

HERMES' PORTAL



HERMES' PORTAL

Issue n° 12

June 2004



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HERMES' PORTAL

Publisher: Hermes' Portal

Contributors: Abelard, Jeff Berry, Andrew Gronosky, Mark Hall, Matt Ryan, Michaël de Verteuil, Alexander White, David Woods

Editorial and proofreading help: Sheila Thomas

Illustrations: Angela Taylor (cover, border & p. 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 26, 40, 43), Alexander White (p. 29, 32, 38), David Woods (p. 15, 16, 17), Radja Sauperamianane (back, page numbering & p. 42)

Layout: Eric Kouris

Thanks: All the people who submitted ideas, texts, illustrations or helped in the production of this issue.

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Contacting Hermes' Portal

Email: Hermes.Portal@wanadoo.fr

Web site: www.hermesportal.fr.st

Who's who

Jeff Berry

Jeff Berry has been gaming since the late 70's and playing Ars since the second edition. He has the dubious honour of having written the first module for *Vampire: The Masquerade* from his playtest campaign. He works for NASA and runs a small theatre company, the Deptford Players (www.deptfordplayers.org), in New York City. He is active in the Society for Creative Anachronism.

Mark Hall

Mark Hall got his degree in History in 2001, partially inspired by his love of Ars Magica. He now teaches World History to 10th grade students in Houston, Texas. He credits his writing to his wife, Kris.

Publisher's corner

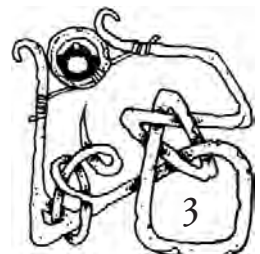
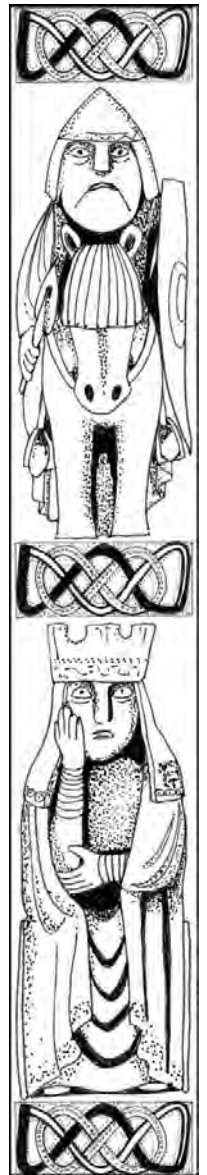
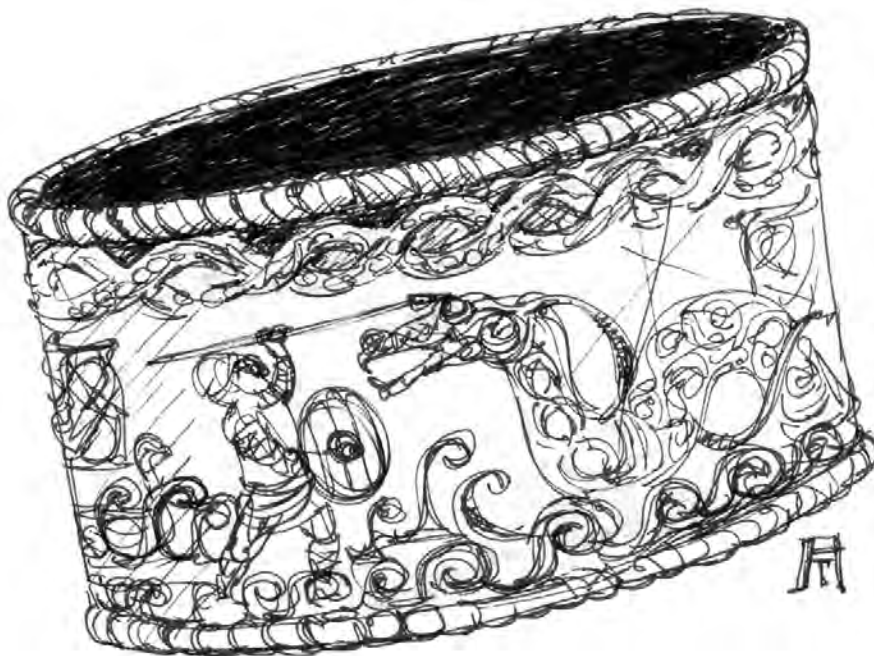
At last issue #12 has been released! I am "only" one month late. In my defence I can say I had an exam in algebra at the beginning of June (I'm already a teacher and I'm at the top in the French scholarly

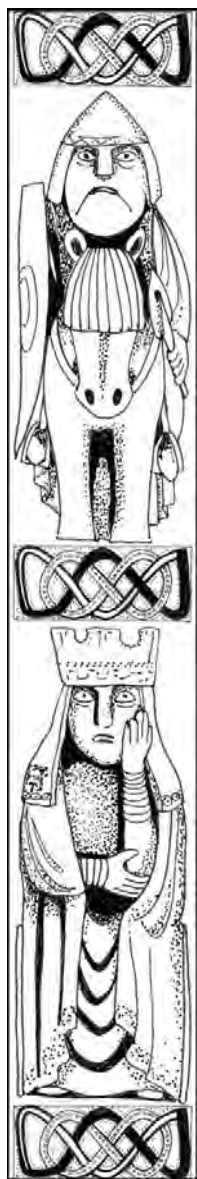
system, but nonetheless I try to continue studying mathematics). I could also add I've been waiting for a few articles longer than expected. Oops! You aren't cleared to learn about this.

In issue #12 (the one you have before your eyes right now), you'll find a scenario to play with Land of Fire and Ice designed by one of the authors of this supplement, plus articles on failed apprentices, on the place of covenants in Mythic Europe, and on ways to include the politics of the Order in your saga. And you'll also find the regular columns: Abelard (sad news from Moratamis), the Omnibus Grimoire and the Heretic's Corner. So everything is here and fine — "only" one month late!

Now I'm (almost) on vacation for two months. I still have to work on the translation into French of a book on linear algebra, but there is not much to do, I'm almost done with it. I will have time to work on the special issue. I have a rather clear idea of what I want to put in it and which sources to use. It will take some time to work it out but it will be released before the end of the year. Before this, issue #13 will be released at the end of September, without delay this time.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of Hermes' Portal as much as I enjoyed working on it!





Magic Beneath the Skin

by David Woods

Introduction

The following story is written primarily for the Toframanna Saga from *Land of Fire and Ice*. However, it can be adapted for other locations. This story draws from two sources, the Draugdróttin article by Mark Shirley in *Mythic Perspectives* 9 and *Angurgapithe — Witch-Hunts in Iceland* (out of period but great material). This story delves into the dark side of magic and highlights a particular vile spell supposedly practiced in Iceland.

The story is quite a simple investigation, but the drama should develop from how the player characters choose to handle the situation. Details of many locations and supporting characters have not been elaborated on and it is left to the storyguide to fill in the blanks. Depending on how much detail you normally like, this story may require more or less work.

Synopsis

The story begins with two schooled galdramen (natural magicians) Kollbeinn and Andrés, from the cathedral school of Holar. Five years previously one accidentally killed the other. Not only did Kollbeinn keep this murder secret, he mutilated his friend's body in order to cast a spell that would grant him riches.

Kollbeinn returned home claiming a troll had killed Andrés. The body was never found and five years later Andrés returned to the district as a draug (corporeal undead monster). He immediately embarked on a murder spree, mutilating the bodies as he was mutilated. He was hunted down by a trollsdoottir called Vígdís, but she found the battle too much. As she retreated Andrés cursed her.

Vígdís then found herself stuck in the form of a polar bear. Caught and sold abroad, she winds up fighting dogs in the player characters' hometown. From this point on the player characters may become involved and it will be up to them how events develop, however, a likely ending could involve a fatal confrontation between Kollbeinn and Andrés.

Although written for an Icelandic setting, it can be adapted for anywhere in Europe. Essentially there is little difference between schooled galdramen and natural magicians. Other details can be similarly tailored to suit another location.

History

Ten years ago two young men joined the Icelandic cathedral school of Holar. Kollbeinn was the younger son of a godi and Andrés was the son of a tenant. Both were Gifted and received schooling in magic alongside their other studies. Sharing the same magical natures, the two grew close.

Just before they were due to take full ordination, Kollbeinn's father and elder son were killed in a feud. Kollbeinn claimed his father's godord and led a very successful legal case against the killers. He took up his father's position and arranged to have Andrés appointed as the priest of his farmstead's church.

Without any guidance or oversight by the masters of Holar, they pursued knowledge recklessly. When Kollbeinn decided to contact the local svart lord (spirit of death, see *LoFaI* p. 47), Andrés voiced concern but deferred to his friend's judgment.

Since the Christianization of Iceland, no galdraman has developed more than a polite relationship with svart-spirits. Normally galdramen make every effort to generate a good reputation. This acts to counterbalance the effect of their Gift and general Icelandic prejudice against magical practice, particularly by males. Any service by svart-spirits would be abhorrent to a Christian and its discovery would certainly lead to outlawry; the Galdramen Hreppar (see *LoFaI* p. 27) would not defend such an individual. Finally, galdramen make a living from their magic and svart-galdor is simply not commercial.

However, this did not deter Kollbeinn, who wished to use necromancy to research ancient pagan magic.

To the south of his farmstead lay the Drangajökull (rock-pillar glacier). Within the labyrinth of tunnels beneath the glacier lay the ancient burial chambers of Iceland's giant community. Now these chambers are the necropolis of the svart-lord Blæingr. In ages past, many giants and Norse magicians had fallen under his power and come to serve his court. Amongst them were those who held knowledge of runecraft, which Kollbeinn wished to research. The pair found their way into Blæingr's court and pledged their allegiance. Blæingr rose slightly from his long slumber and rewarded them with the spirit of an ancient giant runecaster to be their teacher.

With this help, Kollbeinn and Andrés studies progressed rapidly. The combination of their philosophiae and alchemy enabled them to recreate the dead sorcerer's spells in a form they could cast. With the spirit's guidance they inscribed these spells into a red book. Meanwhile, Kollbeinn's holdings were doing badly under the burden of supporting his researches. Kollbeinn desperately needed his work to produce practical spells before lack of finances forced them to stop.

The tenor of some of the spells disturbed Andrés greatly, but whenever he began to question the wisdom of this new magic Kollbeinn would interrupt with a barrage of justifications. One day, while journeying back from the Drangajökull, Andrés insisted that Kollbeinn listen to him. Enraged Kollbeinn knocked Andrés from his horse and the rocky landing broke his friend's skull. Although initially distraught, an opportunity to solve his financial crisis came to Kollbeinn's mind. At first, Kollbeinn had dismissed the spell as too gruesome to contemplate,





but the means now lay before him. After a night of conflicting emotions he resolved to cast the ‘corpse trousers spell’ (see insert).

On his return, Kollbeinn claimed a troll had taken Andrés when they wandered off the path searching for sulphur. Kollbeinn had wished to bury Andrés and thought to blame the mutilation on the troll, but the search party found nothing.

The spell was successful and Kollbeinn found he had silver to buy whatever he needed. The red book slowly filled with spells.

Nábrókarstafur

This spell-stave revives the male generative capacity of a corpse and manipulates it to generate wealth for the magician. The spell-stave should be tied to the magician’s own scrotum along with a coin, a pawn of vis or other small valuable commodity. The spell-stave requires that the magician wear the intact skin of a human body next to his own. When worn, this skin will become undistinguishable from the magician’s own skin. The coin or vis will then constantly be multiplied in the scrotum; the excess must be periodically cut out (this is painful).

Mechanics

CrTe/CrVi Lv40: Grants the wearer the Wealthy or the Personal Vis Source virtue.

See the Red Book section for further details of spell-staves.

Andrés Returns

Andrés’s body was found by a powerful svart-spirit and re-animated as a draug (see insert). Confused and in maddening pain, Andrés wandered across the Drangajökull until he fell into a glacial crevasse. Five years later he emerged and wandered to the south. He is now unrecognizable, horribly bloated, partially flayed and wearing a ragged priest’s tunic. He wanders the paths of the Western Fjords looking for his ‘trousers’; the return of which he believes will end his pain. He has no recollection of who his is, how he died or who might have his ‘trousers’. Andrés attacks any small group of travellers who happen across him. He slays them and tries on their trousers

to see if they fit. He avoids larger groups by sinking into the ground.

So far the death toll is just two peddlers and two poor fishermen. However, the mutilation of the bodies has shocked and frightened people more than four simple killings would ever have done. The local galdramen have negotiated for stronger spirits to guard the paths where the killings took place, but Andrés has simply moved to other paths. Currently, if people need to move in the Western Fjords they travel in larger groups.

Kollbeinn guessed immediately who was behind the attacks, but is currently sitting tight. He is hoping that someone will slay the draug of Andrés without discovering the details of its genesis. Some of his thingmen are urging him to lead a hunting party for the beast, but the last thing Kollbeinn wishes to do is confront Andrés. Instead he secretly sent a letter to a local galdraman called Grim and asked him to find a trollson to hunt down the beast.

As it happened, Grim’s daughter Vígdís is a trolls-dottir and it was she who first read the letter. Eager for the adventure, she decided to hunt the beast herself. Vígdís tracked down Andrés’s draug. She shape shifted into her favoured fighting form and did battle. However, the draug was too powerful for her and she fled. As she did so Andrés cursed her; dooming her to fight battles she cannot escape from. She soon found that she was stuck in bear form. Worse was to come, as while making her way back home she was netted by farmers and sold to a merchant. Her curse will break if she is rescued from a fight she cannot win.

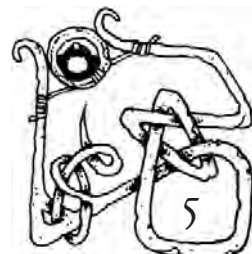
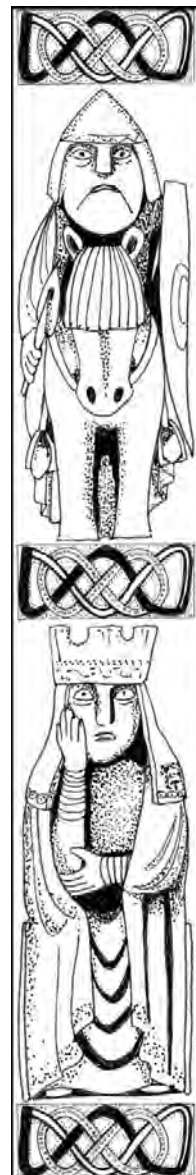
Player’s Introduction

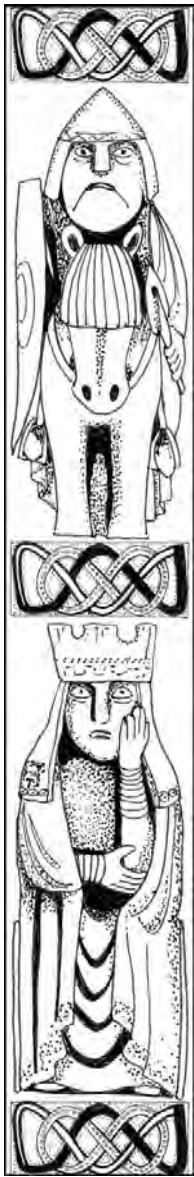
It is spring and the characters in De Panne hear that a white bear will be baited later that week. There

Draugar

Draugar (singular draug) are a form of undead found in Norse lands. Unless buried with proper ceremonies a corpse may rise as a draug, particularly if the dead were powerful, wicked or both in life. Draugar are animated by svart-landvaettir. However, the study of Svart-Galdor was never very widespread amongst galdramen. Trafficking in such spirits was normally the province of draugdróttin. A complete description of draugar and the draugdróttin hedge tradition can be found in *Mythic Perspectives* 9. However, all the information needed to run this story is given in the individual description.

Their powers were sought after to protect burials from robbery via the creation of guardian undead and cursing spirits. There was never much call for such services in Iceland. Ironically svart-spirits are widespread and very powerful in Iceland, but Icelanders are mostly concerned with stopping their dead from rising. In the close-knit Icelandic nation, draugdróttin were never welcomed. Now only troll sorcerers, a few giants and trollsyrir know this art.





Adventure Timeline

This timeline shows the important events in this adventure. Events after the players become involved are subject to change, of course.

- Twelve Years Ago: Kollbeinn and Andrés join Holar cathedral school.
- Eight Years Ago: Kollbeinn inherits his father's godord.
- Seven Years Ago: Kollbeinn and Andrés visit Lord Blæingr beneath the Drangajökull.
- Five Years Ago: Kollbeinn kills Andrés and performs the Nábrókarstafur ritual.
- 40 Days Ago: First killings by Andrés.
- 31 Days Ago: Second killings by Andrés.
- 28 Days Ago: Vígdís encounters Andrés.
- Day 0: Player characters hear of the white bear.
- Day 2: Bear Fight.
- Day 3: Player's begin their journey to the Westfjords.
- Day 11: Players arrive at their first destination in the Westfjords.
- Day 18: Kollbeinn completes his 'Stave to Raise the Dead'

is a lot of local interest in the event and even the Baron is planning to attend. The bear was imported from Iceland via Trondheim. Its current owner is taking it on tour, as its skill in combat is quite uncanny. He issues a challenge to a town to find dogs fierce enough to kill his bear.

The bear is in fact a young trollsdoottir call Vígdís

The Bear Fight

Presumably at least some of the companions or grogs will attend the match. The bear is in a sorry condition, but manages to defeat all five dog packs sent before her. The way the bear fights and reacts to

the crowd is indeed uncanny. At each victory the bear throws the bodies of the dead dogs from the pit in the direction of their former owners, she then belittles her contempt. An animal ken roll of 3+ will confirm that its behaviour is not that of an animal. If a character with Second Sight asks, they are allowed a Per + Second Sight roll against an EF of 9. Success shows the face of Vígdís over that of the bear.

If approached, Herman the owner is busy collecting his winnings. If the characters wish to speak with him they will need to do so in the evening. Herman is staying at the Red Lion and the bear is being housed in a nearby warehouse in a very heavy wooden and iron cage. It is a busy night at the Lion; the owner is living the highlife and being generous with his takings. The Chevalier's Chamberlain, Gerard (see *Trial by Fire*) offers him 50 silver marks for the bear, but is politely declined.

Unless magically persuaded, Herman will not part with the bear for less than 120 silver marks. However, fate conspires against him in the form of disgruntled dog owners. During the celebrations a group of five masked men overcome the man guarding the cage and attempt to slay the bear within. First they try to feed her poisoned meat, but Vígdís does not touch it. Then they improvise spears from wooden poles and attack her. Unless the player characters also try to see the bear that night, the men will succeed.

Vígdís Survives

Assuming the player characters try and see the bear, they will be in a position to prevent the killing. If the characters manage to rescue Vígdís, the curse will be broken and she will revert to her true form. However, the timing of the intervention may mean she is badly wounded.

Vígdís Grimsdóttir

Magic Resistance: 10

Size: +2

Characteristics: Int +1, Per -1, Pre +0, Com +1, Str +1, Sta +3 Dex +1, Qik -1

Personality Traits: Furious +3, Adventurous +2, Cautious +1, Practical +2

Virtues and Flaws: Elin Bride +2, Iron Willed +1, Tough +1, Enduring Constitution +1, Knack (Brawl) +3, Close Family Ties (Sea Giant Clan) +2, Compulsion (physical contests) -1, Enemies (Rock Giant Clan) -3, Curse of Venus -2, Susceptibility to Divine Power -4

Trollsynir Abilities: Second Sight, Shapeshifter, Jotunn Affinity (Sea), Gift

Trollsnap Afflictions: None

Abilities: Brawl (maul) 5, Hunt (seals) 3, Athletics (swimming) 3, Shapeshift (Mammals) 5, Jotunn Affinity with the Sea (mists) 2, Gift (physical) 3, Second Sight (invisible) 3

Description: In her natural form Vígdís is eight and a half feet tall. However, among humans she

uses her shapeshift ability to reduce her height to six feet. She is no prettier than average and has light red hair. Last year she attracted the attention of a young giant of the rock clan. She rejected his clumsy advances and later had her father refuse a formal marriage offer. This was not taken well by the rock giant clan.

Combat Stats (Polar Bear Form)

Weapon	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Claws	+9	+10	+6	+12
Tackle	+7	+8	+4	+9*

* Target must make a Strength + Size roll of 14+ to remain standing.

Soak: +15

Fatigue: +12

Fatigue: Ok, 0, 0, 0, 0, -2, -4, Unconscious

Body Levels: Ok, 0, 0, 0, 0, -2, -4, Inc., Dead

N.B. Stats calculated from adding the bear stats (standard bear, +1 to Str and Sta for Polar species) to Vígdís's and assuming normal bears have a brawl skill of 4.



If taken back to the covenant's townhouse, she can thank those responsible and explain how she came to be in her situation. After her ordeal she just wishes to return home to her mother and father. She can tell the magi where she encountered the draug and its unusual feature of a flayed lower body. She assures her rescuers that her father Grim Sigurðsson will reward them well. She will also mention the bounty of 12 pawns of önd (vis) that the godi Kollbeinn has offered for the beast.

Although Vígdís will not mention it, an Organizational Lore (Galdramen Hreppar) roll of 9+ will reveal that her mother is a daughter of the sea giant chieftain. This should be viewed as a wonderful opportunity to gain the favour of this important clan.

Assuming she is well enough to travel Vígdís will wish to go home immediately. If playing the Toframanna Saga, the magi have a magical gateway (similar to a Hermes Portal) that links their De Panne townhouse to their Icelandic site (Scartaris). The magi may decide to escort her through the gateway to Scartaris and then to the Snaefellsnes. From there she can lead them directly to her father's island of Æðey (see below).

Otherwise she will wait in De Panne while she recovers. Once well enough, she can Shapeshift into a whale and swim home.

Vígdís Dies

If the player characters fail to prevent the killing, Vígdís will revert to her true form on death. The sudden transformation will cause her attackers to flee and her body will be discovered by Herman shortly after. The discovery of a murdered woman locked in his bear cage will come as quite a shock. The Chevalier will be looking around for someone to hang and the hunt will be quite intense.

Bodies are normally buried quickly, but such a huge grave will take at least two days to dig and so the player characters have this time. The body will be removed from the cage, laid out on the warehouse floor and covered by a tarpaulin. It will be moved once more to bring it to the grave.

If the player characters manage to get to see the body they can perform their own investigation. If any of the player characters have attended Galdramen Hreppar meetings, they will probably recognize Vígdís. To recall her name will require an Organizational Lore (Galdramen Hreppar) roll of 6+. She will be clothed and carrying a backpack when found and these can provide clues. To a keen and knowledgeable eye, her clothing will be recognized as Icelandic; otherwise it will seem like a rural Norwegian style (perhaps a little dated). Her size will indicate her giant blood. She will have on her a brief letter from the godi Kollbeinn (in Norse) asking her father Grim to contact a trollson to hunt down the beast responsible for the killing in the Western Fjords. The letter also offers a 12-pawn önd (vis) bounty on the creature.

Assuming the magi are not observed, they might use *Whispers through the Black Gate*. In which case



Vígdís will willingly tell the magi what she knows in return for sending word to her parents of her fate.

The Western Fjords

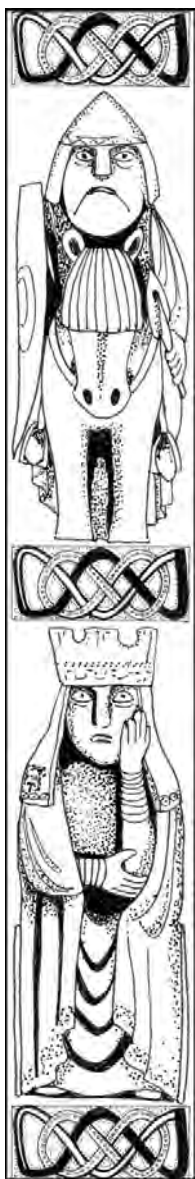
The weather for the journey is fair. With only light rain to contend with, the journey from Snaefellsnes to the Western Fjords is relatively swift. Obtaining shelter along the way should not be a problem, particularly if the magi's purpose is hinted at (investigating the murders). The journey to the area of the killings should take them no more than seven days' travel.

Wherever they are staying, they will be expected to rest on Sunday and attend Mass. This is a legal requirement in Iceland and it would be unwise to avoid it, particular for foreign magicians. Therefore the journey will take eight days in all.

Common Knowledge

If the player characters choose to ask, they can quickly learn more details of the four killings. The first occurred in early spring when two peddlers were slain on a regularly used path. A group on their way





to the valthing discovered them. Seeking out the eye-witnesses of this discovery will yield little more information.

The second pair was discovered two weeks later. These men had fairly well to do families and so their deaths generated far more interest. The closest godi was Kollbeinn, but he declined to act so another godi of his district (Bjarni) organized a hunting party, which set out searching for trolls. The party did find a troll and wounded him, but he escaped after killing one of the attackers and severely injuring several more. Since then there have been no more attacks, but as yet no party of less than four has dared travel.

Of course the player characters may know the killings were the work of a draug rather than a troll. This knowledge will surprise most people, as draugar are very rare these days.

Kollbeinn the Godi

Kollbeinn's failure to lead the party is a source of mild scorn in the district. In relating the story of the hunt, all are bound to mention Kollbeinn's lack of involvement. If further enquiries are made into Kollbeinn, locals can tell them about how he was meant to be a priest but for the death of his father and brother. The virtuous qualities of his father and elder brother will be extolled at great length, including their noble last stand. This feud is long over now, with the killers outlawed in Iceland and living in Norway.

Apart from his reluctance to hunt the troll, Kollbeinn is generally considered a good godi. His skill at law is certainly acknowledged and his ability to amicably settle disputes out of court is well known. He is also very generous to the Church and the poor. However, many find his manner effeminate, question his skill at arms and doubt his courage. Many people believe Kollbeinn is over reliant on his thingmen when his role demands shows of physical force and on his own wealth to buy settlements.

Although learning is well respected in Iceland, Kollbeinn's neglect of his farmstead in pursuit of it is judged poorly. However, the continued wealth of his household shows what a good manager his cousin is. If a player character is particularly successful, he may learn that Kollbeinn is thought to be a magician, which simply underlines his unmanly reputation.

Some people may recall how a troll attacked Kollbeinn while he was travelling with his priest five years ago. For some this may account for Kollbeinn's unwillingness to face a troll again, although this simply confirms his lack of courage.

Bjarni the Godi

Bjarni led the troll hunting party and is well thought of in the district. His father feuded with Kollbeinn's father. Although his father won physically, the subsequent court case went badly as his father had clearly over reacted, in most people's opinion. Although his father was not outlawed, he lost a lot of support and died of an illness shortly after. Bjarni

now considers the feud over and is doing well rebuilding his family's reputation in the district.

Bjarni owns fewer tenancies than either of his district peers and is considered the least wealthy. Various misfortunes have struck his farms, but Bjarni has kept control of the situation and ensured his tenants recovered.

Skeggi the Godi

Skeggi owns three fishing stations in the district and the need to travel in large groups has caused problems for the hut-men who work them. Before Kollbeinn came into wealth, Skeggi was considered the most prosperous man in the region. Rumour has it that Skeggi hates Kollbeinn with a passion and is looking for a pretext to contend with him. This has not been easy so far as Kollbeinn has skilfully settled cases between their rival thingmen, often with silver from his own pocket.

Some predict Skeggi's patience will run out soon and he will start to provoke Kollbeinn directly. This is the crisis many people in the district are looking for.

