

Ars Magica

Hooks



by Andersen, Brennan,
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Chapter One

Introduction

Welcome to *Hooks*, an adventure supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*.

The library of *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* supplements contains many exciting and intriguing story opportunities for your saga. However, it is sometimes difficult to provide a rationale, in play, that draws the player characters in these new story directions. This book, *Hooks*, provides your troupe with a set of short scenarios that each lure the player characters into new story opportunities.

Each scenario is intended to introduce another supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*, and has been written to

only take a single session of play, although depending on your troupe the scenarios may actually take longer to resolve. There is nothing wrong with your troupe if this happens!

The scenarios all offer suggestions as to how your troupe can extend the story in later play using the target supplement, but your troupe does not need to extend the scenarios if you do not want to. Playing these scenarios gives your troupe the chance to see whether you enjoy a certain sort of story, and a launchpad for more of the same if you do. If you don't, the scenarios are perfectly playable as one-off adven-

tures either by themselves or as interludes in a larger saga.

Some chapters refer to the rules and terminology of their target supplement (or other *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* books). If understanding these rules and terms are critical to using the chapter's scenario a brief explanation is given in the text. Otherwise, these references are not directly relevant now, but may be relevant later if the troupe continues to explore the story possibilities in later play.

Note that your troupe does not actually require the target supplements to play these scenarios; they are intended as tasters.



The Scenarios

Each scenario is briefly described here, without spoilers, so that you can choose what you would like to play.

Birth Right

The infant son of the baron is abducted by faeries. The faeries plot to gain power over the baron's fiefdom, which includes (or borders on) the player character covenant.

This scenario introduces *Realms of Power: Faerie*.

Echoes of the Ancient Dead

Clay tablets with clues to the location of the lost Canaanite city of En-Dor in the Levant fall into the hands of the covenant. A magus arrives claiming to be the rightful owner. Will the player character magi work with or against him in his quest for the forgotten secrets of the ancient Canaanite necromancers?

This scenario introduces *Ancient Magic*, Canaanite Necromancy chapter.

Into the Valley

The covenant discovers that a local vis source is being harvested by a magus who has taken residence in a nearby town. Confronting the thief reveals a deeper plot involving the awakening of an ancient power.

This scenario introduces *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, Bjornaer chapter.

New Deal

The magi are confronted by an imminent shortage of lab supplies when their regular supplier fails to deliver. The player characters need to find new suppliers and strike new deals, potentially involving them in the machinations of the merchants. Perhaps they are better off starting a business of their own?

This scenario introduces *City and Guild*, especially trading and shipping.

Salvation

The magi learn of a nearby, haunted, ruined monastery. Can the player characters investigate without damning their immortal souls?

This scenario introduces *Realms of Power: Infernal*.

Small Game

A pair of covenant grogs begin to act strangely, as if they are being manipulated into spying on the covenant. Can the player characters discover the mechanism behind these cat's paws?

This scenario introduces the *Ancient Magic* sourcebook's Mechanica of Heron chapter.

The River

A Tytalus magus floods a river, killing hundreds of mundanes, and perhaps damaging the properties of magi. The magus claims his actions are not criminal because (in the Rhine Tribunal) he is the guardian of this river. Do the player characters, and the rest of the Tribunal, support this interpretation of the Code or not?

This political scenario introduces *Guardians of the Forests: Rhine Tribunal*, particularly for sagas set in a different Tribunal.

To the Dark Tower

A noble knight has a terrible vision of the ruin that the covenant will bring to his lord's lands. The knight thus travels on a quest to slay the player character magi.

This scenario introduces the *Lords of Men* sourcebook.

Birth Right

A naked and screaming baby boy is held aloft by a pale woman, wearing a long white lace bridal gown, standing in a verdant forest clearing. The forest-edge is crowded with a fantastic audience: rank centaurs, fecund satyrs, valiant knights. Even the gnarled trees closely observe this ritual held at the forest-heart.

A moment of irritation flashes over the pale woman's otherwise calm face as she carefully pries open the baby's chubby, clenched fist and slips a tiny gold ring onto his finger.

The baby falls asleep and the beautiful, pale woman smiles serenely once more, sliding a larger

gold ring onto her own slender finger. The creatures watching from the forest-edge applaud and cheer the marriage. From among the joyful throng a band of faerie knights turn away and head out from the green forest-heart. Out toward the world of men...

The Faerie Queen Blegen

The beautiful pale woman is the faerie queen Blegen. She has a Sovereign Ward that means that she cannot leave her forested fa-

erie kingdom. However, Blegen is insatiably curious about the mundane world. Her plan is to marry the infant, first-born son of a local noble and then have her faerie knights assassinate the noble. Her baby husband will inherit his father's lands and, due to his infancy, she will rule until his majority. This will expand her faerie kingdom to encompass the local lands of men, allowing her to "break" her Sovereign Ward and venture into the mortal world.

Blegen's plan has three phases:

- Kidnap the baron's baby son.
- Marry the baron's baby son.
- Assassinate the baron.



Faerie Queen Blegen

Faerie Might: 20 (Herbam)

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

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Focus Power (forest queen), Increased Might, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Humanoid Faerie, Personal Power (castle eyes), Narrowly Cognizant, Enemies (loyalists, Old Nanny), Proud, Sovereign Ward (faerie kingdom), Obsessed (outside faerie kingdom)

Personality Traits: Proud +6

Reputations: Forest Queen (local) +5

Soak: -1

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Area Lore: Local 4 (forest), Awareness 5 (castle eyes), Bargain 6 (mortal men), Charm 4 (mortal men), Etiquette 5 (courtly), Folk Ken 3 (nobles), Guile 4 (mortal men), Intrigue 6 (plotting), Leadership 5 (faeries), Magic Lore 1 (court wizards), Music 5 (harp), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (House Merinita), Penetration 5 (castle eyes), Ride 3 (faerie beasts), Stealth 1 (courts)

Powers:

Faerie Sight: This power allows the faerie to automatically distinguish mundane things from glamor, and to automatically identify another faerie's glamor, and to automatically see an Arcane Connection (and know to whom it is an Arcane Connection, if that person is present). The faerie can also use faerie sight to determine the motives and goals of other faeries (Awareness + Perception roll against an Ease Factor equal to Might of other faerie / 5). See *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 50 for more details.

