians



trading tunes by the fire, and a few folk wearing earth-hued hunting clothes sitting on stools talking to the barkeep, who himself seems as unperturbed as ever. All in all, a queer group. Perceptive people (Per + Alertness roll of 10+), or those with Faerie Blood or Faerie Upbringing might also notice a few diminutive figures lounging about in the shadows of the faerie tavern, or playing cards on the mantelpiece.

The boundaries of this *regio* follow the walls of the mundane tavern in all respects, save one. Whereas all of the normal tavern's storage space is above ground, the magical tavern has a small cave beneath it which acts as a wine cellar. In addition, this cave is home to a faerie named Flynn (see insert). The cave is accessed by a short flight of steps in the magical tavern's kitchen (see the map of the tavern).

All the regulars of the Faerie level of the tavern call it the "Golden Bough," to distinguish it from the mundane tavern.

Flynn, a Cluricaun

Flynn is a typical cluricaun, standing two feet tall from the bottom of his mouse-skin boots to the top of his old leather hat. The rest of his body sports a miniature version of a barkeep's clothes: natural woolen hose, open necked home-spun shirt and well-stained apron. Tufts of bright, fire-red hair stick out in all directions through holes in his worn hat, making it difficult not to stare at him. First time visitors often make this mistake and shortly thereafter get to hear Flynn's high, piping voice soundly berating them in *extremely* inventive ways.

Cluricauns are cellar faeries by nature and Flynn is no exception. He loves spirits of all kinds, and is particularly fond of perrin, a strong wine made from pears. In addition to being an expert connoisseur of ales, meads, wines, and liquors, he is quite knowledgeable concerning their preparation and loves nothing better than to check and recheck the state of his "ladies," settling in the bottle or fermenting in the cask. Woe to him who casually criticizes his drink within earshot of Flynn, for that person soon as not finds himself afflicted with unusual urges which can be thoroughly embarrassing if acted on in public (successful Stm + Drinking roll of 8+ or the character finds himself singing from a tabletop, for example). On the other hand, Flynn is quite susceptible to flattery, and can barely suppress a childish grin if told how wonderful his latest batch tastes.

Flynn currently lives in a cave beneath the Golden Plough, an accommodation that he loves (though he

never admits it). The cave is packed with ancient casks, rows of sturdy shelves lined with bottles, and an almost unfathomable tangle of brewing equipment. Narrow trails weave among the barely ordered chaos, though most are too small for a human to navigate. Flynn has little need of sleep, but he does enjoy curling up in his fleece lined half-cask with a solid mug of perrin and a pipe of smooth tobacco. Otherwise, he works like one possessed, zipping around the cellar with surprising speed; tasting, stirring, mixing, and sorting, all the while mumbling to himself and taking notes in a fat ledger filled with completely undecipherable faerie-script.

Flynn verbally abuses anyone who disturbs him while working, unless they bring him appeasement in the form of a choice bit of flattery or tobacco. Occasionally Flynn can be coaxed into coming upstairs to mingle with his admirers, who do their best to make Flynn blush with pride. The regulars of the tavern also know of the cluricaun's weakness for games and often offer to play a game of nine man's morris or chess with him. No one can remember the last time Flynn lost — if it's ever happened. It is customary during the game to ply Flynn with a steady stream of free drinks in an attempt to quell, once and for all, the rumors that he can drink any quantity of alcohol without showing its effects. Once, a wealthy magus, who played a particularly mean game of chess, kept the drinks coming for seven hours, at the end of which Flynn yelled, "Gotcha...ha, Ha, HA, CHECKMATE!," downed his forty-ninth shot, chased it with the dregs of his second cask of ale, and retired for the night. Much money exchanged hands that night.

Roleplaying Tips

Speak quickly in a high, clear voice. Wear a colorful hat. Don't be afraid to yell and rant and rave for the smallest reason; remember, Flynn is the ultimate soft-hearted grump.