Grim the Saldraman

If the player characters think to ask for Grim Sigurðsson, they will be directed to the island of Æðey (eider island) and its single farmstead.

Grim rarely travels to the mainland; people who require his services normally come to him. This is rare, as Æðey is not considered a safe place for ordinary men. Grim's family is also considered odd as no one is quite sure where his wife hailed from. A more specific enquiry about his wife might uncover a doubt about whether she attends Mass. If the player character does well he might get a rumour that Grim's wife may be a spirit. This is as far as anyone is willing to go in open speculation. Although not attending Church would normally lead to a prosecution, Icelanders know to leave spirits be.

For those men brave enough to seek his employment, Grim is highly rated. Æðey has rich pastures and has a huge eider duck colony. Most of the region's eider down comes from Æðey. Many young farmhands who worked on Æðey have returned with wealth enough to start their own household. These men often send their younger sons to work for Grim.

Kollbeinn's Farmstead

Kollbeinn's personal farmstead is located on the Snæfjallastrond ('snowy mountain coast'), northwest of the Drangajökull. It consists of four structures: the farmstead, a cattle shed, a church, and unusually, a limekiln.

The farmstead has been extended a number of times and is now quite large even for a godi's residence. Twenty-eight people live within, mostly labourers and their dependants (wives, children and elderly relatives). A more detailed breakdown of the residents is given below.

Kollbeinn

Rakel, Kollbeinn's Mother



Rauðr, Kollbeinn's Cousin
 Mjoll, Rauðr's Wife
 Sigurðr, Rauðr's son
 5 Labourers
 3 Labourers' Wives
 9 Children of Labourers
 6 Elderly relatives of the labourers

People enter via the 'wet-room', where outdoor covers are removed and hung to dry. All the rooms within are well decorated with wall hangings. The labourers occupy the main room, with Kollbeinn's family occupying a large annex with individual sleeping closets within. Another of the extended rooms houses Kollbeinn's alchemical laboratory. A locked door blocks the entrance to this.

There appears to be no shortage of fuel in the Kollbeinn household and his entire household appears well fed and well dressed. If anything, the interior appears too neat, as Kollbeinn demands the minimum of clutter. He also asks for the general clamour of Icelandic households to be kept low while he is working. Still, with nine children under twelve years old under the same roof, this is seldom achieved.

Kollbeinn's Hospitality

Kollbeinn will greet any magi with enthusiasm, inviting them to stay in his family's annex. He will try to engage the magi in discussion of their magic, its origin and capability. If asked about his own, Kollbeinn will be pleased to show them his laboratory in the hope of drawing more out of them. A laboratory of natural magic has some similarities and many differences to a Hermetic one. Kollbeinn will criticize the techniques of the schooled galdramen as unwise attempts to mimic traditional spirit summoning. His use of staves involves creating the effect directly, rather than via a spirit. Superficially, this appears to be how the natural magicians of mainland Europe work their magic.

Kollbeinn Galinsson (Schooled Galdraman)

Characteristics: Int +5, Per +2, Pre +0, Com +3, Str -1, Sta -1 Dex +0, Qik -1

Age: 26

Size: +0

Confidence: +3

Virtues and Flaws: Mythic Intelligence +5, Knack (law) +3, Inventive Genius +1, Iron Willed +1, Enemies (Skeggi) -3, Dark Secret -2, Driving Goal (new magic) -1, Magical Air -1, Offensive to Animals -1, Social Handicap (homosexual) -1, Compulsion (neatness) -1

Personality Traits: Focused +3, Callous +2, Brave -2

Reputations: Fair Godi 2, Magician 3, Unmanly 2

Important Abilities: Alchemy 5 (transformations), Artes Liberales 3 (logic), Bargain 3 (legal settlements), Concentration 5 (reading), Disputatio 3

Unless the characters have high philosophiae scores, only the barest principles of Kollbeinn's work will make any sense. Characters with philosophiae scores of 6 or more are allowed an Int + Philosophiae roll against a target number of 12+. Success will allow the character to realize Kollbeinn's techniques are moving far beyond natural magic. However, what potential Kollbeinn's new magic might have will not be clear.

Kollbeinn will run through a selection of spell assemblies (in the form of staves) he has created about the farm. The principal ones involve increasing the duration and intensity at which fuel burns. Another helps retain heat within a room. These assemblies enable the limekiln to be run economically in Iceland. This kiln now supplies lime throughout Iceland, lime that would otherwise be imported. They also moderate the harshest winter nights in both the farmstead and the cattle stalls. This means his cattle always do well over winter, allowing him to keep a larger herd base. He will attribute his wealth to these projects (which is true in part).

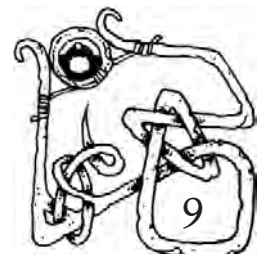
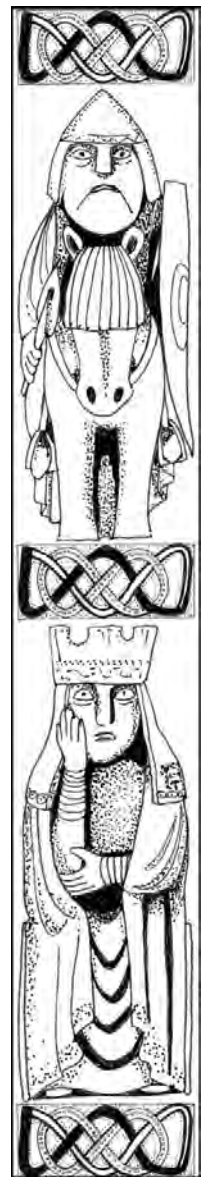
If asked what he knows of the killer beast, Kollbeinn will say that Grim told him the beast is a draug. He will then tell them how svart-spirits abound in Iceland, but galdramen wisely leave them be. Kollbeinn will speculate that the draug might be centuries old, recently freed from the Drangajökull glacier near where the first killing took place. Finally, he will show them his latest project, a stave to lay a draug to rest.

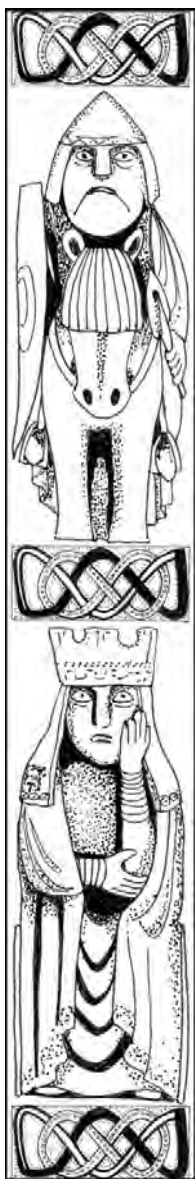
If reminded about Andrés, Kollbeinn will shake his head and claim this is a possibility he dare not think about. He cannot understand how even the draug of Andrés would kill and mutilate as this one has done. He can only speculate that if it is Andrés, some troll draugdróttin is using him for some twisted purpose.

Of course, Kollbeinn is not completely candid with the player characters. He keeps his red book (see

(getting own way), Etiquette 3 (legal), Icelandic Law 5 (manslaughter), Intrigue 2 (godí), Legend Lore 3 (myths), Magic Sensitivity 3 (vis), Philosophiae 7 (metaphysics), Scribe Latin 3 (copying), Speak Latin 5 (Church), Stave Magic Theory 4 (protection)

Description: Kollbeinn is of average height and light build. He always dresses in fine clothes, which is possible as he engages in no physical labour. Given time Kollbeinn may revolutionize the magic of Schooled Galdramen in Iceland. He has already grown beyond the need for his spirit-teacher and is beginning to create wholly new staves of increasing power. If Kollbeinn survives this story he may present an interesting dilemma for the player characters. If left alone he might develop a magic system to rival Bonisagus. If brought into the Order he will become a powerful Hermetic magus. What innovations might he bring to Hermetic theory! But can he be trusted?





below) hidden and is careful not to slip any more knowledge of the draug then he should know.

Mentem spells will be blocked by the godi's protective stave and it will signal the magus's attempt. Kollbeinn will be incensed and will demand the magi leave immediately. He will promise to bring the matter up at the Galdraman Hreppar meeting that summer. If the magi apologize and offer compensation Kollbeinn may relent. However, the actual offending magus will have to find alternative accommodation.

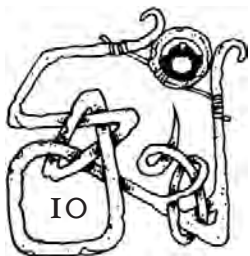
St Thomas's

The church is very impressive by Icelandic standards and is situated about two hundred yards from the farmstead on a small hillock. It has been constructed entirely of imported wood, brightly painted in red and green. It can hold a congregation of over two hundred in relative comfort. It is dedicated to St Thomas A'Becket. Its internal artwork depicts scenes of his martyrdom and the various miracles associated with him. St Thomas A'Becket is a very popular saint all over Europe, but his story finds particular resonance in Iceland. The laity admires his defiance of kings and the priesthood admires his firm stand against secular authority.



Father Markús is the resident priest. A modest reliquary beneath the altar houses a glass vial of clear liquid. Father Markús obtained this on his pilgrimage to Canterbury. The healing powers of St Thomas's blood were noted immediately after his death and it was carefully gathered from the scene. Even so, demand from pilgrims was high and so the priests took to diluting the blood. As further demonstration of divine grace the diluted samples were equally effective. Now it appears completely clear.

Due to Father Markús's sincere pilgrimage with many acts of charity and piety along the way, by the grace of God, the relic of St Thomas's blood is true — it contains one Faith point. If God wills it, a single drop may cure any ill or heal any wound. As long as the merest trace of liquid remains within, Father Markús can refill it and the relic will remain true.



Father Markús can tell the player characters no more than common knowledge about the beast. He will know about his predecessor Andrés and, if asked about the new Church, he will relate the sad tale of the old one and its unfortunate priest. Kollbeinn had the small old church rebuilt in memory of his friend. He and Kollbeinn regularly pray privately for Andrés's soul. Although he will not mention this to the player characters, he knows from Kollbeinn's confessions that Andrés died accidentally by his friend's hand. Kollbeinn has not confessed to what he did afterwards, however.

Markús has been asked to keep an eye on Kollbeinn's, magical researches by Father Vebrand Thoroddson, the leader of the Skalholt galdramen. As yet he has nothing in particular to report. Kollbeinn's staves are unlike the spell assemblies used by other schooled galdramen, but the effects Markús has seen are not worrying.

Bjarni Farmstead

Located in a prime sheltered location, Bjarni's residential farmstead is clearly prosperous. The farmstead itself is large, but within the usual range. The fenced hayfield is doing very well. When the player characters arrive, Bjarni's household are preparing for a wedding reception.

The wedding is for Bjarni's elder daughter. No expense has been spared. Cows and sheep are being butchered and prepared for the wedding feast. Everyone is very busy with some preparation or other. Guests from outside the district are already arriving and setting up tents.

Bjarni's Hospitality

Bjarni will welcome the player characters and invite them to stay for the wedding. They will be shown where to pitch their tents.

Bjarni is very busy and cannot spare the player characters much time. Bjarni is wary of the foreign magicians, but has passable Latin and will try to engage them in cordial conversation. If any of the magi has learnt Norse to a functional level, Bjarni will be impressed and put at more ease. Eventually he will relate his encounter with the troll. If informed that the true culprit is actually a draug, Bjarni will be worried, as he has now enraged a troll unnecessarily. This leaves him with two choices, finish the job or pacify the troll. He will ask the player characters to track the creature down.

The troll fled to the Glámi moors and, after the thrashing handed to Bjarni and his men, none were willing to pursue it there. The magi should use their judgment as to whether the troll can be bargained with or not. He can give gifts of livestock, homespun and a fine wall hanging if the magi succeed in removing this threat.

The wedding itself is very well attended. Not everyone can fit inside the local church for the blessing and the player characters will be with those outside. Norse-speaking grogs, companions and magi with the Gentle Gift, might use this opportunity to

gossip with the locals. They may hear talk of the growing enmity of Skeggi to Kollbeinn, as well as the latest doings of the Storgodi and Bishop Gudmund.

After the wedding there is the feast and games. Bjarni has bought in plenty of beer and so the festivities will be wild (Icelanders rarely get to drink alcohol). If the player characters decide to join in with the ball games and wrestling, they can. Fights over these games are not uncommon. The storyguide may like to roleplay this possibility, as the player characters can defuse a potential fight or start one.

If the player characters behave well at this party, eligible bachelors may find themselves being assessed for potential matches, particular if they appear wealthy (not hard for men from mainland Europe). There are plenty of young women at this wedding that might catch a character's eye. However, their suitability for a particular match is a carefully considered calculation. The storyguide may wish to pursue this as a side story.

Skeggi's Farmstead

Skeggi's residence is on the southern border of the Westfjords district. Skeggi is in the process of extending the farmstead and this work is ongoing when the characters arrive.

Skeggi's Hospitality

Skeggi speaks limited Latin; to converse with him directly the player characters will need to know Norse to a functional level (4). Presumably at least one of the characters will have this.

Skeggi will make it obvious that the magi are not welcome. He will invite them in to discuss their business in the Westfjords but if they ask for overnight accommodation, he will direct them to one of his tenants about a mile away.

Skeggi knows no more than common knowledge of the beast; he expects the Galdramen Hreppar to

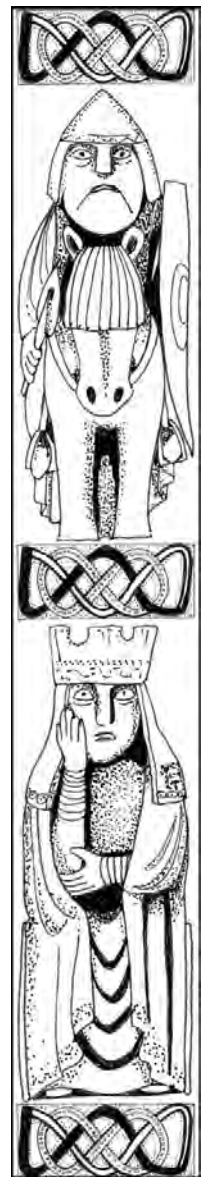
deal with the matter. Obviously magicians have to be good for something or else respectable Christians would not tolerate them. He is not concerned about the killings themselves, particularly as they occurred in the north. He suggests they look for the beast there and will warn them against chasing it south.

After this, Skeggi will ask questions of the magi. He will ask why they moved to Iceland, as Iceland clearly has more than enough wizards already. Were they escaping some legal charges in their homeland? How long do they plan to stay? Can he expect to see any more of the magi's ilk in Iceland? Any of the magi's public doings in Iceland will be subject to similarly pointed questioning and negative interpretation.

The magi's reaction to this provocation will be noted. Assuming the magi haven't been in Iceland long, their exact social status will not be defined. Icelanders will have no knowledge of the individual's family and normal social clues in speech and manner will be confused by their foreign ways. People will be looking for clues to place them in the social order. Their interaction with hostile men like Skeggi is an excellent test.

If individuals are too passive or subservient with Skeggi, people will assume that they are of a humble background. If the magi are firm in answering Skeggi, but offer him no insult in return, people will assume their station is that of typical land-owning magicians. If the magi answer in an aggressive but measured manner, they will be behaving like an equal to a godi. This would be quite unusual for an Icelandic magician, but as the magi are unknown this might be accepted.

If they respond too aggressively, they risk making an active enemy of a godi. If the magi are particularly haughty, people may conclude they consider themselves above Skeggi. This is potentially quite



Outlawed Magi

Unlike galdramen, many magi are extremely able in combat (if they use magic). Galdramen require minutes to generate any effect at all and mostly these effects are not spectacular. Galdramen can only live in Iceland within the law, as their magical abilities provide little defence against mundane attack.

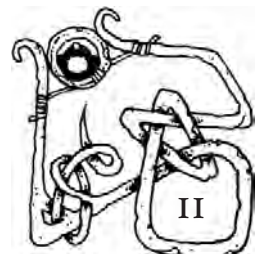
Trollsynir generally only live on the very margins of mundane society, if at all. Their Blatant Gift makes relationships with mundanes very difficult and so they tend to associate with galdramen when they do interact with society. In any case, they can generally defend themselves physically without open magic. If they do get into conflicts with mundanes and use magic, they are likely to be mistaken for a troll anyway. Icelanders do not bother mounting a legal case against trolls. Even if they are outlawed, trollsynir can generally simply retreat to their giant families for while. Living as an outlaw has little effect on most trollsynir.

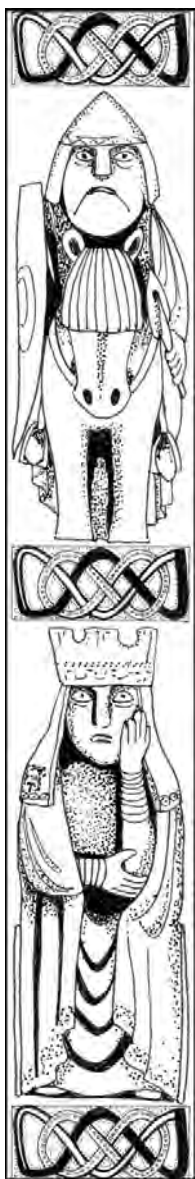
To Icelanders, magic like *Ball of Abyssal Flame* and *Incantation of Lightning* are the province of the most

powerful giants, not mortals. Any group that actually decided to attack the magi will probably be very surprised (perhaps briefly).

Normally, an open use of lethal magic will leave the tradition of tolerance towards magicians in severe jeopardy. However, as the magi are foreigners, any backlash from their actions can be deflected from natives. Even if outlawed, in the final analysis no mundane will be able to enforce an outlawry verdict on a Hermetic magus within a covenant. Only trollsynir can offer any creditable threat to a wary magus. As long as the magi acted in self-defence, it is doubtful if a trollsynir will be moved to make an attempt.

The Storgodar are themselves harbouring men outlawed by rivals, undermining the legal system in Iceland. If a covenant stands firm in protecting and sheltering an outlawed magus, they can do this too. Eventually the reality of their power will be acknowledged, if not ever fully accepted.





dangerous for the player characters, as it would certainly upset the established order. People may begin to wonder if these foreign magicians respect anything about Icelandic society, particular the traditions of benign magical practice.

Æðey

Assuming they save Vígdís's life, they will receive a warm greeting by her father Grim and her giantess mother Ísgerðr.

Æðey is a beautiful island with a very large eider duck colony. The feathers of these birds are highly prized, but the ducks are guarded by fierce landvaettir. Only Grim's respectful negotiation with the landvaettir allows a quantity of feathers to be harvested from the nests. The whole island has a +3 magic aura.

Although Grim has been preoccupied searching for his daughter for the past few weeks, Grim can tell them some additional information. From the galdroman's hamfaring and spirit contacts he has learnt that a draug was responsible for the attacks. The draug wandered off the Drangajökull and is searching for something. He has no idea what this 'something' might be, although he speculates that the mutilations might point to it.

He is worried that the creature is growing in power with each killing and even his latest path wards might not withstand it. He can advise the characters on what they need to do in order lay the creature to rest. If they simply slay the draug, it will sink into the ground and renew itself in the belly of the earth. They must cut off its head and lay it at its feet. This will confuse the draug enough to prevent its escape. Then they need to give it a Christian burial. If they ask, Grim will advise them against visiting the svartlord of Drangajökull. This lord has been dormant for centuries and is best left so.



If players are wondering about the promised reward for saving Vígdís, a basic etiquette roll of 3+ will advise the player characters that gifts are given when guests leave. Asking for such a gift will be very rude and insulting, as it suggests Grim would not have done so anyway. If the player characters do enquire about a reward, Grim will give them six pawns of vis in the form of eiderdown and send them on their way. If the characters play it cool they will get twelve pawns and Ísgerðr will give the leader a gold armband (see insert).

If the covenant needs another vis source, the storyguide may decide that Grim offers them a share of the vis he collects in eiderdown each year. If the covenant sends a man to help with the eider hunting, he can keep any vis he collects. Eider hunting involves collecting down from their nests, not actually killing birds. This will gain the covenant a number of pawns equal to $(\text{Dex} + \text{Climb} + \text{Stress die})/10$, round down, each year. This vis is mixture of Animal, Creo or Ignem (determine individual pawns at random).

If Vígdís did not survive, Grim will give the player characters the information he knows about the draug. In addition, he will offer a further twelve pawns of vis to Kollbeinn's bounty.

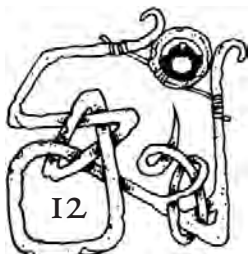
Ísgerðr's Ring

This gold arm-ring weighs about a pound. It is richly engraved in ancient Norse style with sea motifs. Careful study reveals the engravings represent Thor's capture of the Midgard serpent, Jormangund. While wearing this armband, the owner's strength is raised by +1. Once a month the character can perform an act of Mythic Strength. The activation of this power can be requested by the player, but is entirely at the discretion of the storyguide. The effect should only be activated if it is poetically appropriate by Norse heroic traditions.

Hunter and Hunted

Flosi the Troll

Flosi was once a trollson, but lost his humanity many decades ago and has now lost most of his magic. Although his Might is strong enough to resist the path guardians, he finds them annoying and usually avoids them. Prior to being attacked, Flosi had no particular inclination to attack humans; they were contemptible but he did not seek them out. This has



Flosi

Magic Might: 35

Size: +2

Characteristics: Int -2, Per +1, Pre -5, Com -1, Str +5, Sta +7, Dex +1, Qik +5

Personality Traits: Angry +3

Trollsynir Abilities: Second Sight, Shapeshifter, Jotunn Affinity (Rock), Gift, Curse, External Soul

Description: Big, hairless and muscular. His skin is the colour of granite. He wears crudely sewn together animal skins. His face is elongated and slightly horse-like. If he does speak Norse, it is awkward and difficult to understand. He is more likely to respond to Jotunn. Since becoming a troll he has yet to fall in with any of the troll clans. He lives alone and wishes to be left alone. He spends a lot of time

in the form of a rock. In combat he wields two clubs and fights with supernatural speed.

Abilities: Brawl (claws) 6, Two-Weapon (club) 5, Hunt (fish) 4, Athletics (climbing) 5, Shapeshift (rock) 5, Jotunn Affinity with Rock (landslides) 5, Gift (physical) 5, Transform (tools) 5, Second Sight (invisible) 10, Potency (shapeshift) 10, Speak Jotunn (shapeshift) 10

Combat Stats

Weapon	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Reach
Claws	+12	+8	+12	+9	Close
Club #1*	+11	+7	+11	+12	Near
Club #2*	+11	+7	+11	+12	Near

* Furious Attacks

Soak: 16

Fatigue: Ok, 0, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Body Levels: Ok, 0, 0, -1, -1, -3, -5, Inc., N/A

now changed and when he feels himself fully recovered he plans revenge.

If fought, Flosi will be a formidable opponent. His external soul makes him impossible to kill immediately; he can only be incapacitated. The only way to kill him is by locating his soul-object and smashing it. An Intellego Vim ritual could be invented to locate his soul-stone. However, this possibility is not common Hermetic knowledge. In fact, the existence of External Souls themselves is not widely known outside the Loch Leglean Tribunal. A cursory use of Intellego magic will come up empty and many would conclude it is not Hermetically possible to kill Flosi. Only by seeking out the research of Domnhull Beg of Loch Leglean (*LotN* p. 90) could the possibility become apparent and the design of the locator spell begun.

Intellego Mentem spells may be more useful, but first a Gift of Reason spell would need to be used to recover enough of Flosi's mind to recall his days as a trollson. Simply using *Pose the Silent Question* will result in an 'I don't remember' response without this.

Flosi has actually fought Andrés. He pulled a silver cross from the creature's neck as they fought and kept it as a trophy. If the player characters agree to let him go, he is prepared to give them the cross and leave humans in peace. Examination of the cross will indicate that the neck chain is probably still intact. The cross will act as an arcane connection to the remaining chain. A simple Intellego Terram spell can be used to determine the chain's direction and the magi can use this method to find Andrés's cave.

The cross is distinctive and might be identified as belonging to Andrés by those who knew him.

Andrés in the Cave

Andrés has laired in a cave behind a 40-foot waterfall. Although waterfalls are fairly common in Iceland, this is a particularly beautiful example and has a magical aura of +2. The air here is normally fresh and fish can usually be found in the pool beneath. However, observant characters may notice a

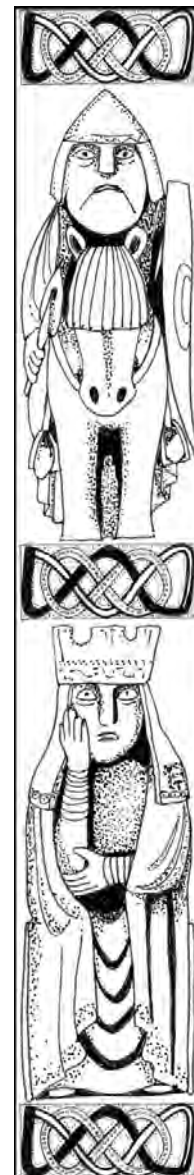
trace of putrefaction in the air. Nearby vegetation is also showing signs ill health.

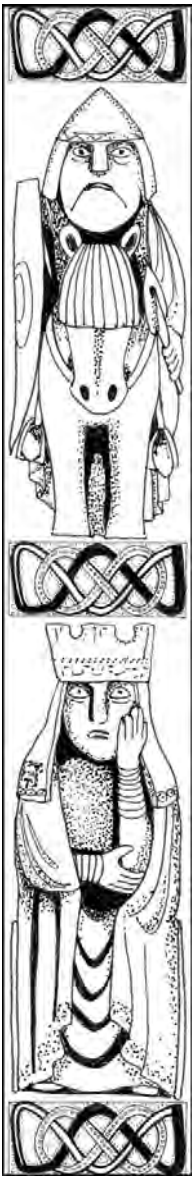
Getting into the cave is not easy without magical assistance. The storyguide should try to make the passage into the cave difficult, but not impossible with some thought. With cooperation, ropes and a Dex + Climb stress roll against a TN of 9, the cave ledge can be reached. The cave is 20 feet up from the rocky pool and so falling from this position would be very dangerous.

The cave is about 8 feet high, 5 feet across and it goes back 20 feet. Andrés is sleeping at the very back. As soon as a character enters the cave, he must make a Sta test against the stink (see powers).

Resolutions

There are a number of ways this could play out. Some examples are given below.





Andrés

Magic Might: 20 (40)

Size: +1

Characteristics: Int +0, Per +1 (sharp), Str +7 (supernatural), Sta +10 (undead), Pre -5 (hideous), Com -2 (cloaking), Dex -3 (lumbering), Qik -1 (grave stiff)

Personality Traits: Angry +5, Confused +3, Destructive +2

Description: Andrés is as black as death. His body had swollen to enormous size and his face has twisted beyond recognition. He carries the foul smell of death with him. His speech is a croaking mockery of his living voice. Andrés cannot rest until he retrieves his memory of how he died and his stolen trousers. If reminded of his name he will recall his love for Kollbeinn and seek him out (thinking his friend will help him). Otherwise he will continually retreat into the earth if threatened by multiple opponents.