Faerie Speech: This power allows the faerie to duplicate the language spoken by her human audience. See *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 50 for more details.

Forest Queen, 1 point per magnitude of effect, Init -4, Herbam or Animal: The faerie queen can duplicate any Hermetic Herbam or Animal effect, up to level 25, that affects the forest, or its inhabitants. The power costs 1 point per magnitude of effect.

Castle Eyes, 0 point, constant, Mentem: While the faerie

queen is within her castle she is aware of everything happening within the castle. To determine whether she notices something make a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 9. If she is specifically looking for the thing, the Ease Factor is only 3. Mundane and magical attempts to hide from the faerie queen have no effect, but this power needs to Penetrate the Magic Resistance of those sensed.

Equipment: Long lace dress, silver tiara, wedding ring.

Vis: 4 pawns of Herbam vis in a wooden heart.

Appearance: The faerie queen Blegen appears as a beautiful pale-skinned woman wearing a delicate silver tiara. Her voice is crisp and authoritative, and it is difficult to judge her apparent age: mid-thirties seems plausible. Blegen usually wears a dark-green, long, translucent, lace dress, but she sometimes changes the dress' color. Her hair changes with the seasons: in spring it is short and white; in summer her hair is long, sleek, and golden; in autumn wild, twisted and red; finally, in winter it hangs in black ringlets.

When the scenario begins the first two phases are already complete. The important consequence of Blegen completing her plan, from the player characters' per-

spective, is that the covenant is within (or very near) the noble fief she claims via her infant husband. Her suzerainty over the fief will cause it to develop a Faerie aura.

This may interfere with the magi's magic, vis sources, and so on.

This story is a hook for the *Realms of Power: Faerie* book.

Faeries

Realms of Power: Faerie describes the nature of faeries. Faeries gain "power" or vitality from acting out roles in stories, even if the role requires the faerie to be "killed" or "defeated." There is no game mechanic for vitality, but ultimately vitality motivates faeries.

Most faeries are fully immersed in story roles and incapable of acting outside the role. Such faeries are Incognizant. A Cognizant faerie is fully aware she is merely acting out a role and can change roles to increase her vitality.

A Narrowly Cognizant faerie lies between the two extremes and is capable of changing her role in a limited way. Blegen and Old Nanny are Narrowly Cognizant. The other faeries in this story are Incognizant. Most magi are unaware of the true nature of faeries.

Faeries have Pretenses instead of Abilities. Faeries only imitate skills and knowledge, but only Cognizant faeries do this consciously. In play, use Pretenses exactly as Abilities, but very observant characters may notice something odd.

Changing Location

For the story, the mundane noble's fief contains a forest with faerie regiones. The faeries do not need to be the sole, or most powerful, supernatural inhabitants of the forest.

If, in your saga, the lands near the covenant do not contain a suitable forest, you can move the faeries to a different sort of terrain.

For example, Blegen can just as easily rule over faeries of the mountain, glacier, lake, or desert; replace her *Forest Queen* power, her specializations, and her *Might Form* as appropriate. You will also need to devise new descriptions for the faerie regiones.

Changing Power

The faeries may not be challenging for powerful magi. If the troupe wants to make the faeries more challenging, the easiest solution is to increase the *Might Scores*. The *Major Faerie Virtue Increased Might* increases a faerie's *Might Score* by 15. The *Minor Faerie Virtue Increased Might* increases a faerie's *Might Score* by 5.

Baby Marcus & Baron Frederick

Marcus is the baby heir of a noble whose fief contains the faerie queen's regio and is near the

covenant. The covenant may be built within the fief too. For this scenario this will be the Baron Frederick, but choose a noble appropriate to your saga. A duke, count, or other noble rank can be used instead.

Marcus is about a year old when the scenario begins. If planning ahead, you can foreshadow this story by news reaching the covenant, a year earlier, of Marcus' birth. The birth of an heir could be cause for celebration by the noble and common-folk of the fiefdom. Apart from being Baron Frederick's heir, Marcus is an ordinary mortal baby, and thus game statistics are not provided here for baby Marcus.

Game statistics are not provided for Baron Frederick either. If in your saga, you already have established statistics for a suitable local noble, use those statistics. Otherwise, use *The Knight* template (*ArM5*, page 23).

Baron Frederick has a dozen men-at-arms at his ready disposal; use *The Standard Soldier* template (*ArM5*, page 22) for them. The baron also usually has four vassal knights at his castle, but these have been replaced by faeries (see later).

What Happens

The following scenes give the player characters opportunities to become involved in this story.

Kidnap and Murder

The desperately worried Baron Frederick (or his servants) approach the magi for help to find baby Marcus, the baron's heir. The baron's wife (the lady Elaine) was murdered two days ago, and their baby is missing (presumed kidnapped by the assassin). Frederick's four knights were also missing.

The baron's servants have since found the bodies of the knights. The knights' throats had been slit, and the bodies dumped in a forested and fog-filled ravine not far from the castle. Surprisingly, the knights appear to have been killed months ago. This is surprising because the four knights have been recently seen at feasts, jousts, and hunts.

Stories are told in Frederick's court of faerie imposters that haunt the forest near his castle. The baron fears these faerie creatures have murdered and replaced the baron's knights, murdered the baroness, and then kidnapped his son. It is not clear to the baron what might motivate the faeries, but it is clearly a problem that wizards can solve.

RESPONSES TO KIDNAP

The magi may refuse or ignore Baron Frederick's plea for help to find his kidnapped son and Lady Elaine's assassins. This will greatly anger the baron, but he is too concerned about recov-

ering his son to move against the covenant right now. In this case, the troupe should move on to the subsequent murder of Baron Frederick.

If the player's covenant responds to the kidnap, then bear the following in mind:

- It is easy to confirm with spells when the knights were murdered. It is obvious to mundane inspection alone that the corpses have been lying in the foggy ravine for months. The fog, which has hidden the corpses until now, is a faerie effect (cast by a faerie knight, see later). The spirits of the dead knights (if interrogated) tell of being ambushed and killed in the forest.
- The baron's huntsmen have tracked the faerie knights into the forest, where the trail disappears. The knights continued into a faerie regio containing the faerie queen's court. Player characters with access to suitable spells can easily find the regio and continue to track the faeries. The trail is at least two days old before the covenant becomes involved.
- Queen Blegen has already married baby Marcus. In the next few days or weeks, her knights will attempt to murder Baron Frederick (see later).