Lucas, the Owner

The first thing strangers notice about Lucas is his smile, an almost constant fixture on his slightly pudgy and roundish face. It beams forth like a beacon of cheerfulness, inviting others to join him. In fact, many people have a hard time *not* smiling when seeing Lucas for the first time. Above his smile sit two sparkling, blue eyes and above them, a wild shock of thinning brown hair. Lucas's body is of average height and above average weight, most of which is stored in a respectable tavern-keeper's paunch.

Flynn's Profile

Faerie Might 14

Int (creative) +1

Per 0

Str (small size) -2

Stm 0

Prs 0

Com 0

Dex (deft hand) +2

Qik (nimble) +4

Confidence: 3

Size -2

Thrown Bottles: 1st +2 Atk +9 Damage +4

Fat +3 Def +8 Soak +3

Body Levels: OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

Personality Traits

Stubborn +4

Grumpy +3

Unpredictable +2

Important Skills

Drinking (stamina) 5

Make wine, ale and liquor (perrin) 7

Evaluate wine, ale and liquor (locations) 6

Game (board, dice and card) 8

Faerie Lore (wild faeries) 6

Powers

Flynn has almost unlimited powers when it comes to making wine, beer and liquor. He can brew most things in half the time usually normally needed, and his beverages never go bad. Flynn also has the following powers that might be used in a given situation:

- **Potent Brew** — for 1 Faerie Point Flynn can double the alcohol content of any normal sized drink that he can see. Characters therefore get drunk much faster than they expect, within a couple drinks. A drinker receives a Per + Drinking roll. If 8+, the character realizes the drink is unusually potent. If this roll fails, the character continues drinking and gets drunk unless a Stm + Drinking roll of 10+ is made. See the *Mechanics* section for the results of drunkenness.

- **Impotent Brew** — likewise, by expending 1 Faerie Point Flynn can remove all alcohol from a normal drink. Another Per + Drinking roll, this time of 6+, is needed to detect the lack.

- **Control Spirits** — for 3 Faerie Points Flynn can exert limited control over alcohol already consumed. He might, for example, make it rush to one's head quickly, or will it to leave one's body in the normal manner without further ado. For the effects of drunkenness, see the *Mechanics* section. In addition, this power allows Flynn crude control of *extremely* drunk people's actions. To get them to perform an action, he must make a Com + Drinking roll in excess of that made by the drunk person. The drunk person suffers a -3 penalty to his roll, though, given his state.

- **Curse of the Spirits** — the expenditure of 10 Faerie Points allows Flynn to lay faerie curses on hapless souls, curses concerning liquid spirits. These curses are usually more annoying than malicious and are permanent until removed by Flynn or an intervening magus. Examples include: sneezing uncontrollably whenever one raises a drink of alcohol to mouth, turning blue for an hour after drinking any alcohol, or being possessed by great noisome bouts of flatulence after consuming alcohol. Flynn must be truly enraged or in great danger before he casts these curses. To resist the effects of a curse, magi are allowed Magic Resistance rolls (Flynn's Penetration roll equals Faerie Might plus a simple die). As most curses also effect the body, the *Córporem* form is used for Resistance rolls. Characters other than magi, and those magi who fail their Resistance rolls, may resist a curse on a Stm + Drinking roll of 12+. Note that victims of Flynn's curses are unlikely to find any sympathy among the patrons of the magical tavern. In fact, most take great pleasure in teasing such people by buying them drinks. Spells used by magi to lift a curse must be Level 15 or higher.

Vis

Flynn's body contains 5 pawns of *Creo vis* and the only way to harvest it is to kill the faerie. If Flynn is killed, the perpetrator earns the undying enmity of a host of elves, faeries, magi and bards (the patrons of the Golden Bough).