Abilities: Brawl (claws) 6, track (over rock) 4, Awareness (foes) 3, Athletics (running) 5

Combat Stats

Weapon	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Claws	+7	+4	+5	+11

Soak: 12

Fatigue: Tireless

Body Levels: Ok, 0, 0, 0, 0, -2, -4, Incapacitated, Dead

Powers:

- *Regeneration*: Andrés heals one body level per round, even after "death". Burning, dismemberment or drowning is required to prevent this.
- *Immunity to edge weapons*: Only with massive force can edge weapons, including spears and arrows cut into Andrés's thick hide. All edges and points act as if they were completely blunt. Such weapons have a damage bonus of zero for the purpose of calculating damage in combat with Andrés.
- *Stink*: All within 10 paces of Andrés must make a Stamina stress roll of 6+ or act with a -3 penalty to all rolls. Botching induces vomiting and incapacitation for (10-Sta) rounds.

- *Prophecy*: Andrés receives visions of the future. The accuracy and subject of these visions is entirely up to the storyguide.
- *Rock Swimming* (MuCo/Te 40, 2 points): Andrés can sink deep into the earth and move through it at walking pace. Andrés must make a Sta roll of 15+ to enter or leave the earth. If incapacitated this power works automatically, but only after two rounds. To prevent this Andrés head needs to be severed, which requires three body levels of damage on his prone body (Dfn 0). The head then needs to be placed at his feet.
- *Mist Raising* (CrAu 10, 2 points): Andrés can raise a thick mist that resists being dissipated by wind. It reduces visibility to less than 1 pace. The mist smells of corpses.
- *Curse* (Vim, 10 points): Andrés can issue curses with a base total equal to his permanent Might. Poetic Justice modifiers apply as normal.
- *Call Trousers* (ReCo 45, 10 points): Andrés must be within Reach range to activate this power and must concentrate to maintain it. The victim must make a base soak test (no armour) each round against a damage rating of [elapsed rounds] + Stress Die. If the victim loses three health levels, all skin below the waist peels away and makes its way to Andrés. The victim then loses another health level every minute until they die. Only magical intervention (Restoration of the Body made Whole) can prevent this.
- *Belt of Trousers*: Currently this item is made from the flayed lower bodies of four men. It grants Andres a +5 bonus to his permanent Might per trouser (currently +20). If wrestled from him, his permanent Might will drop to 20 (his normal Might) and he will lose 5 temporary Might points for each trouser. If this brings him to 0 Might, he will be incapacitated. If removed, the belt is worth 2 pawns of Corpus vis per trouser.

Notes: Andrés can only be permanently killed by a Christian burial, a specific magical effect, or being reduced to ashes. If reduced to ashes, these can be harvested for eight pawns of Corpus vis.

Hack and Slash

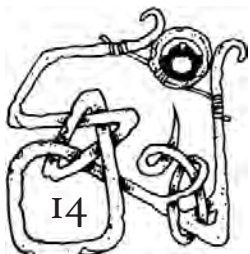
The player characters might simply manage to dispatch Andrés, get him buried and deal with Flosi somehow.

If the player characters decide to kill Kollbeinn or deliver him to Andrés, they will have a fight on their hands. Kollbeinn will not initiate a conflict with the magi and before his formal outlawry it might be unwise to attack him with magic; although if exposed no one will actually object. His protection sigil against witchcraft is quite powerful and the magi may not be able to penetrate it. It is a strange non-Hermetic effect and the magi may not realize it can be

penetrated. He has a good number of able fighters on his farm and any mundane assault would be difficult and bloody. Using magic against these people would certainly lead to outlawry.

The Truth

The player characters might get to some or all the truth behind Andrés and Kollbeinn. Kollbeinn's shame is in two parts. Having accidentally killed his friend he should have admitted to it and offered Andrés's family compensation. His mutilation and use of the corpse would horrify any sane Icelander, but legally isn't black magic as it did not harm men or



livestock and so is 'only' a lesser outlawry offence. However, the bishop would excommunicate him.

If exposed, Kollbeinn will not wait for this to happen. He will buy passage on the next ship leaving Iceland. If he has befriended the magi, he might ask for their help. If he learns anything about the Order he will ask to join. Otherwise he will simply flee to the mainland and disappear.

Publicly exposing Kollbeinn would be very detrimental to the Holar cathedral school and even the Galdramen Hreppar. Such vile magic might seriously undermine Iceland's toleration of magical practice. The characters would be best advised to avoid this.

A Reunion

Andrés is very difficult to dispose of but, if the player characters think to do so, a few words will cause Andrés to seek out Kollbeinn, potentially resolving the situation 'neatly'.

If he encounters Kollbeinn again he will at first recall their love, but after a time, will remember how he died. Love will turn to anguish, as Andrés will ask Kollbeinn how he could do this to him.

If Kollbeinn has not yet completed his 'raise the dead' stave, he will have no answer for Andrés and can only stare in dumb horror at his old friend. Andrés will then call his trousers to him. The poetic justice of this act, bypasses Kollbeinn's protective stave. Andrés's skin will peel off Kollbeinn's flesh, taking Kollbeinn's own with it. It will then roll across the floor to Andrés and return itself to him. If no one interferes, Andrés will then attempt to comfort the dying Kollbeinn. When Kollbeinn dies, Andrés will carry his body to the Drangajökull. There they will become part of Blængr's court.

If Kollbeinn has completed the stave, he can try to use it to lay Andrés to rest. If Kollbeinn survives, reports of the incident find their way to Skeggi, who will waste no time in bringing a witchcraft case. Considering the gruesome events, the Galdramen Hreppar will not interfere.

The only thing in Kollbeinn's favour is that people will be vague on the particulars. Unless the player characters discover and publicize the details, they can only go on the eyewitness accounts of the confrontation. From that they can only infer that Kollbeinn was somehow responsible for Andrés's condition and he came seeking vengeance. Most will assume it was some botched magic the two were working, but for many this is crime enough. In this event the case will be settled out of court with Kollbeinn outlawed from Iceland.

The Red Book

This book contains the spells Kollbeinn and Andrés adapted from the teaching of their spiritual mentor. Kollbeinn has now grown beyond recreating old effects and now understands enough to create wholly new effects.

All these spells are written with clear and precise instructions. Creating the staves can be done entirely from text by any Gifted person with a score of 3 or

more in Philosophiae and Alchemy. The casting total is:

Int + Philosophiae + Alchemy + Aura + Stress Die

Compare this total to the effect level and determine time, fatigue loss, and success or failure using the same mechanics as casting a ritual from a Hermetic text. Once complete, the stave is prepared; the user then needs to follow the instructions to generate the effect. There is no time limit on this second step.

The inscription of the staves requires vis, which is used in various prescribed ways in their preparation. Each requires a number of pawns equal to the magnitude of the effect (this acts as the vis in the ritual casting). The following is a selection of the more potent spells. Feel free to make up more as you wish.

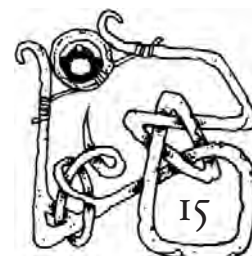
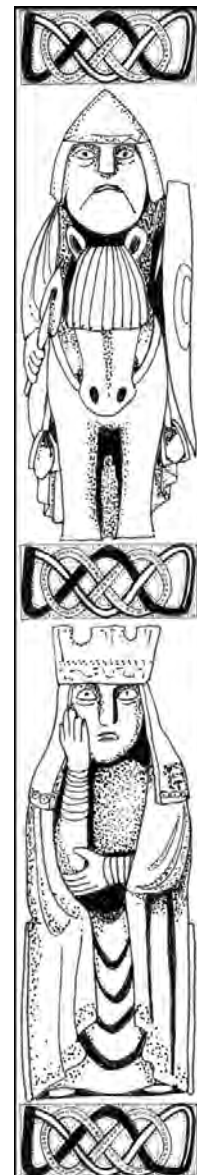
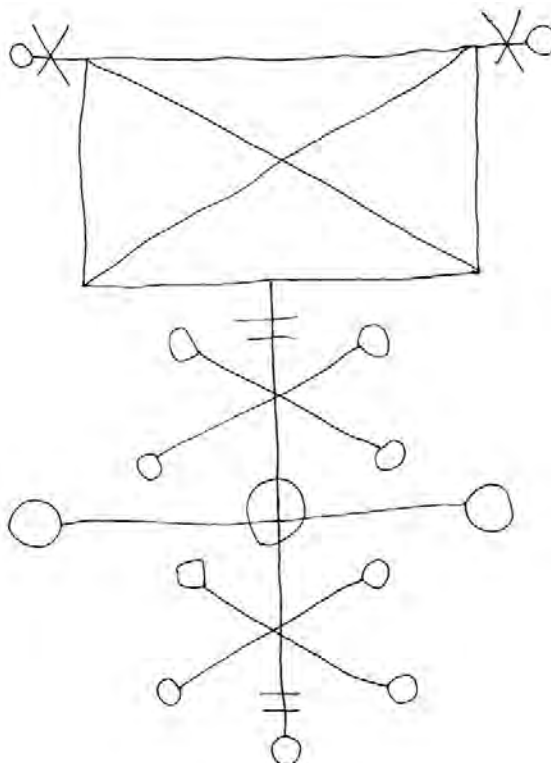
[Adapted from *Angurgapithe — Witch-Hunts in Iceland*]

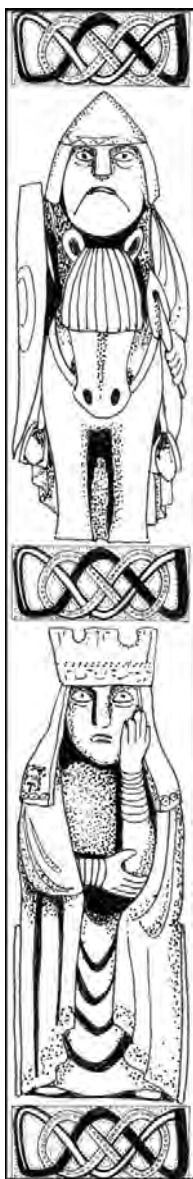
A Stave to Raise the Dead (Stafur til að vekja upp draug)

This sign can be used to create a draug or exterminate one. It must be carved on the skin of a horse's head with a mixture of blood from a seal, a fox, and a man. To wake the dead, the stave should be placed in the mouth of the body and this verse must be recited:

Þykkt blóð, þreytast rekkar.
Þjóð mörg vos öld bjóða,
grand heitt, gummar andast,
glatast auður, firrast snauðir.
Hætt grand hræðast dróttir
hríð mörg, vesöld kvíða,
angur vænt, ærnar skærur.
Illur sveimur nú er í heimi.

To exterminate a ghost, the stave should be pressed to its chest.





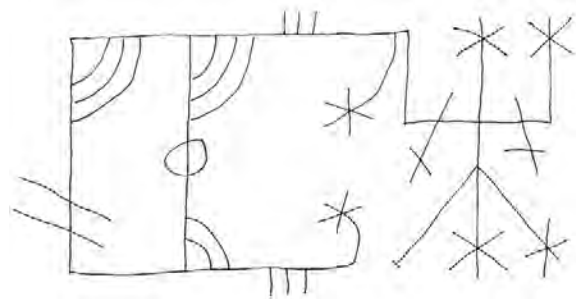
Mechanics

ReCo 40: Animates the corpse as a draug.

PeVi 40: Lays the undead to rest.

A Killing Rune (Dreþrún)

This stave is to be written on a piece of vellum taken from a stillborn lamb. If a man has insulted you without reason, throw it where his horse has trodden and cover it. Some of his livestock will then die.

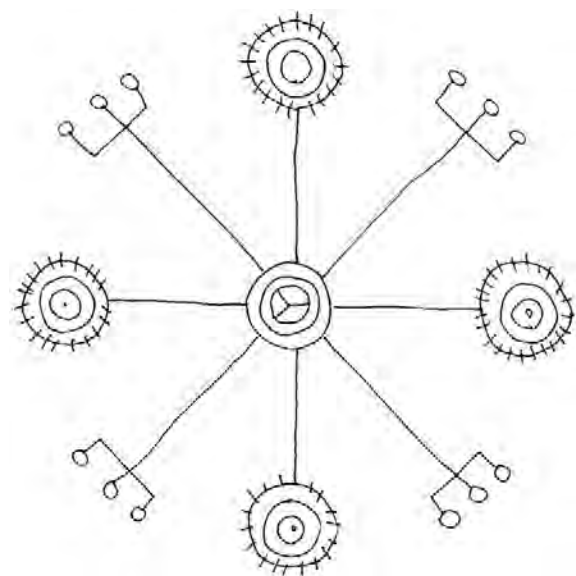


Mechanics

PeAn Lv30: If used as instructed, roll a stress die to determine how many animals will die. This will manifest as a disease, which inflicts the victim's household stock. Good care of the animals may reduce the death toll. It is possible that the disease will spread to neighbouring farms if proper precautions are not taken.

A Fishing Stave (Veðistafur)

This stave should be drawn in wren's blood on a caul with a pen made of a raven's feather. Then put it in a gimlet hole under the prow of your ship and you will always have a good catch.

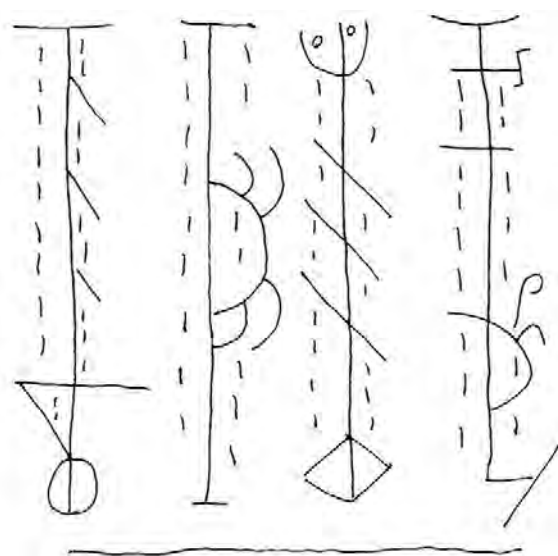


Mechanics

ReAn Lv20: The spell attracts fish to the boat. The time needed to generate a full catch is halved.

Against Witchcraft (Stafur gegn galdri)

These four signs are a protection against witchcraft from all four corners of the earth. Carry them on your body.



Mechanics

ReVi Lv30: Each of the four signs must be enchanted separately, but they will only work if all four are complete. Each of these signs protects the wearer against magic from a single realm, magical, faerie, infernal and (supposedly divine) power with a magical resistance of 30. This magic resistance is modified by poetic justice. Effects that are particularly unjust or dishonourable are resisted by up to 14 point more than the base. Conversely effects that are very justified and honourable are resisted at a reduced rating. Completely bypassed if the storyguide decides so.

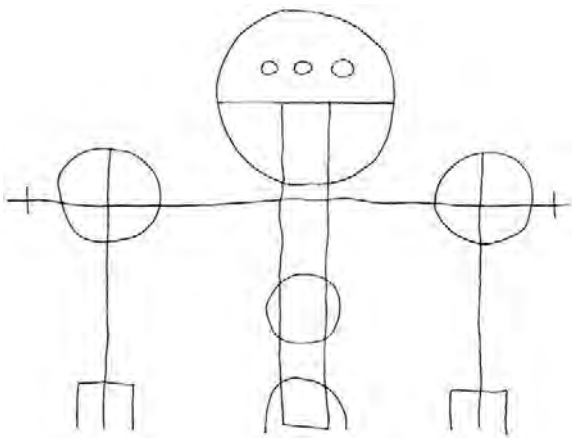
Any effect that fails to penetrate is reflected back on the caster. In addition, if an effect does penetrate, it causes the whole stave to burn up with a force equal to the amount by which the resistance was exceeded. The wearer must soak damage equal to this excess (Penetration - 30). Although the stave is destroyed in this process, the incoming effect is still stopped.

A Lesser Circle of Protection (Rosahringur minni)

Rosahringur must be carved on the flesh side of the skin of a brown bitch. Then colour the carving with the blood of a black tomcat, which has been killed under a full moon. This is a powerful protection against ghosts and witchcraft. Place this stave in the eaves of your farmstead and recite the following verse:

Undan vindi vondan sendi,
óskir ferskar raski þrjóskum,
galdurs eldur gildur holdið
grenni, kenni og innan brenni.

Eyrún dára örin særi,
eitrið ljóta, bíti hann skeytið,
allur fyllist illum sullum
eyði kauða bráður dauði.

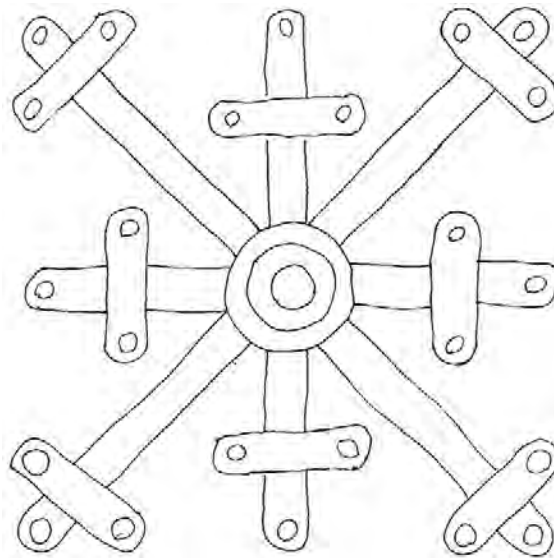


Mechanics

ReVi 40: Protects the farmstead and all currently within from external magic realm power and entrance by creatures with a Magic Might score of 20 or less. The farmstead has a magic resistance of 20 against spells and powers used upon it. Any effect that fails to penetrate is reflected back on the caster. In addition, if an effect does penetrate it causes the stave to explode up with a force equal to the amount by which the resistance was exceeded. This may blow a hole in the roof. Although the stave is destroyed, the incoming effect is still stopped.

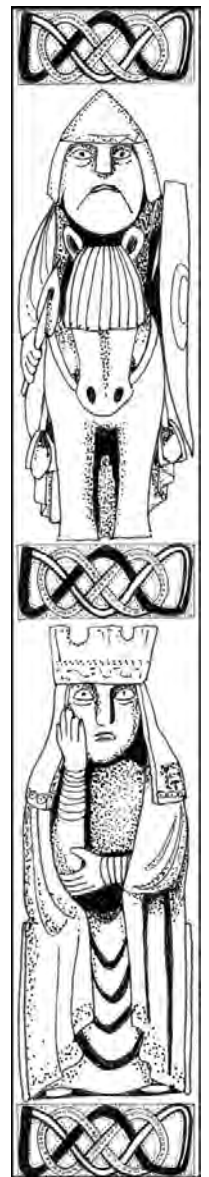
To Open Hills (Hólatafur)

Carve this character on a pole of rowan. Paint the lines with blood from under your tongue. Knock on hills or rocks with the rowan and they will open.



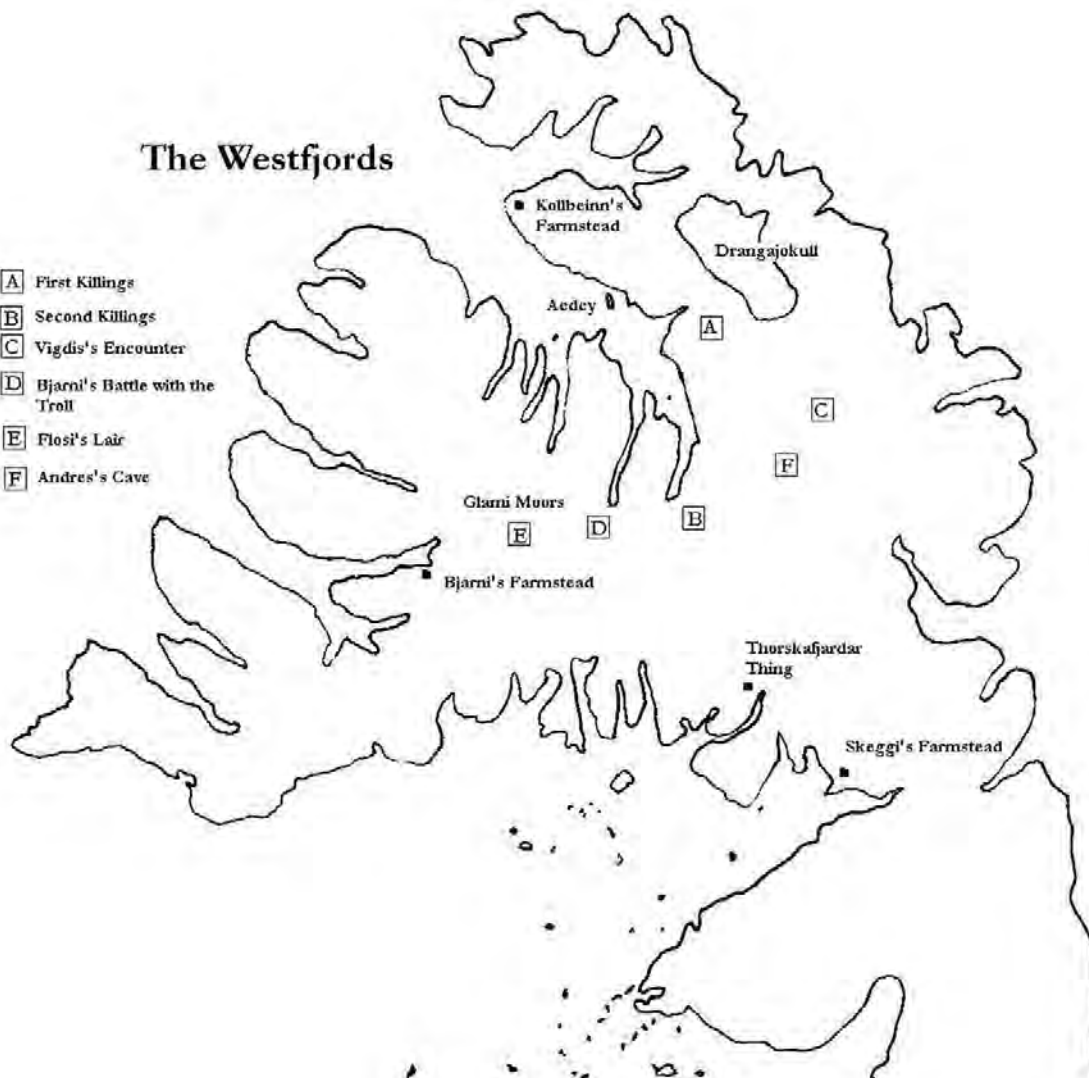
Mechanics

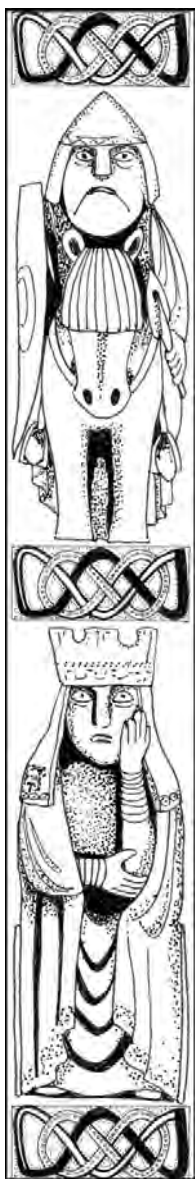
ReVi Lv40: Opens a magical, faerie or infernal regio. Can only be used once.



The Westfords

- [A] First Killings
- [B] Second Killings
- [C] Vigdis's Encounter
- [D] Bjarni's Battle with the Troll
- [E] Flosi's Lair
- [F] Andres's Cave





Failed Apprentices in Mythic Europe

by Mark Hall

There are very few failed Hermetic apprentices in Mythic Europe, and much rarer is the one with any real magical power. The vast majority of apprentices eventually become magi or die in the process. Most apprentices who are orphaned are snatched up by other magi, and those who flee are often found. Those whose Gifts are damaged or destroyed find employment with a covenant, making use of what skills they learned to live part of the life of a magus. Given their rarity, what circumstances result in a failed apprentice, especially one not under the close watch of the Order of Hermes? How does the Order produce a talented hedge wizard? Understanding these factors is the key to using a failed apprentice in a saga, either as a magus or companion player character, or as a storyguide character.

Leaving the Apprenticeship

Every failed apprentice once had a master. What happened to this master, and why a former apprentice fails to become a magus is the driving force in the rest of his life. How an apprentice leaves the Order determines where he can go from that point forward.

The most common reason an apprentice “fails” is that his Gift is damaged beyond repair, often due to a Twilight experience. A damaged Gift doesn’t completely disappear; what remains sometimes manifests as an Exceptional Ability, but can also include partially remaining Hermetic magic. Many failed apprentices with damaged Gifts remain under the Order’s control, developing great skill in a single Technique, Form, or even a single Form/Technique combination, but are too crippled to be a true magus. Many others will remain with the Order as alchemists (greatly aided by their knowledge of Hermetic Magic Theory), herbalists, or scribes. Compared with other failed apprentices, these consortes usually attain the greatest degree of power. Since they are still associated with the Order, they can earn access to libraries, labs, and even, occasionally, vis. As they operate with the blessings of the Order, they do not have to fear being hunted down. Some are even able to join the Order as part of House Ex Miscellanea as they gain experience.

Independent former apprentices (those not associated with the Order) are much rarer. Most such are freed because of the death of their masters. The life of a magus is not a safe one, and many dangers in Mythic Europe can threaten even a magus at the height of his power. Powerful faeries, dragons, giants and demons have all made orphans of multiple apprentices over the centuries. An orphaned apprentice will often find himself alone, with both custodes

and consortes either having fled or been killed. These apprentices can freely leave, if they wish, and most in the Order will assume them to have been destroyed.

These apprentices have the most freedom of failed apprentices; with no one actively looking for them, they simply need to remain unobtrusive. Some choose to live the rest of their lives without magic. For others, their minor abilities will usually be overlooked by magi, though they can often get access to small supplies of vis. They are sometimes even able to enter the Order through House Ex Miscellanea.

Some apprentices attempt to flee from their masters, hoping to be more difficult (and expensive) to find than they are to replace or do without. This method is rarely successful, and usually only so with those apprentices who are nearly full magi themselves. It is far too easy to keep and maintain an arcane connection to one’s apprentice, and that makes tracking a runaway simple. Only more advanced apprentices, or those who can at least cast Confound the Connection from a text, are capable of escaping easy detection. If an apprentice manages this, the combination of Parma Magica and the Limit of Sight make him difficult to find. They live paranoid lives, however, since they cannot easily re-enter the Order or settle in one place for long. This makes it difficult to gather vis, do research, or lead any semblance of a normal life. Most will be able to settle for a season or two before the local magi take notice, then have to move on; being captured usually means returning to life as an apprentice, a fate that most Hermetic fugitives have no desire to repeat.

The rarest variety of the failed apprentice is the “lost” apprentice. Apprentices are sometimes lost in regiones. These apprentices, often half-trained, will be forced to develop what magic they have in order to survive in the skewed reality of the regio. The usual abundance of vis means that the former apprentice can be quite powerful in a few areas, but as a group these former apprentices are often erratic; their long exposure to the regio’s magic, combined with the necessities of survival on their own, rarely leave them untouched. If they’re able to finally leave the regio, they are usually quickly brought into the Order, though rarely fully trusted. The flaws Sheltered Upbringing, Hedge Wizard, Decrepit (due to partially healed wounds or diseases from their time alone), Twilight Points, Blatant Gift, Incomprehensible, Poor Reader and Weak Writer are all appropriate; depending on the regio, Student of the Faerie, Faerie Magic, or Plagued by Supernatural Entity can also be appropriate.