Lady Elaine

The baron's wife, Lady Elaine, was killed by the faerie knights and her body left in the castle. Lady Elaine's murder ensures that she cannot later have rights over the baron's fief as his widow. Elaine's ghost, if summoned, knows little of value. She was killed with a single sword thrust to the heart while she slept.

Contract Killers

It is assumed the magi are opposed to the faerie queen's plan. However, magi strongly sympathetic to faeries (such as magi from House Merinita) might instead help the faerie queen complete her plan. If this is likely, rather than sending her knights to murder Baron Frederick, the faerie queen's agents might first try to give the job to the magi.

- There are many things that can be taken from Baron Frederick's castle and used as Arcane Connections to find baby Marcus. Note baby Marcus is not actually in the faerie queen's court: he is in the Nursery (a different faerie regio within the forest).
- The magi may be cautious

of involving themselves too readily in this mysterious kidnapping. There is a risk of accusations of either 'interfering with the mundane' or 'molesting faeries'.

- The magi (especially House Merinita magi) may already be aware of the faerie queen's plan through their faerie court contacts. They may have even been invited to the wedding.

A HIDDEN COVENANT

If the covenant is hidden from the mundane world, then word reaches the covenant of baby Marcus' kidnap and the baroness' murder through the contacts maintained by the grogs. If Baron Frederick is murdered, then word similarly eventually reaches the covenant.

BAD RELATIONS

If the magi are already on bad terms with Baron Frederick, then he assumes that these disreputable wizards have something to do with the strange abduction and murders. In this case, the baron angrily approaches the covenant (or sends representatives) seeking the abducted baby, and may be expecting and willing to pay a ransom. The magi might try to recover baby Marcus to prove their innocence (or to ransom him back to his father).

Murder

A few days or weeks after Blegen's marriage to baby Marcus her knights attempt to murder Baron Frederick. The knights either ambush him in the forest or sneak back into the baron's castle to kill him in his sleep.

The baron only has men-at-arms left available to him at his castle (see earlier). His other knight vassals all have responsibilities and live on manors elsewhere in his fief. If the player characters somehow gather these vassal knights, the game statistics for the knights in Chapter Nine: *To The Dark Tower* can be used.

SAVING THE BARON

If the player characters try to protect Baron Frederick, then the success of the assassination attempt depends on player character actions. If the unsuccessful knights escape they return at a later date to finish the job. If the knights are destroyed, then the faerie queen makes no more immediate attempts. However, she sends new assassins over the following months and years.

If the player characters do not try to protect the Baron, the assassination attempt is successful.

A NEW QUEEN

If the Baron is killed, Blegen inherits his lands via her baby husband. This immediately

causes a Faerie aura of 1 to arise throughout the barony. In many areas this new aura is swamped by existing Dominion or other auras. However, every spring equinox the Faerie aura increases by 1, until it reaches a value of 4.

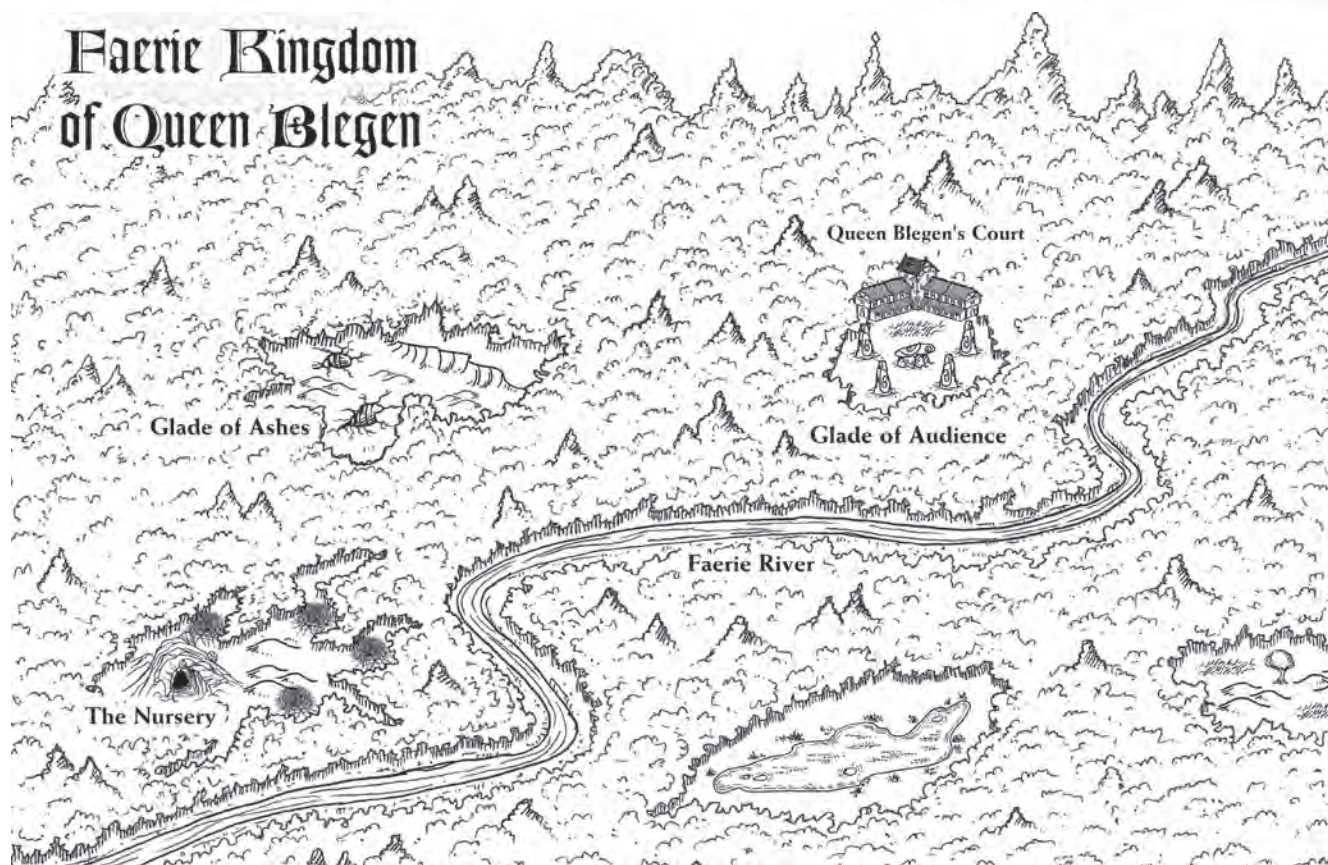
Blegen's first action is to send centaur heralds to every village and town in the barony. The centaurs announce the sad death of Baron Frederick, and the succession of baby Marcus and his wife the faerie queen Blegen. The centaur heralds also announce that all feudal taxes are canceled for a year and a day, to commemorate the death of the old baron, and the life of the new. Blegen does this very rapidly and long before the death of the old baron is reported in feudal courts. Thus, her take-over precedes any similar attempt by the king (or neighboring nobles) to install a steward.