Lucas is fairly secretive about his past, but it is generally thought that he spent much of his youth wandering the roads with troupes of mimes, jongleurs, and actors. How Lucas ended up at the Golden Plough or why the previous owner willed it to him is not known, but no one denies that he keeps a fine establishment. Another of Lucas's long-standing secrets is the truth behind his relationship with the mute door-man, Noggin (see below for more). Some say they are related: uncle and nephew perhaps, or even father and son, though Lucas has never mentioned a wife. In any

Lucas's Profile

Int 0

Per (good hearing) +1

Str (broad-shouldered) +2

Stm (sturdy) +1

Prs (friendly) +2

Com (talkative) +3

Dex (big handed) -2

Qik (lumbering) -2

Confidence: +1

Age:34

Personality Traits

Cheerful +3

Secretive +1

Excitable -2

Important Skills

Scan (strangers) 4

Empathy (lonely) 3

Charm (customers) 5

Folk Ken (needs) 3

Acting (improv) 2

Storytelling (humorous) 4

Brawl (wrestle) 4

Diplomacy (Flynn) 4

Pottery (mugs and jugs) 4

Area Lore (gossip) 6

All other casual lores 4

Reputations

A Friend/regulars 4

Mysterious/local merchants 2

case, polite customers never ask Lucas about such things and are quickly hushed by others if they are rude enough to do so.

Lucas truly loves his work and never seems hassled or harried even when the crowds are large in *both* levels of the tavern. Seldom does his smile leave his face, and rare is the day indeed when he becomes perturbed enough to actually frown. Some might mistake his demeanor as a sign of shallowness, but Lucas is an excellent listener and always seems to be there when a sympathetic ear is needed. As a result, he knows most of the gossip that's worth knowing, both personal and political. This includes things both mundane, magical and Faerie, for he is privy to many a conversation between men, magi, faeries and their like in both levels

of his tavern. Thus, Lucas can be a valuable source of general information, although he gives out specifics sparingly, if at all.

Lucas has his hands full running both taverns, but won't have it any other way. He loves the contrast between the hard working commoners of the Golden Plough and the eclectic folk who frequent its faerie counterpart (sometimes called the Golden Bough). Lucas works both levels of the *regio*, and slips from one to the other unobserved while in the kitchen or back room. His secret is well kept — only Noggin, the cook, and a serving girl with faerie blood know of the Golden Bough (and this group does not include those patrons who frequent the Bough). The others who work in the Plough, and those who frequent it, laugh at the suggestion of a magical tavern.

In order to keep his secret, Lucas must screen his clientele carefully and ensure that no one enters the Faerie *regio* by accident. To this end he employs Noggin, an enormous mute with a bit of troll blood. Noggin sits at the front door and uses his small magical ability to keep the workers in the mundane level as they pass by. Usually this works fine, but an unsuspecting soul occasionally begins to slip into the Golden Bough, whereupon Noggin feigns a sudden attack of clumsiness, casually trips the person and yanks him back out. Noggin memorizes the patrons who are allowed into the Faerie tavern, and uses his magic to help them along their way. He rarely needs breaks, but when he does, either Lucas replaces him or the door is briefly locked.

Lucas makes all decisions on who may enter the Golden Bough and does so according to no set criteria, rather trusting to his instincts. Many are referred to him by current customers, but some he picks from regulars at the Golden Plough. The customers of the faerie tavern guard Lucas's secret as well, for the Golden Bough provides a welcome relief from the Dominion-infested city.

Roleplaying Tips

Be warm, generous, and friendly to all who enter your tavern. You like to think of the regulars of both taverns as family. When talking, put a smile on your face and speak in a slow, measured bass voice. To further the image of yourself as a friendly tavern owner, go ahead and serve up some *real* snacks and drinks — you'll be surprised at the effect this has on your players.

Mechanics

Those entering the tavern by the front door must pass by Noggin, the doorman. He can add or subtract 10 to all attempts to enter the *regio*. As a 6+ is needed



to enter, he is usually successful in sending people to the proper level.

Though not strictly specific to entering this *regio*, rules for the effects of drunkenness are needed here, simply because people drink in a tavern, particularly in a Faerie tavern. It's first important to direct you to Flynn's powers over spirits (see above), which may have considerable say in whether characters get drunk or not. Getting drunk in the Golden Plough or the Golden Bough depends much on characters' personality and will. If a character refuses to drink in either tavern, he's not likely to get drunk (unless Flynn somehow makes a nonalcoholic drink suddenly potent). Characters with a predilection for drinking may do so by choice in the Golden Plough. Those with such a favorable attitude who enter the Golden Bough have a hard time resisting drink, especially after sampling a couple (Stm + Drinking roll of 8+ to stop drinking before getting drunk). Characters with a weak-willed personality, or those subject to alcoholism, must make the above roll against a value of 10 in the Plough, and against a value of 12 in the Bough.