A Census of Failed Apprentices, by House

Who goes renegade? Apprentices of different houses have different reasons for leaving, and some houses are more likely to have renegades than others. Here is a breakdown, house by house, of who goes renegade, and why.



Bjornaer: If the apprentice has mastered a Heart-Beast, most Bjornaer will let them leave, no matter how incomplete their Hermetic training, or whether or not they have formally sworn the Oath. On the other hand, Bjornaer magi with possessive natures will often spend years searching for an apprentice who left. Many Bjornaer are passionate and more than a few apprentices will split with their parens over a feud. Such personality incompatibilities often arise from differences in Heart-Beast; a wolf-hearted apprentice will not lightly take instruction from a sheep-hearted parens, after all. Some heart-beasts take poorly to being tied to one place; it is not uncommon for those migratory or nomadic heart-beasts to disappear for a time, only to return later. Some Bjornaer parens encourage this form of getting in touch with their inner beast, but it infuriates others to no end.

Bonisagus: House Bonisagus has a surprisingly high number of runaways, and many of those runaways succeed. Most of these runaways are “acquired” apprentices who do not wish the honor of joining House Bonisagus, or simply young men and women who fold under the high pressure of their lifestyle. Many magi of Bonisagus do not have a wide variety of abilities, so they find it hard to locate their apprentices when they flee. They can, however, enlist the help of other magi without having to worry that the apprentice will be claimed by another member of House Bonisagus.

Criamon: Criamon magi rarely lose apprentices. The type that they seek for apprentices usually have a deep fascination with secrets, and the riddling and intrigues of a Criamon magus become like a puzzle-box for them. Criamon magi regularly peer into their apprentice’s minds, winnowing through thoughts and feelings to understand the Enigma which is another person. This makes hiding plans to leave difficult. An apprentice who is about to get bored is often presented with a new puzzle or riddle to work with, or given subtle “nudging” towards the correct attitudes with Mentem magic (either Rego or, more commonly, Creo to introduce new thoughts).

Ex Miscellanea: Not surprisingly, House Ex Miscellanea is the largest source of runaway apprentices. Their reputation as Hedge Wizards often makes it difficult for them to get aid for locating their apprentices, their exotic magic makes them attractive “acquisitions” for House Bonisagus, and their specialized nature means that few have the resources for a sustained search. This is tempered somewhat by the fact that most magi of Ex Miscellanea are cautious about choosing their apprentices, selecting only those who fit the criteria set by their tradition. That caution makes their apprentices less likely to flee due to stress or conflict, but once an apprentice flees, there is little chance of being recaptured.

Flambeau: Flambeau magi are not as picky as others about their apprentices, and not all their choices are good matches to their own personality. House Flambeau has few rogue apprentices, though.

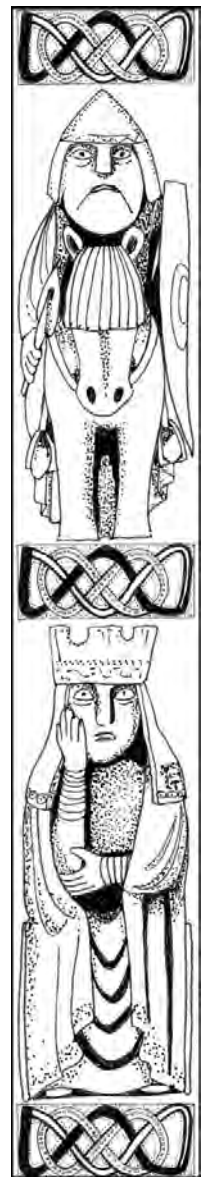
Flambeau magi impress on their apprentices that leaving would be a quick route to a violent end. Most “lost” apprentices that House Flambeau has are in the form of casualties, not rogues, and most free Flambeau apprentices were released by the death of their masters.

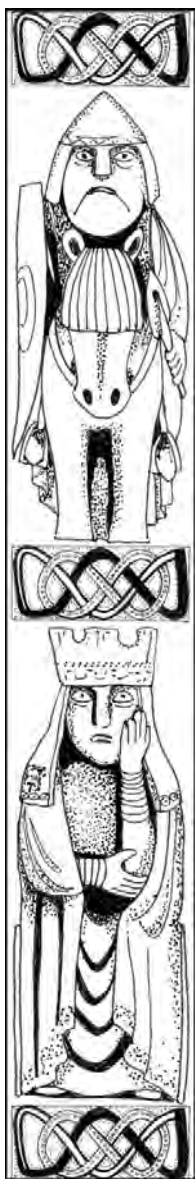
Jerbiton: House Jerbiton does not lose many apprentices. While as mentally rigorous as any apprenticeship, the extensive social contacts that most Jerbiton parentes provide their apprentices with mean that the apprentices are better able to deal with the pressure, and find more outlets for their frustrations. The house does, however, have one type of attrition that other houses do not often see: apprentices who leave the Order to join the Church. Jerbiton magi have frequent contact with both the regular clergy and the universities of Europe, and a few Jerbiton apprentices find a scholastic life far more attractive than a magus’s lifestyle. House Jerbiton tries to discourage this as much as possible, but once an apprentice has joined the Church, Jerbiton will often send someone to remove or alter key portions of the apprentice’s memory; any Arts they may know, and key portions of the Parma Magica. While this is not always successful, the house feels it is necessary to protect the Order’s secrets.

Mercere: House Mercere has the lowest apprentice-loss rate of any of the houses. Much of this is due to their nature; while their magical members lose apprentices to stress and magical disasters, those who are “damaged” are usually funneled into the house’s message-carrying activities. The Order does not track Mercere’s non-magical apprentices, and the house as a whole is not overly concerned when they choose not to complete the training.

Merinita: House Merinita is almost a revolving door for apprentices. Many apprentices are “borrowed” by the fae, for a year or a decade, and many Merinita bargain for Gifted, mortal children stolen by the fae. Several apprentices every century get lost in regiones, only to be rediscovered later and their training completed by parentes, fratres, or other members of the house; unlike other houses, Merinita apprentices who return from faerie regiones are completely accepted by most of the house. The chaotic magics of the fae mean that Merinita magi also produce many apprentices with damaged Gifts and skills in one or two magical Arts or faerie powers.

Quaesitores: House Guernicus does not lose apprentices save to magical mishap. Those who go rogue are tracked down without mercy, using any means necessary. Some members of House Guernicus do make extensive use of those with damaged Gifts. These former apprentices are not members of the Order, so they can do magical scrying on members of the Order without violating an Oath they never took. It is dangerous work, since the former apprentices lack the protections of the Code if they are discovered, and anything learned from the scrying can only be used for leads, lest the Quaesitores





themselves be accused of scrying, but it is a valuable tool in difficult investigations; a different perspective on cold facts.

Tremere: House Tremere have relatively few rogue apprentices, though they have their share of crippled and lost apprentices. Magi of Tremere choose their apprentices carefully, and most find that the life of a Tremere magus agrees with them. Their rogue apprentices usually follow the house's methodical planning, making very sure of their escape plan before putting it into motion. They are seldom successful, as Tremere parentes are far from shy about using Intellego Mentem spells to explore their fili's minds, and using Muto Mentem to give them more agreeable dispositions.

Tytalus: Most apprentices of House Tytalus attempt to escape their apprenticeships at least once; their parentes encourage this with harsh conditions and scant praise. When apprentices attempt to leave, the parentes will either immediately track them down to prove their superiority, or will toy with them, only to reclaim their apprentice when the time comes. This tendency means that House Tytalus produces many rogue apprentices, but also that they know how to deal with them, and recapture them, when necessary.

Verditius: House Verditius loses relatively few apprentices. Their magic requires an immense investment of time and energy, and their lower ability with formulaic magic makes fleeing a more difficult prospect; it also makes hiding from a possessive parentes simpler. Verditius apprentices who do flee can often disappear quite effectively, hiding as alchemists and amulet-makers in the larger cities. Many who suffer from damaged Gifts remain talented in the field of alchemy, bringing Hermetic knowledge to bear on normal alchemy, and some even remain talented enough to be called Hermetic magi; their deficiencies usually manifest in spell casting weaknesses, which some Verditius parentes do not consider that important as a deficiency.

Life on the Run

How do independent apprentices manage to avoid detection? Most do not. Those who are assumed dead usually slip up, or wind up going back to the Order. Life on their own is hard, and only those who were older when they became apprentices will be even partially prepared for life outside the Order. Most apprentices do not plan to be on their own, and so their magics are rarely well-suited to it, and many do not think about what it means to be a renegade. Those who flee the Order do not often have the power to elude their masters, and it is hard for an apprentice to eliminate every trace of himself from his master's sanctum. One or two do manage to survive every decade, though, and it is helpful to understand why.

It helps these renegades that the Order may be a single body, but it is hardly monolithic or universal. There are many places, especially in Eastern and

Northern Europe, where the Order simply does not reach. Apprentices who run can often find shelter in the wild places of Novgorod or Loch Leglean, or they can leave the lands of the Order altogether, going to places not frequented by Europeans, such as Cathay or the Moorish states. There are even rumors of a Bjornaer apprentice fleeing to Greenland and beyond.

A major obstacle to the Order recapturing renegade apprentices is the sheer size of Europe, even where the Order is powerful. It is difficult, even for magi, to coordinate their efforts to find renegades across a wide area. The political nature of the Order, and even the Code itself, also makes magi less likely to ask for help in finding their apprentices. Drawing the attention of a Bonisagus magus who thinks you're obviously unfit to have an apprentice is a quick way to lose your invested seasons of training. This usually means that no more than the parentes himself, perhaps with the aid of his amici or familiar, will be searching for the runaway. With less eyes and spells looking for them, the former apprentice has a better chance to escape.

The extensive training of Hermetic apprentices means that they're aware of their own weaknesses. Those who do plan to run will seek out "Confound the Connection", and relatively simple (second magnitude) Intellego Corpus spells will determine what arcane connections there are to apprentices. Those who manage to buy some time before they run (or can manage to not be missed for a season) have an excellent chance to negate their own arcane connections, making them harder to track by that means. It takes more complex (fourth magnitude) Intellego Vim spells to find arcane connections that a parentes might have built to his apprentice, and finesse to break those connections with Perdo Vim. With a season of preparation (not hard for often-ignored apprentices to gain), a prepared apprentice can foil the simplest methods of detection, and the Parma Magica provides some protection from the more complex.

It is a hard life, but it can be rewarding; with carefully applied magic, free of the Order's restrictions, a moderately talented apprentice can make a comfortable living. Many will apprentice themselves to other hedge wizards, learning bits and pieces of other magical systems to supplement their incomplete Hermetic knowledge. Former apprentices can even produce breakthroughs that would be the envy of Hermetic magi, though without the ability to share it with the Order, any discoveries they make are lost.

Creating a Failed Apprentice Character

There are two routes to creating a failed apprentice. Those with extensive Hermetic training should usually be created as members of their houses, but with flaws to represent their lack of official membership; Stingy Master, Dark Secret and Enemies (variable, according to how avidly they are sought). If



you train any apprentices, then they will automatically have the Discredited Lineage flaw. No Sigil does not usually apply, unless the former apprentice is trying to “pass” as a full magus.

It is also possible to generate a failed apprentice as a companion by selecting the proper Virtues, Flaws, and Abilities. Of course, the Companion Social Class virtue of Failed Apprentice is necessary, and the virtues of Educated and Further Education are both appropriate. Companion Failed Apprentices are able to take some Hermetic virtues and flaws; in fact, Hermetic flaws are very appropriate, since their training is often incomplete, and even Arts they have some skill in might be somewhat crippled. To represent your character’s magical talent and Hermetic abilities, however, there are several new Virtues and Flaws available, below.

Every failed apprentice with remaining Hermetic abilities should have either the Damaged Gift or Manifest Gift virtues. Those with the Damaged Gift have had their magical abilities stunted, and cannot gain new magical Arts or skills; they can, however, expand any abilities that they do have. Those with a Manifest Gift simply lack training; they could learn any magical Art presented to them, or could even move on to some variety of Hedge Wizardry. Another virtue to consider is Latent Magical Ability; in this case, the character has the potential for the Gift, but their parens did not bring it out of them. A failed apprentice without any of these has likely had his Gift almost completely destroyed; any Exceptional Talents they have are (and will remain) the extent of their magical abilities.

Most Failed Apprentices have some level of the Hermetic Training virtue. This represents the amount of training they gained before leaving their masters. Any Art which has been opened can be used in the formation of spontaneous magic, learning and casting formulaic spells, or in lab work, just as if the character were a magus.

Other Virtues and Flaws for failed apprentices can run the gamut, including many House-specific virtues (except as noted below). If the character has any level of the Gift (except for Latent Magical Ability), then all their virtues and flaws must be purchased as a magus, not a Companion. Many will have the flaw of Enemies, representing their former master and any others who might be looking for them.

Forbidden Virtues and Flaws to Companion Failed Apprentices

- Discredited Lineage (no matter how spotty your lineage, it does not matter as a renegade apprentice)
- Extra Arts (subsumed into Hermetic Training)
- Extra Spells (subsumed into Hermetic Training)
- Hermetic Prestige
- Infamous Master
- No Sigil (you are not a magus; no sigil is a fact, not a flaw)

- Promised Apprentice
- Quaesitor
- Tormenting Master (this is subsumed into the Enemies flaw, assuming your parens is still looking for you)

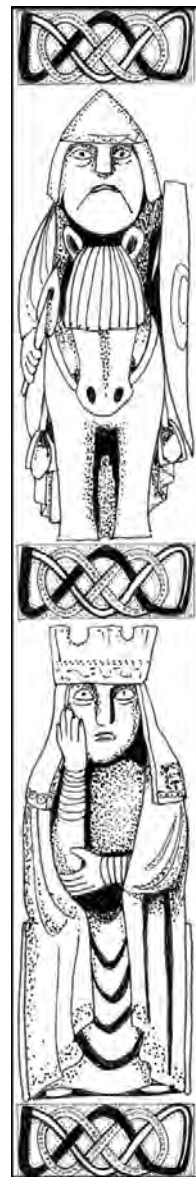
New Virtues and Flaws

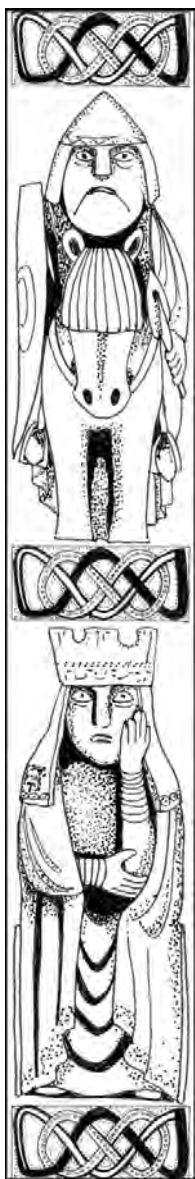
+0 Damaged Gift: You possess the Gift, but it either was not strong to begin with, or has somehow been damaged beyond repair. You are capable of serving as a lab assistant in any Art that you have proficiency with, can accurately scribe magical formulae and texts, and likely retain a few magical powers and skills (though you must possess a Virtue which gives you access to Hermetic and Arcane abilities). You suffer the full social penalties of the Gift, equivalent to the flaws Magical Air and Offensive to Animals. Your Gift can be Gentle or Blatant, with the appropriate virtue or flaw. You may take the +1 virtue Hermetic Training, and Hermetic virtues and flaws; because your Gift is damaged you can only improve on what you already know; you may not learn any new Arts or magical systems after character creation. Additionally, any Magical Deficiencies or similar flaws must be in Arts that you possess; you may not have a major deficiency with Ignem if you are incapable of using Ignem magic in the first place.

+1 Hermetic Training: You have 10 experience points to spend on Hermetic Arts, Spells, or skills. Arts must be opened before they can have experience points applied to increase their score; this costs 1 point per Form, and 2 points per Technique. This virtue requires the Gift (either by being a hedge wizard, magi, exotic magus, or possessing either the Damaged Gift or Manifest Gift virtues), access to Hermetic training (either by being a magus or having the +1 Social Class virtue, Failed Apprentice), but may be taken more than once.

+1 Manifest Gift: You have the Gift, and with training could be a fully capable magician (either a Hermetic magus or some other variety). You may take Hermetic virtues and flaws, though these will often only represent potentials; without training, your ability to use any aptitudes will be uncertain (and wholly up to the storyguide). On the downside, your magical nature means that you suffer the full penalties of the Gift (equivalent to the flaws Magical Air and Offensive to Animals), unless you also purchase the +1 Hermetic Virtue “The Gentle Gift” or the -1 Hermetic Flaw “The Blatant Gift”.

+1 Not Hunted: This virtue is exclusive to failed apprentices who have Hermetic Training (others could take it, but the Order isn’t interested in them). For whatever reason, you are not currently being hunted; the Order is not aware of your status as a renegade. This may be because your parens died, and you were assumed dead, you have been lost in a regio for some time, or you simply managed to completely elude your pursuers, who have now given up. This can change at any time, however, so you need to be on your guard.





+2 Magical Affinity: Single Technique/Form Combination: Your magical skills are specific, to where you have an Arcane Talent, Affinity with Technique/Form, at an initial score of 1. You may add your affinity to all spell rolls and Lab Totals involving this kind of magic. You may increase this rating just as you increase other Talents — by spending experience points.

Moderately Competent Independent Apprentice

This example apprentice fled a master whose diabolism was beginning to threaten the apprentice's own life. Unable to master the rituals of demon-summoning, he was to be given to the demons as a sacrifice. Knowing little of the Order, and with only the barest of magical knowledge, he is constantly hiding from all who practice magic, afraid they will be like his parents.

Age: 20

Int: +2, Per: +1, Str: 0, Sta: +1, Pre: 0, Com: +1, Qik: +1, Dex: 0

Virtues & Flaws: Failed Apprentice Virtue +1, Manifest Gift +1, Educated +1, Further Education +1 *2, Hermetic Training +1 *5, Diabolic Upbringing -2, Enemies -2 (A parents who is interested in your return, but is not investing a lot of time into the search for you; likely less than a season every two years), Hedge Wizard -1, Incomprehensible -1, Lack of Concentration -2, Limited Magic Resistance -2

Abilities: Speak Own Language 5, Speak Latin 4, Scribe Latin 3, Theology 2, Artes Liberales 1, Disputatio 1, Parma Magica (Corpus) 2, Single Weapon 2, Awareness 3, Stealth 2, Disguise 2, Magic Theory 3, Occult Lore 2, Faerie Lore 1, Legend Lore 2, Guile 2, Finesse 1, Penetration 1, Survival 2, Swim 1

Opened Arts: Perdo 2, Muto 0, Rego 2, Corpus 1, Ignem 2, Mentem 4, Vim 0

Spells: *Tip of the Tongue* (PeMe 5; 7 casting total), *Call to Slumber* (ReMe 10; 7 casting total), *The Many-Hued Conflagration* (Mulg 5; 3 casting total)

Legal Status of Covenants in Mythic Europe

by Jeff Berry

The Covenant stands on a isolated cliff or in the middle of a remote moor, alone, aloof and removed from the concerns of the mundane world... Or does it?

The ways in which a covenant in an isolated area fits into the social, legal and feudal world of Mythic Europe is an area which is both poorly explored in canon and rich in the ways it can provide adventure seeds and add color to a saga.

Be warned! The discussion to follow is simplified and generalizations have been made, but it should provide a solid foundation for storyguides who are interested in adding this aspect of medieval life to their Sagas.

In 1200, in Mythic Europe, almost all the land is nominally under someone's rule. Certainly all the land which is considered valuable is under someone's rule or otherwise occupied. An isolated covenant is therefore, at least on the Continent, on somebody's property — the local knight's, the Count's or the King's.

So why does the feudal overlord put up with this squatter? There are a number of reasons why he might.

The first reason is the simplest. He might be too busy elsewhere and it is simply not worth his time. If your Covenant of Transalpinia is so remote that it takes weeks of travel to get there from any place interesting, the lord might just decide it's not worth his while, especially if he's got a Crusade to plan.

This reason has the advantage of requiring very little work from the SG. However, it doesn't provide much in the way of color or ambiance.

The idea that a feudal overlord might view a covenant in the same way that he views any other person wishing to clear and occupy otherwise useless land provides many more interesting avenues for exploration.

As mentioned, there were wide expanses of land, 'solitudes', which were outside of any kind of private ownership and which depended only on the authority of the high-ranking nobleman who controlled the area — that is, they were not directly attached to a small land-holder. These were areas which were not "under the plow," inaccessible, unsuitable for cultivation, covered with thick forests and so on. These lands were useless to him, providing no income in kind nor any rents.

There was also a class of landless, mobile peasants. These men, often younger sons of serfs who



had fled their father's lands, moved from place to place in search of work, food and lodging. Such men were motivated to clear land, improving it and making it their own. [1]

Those two factors combined to generate "new towns," towns which had charters granted to them by lords who saw the opportunity to draw rents where there had been no rents before. In fact, in some places in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the lords created the towns prior to the arrival of the mobile peasantry and advertised for peasants to go fill it, offering freedom from many of the onerous duties of serfdom.

Similarly, there are cases of the free peasants clearing land on their own initiative and then being granted a charter. Why not? In this case there is already a productive populace in place. By granting a liberal charter and charging a reasonable rent, the lord increases his income and is spared the necessity of expelling the peasants with some effort from their homes and then replacing them or losing the potential income. [2]

This is the basic process by which many of the towns of the Middle Ages were born. It is also an extremely workable model for how an isolated covenant might fit into the regimented world of Mythic Europe.

In effect, the covenant becomes a town or commune. [3] It owes rent, in money or in kind, or possibly some service as a collective duty - such as that of the town of Lorris, whose charter of 1155 requires the town to transport the King's wine to Orleans once a year.

The kinds of rents and services a nobleman might include in a mundane town charter are fairly straightforward. Money rents, of course, and since the town is almost by definition a manufacturing or trading center, goods of some kind might also be included. Services might include such things as transport of goods, or even levies of troops.

A covenant, especially a remote one, is a different matter. It may not be producing any sort of manufactured goods, although it might. Transport and other services are also problematical. The most common forms of rent would probably be simply money rents or payment in magical items. The sale of magical items to mundanes is not prohibited, although it is restricted, and what could be more natural than a rent in money with, for instance, a requirement to produce a magical sword for the nobleman every decade?

Another possible reason a lord might tolerate and charter a covenant would be to use it as a buffer zone of some kind. A covenant placed in a mountain pass might make an invader think twice. A covenant could also be used as a political asset, a threat, even if a hollow one, to use against an enemy.

So how would such an arrangement come to pass? There are several ways. A group of magi could seek out the appropriate nobleman and acquire a charter prior to founding a covenant.

More interesting, perhaps, an established covenant could come to the attention of the ruling noble, who then attempts to negotiate or force a charter upon the magi. A rich vein of possibility lies there for a politically active saga.

A third possibility is to simply found the covenant in an existing city. There all the thorny issues of land ownership and charters have already been resolved, and the magi must deal only with the Dominion. Many of the Roman Tribunal covenants probably find themselves in this situation.

And how would the Order of Hermes look upon this relationship? The Peripheral Code prohibits magi from being vassals of mundane nobles. However, there is nothing to prevent them from renting land or providing such services as are permissible under the Code to mundane nobles.

Indeed, I think that some interpretations of the Code might allow for the covenant itself to enter into the feudal structure and hold land of a lord and have lesser nobles and knights in fief, so long as the magi themselves were not directly involved. Again the model here would be that of the great abbeys and monasteries. Indeed, the Covenant of Bellaquin from the Covenants supplement describes just such a relationship.

In short, for sagas which are interested in having the magi and the covenants be a part of Mythic Europe, rather than completely outside it, there are several possibilities for integrating them into the political, social and legal life of the Middle Ages.

Notes

[1] Although the serfs were bound to the land, if the family grew so large that the land could not support them all, some would flee. The lord had little reason to pursue them so long as he received his due in work and in kind. Once these men had fled far enough that no one knew them, they became to all intents and purposes free. This was famously formalized later when those who dwelt in a town for a year and a day became free by law.

[2] The Cistercian abbeys founded in the eleventh century were often founded in much the same way, receiving grants of wasteland, which the monks cleared and turned into profitable land.

[3] The medieval commune was a city that had gained self-government, free from either lord or bishop, such as that of Avignon (1129-1251).

Sources and Further Information

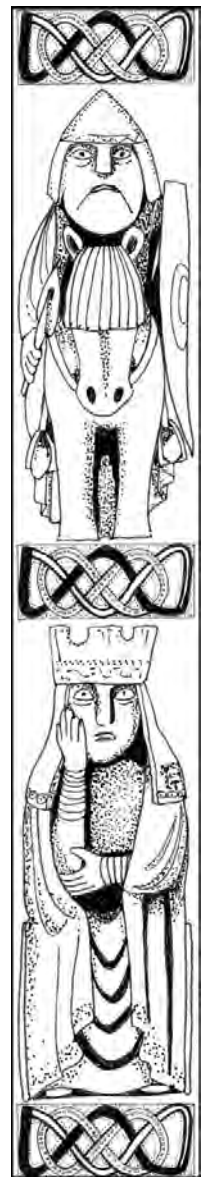
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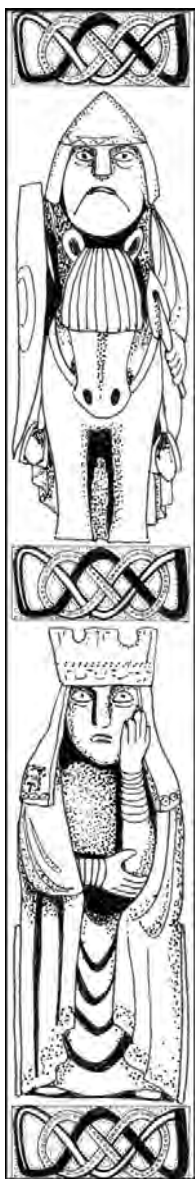
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Omnibus Grimoire

Scroll VII: Imaginem

by Andrew Gronosky

Esteemed colleagues,

This season I humbly present to you this, the seventh scroll in my omnibus grimoire assembled from lesser-known tomes and libraries throughout the Order. I now treat the Form of Imaginem, which can be said to be among the most flexible and versatile of the Forms.

Unlike the other Forms, Imaginem can often be shaped and altered at the time of casting to suit the caster's wishes. A Muto Corpus spell to change a person's appearance can only make him look like another human being, but a Muto Imaginem spell can make him look like a scarecrow, a statue, or hollow tree according to the need of the moment. It is not surprising, then, that many magi take the trouble to learn a few highly adaptable spells, such as the well-known *Image Phantom*, and content themselves with that limited repertoire. As I hope to show, there is more breadth and depth to the Form of Imaginem than one might first suspect, especially when one considers sensations other than sight and sound.

Once again, I present a number of useful spells accessible to the non-specialist: nine of the twelve spells on this scroll are of third magnitude and below. May they reach you in good health, and prove useful and illuminating as you pursue your magical studies.

Your colleague and servant,

Jarius of House Mercere

Creo Imaginem

Eerie Glimpse of the Half-seen Phantom (CrIm 10)

R: Far, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Spell Focus: (+1)

Cause a vague, shadowy, illusionary shape that moves a short distance (up to a few paces). By design, the shape is easy to notice (Per + Awareness roll of 0+) but hard to identify. The effect is that viewers seem to see out of the corner of their eye something that suddenly moves, but which they can't identify. This is disquieting in the best of conditions, and if the surroundings are unfamiliar and/or eerie, it can force viewers to make an immediate Brave roll or become very anxious. The difficulty should be set by the storyguide, ranging up to 12+ for a haunted forest at night. Note that while only one image is created, it can be seen by multiple people, so this spell can actually affect several onlookers even though its target is Individual.