If the player character's covenant is within the fief, it is also visited by centaur heralds relaying Blegen's message. Even if the covenant is hidden in a regio the centaurs are able to find it. On the other hand, being only faerie Might 5, the heralds are probably not able to enter the *Aegis of the Hearth* without invitation.

The Faerie Court

Blegen's faerie court is densely forested, much more so than the mundane forest. The sea-

Faerie Kingdom of Queen Blegen



sons and days pass at the same rate in the court as they do in the mortal world.

There are many entrances to the court, which is a regio with a Faerie aura of 4. Anybody who is in the forest and can see the way to the court (see *ArM5*, page 189) can cross into the regio (and lead others across). Within the regio, if a character climbs to the top of the tall trees, the forest appears limitless in all directions. However, this is just an illusion. The forest regio is actually only a dozen miles across, but it has no edge. A character who walks far enough finds himself to have walked in a circle.

Apart from green forest, the main features of the court are a wooden castle and two large clearings, each of which is several acres across. The humanoid faeries of the court, including Blegen, live in the castle. The dense forest is haunted by a tribe of centaurs and wild bands of satyrs.

One of the two forest clearings is used by Blegen as an audience and feasting hall. This clearing is verdant and grassy. The other forest clearing is a dead place. The ground is covered in thick ash and rusting shards of iron. This second clearing is avoided by the faeries.

PLAYER CHARACTERS IN THE FAERIE COURT

If the player characters travel to the faerie court they find the faerie queen Blegen either in her castle awaiting the murder of Baron Frederick, or in the green forest clearing holding a feast to celebrate the murder and her ascension to her mundane title.

- Most of the court faeries avoid the player characters. However, if questioned, they readily say that baby Marcus is in the Nursery, looked after by Old Nanny. The faeries are excited about the recent marriage between Blegen and Marcus, and (if Baron Freder-

Faerie Knights

Faerie Might: 5 (Corpus)

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

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Sight, Humanoid Faerie, Lesser Power; Passes for Human; Dutybound, Incognizant, Tradition Ward (garlic)

Personality Traits: Brave +6, Chivalrous +3

Reputations: Knight (local) +4

Combat:

Long Sword + Heater Shield: Init +4, Attack +14*, Defense +14*, Damage +8

* Add +3 if mounted.

Soak: +12 (Stamina + chain mail)

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Pretenses: Animal Handling 2 (horses), Area Lore: Local 2 (forest), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 4 (weapons), Etiquette 3 (courtly), Leadership 3 (faerie knights), Single Weapon 7 (long sword), Speak Living Language: German 3 (courtly), Ride 3 (combat)

Powers:

Faerie Sight, see Blegen.

Each of the four knights has one of the following powers.

Javelin of Earth, 1 point, Init -4, Terram: The knight throws a javelin made of earth at

his target. The javelin automatically hits and does +10 damage, but must Penetrate Magic Resistance to be effective. (Lesser Power; 25 spell levels)

(Base 3, +3 Sight, +1 Rego Requisite; +10 two intricacy points to reduce Might Cost)

Flame Sword, 1 point, Init -4, Ignem: The knight's sword is wreathed in flickering blue flames. This adds +6 to damage with the sword, and the blade can be used to start fires. (Lesser Power; 25 spell levels)

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Diameter; +10 two intricacy points to reduce Might Cost)

The Quaffing Knight, 0 points, Init -1, Aquam: This power vastly increases the alcohol content of wine or beer. The power can affect over 3,000 gallons — but has to be used multiple times to affect multiple vessels. (Lesser Power; 25 spell levels)

(Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 size; +10 two intricacy points to reduce Might Cost, +5 increase Init)

Fog of War, 4 points, Init -4, Auram: This power creates a bank of thick fog that covers an area of 16 acres (an area about 160 paces across). (Lesser Power; 25 spell levels)

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +3

Moon, +1 size; +5 one intricacy point to reduce Might Cost)

Equipment: Full chain armor, long sword, shield, warhorse.

Vis: 1 pawn of Corpus vis (in sword).

Appearance: The knights appear identical to the murdered knights of the baron. They are armored, carry swords, and ride the horses of the murdered knights.

The speech of the knights is slurred and accented. This is because the faeries have concentrated their Pretenses in weapon skills rather than language — in fact, the faeries are marginally better swordsmen than the original mortals they are simulating. The unusual speech pattern of the faerie knights makes them sound slightly drunk.

Apart from murdering and kidnapping for the faerie queen, the knights are dutybound to act in a chivalrous manner. However, being faeries, the knights are only simulating their chivalry, so a careful observer may notice something false.

These knights are ward- ed against with garlic. The knights cannot touch or harm a target carrying garlic and take +6 Damage if forced into contact with garlic.

ick has already been killed) the faeries are happy that Blegen's faerie kingdom has extended into the mortal world. If asked, the faeries will explain that the Nursery regio entrance is the darkest place in the forest, but they do not know where this actually is.