If you ever wonder if a character is drunk, have a roll of Stm + Drinking be made. For each drink consumed at the Plough, impose a difficulty number of 2. For each drink consumed at the Bough, impose a difficulty number of 3. Of course, you're always free to decree

that a character is drunk, based on a character's actions, size, and mood (those feeling particularly jolly are often prone to more drinking). If a character has also had little food previous to drinking, she gets drunk more easily. If a roll to determine drunkenness results in a botch, the character in question passes out.

The effects of drinking are many varied, influencing characters physically, mentally and emotionally. All characters' physical Characteristics suffer a -2 penalty while characters are drunk. Mental Characteristics and skill attempts that involve concentration suffer a -2 modifier as well. If Strength and concentration are used simultaneously, a -4 roll modifier is imposed. Drunks also roll twice the normal botch attempts. Furthermore, a drunk character's highest rated Personality Trait is increased by 2. Thus, a violent (+2) character becomes all the more so (+4). Finally, if a character ever botches any roll while under the influence of alcohol, he passes out.

Though drinking can debilitate characters, the effects of alcohol do wear off. For each hour after drinking has stopped, a Stm + Drinking roll is made, called a "recovery roll." The difficulty rating is equal to that used to determine if a person becomes drunk (based on how many drinks have been consumed). For each hour after the first, once drinking has ceased, the above difficulty rating is reduced by 2. This reduction

reflects the diminishing effects of alcohol over time. Until a character makes a successful recovery roll, he remains drunk and suffers the appropriate modifiers. If the difficulty rating of recovery is reduced to 0 before the character makes a successful recovery roll, that character passes out, asleep. Characters who botch a drinking recovery roll also pass out.

Waking an unconscious drunk requires a Prs + appropriate Social Talent (e.g. Intimidation, or whichever is pertinent) roll of 8+, modified by the drunken character's Stm. If the unconscious drunk is left to sleep, he keeps sleeping until a Stm + Drinking roll of 8+ is made, rolled once per hour of sleep. For each hour after the first, a cumulative +1 modifier is gained for those wake-up rolls.

It's up to you to impose penalties on those hung over, but we shouldn't be too hard on the characters. A -1 modifier to all Characteristics might be appropriate, imposed for the first few hours after a character has been drunk.

Location

The tavern is best set in a large, bustling city. Place it in a lower-middle class neighborhood, off one of the main streets. The locals should think of it as a good, respectable tavern and have no inkling that it is anything more than that. Keep in mind that this bastion of Faerie should be located well away from sources of the Dominion, like churches and cathedrals.

Stories

The uses for the Golden Plough (and Bough) within a Saga are myriad, but the characters must first discover their existence. This can happen in several ways. For example:

- A magus or "magical" companion (like a bard or healer) is introduced to the Golden Bough by a friend. This friend should be a fellow magus, a faerie, or some kind of magical being. The actual introduction should involve a visit to the Golden Plough, where a few drinks are had and Lucas has a chance to interview the character (during normal conversation). If Lucas gives the okay, the friend takes the character outside on

some pretext, then reenters into the Golden Bough, where the two are welcomed again by Lucas and the regulars of the magical tavern.