The effects of being shaken by this spell are up to the storyguide and will vary from one character to another, but they might include penalties to Perception rolls (as the character is startled by every noise and shadow) and Concentration rolls.

This spell was invented by Bellana of House Merinita, who uses it to discourage peasants from wandering near her covenant.

Design: Create an illusion that affects vision, Level 5. Increase Range to Far (+2 magnitudes) and reduce Duration to Momentary (-2 magnitudes). Add +1 magnitude for a moving image.

Lure of the Savory Aroma (CrIm 10)

R: Far, D: Diameter, T: Ind.

Spell focus: A hair from a leopard (+3)

Requisite: As appropriate for subject

Make a strong scent of something the subject likes to eat, emanating from a point you designate. You choose one subject when you cast the spell and the smell created is appropriate for that subject. For humans this would be the aroma of the person's favorite food. For a bear it might be the smell of honey; for a wolf, a live rabbit or deer; and for a horse, freshly cut hay. The smell is noticeable from about 20 paces away in still air, or two or three times that distance downwind in a light breeze (animals with a keen sense of smell can detect the scent from further away). All creatures in the general area can detect the scent, though it might appeal only to the subject you designated. Humans may or may not be inclined to investigate the delicious smell, but animals, especially hungry ones, are easily drawn to it. Once they reach the source of the smell, both humans and animals are apt to look around for the source, and will be puzzled when they fail to find it.

A casting requisite is required: Mentem for humans and Animal for beasts. The leopard is a magical beast whose sweet-smelling breath lures men and beasts to its lair.

Design: Create an illusion that affects the sense of smell, Level 5. Increase Range to Far (+2 magnitudes) and reduce Duration to Diameter (-1 magnitude). Casting requisite is required to create a smell that would appeal to the subject.

Voice of the Unseen Spirit (CrIm 25)

R: Near/Arc., D: Conc., T: Ind

Spell Focus: A snake's tongue (+3)

Create a voice that speaks at your mental command. The voice can speak or make any sound a human can, and the pitch and sound of the voice — low or high, male or female — is determined by your Wizards' Sigil. It seems to originate from a point you designate and everyone within earshot can hear the voice. The voice cannot be used to cast spells for you. Mundanes are likely to think it is the voice of a ghost or spirit, not a spell effect.

Design: Create an audible image, Level 5. Increase Range from Reach to Near, +1 magnitude. Add +1 magnitude for intelligible speech and +2 magnitudes for speaking at your mental command.

Intellego Imaginem

Glimpse of the Distant Stranger (InIm 10)

R: Arc, D: Momentary, T: Ind.

Spell Focus: A rock crystal (+2)



Reveal the current, actual appearance of a person to whom you possess an Arcane Connection. You see the person as he appears in the light conditions where he or she is located, so you may see nothing but a black silhouette. If the person is disguised, you see the disguise; if the person has died and been cremated, you see the ashes. The image lasts only two or three seconds, so you can determine obvious details — wounds, clothing, items carried, whether the subject is laughing or crying — but not much more. It is against the Code to cast this spell on another magus without permission. The spell originated in House Quaesitor, whose members use it mainly on mundanes. Some Quaesitores point out that it can often be more useful to learn a suspect's appearance than his identity.

Design: Use one sense at a distance, Level 5. Increase Range to Arcane Connection (+2 magnitudes) and reduce Duration to Momentary (-1 magnitude).

Eyes in Back of the Head (InIm 10)

R: Pers., D: Conc./Sun, T: Special

Spell Focus: A pair of tiger's eye gems (+3)

While this spell is in effect, you can close your eyes to see what is behind you. Hermetic magic can't actually grant true 360-degree vision because the largest known Target category is Sight, and 360-degree vision would be larger than that. If using the spell focus, wear the gems together so they face behind you.

Design: Although this spell doesn't let one use senses at a distance, it does let one see where one normally couldn't, so the Level 5 guideline seems appropriate. Reduce Range to Personal (-3 magnitudes) and increase Target to Sight (+4 magnitudes).

Portrait of the Spying Eyes (InIm 25)

contributed by Andrew Mitchell

R: Special (Arc), D: Concentration, T: Room

Spell Focus: Two crystal balls from the same rock +2

You can look into a painting of a specific person and see out the eyes of another painting of the same person. You can also hear. You must have an Arcane Connection to the second portrait, though two portraits that were painted by the same artist at the same time count as Arcane Connections to each other.

Design: Use two sense at a distance, Level 10. Increase Range to Arcane Connection (+2 magnitudes) and increase Target to Room (+1 magnitude).

Muto Imaginem

Conceal the Conspicuous Portal (MuIm 5)

R: Reach, D: Sun/Perm., T: Room

Spell Focus: A bit of plaster (+1)

Alter the appearance of a room so one or more entrances/exits are totally concealed. Usually, a door is simply made to blend in with the wall, but it could be made to look like a bookcase or be hidden behind an illusionary tapestry. You designate which doors, windows, and other openings are concealed but the way in which they're concealed often depends on

your Wizard's Sigil. The spell is broken if someone other than the caster actually touches a hidden door, or does something else that exposes the illusion, such as touching an illusionary tapestry (in the vis-boosted version of the spell, touching the illusion suspends the spell for one Diameter).

Design: Change one sensation of an object, Level 5. Reduce Range to Reach (-1 magnitude) and increase Target to Room (+1 magnitude).

Illusion of Altered Size (MuIm 10)

R: Near, D: Sun, T: Ind.

Spell Focus: A convex crystal (+2)

Make an object or creature appear larger or smaller. Both vision and sound are affected, so the footfalls of a person made to appear larger also sound louder. For living things, the Size of the target may appear to be changed by one point (larger or smaller); for non-living things, the size change may be plus or minus 50 %. The spell is broken if the target is touched or if it tries to do something inappropriate for its actual size, such as walking through a low doorway without stooping.

This spell was recently invented by a dwarf magus who is a bit insecure about his height, and contributed it on condition of anonymity.

Design: Change two sensations of an object, Level 10.

Perdo Imaginem

Scent of the Cold Stone (PeIm 5)

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

Spell Focus: Spring water (+1)

Destroy a creature or person's scent, to the point where the subject cannot be tracked by hounds. Also useful on grogs who do not bathe often enough for polite company. If the target becomes covered in a strong-smelling substance — say, he falls into a dung heap — the spell is broken. If using the spell focus, wash part of the subject with spring water.

Design: Destroy an object's ability to affect a single sense, Level 5. Reduce Range to Touch (-1 magnitude) and add +1 magnitude for a moving image.

Chamber of Profound Silence (PeIm 20)

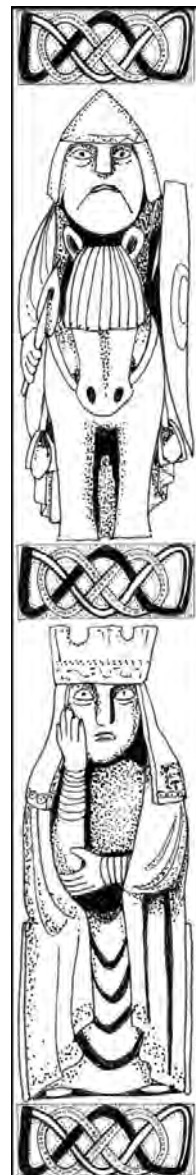
R: Reach, D: Sun/Year, T: Room

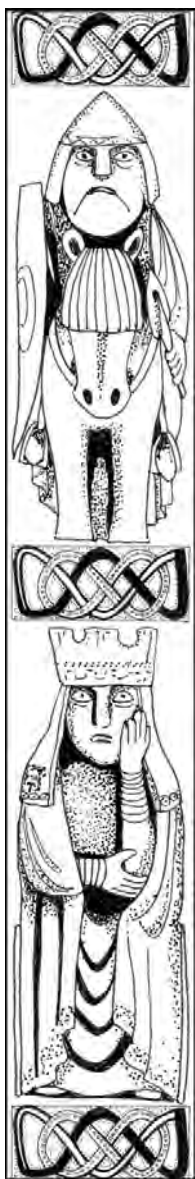
Spell Focus: A bell with no clapper (+2)

For the duration of the spell, no sound can enter or originate within the target room. Magi trying to cast spells within the affected area suffer normal penalties for casting without voice. Enchanted devices with verbal triggers cannot be activated inside the room. People inside the room cannot hear anything at all.

This spell was invented by the Tylalus wizard Drago, who had the gift of Silent Magic and used this spell to thwart and harass rival magi. This archivist hopes the reader will find more appropriate uses for the spell, such as protecting one's sanctum or simply assuring an undisturbed night's sleep.

Design: Destroy an object's ability to affect one sense, Level 5. Increase Target to Room (+1 magnitude).





Add +1 magnitude for the ability to affect moving things within the room, and another +1 magnitude for the ability to destroy sounds entering the room from outside.

Rego Imaginem

Voice of the Unseen Puppeteer (ReIm 10)

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Individual

Spell Focus: A parchment cone (+1)

Make the voice of someone you touch appear to emanate from any creature or object within Near range, chosen at the time you cast the spell. (You must have line of sight to the object at the moment of casting.) If the object moves, the subject's voice moves with it, but the spell is broken if the distance between the two becomes greater than Near. If you cast this spell on yourself (or someone else successfully casts it on you), you cannot use your projected voice to cast spells, though you can still cast spells without voice.

Design: Make an object appear to be up to Near range from its actual position, Level 15. Reduce Range to Touch (-1 magnitude) and reduce Duration to Concentration (-1 magnitude). Add +1 magnitude because the target object can be moved.

Mirror of the Frozen Image (ReIm 15)

R: Reach, D: Sun/Perm., T: Individual

Spell Focus: A silver mirror (+3)

Freeze the image that is reflected in a mirror. The mirror no longer reflects: it only displays the image frozen upon its surface. Note that mirrors in Mythic Europe are generally made of metal, not glass, and are quite blurry and distorted by modern standards. Using a silver mirror aids in the casting of the spell. The spell also works on pools of water, shiny helmets, and other reflecting objects. It cannot capture magical images such as those shown by *Enchantment of the Srying Pool*, only mundane reflections.

Design: Make an object appear to be contained in another object, Level 15.



Politics and Conflict: Strategy and Tactics

by Alexander White

“Politics is the art of choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable.”

— John Galbraith

This article is intended to aid those troupes with the fortitude or quirkiness to try their hand at an involved political saga. It presents a real-politick viewpoint of how people may involve themselves in politics. Even for those troupes uninterested in detailing their Hermetic politics in such a way, this article could be used by troupes to create a backdrop for non-political stories and adventures.

At least three other articles will follow this one. The next article “A Troubled Union” is a sample story revolving around factional conflict within a Tribunal. It aims to be generic enough to fit almost any circumstance and saga. “Systems of Conflict” details a system that allows for conflict and warfare between factions and covenants. Then the fourth instalment, “Power and Peril”, will present a number of seasonal political activities for the ambitious Hermetic politician.

This article makes reference to political theories and tactics from times and places far removed from Medieval Europe, such as those of Sun Tzu, Niccolò Machiavelli, and more modern thinkers, like Max Weber. Quotes attributed to Hermetic figures are more likely than not taken or paraphrased from these (and other) people — hopefully they (and you) won't mind. Deliberate anachronism definitely has a place in *Ars Magica* and the fetishism of so-called historical accuracy should be avoided if it is to remain the game we love so dearly.

Thanks to the excellent people in ALS, the awful people in Unity, and the entire crumbling edifice that is MUSU (how we mourn). Also: many thanks to Timothy Ferguson for his practical advice and invaluable assistance.

Viam Adfecto Ad: Disposition, formation, shape, aspiration

The purpose of this book

“All conflict is based on deception.”

— Tremere, to the author, Martin Liberius the historian

In recording everything that the people of our Order have experienced in successive struggles up to the time of this writing, I have followed a plan — that of arranging all the events described as far as possible in accordance with the actual times and places. But from now on, I shall no longer keep to that method.

In this volume I aim to record the essential advice and directives left by the Founder as it is appropriate,

My dearest Yuelgoet of Doissetep, from your close friend Goliard of Blackthorn, hail and good health!

The following is excerpted from the anathematised tractatus *Viam Adfecto Ad*, a volume which presumed to tell a true history of the Order of Hermes as being dominated by the actions of our House's Founder, Tremere the Wise. It was claimed at the Winter Wizard's Council at Coeris last year that all extant copies were destroyed. Through careful research and an exchanged favour with Pertinax, the librarian of that ancient and honourable covenant, I gained access to a closed archive of so called “Black Texts”, and therein discovered the final copy yet believed to remain. By this knowledge, committed exactly to memory by myself in that secret place, you and I may know other vituperious and obscene manuscripts, and confiscate them, that they may not pollute the minds of the ignorant and impressionable.

I remain in unity and resolution, Goliard of Blackthorn, follower of Tremere. Farewell in trust, grace and honour.

and to give a measure of structure and form to that advice, which was given at different times and at different places. In so doing, I collate my personal experiences and views, those of my colleagues and the records, letters, volumes, journals and anecdotes left by contemporaries. In all cases I have sought to offer a true and accurate account.

The reason is simple. As long as those responsible for what happened were still alive, it was out of the question to tell the story in the way that it deserved. For it was impossible to avoid detection and, once caught, to escape death in its most agonising form. Indeed, even in the company of my dearest friends, I felt far from safe. Then again, in the case of many events which in my earlier volumes I did venture to relate, I dared not reveal the reasons for what happened.

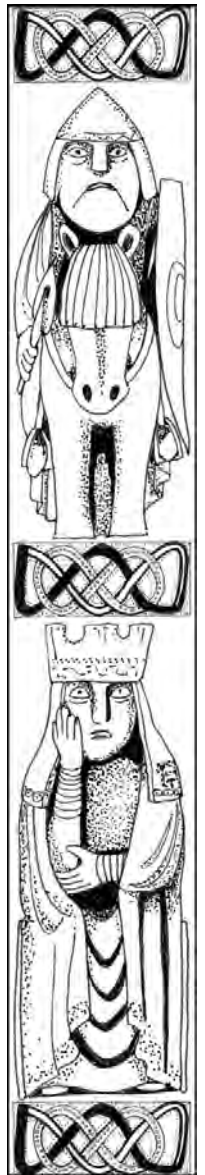
So, in this part of my work I feel it my duty to reveal the words spoken by the Founder and to explain the reasons for what has hitherto been passed over in silence. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone.

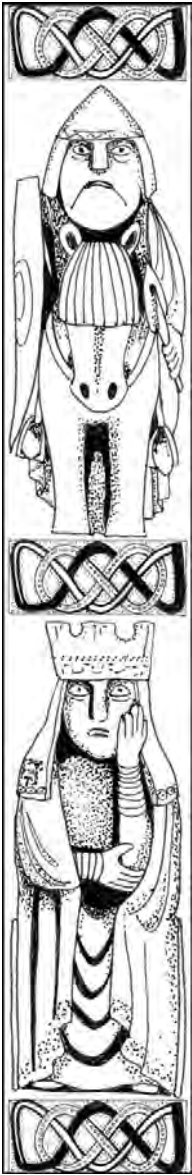
Strategy

“Strategy is the single most important factor in a campaign. The right strategy can survive a mediocre campaign, but even brilliant efforts are likely to fail if the strategy is wrong.”

— Tremere, to Valentinus filius Jerbiton, during the Second Grand Tribunal at Durenmar

Tremere believed that in all conflicts, strategy was of singular importance to the success of his ventures, and to the realisation of his goals. Today, we use strategy in our common parlance loosely, but seldom do we truly realise its practical meaning. Tremere, during a meeting with his lieutenant Kassian said, “Broadly, strategy is the process of interrelating ends and means. When we apply this process to a





Primus Roto of House Tremere, our most beloved, in trust, confidence and honour, to the Tribunal of the Rhine, and the most cherished Order; concerning the perjury of *Viam Adfecto Ad*, and the declaration of House Tremere's most righteous call to Wizard's March against its propagator, Martin Liberius the historian, filius of Luise, follower of Tytalus and those who offer him succour, on this day, August the 5th, A.A. 1357.

The darkness of *Viam Adfecto Ad*, which long ago was deservedly destroyed and brought to nothing by the great Elders, but now, as our Dignity has learnt, has secretly entered almost all of the country of the Germans, indeed, the greater part of what is called the Tribunal of the Rhine, has become widespread, and has brought it to the pit of perdition. Our Dignity has taken thought about this, together with the wise and revered Council, and has devised no other cure for evil of this kind than this: that every wizard's council and every Tribunal and feast day of all the great Order's covenants within the jurisdiction of the Rhine should proclaim an anathema on the corrupt doctrines and actions of the perjury aforesaid, so the unlearned people, knowing their false scholars are rejected by the rigour of the Order, may reject those who lead them astray, may recognise what is correct and upright, and may take refuge in the unswerving community of Hermes.

Those who are about to be subject to anathema are these and they should be anathematised in the following way:

- I. To those who, during the lifetime, and after the passing, of the Founder Tremere, untruthfully claim to have faithfully and accurately recorded his words, and then spread those falsehoods throughout the Tribunals of Hermes, and also added such lies as that the Founder wished to subjugate the Order and the mundane princes of Europe, and turn his entire House to this purpose, and therefore claim that the volume *Viam*

Adfecto Ad contains a record of the true creed of the Founder, anathema.

- II. To those who are members of this group, seeking to undermine the name and prosperity of the House, their customs, meetings at night, mysteries, and pernicious teachings, and their fellow travellers, anathema.
- III. To those united with them in affection, who knowingly eat and drink with them and accept gifts from them because they sympathise with them, anathema.
- IV. To those on the Ides of June, the day of the induction of Tremere the Founder into the community of the Wise, practice bizarre and unnatural rites and gather fruits, and perform foul mysteries on that night like pagan rituals, and claim that such was the wish and command of the Founder Tremere, anathema.
- V. To Martin Liberius the historian, filius of Luise, follower of Tytalus, who spread this thrice-cursed lie in the Tribunal of Transylvania during the rule of Primus Cercistum, of the House of Tremere, who ridiculously claimed in *Viam Adfecto Ad* that Tremere sought to subject the Order of Hermes, and the kingdoms of the world under Christ to his dominion, and who propagated this fabrication in the Tribunal of the Rhine, against the wishes of the most venerable and wise Praeco of our Tribunal, anathema.

Let all who are like this be anathematised in this way. Do not yourselves be slack in your treatment of this matter; and do not let your subordinates, apprentices and lesser covenant members of your jurisdiction take it lightly. Know that whoever is careless concerning such salutary correction of the magi, or has regard to appearance, or allows himself to be corrupted by such works, incurs the wrath of Tremere the Founder, and Ours, his faithful Followers. Farewell.

particular set of ends and means, the product — that is, the strategy — is a specific way of using specified means to achieve a distinct end. Strategy is both a process and a product.”

Therefore in defining and formulating strategy, we must consider three things:

1. What are our goals? What do we wish to achieve?
2. What resources can we use?
3. Given these two things, what is our best course of action?

These may seem simple and obvious maxims, but many in the past, including Tremere himself, have fared poorly by disregarding them or forgetting them. Such was the case in A.A. 945, when Tremere sought to make the position of Primus of the House subsume the role of Praeco of the Tribunal of Transylvania. By disregarding his primary goal at that Tribunal, the Founder divided his resources —

his support among magi not from his House — and failed to heed his own strategy.

Two forms of strategy exist, although these are broad categories. The first is an explicit strategy, written and formulated to reduce confusion about ends and means. In his appearance at the Grand Tribunal of A.A. 938, Tremere brought with him a document clearly and precisely outlining his goals and methods in unusual detail — the creation of the Tribunal of Transylvania. This practice has been followed within his House, but largely to a lesser extent. Elaborate drafts were formulated by members of House Tremere at the Wizard's Council of *Tempestas Auctoris* in A.A. 999, which were disregarded as day-to-day pressures led to haphazard decisions. Thus, strategy documents do not equal actual strategy.

Conversely, the absence of a document does not mean the absence of strategy. When key decision-makers share key assumptions and know each other's



minds, they may follow an implicit strategy. Such was the case with Trianoma and the Founding of the Order itself. Although there was no explicit strategy, it can be now seen that she was following a long-term process to bring about the desired ends: the founding of the Order. In practice then, strategy involves both explicit and implicit elements.

Objectives

“Survival is the foundation. Victory is the pillar. Victory then is harder to raise than survival is to lay.”

– Tremere, to Antae Dityvistus, filia Leodontina the Black, follower of Tremere, at Highest Aspiration, Greater Alpine Tribunal

During the first meeting that brought the Founders together, Tremere asked that question, “What is it all about?” Far from being a philosophical question, as it was taken at the time, Tremere was articulating the unconsidered question: what purpose would the Order of Hermes serve? This is the first question of any strategy, because the objective shapes every element of a conflict. Many discussions of strategy take this question for granted. When Tremere asked, “What is it all about?” he was showing his foresight and aptitude for long-range thinking. Rarely is the objective evident.

Survival

“Survival involves not individual life or death, but the continuation of institutions, traditions, and orders. Through you, our ancestors and I shall persist.”

– Guorna the Fetid, to Tytalus and Tremere, before the Founding of the Order

Survival is the minimum objective of any conflict: continuation, maintenance of the status quo, the capacity to outlast defeat; each group must define what it is to survive. For Tremere, the longevity and structural stability of his House, the legacy that

would out-live him, was his least objective, the minimum end by which all others would be measured. Even this had to be questioned of course, and in more recent days, re-examined: continuation in what form and under what conditions? The devastation wrought by the Schism War for example saw the survival of House Tremere, but survival of a sort that saw fully half its members killed in battle or driven into Final Twilight. Likewise, the edifice of the House remains after the Corruption, but again, at a loss of the some of the House’s chief Elders.

Definitions of survival and destruction determine how long and hard you fight. Pragmatists, such as those who dominate House Tremere, currently will yield much to maintain some form of existence. Zealots on the other hand, like those at Masada, equate surrender with death; that is, complete destruction. It is evident that Pusciale, leader of the Corrupt, was a zealot. Rather than seek compromise to survive like her Housemates, she sought the unattainable and perished.

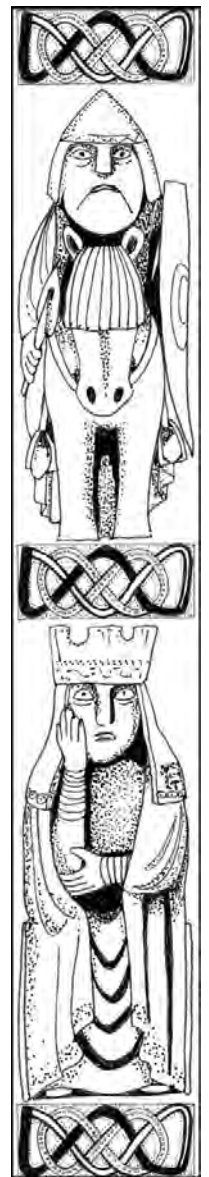
Victory

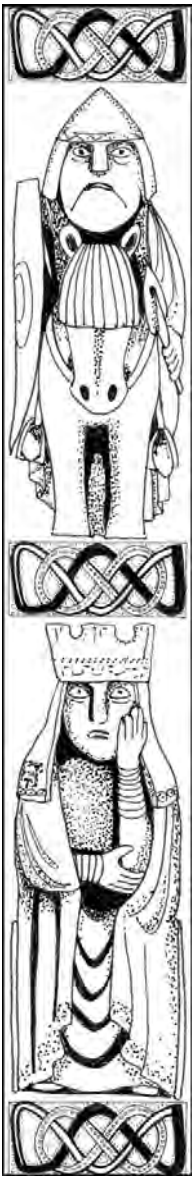
“It is important for me to show strength to keep the young away. If they have the feeling that I am invincible, they will not challenge me. That reputation is intangible, but is more precious to me than gold or vis.”

– Attributed to Apromor, follower of Flambeau, to Tremere

Victory is much more difficult to locate than mere survival. You can achieve different forms of victory, such as complete defeat of an enemy — for example the purge of House Díedne — or partial victory with more limited aims — for example the bounded practice of certámen.

Wise strategists, such as Tremere, follow the advice of Trianoma, who once counselled in Durenmar, “One must develop and clearly define the ultimate





goal, which one is hoping to achieve”. The key here is “ultimate”. It is vital that people ask themselves what end state they want. Most initial responses are short-term goals, such as inventing a spell, writing a tractatus, or having an issue heard at a Tribunal. On reflection, these short-term goals can form the means to achieve long-range objectives, but one should be aware of that objective. Furthermore, one must set a higher short-term goal than the situation seems to demand.

At a Tribunal for example, success in passing one’s ruling requires half of the votes plus one. This makes sense for a minority faction, or a resource strapped challenger; for an established faction with a long-range vision, slender margins of victory suggest weakness and attract tougher opposition next time. Thus, in creating precedent, a slim victory is a logical approach if the goal is to get one body to approve of one measure one time. But if the goal is to change a tradition, or a Tribunal’s policy, the proposal must guide it through a tough obstacle course — large majorities ease friction and help clear obstructions. If one wishes to make a true change, a mere ruling cannot do it. Strategy must reach beyond the meetings and law and include steps to ensure faithful implementation and acceptance.

Assumptions

“All conflict involves risk and uncertainty.”

– Tytalus in answer to Kalocsa the Milky-Eyed, before the latter was forced to join the Order

In a speech to his lieutenants in A.A. 952 in Coeris, Tremere said the following: “There are six critical assumptions upon which the foundation of a strategy must rest. The qualities of the opposition’s leadership, their coordination of followers, their intent, conviction, extent of resources, and the ground of conflict must all be considered for a strategy to be effective. Learn these things as best you can, for they will oft determine your success, or failure.”

Making correct assumptions are critical; false assumptions in the past have lead to disaster. During the Schism War, the Primi of House Tremere and Flambeau both made poor decisions regarding nearly all of six critical assumptions in their conduct toward House Diedne. Not only did they believe that the leadership of their enemy commanded no respect within the House, they grossly underestimated their communication capabilities, and their magical resources. Only in Tremere’s last assumption did the two Primi show any aptitude, choosing to wage initial hostilities in regions that were hostile to the Diedne, and where they would be hindered by the Dominion, local mundanes and creatures of the Magical Realm.

The danger of false assumptions, unless leaders possess oracular abilities, can never be eliminated. No matter how much strategists know, they can never foresee outcomes with total confidence; they can only make educated guesses. That is risk. More often,

strategists are lacking information that could change their appraisal of the odds. That is uncertainty.

Capabilities

“Practicality is quintessential.”

– Tremere, to Iuliania, at Coeris’ Founding

With critical assumptions and objectives in mind, one must then devise plans that make most effective use of the means at hand. Those means are capabilities. Attempting to do more than resources allow is effort doomed to failure. Tremere said, “He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.” This means that you should press ahead when strategic gain is possible, and stay put when it is not.

In practice, this golden mean is an elusive white hart. Aiming too close to the mark creates missed opportunities; aiming too far courts disaster. As Tremere lamented on his deathbed regarding his failed attempt to dominate the Order, “My reach exceeded my grasp.” Primus of House Tytalus at the time privately wrote, “Tremere the Founder was good at starting a war; I do not think he was able in the end to foresee how he would win the war, or at least win some of the victories that would keep him in place. He moved in quickly, but then got bogged down because he didn’t look ahead to where he was going.”