- Unless the player characters attack first, the members of the faerie court do not attack the player characters. Apart from the knights (see insert) the only combatant faeries are the tribe of centaurs. The satyrs are not combatants. The centaurs have Faerie Animal Might 5 (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 76). The centaurs are Size +3, have +8 Soak, and attack with a lance and shield (Init +1, Attack +14*, Defense +11*, Damage +11; * includes +3 "mounted" bonus). The centaurs attack in squadrons of five, but are not trained groups. The centaurs may not attack (and greatly fear) anybody who carries the sign of the cross.
- The faerie queen does not particularly fear the magi. Although she has heard of the Order of Hermes, she views the magi as irrelevant and, once Baron Frederick has been murdered, she expects magi to obey her like any of her other subjects — if the covenant is built within her new lands. If the magi attack her, Blegen retreats to her castle, ordering her knights

Baby Marcus' Cradle

Baby Marcus is asleep, gently cradled in a nest of web hung between two trees. Apart from Old Nanny there are no guards. Baby Marcus is naked except for a plain gold wedding ring, which is an enchanted item.

QUIET MY DARLING HUSBAND

ReMe 10, 0 Pen, 1 / day

R: Touch, D: While (Worn),

T: Individual

This faerie ring causes the wearer to fall asleep.

(Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 While)

and centaurs to cover her escape. Her wooden castle is incredibly and supernaturally large (it is actually another regio, with a Faerie aura of 6), and with her *Castle Eyes* power Blegen is aware of everything happening within it. This, coupled with the size of the castle, means that Blegen can quite easily avoid the magi once she is within her castle.

KING IN ASHES

In a previous age, Blegen ruled the faerie forest alongside a faerie king named Aethle. Clearly, Blegen needed to dispose of her husband, so that as a widow she could marry a mortal heir. Aethle was therefore murdered by



Old Nanny

Faerie Might: 10 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per 0, Pre -2, Com -5, Str +8, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik -1

Size: +4

Virtues and Flaws: Huge, Ritual Power (Web Weaver); Increased Might, Faerie Beast, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech; Narrowly Cognizant; Driven (create webs), Enemies (faerie Queen), Monstrous Appearance; Reclusive

Qualities: Aggressive, Ambush Predator, Skilled Climber (+3 Climb rolls), Tough Hide, Venomous

Personality Traits: Secretive +3, Jealous +1

Reputations: Ancient Nightmare (local) +1

Combat:

Bite: Init -1, Attack +12, Defense +6, Damage +9*

Claws: Init -2, Attack +10, Defense +7, Damage +10**

* Old Nanny's bite is venomous. If a character takes any Wound from her bite, check to see whether the character is poisoned too. Old Nanny's venom is equivalent to an Asp bite (see ArM5, page 180).

** Due to Old Nanny's many clawed legs she inflicts 3 Wounds when she strikes. If you are using the Group combat rules these Wounds are distributed about the opposing Group as normal.

Soak: +3 (Stamina + Tough Hide)

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-9), -3 (10-18), -5 (19-27), Incapacitated (28-36), Dead (37+)

Pretenses: Area Lore: Local 5 (forest), Athletics 3 (climbing), Awareness 3 (things in web), Brawl 5 (bite), Hunt 4 (prey), Profession: Weaver 10 (web), Stealth 4 (ambush), Survival 3 (forest)

Powers:

Faerie Sight, see the description given with the faerie queen Blegen.

Faerie Speech, see the description given with the faerie queen Blegen.

Web Weaver, 3 points, Init -9, Animal, ritual: This ritual power creates a thick rope of spider silk half a foot in diameter and two and a half miles long. The spider silk is as tough as iron and can entrap people as

described in the text. It takes an hour for all the silk to be created, and Old Nanny uses her Profession: Weaver Pretense to fashion the silk into webs (or other items). (Lesser Power; 25 spell levels)

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Size; +5 one intricacy points to reduce Might Cost)

Vis: 2 pawns of Animal vis (in spider silk gland).

Appearance: Old Nanny is an enormous spider. She is a black, scuttling, primitive nightmare.

Her usual tactic is to wait until prey is snared in her web, and then she moves in to deliver an incapacitating, poisonous bite to the comparatively defenseless victim. If a snared victim appears to be too tough (or armored), then Old Nanny merely waits for the victim to starve.

Old Nanny flees from characters who are not affected by her webs and hides in a dark corner of the Nursery.

Blegen's knights, and his ashes, laced with iron, were scattered in one of the forest clearings. Today, most of the faerie court are loyal to Blegen, but a few are still secretly servants of Aethele. This hidden, loyalist court faction aim to resurrect king Aethele, but do not know how to do so.

The leader of the loyalists

is Aethele's old drink-master Guma — a tiny dwarf responsible for providing intoxicating brews at the faerie court. Guma has carefully maintained his position in Blegen's court, and does not aid the player characters directly, nor reveal information about Aethele until he trusts them completely. However, if

the player characters investigate the forest clearing scattered with Aethele's ash, Guma carefully observes them. Guma also quietly tells the player characters that baby Marcus is in the Nursery with Old Nanny, if it seems that they will not find this out by questioning other faeries.

Guma has identical game sta-

tistics to Mateos the Faerie Butler (ArM5, page 194–195).

FAERIE KNIGHTS

The faerie knights are identical in appearance to the baron's murdered knights.

Blegen's four faerie knights could be encountered in her court. Alternatively, the player characters might be present when the knights attempt to murder Baron Frederick.

The knights can fight together as a trained group, receiving a +12 group combat bonus (see ArM5, page 173).

If the knights are captured they can be compelled, by magic, to reveal that baby Marcus is being kept by Old Nanny in the Nursery. The knights are unlikely to succumb to mundane persuasion or torture. The knights have not been to the Nursery. They do know that the entrance is the darkest part of the forest, but they do not know where that might be.

Old Nanny and the Nursery

In a dark, deep forgotten place in the forest is the Nursery, in which baby Marcus is watched over by Old Nanny. The regio is cramped, ancient, and covered in thick ropey spiderwebs. The tall trees of the forest, aged and wrinkled pillars, huddle together like shrouded mourners under sheets of gray web. Through the narrow gaps

between the web and the pillar-like trees, patches of blue sky and puffy cloud can be seen, but the light is strangely strangled. A close observer can spot that the web extends up into the sky, linking air to earth. Even the sun is caught in this sticky cocoon, and so it only illuminates the regio with a sickly throttled light. Everything else is locked up tight in Old Nanny's clasp.

Old Nanny is, of course, the architect of this trap... the arachnoid architect.