Traditionally, each first-time visitor to the Golden Bough is initiated. Usually, this involves Lucas choos-

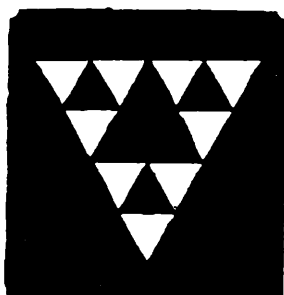
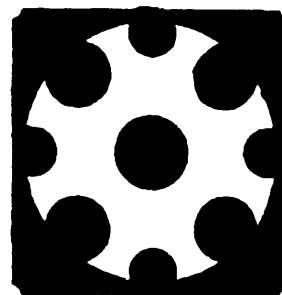
ing and pouring three shots of strange-looking liquor for the newcomer. The initiate must choose one shot and drink it down in one swallow while everyone looks on. Then the sponsor of the person must drink one shot, and the initiate must choose someone at random to drink the last. These liquors always have a noticeable effect on the drinker, which is the subject of gentle joking for the rest of the evening. Possible effects include: turning green (all over) till sunrise, having one's hair grow a foot or more almost instantly, speaking backwards for the entire evening, or spouting bubbles whenever one opens her mouth. While largely a way to break the ice, this initiation also makes people think twice before introducing someone new to the tavern. Traditionally, Flynn is especially obnoxious to newcomers — though he usually waits to show up after the shots are safely downed.

- A character is chasing or tailing someone magical who enters the Golden Bough. The character, of course, cannot enter and mysteriously loses the person he is following. Hmmm.... What does the character do? Alternatively, if the character is following his subject closely enough, they might make it into the Golden Bough together, by mistake, and are quickly ushered out by Noggin.

- A large group of angry faeries shows up at the Golden Bough one day. They accuse Flynn of some unspeakable breach of Faerie Law and whisk him away. Without Flynn's presence the *regio's* Aura begins to weaken, and over a period of time the boundary between the two taverns begins to decay. The characters must find Flynn and resolve his conflicts with the faeries before the *regio* dissolves altogether. Of course, some might not care about the Golden Bough, but just want to rescue their grumpy ol' friend Flynn.

- Note that not all stories involving the Golden Bough need to include magi — some might be appropriate for just companions or grogs:

One day a mysterious person from Lucas's past shows up at the Golden Bough. After hurried consultations with Noggin and the staff, he looks nervously around the room, spies the characters and says, "I have to leave on an important errand right away. Would you mind taking care of things for a bit?" Without waiting for an answer, Lucas, Noggin and the stranger hurry off. The hapless players are stuck in a perfect position for lots of comedic interludes as they try to funnel customers into the proper tavern, deal with untimely visits from the tax collector, or try to cajole Flynn into letting them bring more ale up from the cellar. This story





could easily be used as a short interlude or as the starting point for a longer story. Who knows? Lucas might never return. . .

Once the troupe is introduced to the Golden Bough, other stories can easily follow, involving Lucas, Noggin, Flynn or any of the regulars. In addition, the tavern can prove an invaluable source of information for the characters' Covenant, serving to raise their Contacts score (see Covenants, p. 29) if visited regularly. It might even serve as a neutral meeting ground between Covenants, or as a clearinghouse for magical requests. (Picture a bulletin board in one corner. "Wanted: one dram Babylonian sun-star nectar. No questions asked." Or, "Looking for the grimoire Apocryphal Glamours, vol. II. Will trade.") In addition, gossip heard or people met at the Golden Bough can easily serve as a jumping off point for stories. If you wish to make the Golden Bough the center of a story you could concoct a danger to the establishment, forcing rather strange alliances as the regulars band together against the threat.

Noggin's Profile

Int (slow) -2

Per (piercing eyes) +1

Str (well-defined) +5

Stm (barrel-chested) +4

Prs (friendly) +2

Com (mute) -4

Dex (thick-bodied) -3

Qik (big-footed) -2

Confidence: 1

Age: 19 (apparent)

Size +1

Personality Traits

Happy +3

Proud (of job) +1

Important Skills

Scan (visitors) 4

Premonitions (trouble) 3

Athletics (lift) 5

Charm (locals) 3

Folk Ken (new folk) 3

Survival (wastelands) 3

Brawl (tackle) 6

Two-handed Club (mighty blow) 5

Two-handed Club Parry (edged weapons) 4

Faerie Lore (tricks and traps) 3

Fantastic Beast Lore (trolls) 4

Reputations

Friendly/regulars 3

Trustworthy/Lucas 2