Once an imprudent strategy falters, it undermines morale rather than fortifying it. Confidence is like a store of vis; avoid exhausting it in vain effort. Remember that your own continued confidence will be of no avail if the pawns of vis — the followers on whom you depend — have been depleted. After Tremere’s death, his House languished with no clear vision for many years.

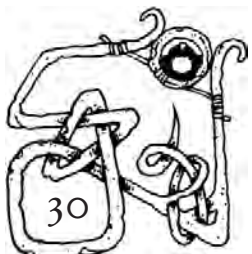
Just as victory and defeat have a dynamic relationship, so do ends and means. Objectives are not fixed, but must be changed as circumstances shift. Unexpected victory or increase in resources may prompt leaders to aim higher, while loss or shortages forces them to recall their ambitions. As Tremere was noted as saying on his only visit to Irencilla, “A plan, like a tree, must have branches — if it is to bear fruit. A tree with a single branch is apt to prove a barren pole.”

Offence and Defence

“Invincibility lies in the defence; the possibility of victory in the attack. Defend when your strength is inadequate; attack when it is abundant.”

– Tremere to Thomas of York, filius Kephalaia, follower of Tremere, at the covenant of Blackthorn

Although defence connotes weakness, it is universally agreed that it is the inherently stronger form of conflict. It is easier to hold one’s position than to expand it. Time that is allowed to pass unused accumulates to the benefit of the defender. He reaps what he did not sow. If you have an established base, you do not need as many resources to hold your territory and achieve victory. Once something is established, it becomes difficult to move or dislodge.



While defence is the stronger form of conflict, offence is the preferred form, “for it is through attack that we can truly pursue a positive aim.” Flambeau’s viewpoint was followed faithfully by Tremere, who held that despite its difficulty, offence provided the only way to achieve victory instead of mere survival. Flambeau adroitly commented that “it is hard for someone to strike you when your sword is in his face.”

Tremere favoured a tactic of defence and offence, since it is impossible to keep one’s sword in the enemy’s face all the time. Counterattack, pursuing one’s strategy aggressively and actively, allows strikes from positions of defensive strength. During the period after Tremere’s death, his House remained on the defensive for a great period, and was periodically placed under siege at Tribunals, particularly in the Greater Alpine Tribunal. After the fall of Highest Aspiration, the leadership knew that an attack would soon be made in Rome, and so deliberately chose to stockpile resources there, awaiting the end of the Alpine campaign. The Tremere counter attack at the Roman Tribunal in A.A. 993 saw their enemies roundly defeated, and their presence there safeguarded.

Numbers and Speed

“While superiority in numbers is the most common element in victory, fast action shatters the enemy and dislocates him, causing confusion, fear and retreat.”

– Tremere to apprentice Leodontina at Durenmar in A.A. 973

To gain numerical superiority over your enemy, you must have more material wealth than they, and also more followers than they. Overwhelming one’s foe is a crude but effective method to attain victory, but can result in both sides grinding each other to oblivion. Someone who engages in this form of victory sees the enemy as targets to be engaged, leading to a methodical approach to conflict.

At a Tribunal, a simple majority will ensure success on the floor, but will create resentment and does nothing more than infuriate your enemy and encourage them to overturn that majority. It results in them forming pockets of superiority of their own, which you cannot overrun or smash, even if you win the initial victories. This happened in the Tribunal of Normandy when Tremere’s opponent’s ensured that they could maintain insurmountable support in a minority of covenants. Even though House Tremere could push through tribunal rulings, in the long run, it was these citadels of resistance that kept him from recovering a decade later when two of his followers fell suddenly to Final Twilight, losing him the majority. The enemy uses these strongholds to prevent early losses from utterly breaking them, and in which to rebuild.

It is rare that anyone can rely on numerical superiority in conflict. House Tremere, being merely one House out of many, can never guarantee it. Instead, Tremere learnt to manoeuvre around such problems

and find advantageous positions. His stated aim was to “render the enemy incapable of resisting, by shattering his resolve and moral cohesion — to destroy his ability to act effectively and in a coordinated manner — rather than defeat him through incremental numbers.”

Material Dislocation

“Your actions must stun the enemy.”

– Tytalus to the assembled members of Fudarus, a year before entering the Woods of Maddenhofen

By causing the enemy to put its resources in the wrong places and use them at the wrong times, they are confounded and pursue wasteful endeavours. This includes magical resources, such as vis, magical devices and the physical wizard’s sigils. At the A.A. 1029 Wizard’s Council of Duresca in Iberia, House Tremere managed to cause their enemies to expend enormous effort in journeying to Duresca in the belief that the Wizard’s Council would be used by the Tremere as a preamble to the Tribunal. They were then held up with debates over petty functional legalities by the tribunal’s senior Tremere — who had wisely entrusted all those sigils he held to a trusted covenant-mate — resulting in those present arriving late to the Tribunal. In that time, the Tremere managed to push through their agenda, since their chief opponents — and their sigils — were trapped at Duresca.

Moral Dislocation

“The essence of victory is speed.”

– Cercistum, Primus of House Tremere, to Arch Mage Amberitus at Literatus, A.A. 1135

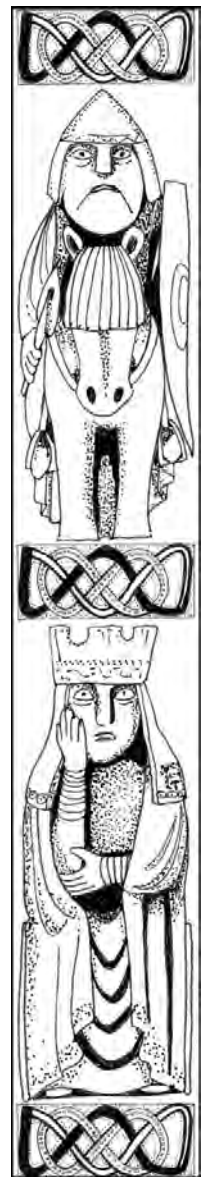
The sense of being trapped, of panic, confusion and indecision comes from the wellspring of moral dislocation. This effect often follows the former, and worsens it. One induces and maintains this effect by surprising the enemy and acting faster than he can react. In the above case in A.A. 1029, the foes of House Tremere were infected with indecision and alarm, resulting in hesitant and unsure moves for quite some time. By the time those at Duresca arrived at the Tribunal, their resolve was dissolved; despite the fact that they then had a numerical advantage over the Tremere, they were unable to use it due to their confusion as to the situation. It took them seven years to regroup. Likewise, the purge of Pusciale’s brood was accomplished within eighteen months. The Corrupted had no opportunity to make sense of the attacks, and the sudden death of Pusciale caused them to fight amongst themselves rather than retreat and re-organise.

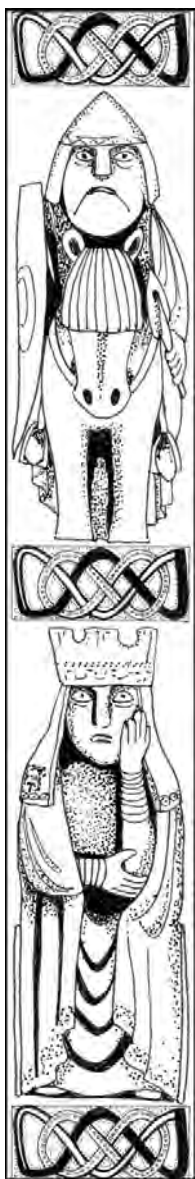
Violence

“I designed certámen, not to win a hundred battles against a hundred foes, but to subdue the enemy without needing to fight at all.”

– Tremere, to Arch Mage Pandectus of Lion’s Gate, at a Wizard’s Council in A.A. 976

The threat of force, of real, tangible physical danger underlies politics. Within the Order of Hermes there are two legitimate forms of violence: Wizard’s





War, and certámen. To be successful, one must be skilled at both forms. Most people are timid and fearful of personal harm. Conflict is often won merely by threatening combat. At other times, the implicit or explicit threat aims not to defeat the enemy but is rather a defensive manoeuvre. By being skilled at martial forms, and by having the ability to competently wage violence, you deter others from challenging you.

The manner in which you may deter a foe with Wizard's War is to gain overwhelming strength and resources. This are both sheer offensive capabilities, such as high magnitude spells in Arts such as Ignem or Perdo, but also material resources, such as large reserves of food, money to purchase supplies and bribes, weapons to arm grogs, armour to protect them, strong walls to defend your covenant, and so on. When you are in a position of such strength, even strong potential challengers usually decline to threaten you.

Certámen however can also achieve this aim more subtly. As the official means to settle disputes within the Order, skill in certámen grants great power, in a similar way as having great resources for Wizard's War. This is one of the greatest weapons in House Tremere's arsenal. By mastering the only legal form of conflict resolution, the House ensures that none dare challenge them. Their ability to succeed in certámen guarantees that such deterrence resides in something real and tangible. Rather than face defeat in certámen, many people will concede and accept the will of House Tremere.

It is the capacity to actualise the threat of violence, to commit to waging war and to follow through on deterrents by killing or devastating foes that makes the threat of violence effective. If you do not have the will or ability to commit violence, then

do not threaten it. Tremere advised that "it is sometimes necessary to take measures that, when your enemies believe no longer, it is possible to make them believe by force."

Furthermore, such violence, when committed must be total, so that your enemies have no reserve or resource to recover. They must either be dead, or be reduced to a state by which they may never become a threat again. Injury that does not devastate only rankles, and encourages your enemy to redouble his efforts to avenge his humiliation.

Society

"We must bring the Order into a state where mages are managed by a mixture of consent backed by coercion."

– Tremere to Iuliania, at Coeris, A.A. 952

Tremere was a firm believer in maintaining above all the integrity and stability of the society of the Order. He directed his followers to obey the decisions made at Tribunals, to follow the public direction of the Quaesitores, to uphold the Code and to strike down offenders against it. It is for good reason that the followers of Tremere are considered to be bastions of stability and security by many other Houses.

This adherence to the processes and systems that exist within the Order is because it was in the best interest of Tremere that the society and means of the Order be strong and honoured. A strong society within the Order of Hermes, one that respected the authority of the decisions of a Tribunal, of the dictates of a Primus and the Peripheral Code of the Quaesitores, would be one where mages would pacify and abnegate themselves. Eventually, Tremere believed, mages would come to regard the Order as continuous, with a distinct territory and as subject



entirely to the authority of the Tribunals. When mages believe there is no other alternative, where anything else is literally inconceivable, then Tremere's vision will be realised.

Cooperation

Although his House now has an undeserved reputation for autonomous and unilateral action, Tremere was always a proponent of working together in partnership with other factions and Houses. This was not through any charity on his part, but rather a realisation that his House would never be large enough to completely dominate the Order by its own power.

Working with others therefore formed a key part to Tremere's plans. As well as creating networks of information and cooperation, it formed reliance by those groups on the support of Tremere and his House. By aiding and advocating for smaller and more marginal groups, Tremere was able to gain their allegiances. In this manner, the Line of Muj in the Transylvanian Tribunal was convinced to join his House rather than that of Merinita, whose follower Quendalon had been garnering support amongst many faerie-sorcerer lineages.

Tremere was wise enough not to only aid minority groups. It was crucial to his wider plans that he align himself with other Houses who depended on the Order's structures and continuity for their identity. The lineage of Trianoma and many of the followers of Guernicus formed significant mainstream political factions, with whom Tremere worked closely in his most active years. Working as a bloc, House Tremere, Bonisagus and Guernicus have been able to dominate most of the Order's core Tribunals since their inception. Only when House leaders fell out during the Schism War did the Tremere become isolated in a key Tribunal: the Greater Alps.

Every major confrontation that House Tremere has become involved with has been characterised by the House seeking to repair its relations with other groups. For this reason, House Tremere can be thought of as one of the most constructive and helpful of Houses, although it is not so for any selfless motive. It is purely to gain the support of the groups it helps, creating chains of dependence. The ousting of Puscialle is beginning another round of apparent helpfulness by House Tremere; it is these chains that allow them to remain such a vibrant and influential House, even after their numbers are reduced severely, or opinion for them falls markedly, by binding others to them. It is remarkable that the House was not subject to a full Quaesitorial investigation, such as was imposed upon House Tytalus after the Corruption.

Coercion

Tremere in life was the least of the Founders. In raw magical ability, he could not hope to hold his own against the Powers of his fratres Tytalus or Flambeau. The creation of the Order of Hermes saw for the first time since the Cult of Mercury, a society of wizards holding the common bond of Oath and

Practice. As discussed above, certámen was created to give Tremere the ability to monopolise legitimate and legal magical conflict. "For certámen to be worth anything however," Tremere said, "its results have to be utterly binding and authoritative. This can only be so if there exists a community that can impose upon itself the legitimisation of violence, and for that violence to be certámen alone."

Tremere was an opponent of regular or widespread Wizard's War, a view that may be surprising to many. Obviously, recourse to Wizard's War marginalised the practice of certámen, and allowed the dominance of martially proficient mages, which Tremere was not. Wizard's War also highlighted, in the eyes of Tremere, the failure of Hermetic society to manage conflict peacefully and bloodlessly.

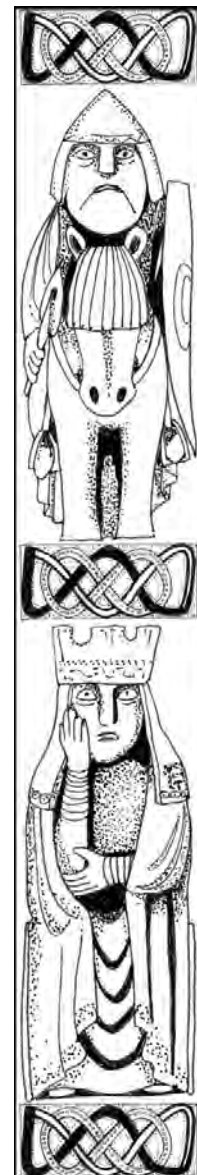
Hence, Tremere was a great advocate of the informal practice of Hoplites adopted by Guernicus towards the end of his life, and later by the various Primi of House Quaesitor. Wizard's War, when licensed by the authorities — the Quaesitor-backed Tribunal — would eventually result in a cabal of specialist peacekeepers who would act entirely at the behest of the Tribunal. Uncontrolled violence and warfare would be diminished "as all legitimate violence is concentrated into the hands of professionals, whose role is to protect the many against those few fire-brands and miscreants who cause conflict and trouble."

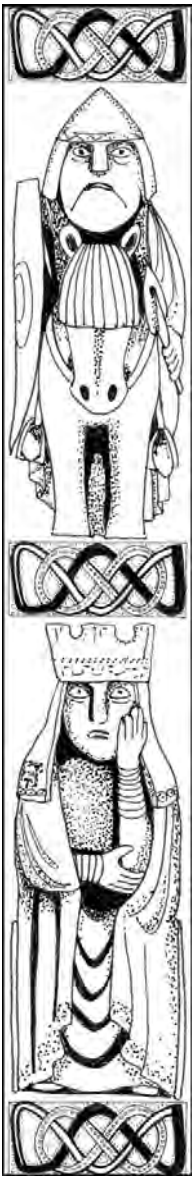
The Code-granted and unalienable right for mages to defend themselves effectively saw each mage as self-sovereign within a federation of sovereign entities. Aware and actively protecting their rights, the members of the Order could never be pacified by the organisation itself. Conflict would continually resort to violence, as the institution itself would not have the authority to resolve the contention. Tremere believed that if violence were concentrated into a small number of hands, then it would be resorted to less.

Territory

"There must come a time where mages, covenants, Tribunals, Houses and the Order itself come to identify with their most intimate identity the possession and occupation of certain tracts of land, and the true possession of all things within that land, be they men, animals, minerals or vis." These words, spoken by Tremere to his inner council, demonstrate his desire to expand the Order and his House in a manner that would eventually come into conflict with the mundane powers of the world. By laying claim over land, Tremere desired to create borders over which the Order would have the only jurisdiction.

This jurisdiction, as he states, would give the Order such power as to exploit whatever resources existed within that land. This is largely counter to our practice, and so Tremere found it difficult to bring about this change. As we know however, Covenants often lay claim to the territory surrounding them. Their supremacy of jurisdiction however varies, and





more often than not, their occupancy of that land is at the sufferance of a mundane lord.

The Order, Tribunals and Houses however have no such possession, and unless they have come to it by birth, mages also lack land. Expansion of the corporate idea of covenant-land-ownership to Order-wide jurisdiction was Tremere's goal, so as to allow the Order as an entity, separate from its members and their covenants, to be self-sustaining.

Authority

"No power can maintain its domination over others by its ability to coerce alone."

— Guorna the Fetid to Tremere, before the Founding

As Tremere was very aware of, no matter how great your ability to coerce or threaten violence, those suffering under domination always had some recourse to resistance. Non-compliance to issued orders is the most basic form of resistance against authority. More powerful mages may rely upon this resistance, bolstered by considerable faculties than could never be taken away by force. Negotiation with the subordinated was required for any kind of Order.

In practice, Tremere found this to be the case, and for a time he was successful. During his brief rule of the Order of Hermes, he came to an arrangement

Guernicus to Tremere, Duresca, between 7 and 14 July, A.A. 912.

I have many things on my mind, arising from the grave political crisis and these dangers that menace us personally. They are legion, but nothing distresses me more than our present situation, the manumission of our Order from the rule of law and the descent into depravity and vice.

That my commands — no, set commands aside — that my displeasure should count with them for nothing. And yet I don't know what I can do, and after all, the talk is really more than the thing itself. Moreover I can't be angry with those I really love. I am only pained, deeply pained. My other troubles are set in great affairs. Pralix's threats and combats I have to expect give me only moderate concern, for I think I can either face them with all honour or decline them without embarrassment.

The truth is that the present regime is the most infamous, disgraceful and uniformly contumacious to all sorts and classes and ages of men that ever was, more so, upon my word, than I could have wished, let alone expected.

On politics I wish I needed not go into detail. The Order is finished. Its plight is all the sadder than when you departed for the East because at that time it looked as though the tractable regime was agreeable to the law and, though odious, not actually lethal to its betters; whereas now it is all at once so universally detested that we tremble to think when it may erupt.

I wonder at the precedents being made at some Tribunals. There is no rule of law here, but rather mages gather together in packs, discarding their

with the various powers and authorities that would have opposed him, creating stability where previously there had been none. Those who would have fought against him were brought under his banner until most of the resisters accepted his jurisdiction most of the time. Outbreaks of insurgency were rare.

Let us consider the instructive words of Tremere to his filia Leodontina: "When I speak of domination, I say authority. It is the likelihood that I will issue a specific command that will be obeyed by those I give it too. Tied to this is legitimacy, which is the extent that my prestige is binding upon others. Combining both my legitimacy and domination, I become an authority whose commands are followed because those who obey consider them to be obligatory or exemplary. I need no longer compel them: they compel themselves." At all times Tremere worked during his occupation as primary power within the Order to sustain the belief amongst other mages that his exercise of power was not just effective and prevailing, but also the sole legitimate authority.

We should be mindful that this idea is followed in large part by the mundane powers, who have the benefit that we can never gain, of claiming their legitimacy from the authority of divine mandate. Within

ancient Roman heritage and act like the barbarians that Trianoma invited from Germany and Pictland. They decide on rulings by common consent and personal advantage; the only precedent is that which is beneficial to their cause. While my sons and daughters struggle to institute order on the boiling ocean, they too are being swept up on the maelstrom of conflict and politics that will soon swamp all sane people in its inexorable tide. Magi meet and debate without knowledge of our common constitution or statutes. They presume to override or ignore the rulings made by wiser and more sensible men on pressing issues that affect us all. Laws are established, based on nothing more than friendships, petty political alliances, and gross personal interest.

When I acquiesced to lending my hand to this Order of Hermes, I demanded that the mandate of law be held above the will of the masses. I said at that first tribunal that we must have regulation to command our behaviour; there was to be no weakness in the law and no exceptions for those who felt themselves to be above the Code. For the Order to be heir to Rome, it must be the order of law. Instead we have an Order of disorder and lawlessness.

You will ask me in what line I shall take my House. Not the same as in my own mind; there I shall vote for justice. But in my House I shall echo Jerbiton, and I shall not do it in a spirit of subservience either. But it is yet another major misfortune for the Order that for me especially there is in a way something wrong in dissenting from Jerbiton on such high matters. The Tribunal Procedures must be instituted. Farewell and good health.



Politics within the Order

Wizards in the Order of Hermes have little need for politics. By nature, magi are individualistic, working alone in their laboratories, and typically allowing only their familiar to gain any personal closeness. Many mages would prefer nothing more than to be left alone to their own devices. This is what the Code entails: safeguarding the privacy and security of its members. Involvement in Hermetic politics grew out of conflicting goals of collectively acting mages, moral mages standing up against immoral ones, and a desire by individualistic mages to ensure their rights were not violated or overrun by others.

There exist within the Order groups of mages dedicated to collective organisation and action, who pursue their agendas with well-planned tactics, and whose doctrines often conflict with the individualistic desires of their colleagues. By believing in organising to bring about change within the entirety of society (generally for beneficial ends), the individualism of some mages is challenged. Secrecy and individualism can breed distrust amongst the many

towards the few, bringing about inevitable conflict over privacy and the rights of society and individual.

Although most mages have benign personal goals, there exist enough power-hungry people that involvement in Hermetic politics is required simply to ensure the Order's — and their own — survival. The corrupt and immoral are as likely to collectively organise as those with benevolent and noble desires, and curmudgeons and conservatives are as likely to oppose the good with the bad when it appears as though their rights may be infringed.

When moral forces retire from the field, leaving only the ambitious and unethical, the Order comes close to self-destructing, such as the Domination of House Tremere, and the Schism War. The Order only functions when selfless mages participate within its political society, engage in Tribunal processes, and oppose those who have only their own interests in mind. It requires the noble and idealistic, along with the individualistic and selfish to all participate, because only through adversity and challenge can the Order prosper, grow and advance.

the Order of Hermes, our sovereign is the Code of Hermes, the sole lawful principle that rules our conduct. Any and all power that the Order holds apart from that held by its members is enshrined and embodied by the Code. Under Tremere's domination, he enshrined the Code as an authority to be obeyed unquestioningly. By being the guardian of the Code, Tremere gained the appearance of the impartial administrator, impartial and non-partisan, carrying out the will of the Order itself. Tremere expressed his authority as simply the vicarious dictates of the will of his subordinates.

Political Sagas: Some axioms

Politics tend to require a long-term approach. This is ideally suited to *Ars Magica*, which works in seasons, and whose primary antagonists think of things in terms of decades and centuries. In a political game, troupes should be encouraged to take this far-seeing approach. They should consider the motivations of their characters and their long-term goals. Furthermore, the player should consider the kind of position he would like to see his character in many sessions down the line.

Excellent advice for the kinds of futures for such games can be found in Timothy Ferguson's *Stories for Elder Magi* articles, in Hermes' Portal 4 and 5. The founding of covenants, of a magical lineage, the domination of a county, kingdom or Tribunal, or bringing about the return of the Old Ones are possible long-reaching objectives. Almost anything can have political ramifications, including Magic Theory breakthroughs, invention of spells, enchantment of devices, and training of apprentices.

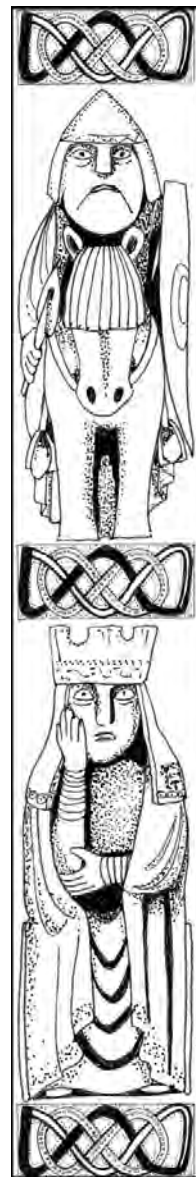
Troupes playing a political game should then have their characters consider some of the issues raised above. Characters should use their motivations to think of one or two short-term goals. Story guides

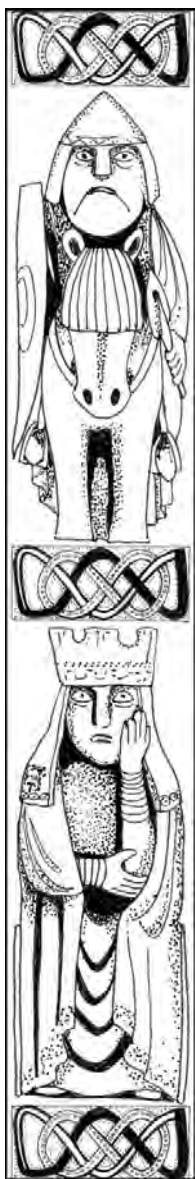
should be encouraged to create NPCs whose own goals conflict with or directly oppose with those of the players' characters, but also some NPCs who could act as allies. This creates the environment in which the politics takes place. The maxim, "conflict is drama" holds true in political sagas as much as any game.

For example, if a character's motivation is to aid his mundane family's prosperity and authority, then there should be an NPC who believes that such actions are reprehensible and against the Code of Hermes. Likewise, there should be an NPC who has a similar goal — aiding a mundane ally — and will thus help the PC when he comes into conflict with the former NPC, ostensibly to create a precedent by which mages are allowed to aid mundanes. In this scenario, the first NPC becomes the enemy and the second becomes a possible ally, who must be courted and convinced.

An assumption behind a lot of politics is the threat of violence. In the Order of Hermes, where there are only two legal means of waging violence, politics is made all the more important. Whereas an outraged noble has recourse to immediate war, brigandage, or fighting, violent conflict between Hermetic mages is that much more potentially destructive, and at the same time, untenable. Mages are protected by their Aegis of the Hearth, *Parma Magica*, or protective magical amulets. Since they are long lived, they also have much more to lose: death at ages thirty or forty cuts short a career that could have lasted for a century or more.

War and violence is volatile, unpredictable, personally dangerous, and produces uncertain results; a botch could throw you into Final Twilight, or create some deadly side effect. Politics on the other hand, is volatile, unpredictable but on the whole, not personally dangerous. While you risk your honour, dignity





and career in politics, you generally do not risk your life. For these reasons, magi may be more likely to resort to political wheeling and dealing in preference to a risky Wizard's War.

Factions

"I raised an army by which I brought the Republic, oppressed by the domination of a faction into a condition of freedom."

— Augustus Caesar, *Res Gestae divi Augustus*

Factions are groups of like-minded people who organise cooperatively to achieve a shared goal. Ars Magica already has factions, in the form of covenants, Houses, mystery groups, Tribunals, and finally with the Order itself.

In game factions are useful because they allow the story guide to easily use archetypes and stereotypes. Alone, all mages (and characters) must be described individually — "Pyrisus is a skilled Ignem mage that favours conservative politics and subtly aids the Frankish nobility in the Queen of Cities." Grouping mages allows you to describe all of them at once — "The mages of the Covenant of Constantinople supports the Frankish principate, and are never rash or hasty." The larger the grouping of course, the less accurate the description becomes — "All Flambeau are either fire-bugs or Perdo specialists." Mystery groups allow for pan-Order distinctions outside of Houses — "He belongs to the Pillar of Hiram, who are obsessed with structure and order." Finally Tribunals also grant characteristics to characters — "The magi in Thebes are a crafty bunch... you can't trust them." This may seem axiomatic, as we often do this unconsciously.

Assume that there are several prevailing trends that cross most internal borders within the Order. There are a few canon examples of this, such as the belief that magi are naturally superior to mundanes and should rule them, or that the Dominion is dangerous to magic and should be stopped. Moving within Tribunals can be some widespread attitudes. After all, mages will often share opinions and beliefs. It stands to reason then that some of these magi would aid each other to realise their goal.