ENTERING THE NURSERY

The Nursery is a regio with a Faerie aura of 5. The entrance is the darkest place in the forest, and so the entrance moves around depending on the seasons and the position of the sun (or moon). A character can calculate where the natural entrance will be at a particular time by devising a horoscope for the location (Intelligence + Artes Liberales (astronomy) roll against an Ease Factor of 9). Each such horoscope takes about an hour to calculate and is only valid for a window of one Diameter. The character calculating the horoscope can freely choose the time at which the window occurs when performing the calculation.

The Nursery can be entered by anybody at the entrance location who can see the way: by using a spell such as *Piercing the Faerie Veil* (ArM5, page 158), for example. However, note that characters

must not bring illumination with them when seeking the entrance to the regio — as an illuminated area will, obviously, not be the darkest place in the forest. On the other hand, clever spell casters may be able to artificially create the darkest place in the forest (using a combination of *Creo* and *Perdo Ignem* effects, for example).

A magus with access to spells like *Leap of Homecoming*, and an Arcane Connection to baby Marcus, can instantly transport himself to the baby's location without needing to find the regio entrance.

MOVING THROUGH THE WEB

The sticky webs that fill the regio make it difficult to move. Characters may freely speak and make gestures, but moving around (including flying) requires a successful Strength + Stress Die roll against an Ease Factor of 9. A single successful roll allows the character to move about for several minutes. Characters who are stuck to the webs may not make combat Defense or Attack rolls, and if a free character botches in melee combat he becomes stuck to the webs.

Spiders and other spider-like creatures, including Old Nanny herself, can move without penalty in the regio.

THE TIME TRAP

The faerie queen has tasked Old Nanny with the care of baby Marcus because Old Nan-

ny's webs have stopped the passage of time in her regio. The sun is snared and day neither waxes nor wanes. This means that baby Marcus will not age and will never enter his majority. Blegen will forever act as his steward.

The freezing of time means that any spells (and other effects) cast with a long Duration in the regio do not expire. Momentary Spells still have an instant effect. Spells with Durations such as *Until* or *Bargain* expire if their trigger conditions are met, as usual.

If the characters destroy a large amount of web, the sun lurches forward in the sky, releasing stored up time, until it is once again snagged by the web that crisscrosses the sky. It takes a Diameter for the sun to be snagged again, and during this period everything in the regio ages by one year; make Aging rolls if required.

This causes active spell effects with a Duration of Year or less to expire too. Causing the sun to briefly move in this way requires at least 1000 cubic paces of web to be destroyed; just freeing individual characters is not sufficient.

OLD NANNY AND THE FAERIE QUEEN

There is an ancient rivalry between Old Nanny and the faerie queen Blegen.

Many ages ago, perhaps before The Flood, the people living

on the edge of the forest feared the dark, scuttling creatures of the forest and the greatest of their fears was Old Nanny. In that age Old Nanny had a different name, a primitive, primeval name; she was terror, the stench of death, and the dark of night. However, over the centuries the people tamed the dark forest, named the forest creatures, and no longer feared the dark places. At least not so much. Blegen, the faerie queen, arose, and Old Nanny, the night terror, shrank.

Old Nanny is not part of the faerie court, but she is subservient to it and jealously remembers when she ruled the faerie forest and Blegen was a wispy, half-formed idea fluttering among the swaying trees. Although Old Nanny watches over baby Marcus for the faerie queen, she has her own story to tell. Old Nanny tries to kill some of the player characters if they make it into the Nursery, but she also wants some to escape (even taking Marcus with them), spreading the tale of the ancient darkness at the true heart of the forest.

Further Tales

However this Hook is resolved, the opportunity is created for further stories that involve the Faerie realm, if the troupe wishes. How the nearby mundane nobles react to Blegen's claim to the barony may

also be important.

- If Blegen is successful, the barony near the covenant is gradually colonized by faeries. Eventually, the magi need to interact with these faeries, and the faerie occupation may attract visitors from House Merinita. Within four years the barony has developed a Faerie aura of 4.
- Links to the Faerie realm may appear in the faerie barony, especially if the magi botch spell casting attempts or enter Twilight.
- Vis sources within the barony may be tainted by the Faerie realm.
- Many mundane inhabitants of the barony are quite content with Blegen as baron, even though some of the faeries are very frightening. This is because when the year long tax-reprieve is lifted the faeries collect taxes in bizarre ways that the peasants and townsfolk do not consider arduous; for example, "the first sheaf of wheat from the harvest," "the last drop of candle-wax from a vigil held on the spring equinox," and "the tails of seven cats." The magi may suspect some of these taxes are vis (albeit probably tainted by the Faerie realm).
- Blegen attempts to fulfill any feudal obligations she owes as "baron." She swears fealty to the king, pays taxes, and

provides faerie soldiers for the royal army. To receive her oath of fealty the king must travel to Blegen as her Sovereign Ward restricts Blegen's travel. As most kings regularly tour their kingdoms, this is not necessarily problematic. The king's response (positive or negative) to the faerie queen may create further stories.

- Neighboring mortal nobles (possibly including the king) might refuse to recognize Blegen's right to the barony and try to overthrow her. Warfare between mundane and faerie armies could embroil the magi. At the very least, Tribunal Quaesitors will wonder (and investigate) whether the covenant has caused this conflict, and thus perhaps com-

mitted Hermetic crimes.

- If the magi prevent Baron Frederick from being assassinated, the faerie queen tries again in future years. This time she tries to distract the magi with some other issue before sending her assassins after the baron. Blegen may seek allies among the neighboring mortal nobles, agreeing to cede a portion of the barony to her neighbors, or offering them supernatural resources.
- If the magi recover baby Marcus, it actually has little effect on the faerie queen's plan: Blegen is still his wife. She tries to kidnap her husband again.
- The player characters may try to get the marriage annulled by the local bishop, or the pope. This requires a

legal argument that the marriage was invalid (perhaps due to age, lack of consent, the faerie priest not being properly ordained, "faeries not being real," etc). Faerie lawyers attempt to counter such arguments in the ecclesiastic courts. It is likely that baby Marcus will be changed by his marriage to the faerie queen, and he may develop faerie powers in later years.

- If the magi kill the faerie queen, the faerie court is thrown into disarray: Old Nanny tries to reassert her power, the dead faerie king tries to reclaim his throne, and the faerie queen tries to be reborn too. Some, or all, of these factions try to gain support from the magi of the covenant.