Troupes and story guides should develop some of these opinions and attitudes, as they are relevant to the saga. In the above example, where the PC wishes to aid his mundane family, the story guide could develop not just a single mage who opposes this, but a group. They could believe that mundanes should be left alone and un-harassed as the Code demands. Another group could believe that mundanes are cattle and should be subjected to the will of mages. This places them indirectly at odds with the player character, as they have no objection to the PC helping his family, but in the long run, wish to command them along with the rest of the mundanes. A third group could believe that the Code should not prohibit behaviour that does not imperil the Order, and thus so long as the player character is circumspect about helping his family, they will be more supportive of him than of others. From there the story guide can

develop individuals within the factions as it becomes necessary.

Factions and Houses

In most cases, factions are informal, and cross House lines. Individualism is an issue here, because Houses do not have the ability to enforce any viewpoint on their members (beyond the power of the Primus to expel members). House Bonisagus for example, cannot have an opinion on your player's character's desire to aid his family, because there will be some people who support him and others who oppose him. Houses are more mystical factions, sharing a common magical tradition, rather than sharing similar doctrines or ideologies. The only obvious exception to this is the Tremere, who do have an internal method of enforcing the House's will. It is this that allows the Tremere to be politically effective across the Order, as they collectively organise and pursue an agenda, rather than act through informal alliances and friendship networks. In this case House Tremere, as a whole, could hold an opinion on the actions of your PC.

Houses could however, operate like factions. There are enough Houses who pursue shared goals, even if collective action is rare, that they could cease to be merely magical traditions. Because of the nature of instruction within the Order, Houses are likely to be made up of largely like-minded mages. Each Founder instilled a measure of his personality upon his House, training his apprentices, who grew up sharing many of his world-views and opinions, and then trained their own apprentices, with the same opinions, and so on. Unless an apprentice rejects the notions and beliefs of his mentor, the Founder's personality would be perpetuated, however diluted. This means that Houses could be considered to be somewhat homogenous, sharing convictions, goals and prejudices. While this would not override personal convictions, it would mean that House-members would share more than just a style of magic.

Ideology

Villains more often than not believe their actions and goals are justified and ultimately beneficial. Few people are entirely evil and vile, and even the most corrupt or unethical politician may still believe that he is representing his constituents.

When creating factions for your player's characters to join and fight against, keep this in mind. Your bad-guys should have a coherent explanation for why they are taking a particular course of actions. While they may be idiosyncratic or quirky, they should be internally consistent. A good method is to ask of them the hypothetical question "Why are you doing what you do?" and "Why don't you agree with so and so?" All factions believe to a greater or lesser extent in their goals.

Also consider the role of ideology in propaganda, and the recruiting of members. The beliefs and convictions of a faction should be able to be clarified



into a few clear slogans, dictates that can be easily remembered. The beliefs of the organisation should appeal to new members; they should sound logical and reasonable, and have worth to members.

This carries into the demonising of other faction's creeds. Few factions consider the beliefs and ideals of another faction to be wholly legitimate or rational. In most cases, they will develop sophisticated arguments against the ideology of their rivals, dismissing them as illegitimate, wrong, unethical, foolish, abhorrent or dangerous.

Without this, factions will feel dislocation and confusion when confronted by the strongly held convictions of another faction; when faced with unwavering faith in an ideology, with no recourse to dismissing and denying those beliefs, anomie or hesitancy could easily strike.

The most dangerous instances of this is when two factions share very similar or identical ideologies. This mostly happens when a faction has split over some issue. Except for the issue that caused the rift, the two factions have (near) identical beliefs. No one likes to consider themselves on the ideologically faulty side. Criticism, reproach and vilification between the two factions tend to be bitter and emotive. The divisive issue comes to exemplify the faults

in the rival and the virtues in your own faction. Demonisation and denigration typifies most of the relations between rival-faction members, despite their concordance on all or most other issues.

Epilogue

This article is intended to aid troupes who are involved in political sagas, by giving an in-character document describing some political tactics and aims within the Order, and also to describe the use of factions in play.

The next *Politics and Conflict* article, "A Troubled Union", tracks the political decline of a tribunal as it struggles with the notions of plurality and tyranny. Following "A Troubled Union" is "Systems of Conflict", which proposes a system to allow political factions, as well as covenants, tribunals and Hermetic Houses to politically (and mundanely) combat each other, and allows you to design your own factions and covenants to confront one another. Finally "Power and Peril" will present seasonal political activities for ambitious Hermetic magi in between brewing potions, learning spells and extracting vis.

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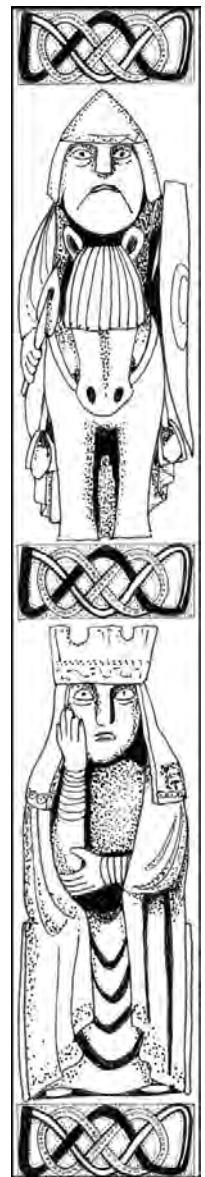
House Tremere: Democracy and debate in action?

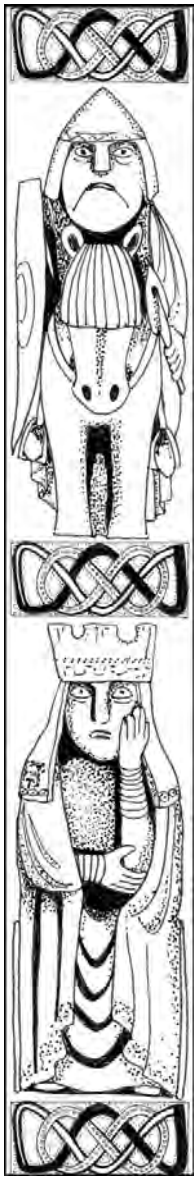
House Tremere is the most autocratic and authoritarian of the Hermetic Houses, valuing discipline and political acumen. How then could it possibly foster democracy and debate?

If we assume that House Tremere is made up of skilled political operators, then there can be no question that they are internally democratic and that there is debate. Machiavelli advised that "it is necessary for a prince to have the friendship of the people; otherwise he has no remedy in times of adversity... Therefore a wise prince must devise ways by which his citizens are always and in all circumstances dependent on him and on his authority; and then they will be faithful to him." (*The Prince*, Bk. IX.) If members of House Tremere feel they have a stake, that they have something to gain, or a reason to be interested, then they are more likely to obey the orders of their superiors. The only way for them to get this feeling of involvement is if their masters address issues of significance to them. In this manner, it is similar to the patron-client system in Rome. Although the client was expected to serve the interests of his patron, the patron was also obliged to reciprocate. Roman patricians and Emperors observed this maxim by providing employment, entertainment and food for the citizens of Rome; successful generals ensured that their troops were happy by making sure they were well and regularly paid, and received generous endowments upon being demobbed.

To be successful, a leader is also wise to listen to advice. Machiavelli again offers this advice, "a shrewd prince should adopt a middle way, choosing wise men for his government and allowing only those the freedom to speak the truth to him, and then only concerning matters on which he asks their opinions, and nothing else. But he should also question them thoroughly and listen to what they say; then he should make up his own mind, by himself." (Bk. XXIII.) The leadership of House Tremere would listen to advice, concerns and problems of their subordinates, as those subordinates have the ability to offer insights, information and intelligence on a range of different topics. To be successful in politics, leaders need to know as much as possible, to gather knowledge about their foes, to learn the details of a particular situation. Without that knowledge, as demonstrated above, effective strategies cannot be formed.

All this being the case, it is of course evident that ultimate power to make decisions lies with those thirteen members of House Tremere who hold their own sigils. Those thirteen mages, advised by the magi whose sigils they hold, then decide the ultimate goals and concerted actions of the House. That congress of thirteen debates issues, tactics, goals and objectives, and as a body, sets House policy, after which it is up to those individuals to ensure that the policies are enacted and enforced. While debate, friction and conflict within the House obviously exist — magi having strong personalities and oft-colliding opinions — the face they present to the rest of the Order is one of absolute loyalty, commitment, discipline and unity of purpose.





Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith (trans), USA: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Christopher Pierson, *The Modern State*, New York: Routledge, 1996.

Honourable mentions to: Cicero, Procopius, St. Paul, Shakespeare, Patriarch Cosmas and Tsar Boris's *Synodikon*.



Dear Abelard

Translator's Note:

Dear Abelard is a column devoted to the writings of an elderly follower of Bonisagus, who believed the best way to fulfill his duty to the Order was to share all of his advice and research in the form of written correspondence with a network of readers, carried by Redcaps to magi throughout Mythic Europe. If, through the course of your saga or studies, you discover a question that you think could at one time have been answered by Abelard, please forward it to the editor, Hermes.Portal@wanadoo.fr or to dearabelard@yahoo.com and we will attempt to find a record of his reply.

The translator wishes to acknowledge and extend his thanks to Roseanne Ryan, Alex White, and Erik Dahl for their worthy contributions to this season's efforts.



Salvete Sodales,

Once again it is summer, and the fields are as bright and tawny as a lion's coat, while inside it is as sleepy and warm as a kitten by the fire. Lammas fast approaches, and in the meantime I occupy myself by supervising the harvest and making Thomas, my new apprentice, comfortable in his new home. The boy has great potential — he thinks such thoughts as I have never considered, and he is so quick of mind! He is also very young, and a strain on my aging bones, but still a delight, and one I am grateful to have with me at this sad time. I shall regale you with tales of his development another day, but for now I have little enthusiasm for such matters, and so while I must respond to those who have so kindly written to me, it is a great effort to bring the pen to the page. Read on, my bewildered readers, and I am sure that all will soon become clear.

This first letter comes from a magus to whom I send sympathy as well as advice, for it seems he has been injured in battle and has trouble speaking because of his wounds. I have written him once already to clarify his earliest message, which was somewhat brief and not a little confusing; though this is likely because of the manner in which I received it, for it had been forwarded to me by another, who is not here to answer it, and this is what he refers to below. Here it is.



Dear Abelard,

I'm sorry it has taken me so long to respond to your letter concerning the question I sent you. I have been badly wounded in a fight with a magical tree and it has kept me from responding as quickly as I would otherwise. I do appreciate you taking the time to address this issue for some of us that are just starting out.

My new covenant has just formed and we are trying to write a charter. I'm not sure where to look for information about what should be in it, what is traditional, et cetera. It has been suggested that we concentrate on privileges, duties, responsibilities, new

members, and vis allocation. Are these the most vital areas or are they just a portion of the more important parts? If so, what are those parts? We want to make sure we don't miss something that is vital. My fellow magi and I appreciate any direction you may afford us.

Eduardo Combustivus ex Flambeau,
filius Domenick Explodicus

My dear Eduardo,

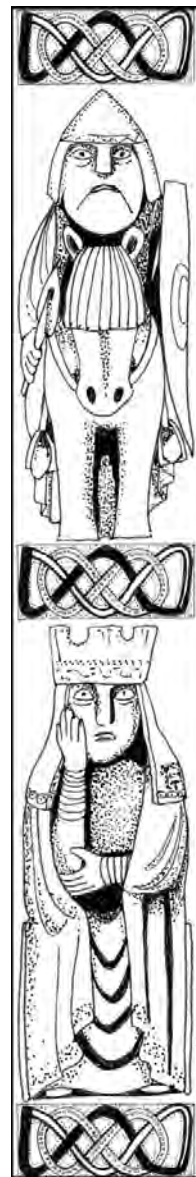
I can indeed enlighten you on what a charter should say and what you need to be sure to address when writing it. It is often a good idea to begin with an existing charter and modify it to meet your needs. To this end, as an example, I will copy out the charter of my covenant, Scriptoris Socii, which we might then discuss to determine where you should make changes. This charter was first written by an associate of mine in Provence, and I changed it in a few places at the advice of Moratamis, my learned sodalis of House Guernicus. It reads as follows:

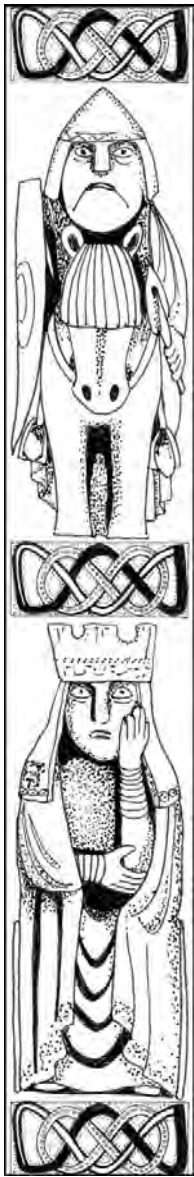
"This is the charter of the covenant of Scriptoris Socii, founded in A. A. 1336, the year of Our Lord 1197, in the Normandy Tribunal. This charter was written and signed by Moratamis, follower of Guernicus, Quaesitor in good standing; Lanatus, follower of Bonisagus; and Virvallus, follower of Mercere, Redcap.

"Dedication. This covenant is dedicated to the pursuit and exchange of knowledge, to the advancement and mastery of the magical arts, and to the fostering of peace among the magi of the Order of Hermes. This dedication is made not in name only, but that it shall be the guiding principle of our lives together. May the Order be preserved and may our small efforts add to its continued growth and strength.

"Requirements. Every wizard of this covenant shall be a member of the Order of Hermes. In the event any of us are cast out from the Order, we shall be considered also cast from this covenant, without any delay. Magi who wish membership in the covenant of Scriptoris Socii must be sponsored by one of its members, who shall present them at council. If the council wishes to attach any conditions to membership, these must be decided by a majority vote. If all magi in the covenant agree, they will be welcomed into our fold and given the status of a member in good standing. Any of us may resign at any time, but none may force another to leave without unanimous agreement among all magi at the covenant.

"Rights and Privileges. The members of the covenant of Scriptoris Socii are granted the following rights and privileges, for as long as they remain members in good standing. (I.) All magi are entitled to food required for good health, mundane resources necessary for their studies, and the right to attend, and speak at council, to which they will be always invited. These rights may not be removed by the council. (II.) Magi in good standing are entitled to call a council meeting, make use of the skills and talents of those who live and work at the covenant, and





to use any of the supplies of the covenant that they think necessary, unless a majority of the council votes otherwise. (III.) Magi in good standing may borrow any book that belongs to the covenant, but for no more than a season without offering it to others to read. These library rights may be revoked by a majority vote of the council.

“Duties and Responsibilities. The magi of the covenant are pledged to respect the following: (I.) Magi must surrender one half of the vis they or their servants acquire to the covenant’s stores without delay. (II.) Magi must surrender one half of the silver or other valuable resources they or their servants acquire to the covenant’s treasury without delay. (III.) Magi must govern the covenant, and carry out those responsibilities assigned to them by the council. (IV.) Magi must give to the covenant anything of value that they discover and do not wish to use; only the covenant as a whole may buy or sell property. Should the council find that any the covenant’s members have failed in these duties, they will lose their status as members in good standing until the council votes otherwise.

“Council Meetings. A council meeting may be called for any reason and may be held at any location in the covenant. For a quorum, at least half of the members of the covenant must be present. Without a quorum, no decisions may be made that affect the covenant as a whole or magi who are not present. Otherwise, the council has the authority to command or administer justice to all the servants of the covenant, and may limit or allocate any of its resources as necessity demands.

“In this we pledge our highest aspirations and beliefs. By the word of everything we hold to be true, we swear to obey the stipulations of this charter and the decisions of our council until death do betray us. And if we fail, may we be led into pain, failure, and dismal eternal solitude.”

There follows a list of our members, which we update every seven years. I sigh as I read that last paragraph, for now more than twenty years later it seems very harsh to me, but such was our fervor at our founding; we were quite convinced of the rightness of our cause. Yet in spite of this dark tone, I hope that our efforts will aid you in your pursuit of a worthy and binding document for your own covenant.

Your charter should be witnessed by a Quaesitor, and a copy given to him to keep, so that it is legal and your members may be held to their oaths to the covenant at Tribunal. He will assuredly advise you if you have omitted anything of importance from your document; give special care that you clearly outline what rights members have, how decisions will be made, and that everyone agrees to abide by these terms.

I also suggest you devise a symbol for your covenant. Not simply figuratively, though that may help to unite you and your sodales and those who serve you beneath a common banner, but a sigil that

represents you to others, by which you may be recognized at Tribunal. For example, our device is a red shield with a straight silver quill and two silver rings on either side, arranged like a nose and two eyes.

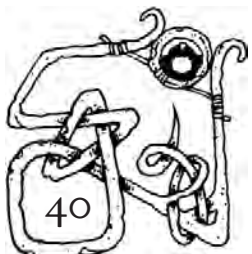
I admire your efforts, and I wish you well on your endeavor. I hope that your new union endures, and that the enthusiasm and goodwill between you and your sodales extends beyond your lifetime. Let us hope that by the time your flesh and bones are fully healed, your covenant is similarly whole, and that both remain so for many years to come.

If any of my sodales is in need of a covenant and would like to join Scriptoris Socii, please write to me and describe why you would be interested and what special qualities you would bring. Our home is small, but can always benefit from the vision of fresh magi who are dedicated to the same ideals that we are, and especially now they would be very welcome.



Dear Abeldard,

While traveling through the Tribunal of Thebes, I came across a small document archive near Thessalonika, which contained a book summarizing many of the ancient Hellenistic hymns and myths. I was startled to read of the dreadful Erictho, grandmother of the Thessalian Witches (my pater now informs me that they still persist!), and the vile necromancy and black arts she practiced.



Most startling of her depraved actions was her “drawing down” of the Moon. Such grandiose demonstrations of magical power were awe inspiring, not least because of the confirmation of that unthinkable power by more respectable authors, a confirmation which would presuppose the Daughters of Erichtho, now living in Thessaly without sanction from our beloved Order, to still possess this ability! Such calamity, I am sure you would agree, that barbarian witches, practitioners of base cannibal rites, possess a power greater and more potent than that taught to Bonisagus by Hermes Thrice-Great.

Upon learning this, I began an exploration of the Hermetic Limit of the Lunar Sphere. If mere uncivilized hedge-witches can achieve the feat of calling down the luminescent moon, then surely a Hermetic magus, masters as we are of all magical arts, should be able to do the same (if not more!). Alas, I have been stymied at every turn, not least by other members of our Order, who consider the very notion preposterous, laughable and impossible. I found most specifically that my understanding of the philosophy behind Bonisagus’ magical limit to be poor at best (the philosophical underpinnings of our Arts was not my pater’s strong point).

Hearing of your great and venerable erudition, I thought to throw myself on the benevolence of your wisdom, to explain the cause for that most aggravating and disheartening Hermetic Limit.

I remain, Perniciel, member of Lariander, follower of Tremere; farewell in grace, honour and dignity. My dear Perniciel,

You must be wary of believing everything you read. This book of Hellenistic hymns and myths you have seen is either tainted by what the authors wanted to believe was true, rather than what experimentation and faith have demonstrated to be true, or it is a lie perpetrated to draw you outside of God’s grace and so corrupt you. I have not read it, but I do not wish to do so, for it sounds to me wholly evil, and I shudder to think that you or any other of our Order might desire to pursue so dark a path. Such mysteries do not exist in fact.

I have indeed heard stories of the witches of Thessaly, but I believe that they, too, are a legend exaggerated for the morbid entertainment of those who enjoy such tales, and nothing but a morality lesson for those who would seek to increase their own power at the expense of their goodness. Surely there are no magi of our Order who claim they belong to this vile sorority, or who purport to achieve such feats with Hermetic magic as literally drawing the moon down to earth? Perhaps there are witches living in Thebes who wield power greater than that of Thrice-Great Hermes or Bonisagus, but I fear that they only wield it temporarily if they wield it at all, in the eternal service of those who oppose the will of Heaven.

I do not mean to discourage your research, but I believe the Limit of the Lunar Sphere is because of one of the most fundamental aspects of nature.

When God created the heavens and the earth, He separated them by a great firmament. The lunar sphere, then, is this dividing line between those intellectual substances that come from above (which the Platonists named ‘gods’), and those from below (‘daemons’). This is the order of nature; the whole of creation is governed by God through his angels and lesser spirits, and lower spirits preside over the lower bodies, higher spirits over the higher bodies, and the highest stand before God.

Even the substance of the celestial bodies is different from the elemental matter of our corporeal sphere below. As Basil wrote, “It is certain that the heaven was created spherical in shape, of dense body, and sufficiently strong to separate what is outside it from what it encloses.” Thus, our magic cannot penetrate that sphere because it cannot affect the substance from which it is made. Yet just as the firmament does not exclude light, as is clear from the fact that we can see the stars through the intervening heavens, so there is no impediment for the Empyrean to affect us with magic, influencing our lives and the events of this world from afar.

In any case, seek not to overcome the limits of God’s creation, but instead use them as models to inspire you to greatness. To ‘call down the Moon’, rather than attempt to literally draw the heavenly body down to earth and so imperil your soul by tempting evil, instead seek to invoke a luminous spirit of the Moon, one of feminine inspiration and change, and follow that spirit to wonders. Like Trianoma, you can bring about great good by illuminating the darkness of your thought and solitude, just as the moon lights the nighttime, and as she, remembered and honored, united the Founders.

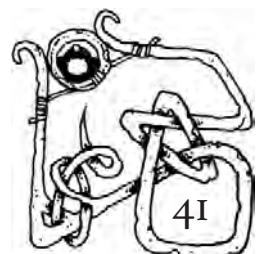
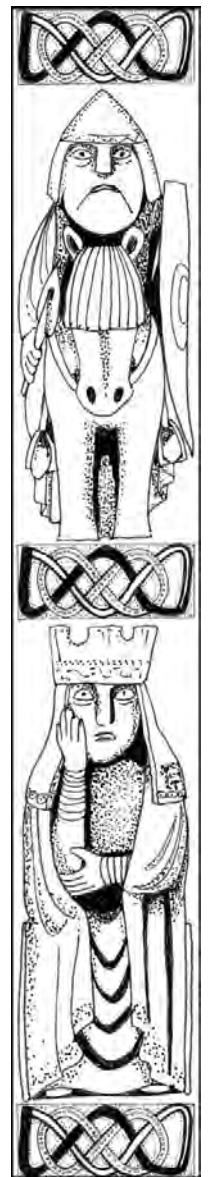
This caution leads me at last to my final letter this season, one which brings me such sadness that it is difficult for me to copy, and more difficult still to answer. Let me delay no more.

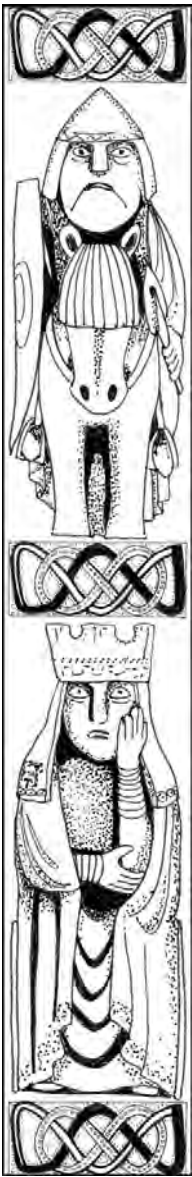


To her colleague, nay partner, to her sodalis, nay brother; his assistant, nay associate, his friend, nay sister: to ABELARD, MORATAMIS.

If since our last encounter you have not heard from me or received any word of my whereabouts, you must not attribute it to indifference on my part, or a rebuke for your tender and well-meaning declarations, but rather to my desire to spare you the pain of a confrontation over my departure. I am sorry for doing this, but I believe it is truly for the best, and I pray that you and God will forgive me for acting in such a manner, leaving as I do in the dead of night without even a word of warning to you, who once thought so highly of me.

To explain my absence, I can only say that I feel I need a change. This may come as a surprise to you, for it may have seemed to you that I was quite happy at Scriptoris Socii. Yet I am not happy, for I desire an identity beyond the pages of your column and the narrow walls that tightly enclose us in this little place, in this little country, in this little Tribunal. You have





delighted yourself by imagining that we are something greater than what we are, and that you are developing a family where your apprentice is your son and I am your wife. Yet this is not how it is, and I do not see things the same way, and for your sake and mine I believe it is best for me to go elsewhere.

This is difficult for me, dear Abelard, for while I have long known of your intense feelings, I do not share them. I had hoped that we could continue to interact with each other as we have in the past, together yet separate, united in our craft but individual in our lives, and I now see that this is impossible for you. Our separateness causes you such anguish, you see in me something that I have never experienced, something that you desire and I do not understand, and I cannot bear it. I believe that distance is the only cure for this malady. From now on, let us commune in letters and prayer, in magic and the mind. Let me be your sister in Hermes, and you my brother in Christ. Respect my decision, and do not come after me.

I have always had the highest confidence in your ability and good sense, and do not think that you will need me with you to continue to comfort the weak and encourage the fainthearted, both by word and example, as indeed you have been doing since you first took pen to paper. If you still care for our sodales of the Order as intimately as you claim to care for me, that is sufficient to make me believe that any earnest encouragement from me would be superfluous. If in your humility you think differently, and you feel you have need of my advice or writings in matters pertaining to the law, write to me what you want, so that I may answer as time permits me.

Meanwhile, thanks be to God who has undoubtedly filled your heart with anxiety for my perils in the wild potential of the unknown. These concerns speak well of you, and your pure love of all of your sodales, not just those who come most readily to mind being so near. Perhaps I will one day write to you with the story of my journey. Until then, may divine mercy through the support of your prayers protect me on the wandering path I have chosen, and quickly crush the devil beneath my feet as I travel.

So, Abelard, live, fare you well, yourself and your children with you, live, but I pray be mindful of me, and perhaps one day when time has cleared our hearts of too much passion and too little truth, we will meet again in the flesh, not as amatores, but as amici. For that day, be good and of good spirits, for I wish you the best.

Moratamis, follower of Guernicus,
filius of Empistula,
quaesitor and maga libera.

My dearest Moratamis,

I do not know how I should respond to your letter, which I discovered beneath the others in our laboratory, now only mine, long after you had made good your escape. I have always said I will answer every letter I receive, though some I do not share in order to allow the reader a degree of anonymity. Yet

many will wonder as I did when they learn you have chosen to leave Scriptoris Socii, and rather than drive gossip and speculation before you, I feel it is better to leave no barriers between us and understanding and answer you here truly.

I do not accept that it is a mistake for me to tell you the depth of my feeling for you. I love you and I will always love you. Such words cannot be kept within, they beg the heavens to be loosed, and when made manifest on the page they become almost alive. Words are part of our Art, and the power of words cannot be denied; they have a soul, they can speak, they have in them all the force which expresses the transports of the heart, they enclose all the fire of our passions. Like our magic, these words exist apart from us and live on without us. I understand that you do not feel the same way about me, but I cannot see why my words must drive you away. My grief is far greater from the manner in which I lose you than from the loss of you.

In His Name who still protects you, I beg you to restore to me your presence when you can, in whatever way you can, by writing to me from the shores to which your tossing ship carries you, that you may have me at least as your partner from afar in grief or joy. And if the tempest of your journey is stilled for a space, then hasten all the more to write, for the more pleasant your letter will be to me, if only to show me that you still keep me in mind.