Chapter Three

Echoes of the Ancient Dead

A hooded figure searches through the ruins of a Byzantine fortress under the light of a full moon, trusting the stories of ghosts to keep the curious at bay. Reaching between two stones, he extracts a tooth from a shattered skull, his grin of triumph eerie in the wan light.

"If anyone is watching," he thinks, "those stories are about to get stronger."

Introduction

Long before Bonisagus introduced his unified theory of magic and founded the Order

of Hermes, powerful magic was practiced in lands far away from the heartland of Mythic Europe. These secrets are all but forgotten and lost, yet rumors and clues of some find their way to enterprising magi.

These hints of great power and magic are worthy of the attention of the Seekers, who delve into ancient lore. Such magic is incompatible with Hermetic magic, but can be integrated for great benefit through hard work. Finding sources of insight can often be as hard as understanding them.

This story delivers ancient artifacts by pure chance to the covenant, challenging determined

magi to investigate, seek, integrate and use powerful magic of ancient days. The intent of this hook is to introduce the player magi to the concepts of Ancient Magic — more specifically Canaanite vecromancy — and the search for and integration of such magics, as well as introduce the tradition and organization of the Seekers. For more information, consult *Ancient Magic*, Chapter 2.

Prelude

Prior to the first events of this story, the Seeker Argos



of Bonisagus made a deal with Vito, a Genoese merchant, to buy ancient clay tablets from the Holy Land. Vito took the advance payment but double-crossed Argos, rationalizing that cheating such an unsavory character couldn't be a sin.

Vito sent the clay tablets by courier to the Teutonic Knights, who had shown an interest in the artifacts as well. Argos is now tracking the tablets by magic through an Arcane Connection to the courier.

Events

The following sections outline the expected sequence of events for this story.

Arrival of the Courier

As dusk approaches, a sharp-eyed person spots a wagon heading for the covenant gates at great speed. The driver looks scared out of his wits and the team of horses look near the point of exhaustion. They look like they are pursued by the devil himself, and the truth isn't far off. Far behind him gallop 15 ghostly riders clad in archaic arms and armor, rapidly gaining on him.

The driver pleads for sanctuary and entrance to the covenant grounds. Assuming this is granted, the Aegis of the Hearth causes the horsemen to retreat

and disperse. The driver is recognized by covenant members as Marco, a freelance courier sometimes used to transport or procure objects of a more sensitive nature. He often works for Vito, a Genoese merchant who specializes in such artifacts. He is by no means comfortable being in the covenant, and clearly nervous around the magi. However, seeking refuge here is better than the alternative.

In his wagon the driver has a crate with the clay tablets from the Levant, bound for some undisclosed buyers within a few days' ride of the covenant location. He has been warned that the tablets contain secrets best left untouched, and that they must not fall into the wrong hands. Tonight was the last night of the window of his meeting with the knights who had bought the tablets.

THE CLAY TABLETS

The language of the tablets is obscure. Those with Hebrew 4 or higher recognize the text as an archaic form of Hebrew and thus stand a chance of decoding it. They offer clues to finding the ancient ruins of En-Dor on the basis of descriptions of Canaan from the time when it was a living culture. They also offer information as to the skills of the Canaanite necromancers, who had unsurpassed powers to speak with as well as summon spirits of the dead. These may be integrated into Hermetic Theory.

MARAUDING GHOSTS

The ghosts of the kataphraktoi are disciplined and execute a tactical retreat once the Aegis repels them. Argos presses them into his service again using *Coerce the Spirits of the Night*; their orders are to terrorize the locale. He is not unnecessarily cruel and does not order mass murder, but the riders drive the populace from their homes, damage dwellings, livestock, and crops, and attack travelers going to and from the covenant. He deliberately has them drop his assumed name during raids, saying, for example, "Bellox gave orders to torch the place!" In Argos' mind this furthers his diplomatic leverage once he goes to the covenant.

The riders employ hit-and-run tactics to cover as much ground as possible and make a determined counterattack difficult. If they face a formidable foe the ghostly riders retreat and reform at their next raiding objective.

ARGOS' VISIT

Within a day or two of Marco's arrival, one of the covenfolk spots a lone visitor approaching the covenant. This gray-haired individual insists on speaking Latin only and introduces himself as Argos, a Magus of Bonisagus. He asks to speak with the magi and acts as if he was expected. Once he is before some or all of the player magi, he demands that he is given what is

Mechanics of the Tablets

Decoding is a seasonal activity requiring a stress roll of Intelligence + Hebrew against an Ease Factor of 18. If successful, the tablets are revealed to be a Summa in Area Lore: Canaan. A complete sequence of six tablets is Level 10 Quality 15, with each missing tablet subtracting three from Quality. In total there are seven sequences consisting of six tablets, each of which is a separate summa. Some tablets are safe at Durenmar and some are held by the Teutonic Knights, but most are unaccounted for since they were scattered in Constantinople long ago. A more detailed description of the tablets can be found in *Ancient Magic*, pages 34–36.

Precisely how many and which tablets the Genoese merchant was selling to Argos is up to the storyguide. The number of tablets found influences the likely style of any follow-up story. A set of four tablets results in a respectable study source of Quality 9. Fewer means that it takes longer to finish reading the text, but it might send the magi searching for other sources, or

more tablets. Note that the tablets are not the only texts available from which to learn Area Lore: Canaan. If more tablets are given to the player magi the research phase could become trivial, but leave more room for the actual search for En-Dor. This find should yield several avenues of investigation and research on which to start out. Remember that even a complete set does not make finding the location of En-Dor a trivial matter; the real challenge lies in the desert. A season's worth of search requires an Intelligence + Area Lore: Canaan roll against an Ease Factor of 18 for success. This is for field work, Ease Factor is raised to 21 for research off-site.

USING AN INTERPRETER

The player magi might come up with the idea of using a scholar from the outside as interpreter. For instance, any Rabbi or Jewish scribe recognizes the text as some kind of Hebrew, but he will not be able to read it until it is decoded. But bear in mind Marco's warn-

ing that these are secrets best left alone. Any scribe with even the slightest bit of knowledge about Judaism or Christianity soon recognizes the name En-Dor and instantly remembers the warning about horrible necromancy. The player magi now have their hands full trying to contain the problem, as a conscientious scribe alerts his community. It should become clear that these tablets are something to be hidden by the magi and studied in the dark.