If the name of lover is absurd, sweeter to me still is the word for friend, and so I will think no ill of you in respect of that blessed title. Farewell, my all.

I remain, as I will always remain,

Abelard

This letter was written by Lanatus, follower of Bonisagus, and dedicated to his sodalis Moratamis, follower of Guernicus. To receive his regular correspondence, or to ask for his advice, please send your name, covenant and Tribunal to Dear Abelard, Scriptoris Socii, Normandy. Your confidentiality will be respected.





Heretic's Corner: Aura pro nobis

by Michaël de Verteuil

Heretic's Corner is usually about simplifying, streamlining and harmonizing flawed game mechanics. With ArM5 fast approaching, I thought we should try something new that did not involve new proposed rules that would probably become irrelevant within a few weeks of publication. As the title suggests, this issue's heresy (such as it is) involves a discussion of auras (and yes, the title is meant to be a pun).

The mechanics governing auras are not so much flawed as scattered and incomplete. Out of the whole mess one can discern four rules of general applicability:

1. Each supernatural Realm has an associated aura which can range in strength from 1-10.
2. Attempts to use supernatural powers while in an aura are subject to the appropriate modifier determined according to the Realm Interaction Table unless otherwise specified.
3. Supernatural powers used in an aura associated with a different Realm are subject to an increased number of botch dice equal to the strength of the alien aura.
4. When auras associated with different Realms overlap, only the stronger is apparent and has any effect.

Beyond these four basic rules, additional mechanics appropriate to each Realm can be found scattered here and there throughout the canon. Each Realm is essentially treated as *sui generis*. The lack of unifying overarching mechanics has certain advantages. It lets the game developers avoid having to make any firm metaphysical observations about how the various Realms relate to each other. It also leaves lots of scope for variety.

On the other hand, this unsystematic approach has also allowed a very uneven treatment with the Dominion receiving the most detailed attention and, most ironically, the Magic Realm receiving the least. Nevertheless, I am inordinately fond of wild extrapolations (a rather common attribute generally shared by heretics), and the canon is not without hints concerning the Magic Realm, which I now propose to tease and flesh out.

By now some of you may well be wondering what scattered, incomplete, Realm-specific mechanics I am referring to. They can be grouped as addressing five general questions with respect to each Realm:

1. How do the various auras associated with a given Realm differ from one another (if at all) other than in terms of strength?
2. What is the origin of each aura?
3. To what extent does a particular aura's strength vary naturally over time?
4. To what extent can characters affect the strength of an aura?
5. How far do the boundaries of an aura normally extend?

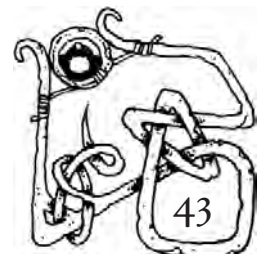
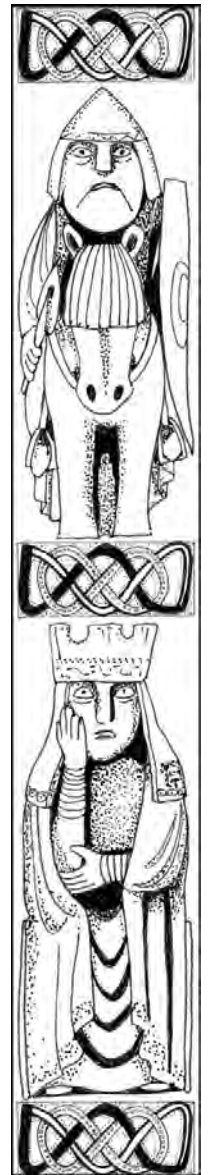
As I don't have the space here to discuss in detail each of the four supernatural Realms, I propose to focus on the Dominion (as the most fleshed out) and the Magic Realm (both because it is of most interest to magi and because its cursory treatment in the canon leaves scope for legitimate metaphysical speculation). Readers expecting detailed mechanics will unfortunately be disappointed. As mentioned earlier, in this issue Heretic's Corner waxes more philosophical than practical, and the essential heresy advocated here is that each individual aura should be unique. If the suggestions appeal to you, you should have little trouble developing your own mechanics.

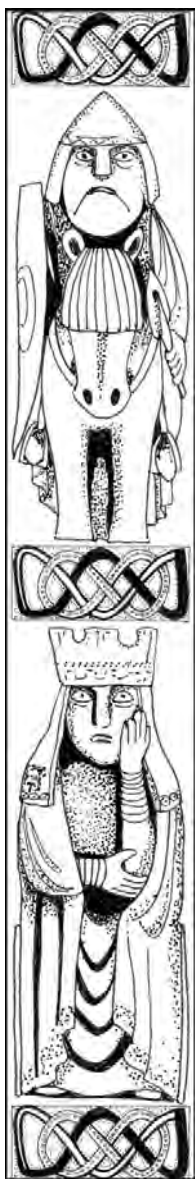
The Auras of the Dominion

Canonically there are many different types of Divine auras. At least six are associated with Christianity alone: the standard or "calm" auras, the "wrathful", "merciful", "just" and "righteous" auras profiled in *Pax Dei*, and the stoic "Celtic" auras which, according to *Lion of the North*, are found in Hibernia and Highland Scotland. There is also a Jewish version of the Dominion and (not having read *Blood and Sand*) there may be at least one Muslim one as well. Speculatively, there could even be Divine auras associated with "righteous" (as opposed to "idolatrous") pagan cults, or with no cult at all.

Each of these Divine auras has its own properties and may affect the powers associated with other Realms differently. Some Dominion aura types also affect more "natural" phenomena such as combat, healing or human social interaction.

While the rules don't say so explicitly, each Dominion aura should in principle have a specified point of origin. Canonically, Christian auras flow from altars though it would probably be more accurate to say that they emanate from the holy relics





these altars are built over. When incorporated into an altar, a relic can produce an aura with a strength of 5, or higher if the altar contains more than one relic, as is commonly the case for larger churches. Without an altar, some (though by no means all) relics might generate an aura of strength 1 or 2. Similar minor auras might be produced by icons and, in very rare cases, the site of a miracle or martyrdom might be so imbued with latent holiness as to produce an aura with a strength as high as 10.

Jewish auras are described as emanating from Torah scrolls. When incorporated in a *binah*, such a scroll produces a strong aura similar to that of a Christian altar. A Torah scroll on its own, kept in a *genizah* for example, might produce an aura of 2, while a phylactery nailed to a doorway might generate an aura with a strength of 1.

One way to make each aura unique would be to give it properties or attributes related to its origin. An aura produced by the relic of a saint renowned for his irenic spirit, for example, might make those present more disposed to reason and compromise. Similarly, an aura emanating from a Torah scroll scribed by a learned scholar might provide positive modifiers to scriptural study. Such properties might help explain why Mythic European craftsmen tend to live and work clustered around churches containing the relics of the patron saint of their trade.

The Dominion ebbs at night and on days of mourning (such as Good Friday), but flows on holy days (such as Sunday, Christmas and Easter for Christian auras). This normally involves a temporary increase or decrease in the strength of the aura by 1, though these effects can be cumulative. Thus Christmas day falling on a Sunday might see the Christian Dominion rise in strength by 2, while the same aura might decline by 2 on Good Friday between sundown and midnight. Note that Easter always falls on a Sunday. The feast day of the saint associated with the originating relic should also count as a holy day leading to a whopping +3 if the saint's day happens to fall on Easter. As the altars of larger churches are often built on the relics of more than one saint, more than one saint's day might be involved.

According to *Pax Dei*, the specific "temper" of a Dominion aura can be changed by an officiating cleric. It is elsewhere suggested that a Dominion aura can be temporarily strengthened though ritual acts such as praying. This might be extended to sprinkling holy water, burning incense and administering communion. The fact that all four are regularly performed at an altar might help explain the mechanism whereby a relic sealed within can generate a much stronger aura than it might on its own. In all other contexts, however, I would cap the benefits of multiple ritual acts at +1, and this only for the duration of the act itself (though a choir of monks singing in shifts can strengthen an aura for a very long time). Similarly, acts of violence, bloodshed and desecration might temporarily decrease the strength of an aura (at most until the altar can be reconsecrated).

Note that this postulates the prior existence of an underlying Dominion aura (even if submerged by a stronger aura associated with a different Realm). Praying or burning incense in the wilderness would presumably not produce a Dominion aura where one does not already exist, though such actions might benefit characters in other ways.

Finally, there is the question of how far a Dominion aura should extend. The only canonical rules are that the Divine auras, in conformity with folk myth, extend as far as the sound of church bells can be heard, and that the strength of the Dominion declines gradually the farther one gets from an altar. The specific mechanics governing this decline are not clearly spelled out but (thanks to extrapolation) can be derived from an inferred "sensory" limit similar to the Hermetic Limit of Arcane Connection. The aura is thus strongest at the altar where the resting place of the relics can be seen and where the other four senses are implicated through the regular performance of ritual acts: Prayer (sound), sprinkling (touch), incense (smell) and communion (taste). The farther one is from the altar, the fewer the senses that come into play, until one can barely make out the sound of church bells or singing in the distance.

Most towns, some villages, and even some of the larger individual churches might have more than one altar, each one generating its own unique aura, and this is not even including the occasional synagogue. Presumably the strongest aura prevails at any given point with the boundary shifting from day to day in response to competing holy days. Where Divine auras are tied in strength, the boundary probably lies at the point at which the church bells or singing associated with each aura sound equally loud. This might explain in part the medieval stimulus towards ever higher steeples and larger bells.

This then, using a bit of extrapolation, can serve as a framework for making sense of Dominion auras while providing for plot and game enhancing individuality. Let's now look at what can be done for the Magic Realm by extrapolating (somewhat more wildly) from the rather thin canonical treatment. There is just the barest hint offered here and there, and much of the necessary extrapolation will have to rest on a number of (heretical?) metaphysical assumptions about the nature of the Magic Realm.

Magical Auras

How many different types of magic auras can be found in Mythic Europe? It's hard to say for sure, and I doubt anyone will ever come up with a complete list, but let me propose a few magical sub-Realms with which specific auras might be affiliated. Some of these auras would be more suited to some covenants than others, and their variety could play a role in determining the location and/or future evolution of new covenants.

The Land of the Dead: This would include auras associated with ghosts and other revenants. This involves making a metaphysical distinction



between the spirit, which merely animates the live human body, and the soul which is the person's true self. According to this assumption, when the body dies, the soul lives on in the afterlife. The spirit usually dissolves at death but, in the case of those not given a proper Christian (or Jewish?) burial, may live on separately as a ghost that mirrors the deceased's former personality (albeit often in distorted or exaggerated form). In rare cases the surviving spirit may even reanimate its former and now soulless body or some other corpse, or even temporarily possess the body of someone still among the living. Magical auras associated with the dead might be found amidst former pagan grave sites, for example (admit it: you always wanted to live in a barrow), and might be strongly attuned to Necromancy, Intellego, Perdo or Mentem magic.

The Natural Realm: This sub-Realm would include auras associated with animal or plant spirits. Animals need spirits to move and plants need them to grow. When plants and animals die, their spirits, like those of humans, can sometimes live on. Some Ars players prefer to associate nature with Faerie, and others argue that Faerie should just be a variant of the Magic Realm. The canon, however, is reasonably clear in associating nature with the Magic Realm rather than with Faerie. "Natural" magic auras might be found, for example, in deep primeval forests, fossil beds, petrified forests, nesting sites of migrating birds, salmon spawning grounds or "elephant graveyards", and be attuned to Herbalism, or to Creo, Animal or Herbam magic.

The Spirit World: Often worshiped in pagan times as major and minor gods, the spirits associated with these auras represent a bewildering array of specific abstract human phenomena, ranging from war to trades, crafts, knowledges, lores and emotions like love, revenge and happiness. Such auras might be found at the sites of former pagan temples, or amidst abandoned settlements or ruins, and might be attuned to enchantment, Muto or Vim magic.

The Land of Dreams: This type of magic aura is described in considerable detail in *The Mysteries*.

The Realm of Ideas: Closely associated with the Land of Dreams, this sub-Realm contains auras populated with spirits taking the form of thoughts, concepts and ideal types. These auras might be found amidst ancient arcane libraries, archives and laboratories, and could provide bonuses to Divination, Rego, Imaginem or Mentem magic.

The Physical World: This includes yet another set of auras, perhaps the most common of all, associated with one or more of the four elements: Aquam, Auram, Ignem and Terram. These auras would normally be found in places of wonder where the elements impinge on one another or where their boundaries blur. Typical sites would be mountain tops or caves (Terram vs Auram), volcanic craters (Terram vs Ignem), islands, lake beds or tidal flats (Terram vs Aquam), hot springs (Ignem vs Aquam),

scorching deserts (Ignem vs Auram), or misty waterfalls (Auram vs Aquam).

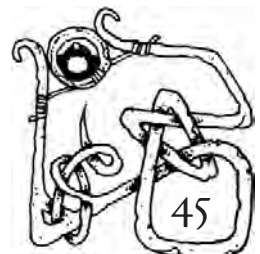
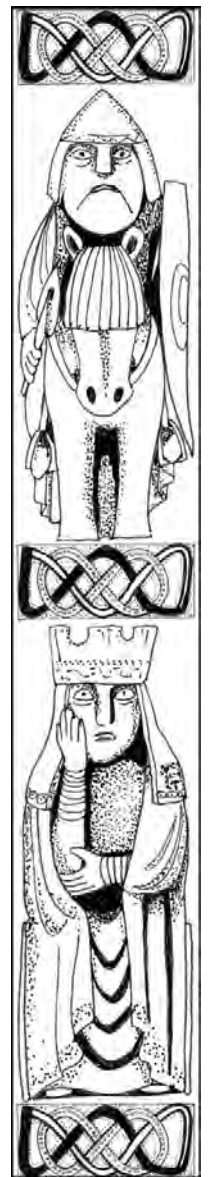
All the auras of the Magic Realm appear to ebb and flow according to the movements of the heavenly spheres, gaining for example a +1 in strength at the Winter solstice and presumably a -1 at the Summer solstice. Eclipses, planetary conjunctions or the aurora borealis might also add +1, while the appearance of comets, novae or meteor showers might represent some breakdown in the natural order and so a -1 to the strength of magical auras. New and full moons might not affect the strength of magical auras per se, but might varyingly help or hinder opposing types of magic.

The Limit of Essential Nature states that Hermetic magic "cannot alter any supernatural aura." This clearly rules out changing a Divine to a magical aura, but does allow for changing the attunement of a magical aura through Sacred Architecture, for example. But can Hermetic magic permanently or temporarily boost the strength of a magical aura? I think it is probably safe to assume that Hermetic magic cannot do so reliably, else strength 5 auras would be more common than they are.

There is a tantalizing suggestion that magical auras can be created (and so implicitly strengthened) "after the working of powerful magic", presumably as an unintended by-product. Perhaps magical auras can be boosted as a result of arcane experimentation and original research, possibly involving the manipulation of standing stones and ley lines, for example. The fact that no established method of doing so is known to the Order probably reflects both the difficulty and uncertainty of the task. Magical auras are a rare resource, after all, and experimenting with their strength might collapse them entirely or boost them counterproductively beyond a strength of 5 leading to accelerated Twilight for magi and physical warping for covenfolk.

Unlike Dominion auras, magical auras are of even strength over the whole of the usually small area they occupy. How then is the boundary of a magical aura determined? For islands and caves, the boundaries are reasonably clear. In other cases, the limit of perception suggested for Dominion auras can probably be applied. Each magical aura can be reasonably assumed to extend as far as its underlying source phenomenon can be perceived *in situ*. A mountain top can obviously be perceived from far away, but if you are far away you are equally obviously not on the mountain top.

So this concludes our heavy, but rules and mechanics-lite, treatment of Divine and magical auras. The same general principles and approach can be used to flesh out the treatment of Faerie and Infernal auras as well. The next installment of Heretic's Corner is roughly scheduled to come your way just as ArM5 hits the store shelves. So I propose to then attack one topic I am reasonably sure ArM5 will not change for the better: the rules governing the nature and uses of vis.



The Lesson

by Matt Ryan

Crow walked the muddy path behind his master, the wizard Albertus. They followed their protectors, Sean and Padraig, although Albertus claimed he needed them not save as baggage handlers. Indeed, besides their short heavy spears, each carried rucksacks stuffed full of camping gear and miscellaneous equipment. The group had been walking for three days, through verdant forests and skirting amber fields, following seldom used paths and hunting trails to avoid accidental encounters. Twice they had left the trail and hidden as groups of woodcutters trooped past. They ate hard bread and apples as they walked and slept outside during the nights.

The boy was called Crow because of his black hair and shadowy eyes. He was eleven, with spindly arms and reedy legs, and a penchant for brooding. He wore a dun-colored tunic and dirty cotton leggings and carried a sack of Albertus' possessions too dear to store in Sean or Padraig's. He had been Albertus' apprentice for five years, living with him and a collection of other magi at *Limes alcis*, a stone tower-house build in the style of the Norman invaders. Before that he had lived with his father, a coastal fisherman, and his mother, a charmer and a midwife. But bad luck had brought him to Albertus' attention, and Crow feared worse luck was in store for him under the wizard's tutelage.

As the sun set on the third day, the group came to a halt atop a low hill overlooking a peasant farm. Although the look of the farm was familiar, much like the farms near his home, it was not one that Crow recognized. In the past five years he had only left *Limes alcis* a handful of times, all in the company of his master and each a visit to one of the other communities of wizards, called covenants. They differed in manner and appearance, but each held a collection of wizards who had sworn themselves into the fellowship of the Order of Hermes. Crow would one day speak the same oath and join its ranks. If he survived apprenticeship, he thought.

Albertus conferred briefly with Sean and Padraig before shooing them away. He sat down, facing the farm. Wordlessly, Crow joined him. The sun set, and with it Crow's shield of magical protection dissipated. He immediately began the enchantment to reactivate it, but Albertus interrupted him with a curt shake of his head. Crow noticed that Albertus refused to perform his ritual protection as well. Odd. Raising his *parma magica* at sunrise and sunset was one of Albertus' first lessons, and its importance had been daily reinforced until it was second nature.

They watched the peasant men drive their shaggy-coated cattle into a fenced enclosure before entering their house. The orange light of their cooking fire was visible from beneath wooden door. Master and apprentice waited patiently until it ebbed and vanished, at which point Albertus descended the hill,

Crow dutifully in tow. In the black night they walked to the cattle pen's closed gate. The herd was quiet, sleeping at the corral's far end. Albertus reached into his satchel and retrieved a small red hurling ball, fist-sized and made of wood, used in the stick-and-ball games of the boys. The magus threw the ball into the corral.

"A game, master," Crow asked in a whisper. His master often confronted him with puzzles and challenges, believing that wisdom was achieved only through discord. In this fashion had his master been taught, and Crow knew that if the time came for him to teach an apprentice, he too would follow his lineage's tradition. They were *fili tytali*, 'sons of Tytalus', and they would not skirt conflict, nor avoid tense situations. Was this the whole point of their three day walk?

Albertus said, "Bring me the ball."

Crow blinked, thinking. This didn't seem much of a test. He could nearly see the ball in the mud near the cows. A simple cantrip would float it back to him. But as he began the first arcane sentence, his hands raised in gesticulation, Albertus gripped him and said: "No spells."

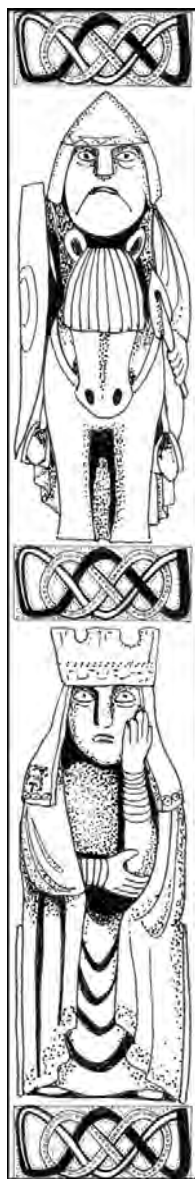
Crow considered. No spells? Albertus used magic constantly and encouraged Crow to act similarly. They cast spells to move laboratory equipment, start fires, clean equipment. Every mundane chore was accomplished by a nonchalant enchantment. Not using spells was peculiar behavior indeed. Crow eyed the hurling ball.

He couldn't go through the corral. His Gift, that mysterious component of human nature that allowed some to practice magic, would certainly excite the cows. The last thing Crow wanted was a house full of angry peasants thinking he was stealing their cattle. Not casting his *parma magica* now made sense, since the protective shield slightly ameliorated the Gift's effect on others. He thought he could walk on the fence itself, balancing as he went, but he would eventually have to mingle with the herd. Albertus' challenges were often physical, his tests meant to hone Crow's mental, magical, and bodily skills. Was he just to walk into the herd? What would be the point of that?

Albertus interrupted Crow's ruminations: "Bring me the ball."

Crow shrugged and scrambled over the fence. He wasn't sure what Albertus' game was, but uncertainty wouldn't stop him. He walked boldly towards the cows. As he suspected, his Gift startled them. They reacted instantly, bellowing a warning to their brethren and rushing away from the apprentice. The lad passed through the boisterous herd and picked up the red ball, holding it aloft like a coveted trophy.

Crow heard shouts from the house, cries of alarm and warning. The door burst open and a throng of hastily armed men charged the corral. Frightened, Crow tried to run back to the gate, but the cows were too excited to safely move through. Avoiding the milling cows, he was forced towards the side of the fence nearest the peasant. Only a few feet away, Crow saw them clambering over the wooden



barrier. Fear gripped his legs. He stood wide eyed, unable to tear his stare from an axe held in a man's angry hand.

From the darkness Albertus charged into the herdsmen.

The magus snatched the first defender from the rails and hurled him into the churning herd. He lashed out with fists and feet, striking into the herdsmen's soft flesh. Two fell and two more engaged the wizard, jabbing at Albertus with jagged-toothed knives. Watching his master broke the terror that held Crow, and he rushed to his aid. From the corral he threw the hurling ball and struck an opponent's head. The man stumbled and Albertus, taking advantage of his helplessness, deftly bent his neck to a mortal angle.

But as the magus beat back the first wave of defenders, more came. The house emptied a half score of men and nearly grown boys willing to risk life and limb to protect their hoofed prosperity. The noise distracted Albertus, allowing a herdsman to stab him in the arm. Crow yelled a belated warning as the magus sank to his knees. Suddenly, two new men rushed towards his master out of the black night, spearmen wearing hoods and bright tunics, a red circle painted on their backs and breasts.

"*Circulus ruber*," gasped Crow, recognizing the symbol of a neighboring covenant, one who's antagonistic relationship had often led to aggressive episodes. He leapt the fence, pulling his dagger free from his belt, and delivered a thrust to the secondary warrior's blind side, piercing his kidney. Blood pounding in his temples, Crow turned toward the leading spearman, who was jabbing his spear into a peasant's face. He was protecting Albertus! The rival's assistance baffled Crow. Did he not notice that the boy had wounded his partner? Strike followed counter-strike and the spearman removed the men hovering over the wounded magus. Albertus recovered a discarded axe. Together he and the spearman continued against the defenders, whose greater number pressed the pair sorely.

"Let loose the cows," yelled Albertus. Shaking off his perplexity, Crow quickly complied. He freed the gate, allowing the bovine welter to burst out in all directions, a surge of flashing horns and ominous hooves. Albertus scrambled to the safety of the fence, pulling the *Circulus ruber* spearman with him. The herdsmen were not as lucky and were caught in the stampede. Some fell beneath the herd, the rest fled, joining their already departed wives and children into the dark folds of the hilly countryside. The herd charged away into the night.

Albertus walked Crow to the fallen spearman, wounded by the boy and then trampled to death by the escaping cows. Crouching, he removed the man's hood, and Crow's stomach knotted as he recognized Sean, his face contorted in death's grip. Albertus took the sharp knife from Crow's failing grip and began to remove the man's features. Crow turned from the grisly work.

The other spearman was setting the farmers' cottage afire, and Crow recognized Padraig's husky face. Within moments, wicked flames danced hungrily atop the house's thatched roof. Shock and confusion overtook Crow and he stared dumbly at the man's malevolent work. Finished, Albertus stood facing the blanching boy and looked deeply into his eyes.

"Three months ago, our southern fields were salted, spoiling their fecundity," Albertus said. Crow nodded with dull remembrance. "We discovered remnants of the magic of Lubrica, a Tytalus maga from *Circulus ruber*. Her actions will affect our winter, when we are hungry from the lack of wheat. Some of us may starve to death. Her affront has now been repaid."

"You meant for this to happen," asked Crow with quivering voice. "To kill the peasants? Steal the cows? For me to stab..." the boy's voice faltered.

"I meant to implicate *Circulus ruber* in a crime. This farm lies near their covenant, perhaps half a day's march. These peasants have long been suspicious of their wizard neighbors. Now they will seek vengeance against them, thinking them cattle thieves. Sean and Padraig wore the disguise of *Circulus ruber* warriors to propagate this ruse. I wanted them to be seen, posing as a raiding party. I did not wish for any of us to remain," he nodded towards Sean's corpse.

"Conflict is a force, a fire. It spreads of its own volition. We must ride it to master it, be engulfed before we can overcome. Sean's body, mutilated beyond recognition, will now be left as evidence against Lubrica and her colleagues. Even in death he still serves *Limes aleis*."

"Why didn't you use magic," asked Crow. "You could have easily bested the peasants."

"Magic leaves traces. I didn't allow us spells to ensure that no stamp of our magic would remain, like Lubrica's did in our fields. The Quaesitor judges of our Order have methods that can identify spells cast on an area. I doubt this will come to their attention, but if it does, we have left no arcane identifiers."

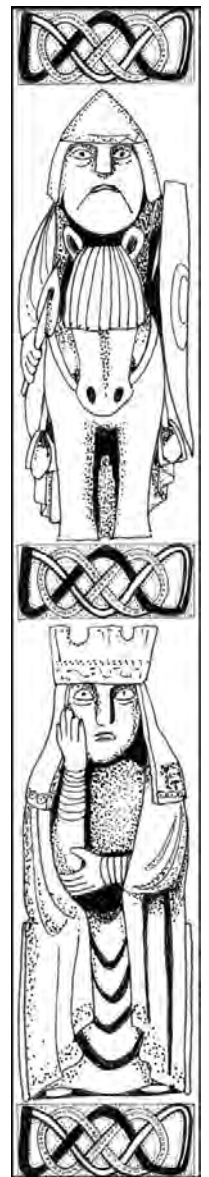
"And the ball," asked the boy. "A game?"

"A game that proved you to be brave. An excellent quality and one vital to a magus of House Tytalus."

Padraig interrupted Albertus' explanation. "We must go. They will return with force."

Wizard and apprentice followed spearman again. Albertus' firm hand on Crow's shoulder lent the boy the strength to walk. But only temporarily, and half a mile from the farm the group had to stop so Crow could vomit the bile churning in his stomach.

No more kind words flowed from his master, but Crow knew Albertus was pleased with him. He ruefully speculated on the consequences of his actions, wondering what would be said at *Limes aleis* once they returned. Padraig refused his gaze, preferring to keep his eyes scanning the hills. Their rest only lasted a few moments before Padraig compelled the group to continue. Home lay in wait, with dry straw pallets and warm bowls of stew. Crow hoped the return walk would erase his guilt.



Coming in Issue #13 of
HERMES' PORTAL

**Covenants As Characters,
Continued**

by Erik Dahl

Prince of Magi

by Alexander White

Germanic Shapechangers

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