COPYING THE TABLETS

Since the text is unintelligible copying carries with it the risk of making mistakes. Careful copying is done at half the standard rate, while copying at normal speed means –3 Quality for the final, translated text. Clever magi wanting to make rubbings or wax impressions need to take care as well, as the tablets are old, worn, and damaged. Such copies take but a few hours to complete, and have a –2 Quality for the text.

rightfully his.

He patiently tells his story once, but tolerates no interruptions. He bought some Levantine clay tablets from Vito, a Genoese merchant, who took his silver but sent the goods to his bidding rival anyway. The courier carrying the tablets has been tracked to the covenant, and

it would be best for all parties if Argos simply took them and went his own way. If asked about the ghosts, he answers that the sinister Bellox from "some dirty necromantic cult" desires the artifacts as well. If not asked, he casually remarks that Bellox will probably try to get his filthy hands on them. He says no

more at this time.

Argos tells his story and answers but a few questions. Canaan should be mentioned. He acts slightly offended if the player magi don't immediately roll over and obey; he is apparently expecting the whole affair to be a formality. He agrees to give the player

Veteran Kataphraktos Spectre

Magic Might: 18 (Mentem)

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

Size: +1

Age: Appears to be in his late twenties

Decrepitude: n/a

Warping: n/a

Virtues and Flaws: Improved Characteristics x3, Large, Puissant Single Weapon

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Loyal +2, Proud +2

Reputations: n/a

Combat:

*Spatha** and *Shield*: Init +3, Attack +15, Defense +14, Damage +10

Bow: Init 0, Attack +12, Defense +8, Damage +7

* *The spatha is a cavalry blade with no thrusting tip. Game statistics for a longsword are used.*

Soak: +11 (full chain mail)

Fatigue: Tireless

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-6), -3 (7-12), -5 (13-18), Incapacitated (19-24), Dead (25+)

Abilities: Animal handling 3 (horses), Byzantine Lore 3 (roads), Athletics 3 (hiking), Awareness 4 (battle), Bow 6 (short bow), Brawl 3 (dagger), Chirurgy 2 (sword cuts), Etiquette 3 (Rhomanoi), Leadership 5 (soldiers), Roman Army Lore 3 (elite forces), Greek 5 (military), Ride 6 (battle), Single Weapon 6+2 (spatha), Survival 2 (desert)

Powers:

Incorporeal, 0 points, Mentem: The

spectre cannot be affected by or affect any physical object. By spending 1 Might point it can make a chilling attack that causes a single Fatigue level instead of damage, disregarding Soak. A weapon affected by a MuTe(Me) effect of Base 25 will affect it. Note the kataphraktos' power *Reaching Through the Veil*. Their bodies may be affected by physical magic (e.g. *Creo Ignem*) with a Mentem casting requisite, as may their spectral mounts. This power is always active.

Reaching Through the Veil, 1 point, Init +1, Mentem/Terram: The kataphraktos can affect the mundane world and corporeal objects with his entire array of weapons for Duration: Sun, making him very efficient. Against a mundane opponent with wholly mundane gear the kataphraktos has +3 Attack, Defense, and Soak, which is not included in the calculated statistics. Defense against the kataphraktos is as normal, but physical attacks still do not affect him.

Fearsome Appearance, 1 point, Init +1, Mentem: Anyone seeing the ghost must succeed in a Stress Roll against an Ease Factor of 6, modified by Brave Personality Trait, to avoid cowering in fear. Affected victims miss their next action and need to roll again the following round until successful. Power affects a group of up to 10 people.

Spectral Mount, 1 point, Init +1, Animal: The kataphraktos may conjure up a spectral horse as a prop for Duration Sun. He may ride across any terrain, including water, faster than any mundane horse can run on level ground. Affecting the mount is effectively affecting the rider, so it uses the kataphraktos' Might for Resistance. When the kataphraktos is mounted, modify all Attack totals by +3.

Appearance: Mounted warriors of impressive stature clad in archaic mail and helmets, from within a skull with thin, wilted skin can sometimes be seen staring with hollow eye sockets.

Equipment: Full chain mail, spatha, shield, bow, camping equipment, and sometimes a warhorse if that power is used

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Vis: 3 pawns Mentem, finger bones from right hand

The kataphraktoi were the cavalry fighters of the Rhomanoi Eastern Empire. Statistics are given for veteran spectres from an elite unit; they have excellent training and years worth of experience. This unit consisting of an officer, two sergeants, and 12 soldiers were killed to the last man in the sixth century while on a mission to drive the pagans away. They have not received a Christian burial and have unfinished business.

Notes on Balance

If the storyguide feels that the player magi are too weak to face the kataphraktoi as written, for example if they are recently Gauntleted or completely without Mentem magic, the power level can be lowered.

In addition to reducing the number of ghosts to as few as seven, reduce their Might to 12 or lower, reduce their combat Abilities, or limit their Fearsome Appearance power to give -1 to -3 to actions taken against them.

Alternatively, you can

have the kataphraktoi be fully affected by mundane weapons when in corporeal form and therefore also affected by all physical magic without the need for Mentem requisites.

However, should the player magi be seasoned veterans and skilled necromancers themselves, simply raising the Might should be sufficient. Consider having Argos use his *Dirge* rite (see later) to bolster the ghosts against spells of dominance and Might-stripping.

magi a day to discuss and consider, while he collects his possessions from his camp. This is mainly because he needs to meet up with the ghosts yet again to arrange for further stages of his plan, in case he doesn't get the tablets right away. If offered hospitality, kind words, and genuine interest, he appears to thaw out a bit but still declines hospitality for now.

Should the player magi hand over the tablets at once with no questions asked, refer to the section "Argos Gets the Tablets." Should they want to meet him again and offer their help, refer to the section "Working with Argos." In such a situation they have more time and opportunity to investigate, but there is little more to learn about Argos, except perhaps for stronger hints that Bellox is entirely fictitious and that it is Argos himself who controls the kataphraktoi ghosts.

Further Investigation

Because of the relatively short time span, the possibilities for a thorough investigation are limited, and unless the player magi's covenant boasts detailed records of the Order like the libraries of magi Mercere or Guernici this could be hard. Well-connected magi with means of fast communication or transportation might reach such a place within this time frame though. The following bits of information should be available in these situations.

The researcher rolls Intelligence + Ability against an Ease Factor set by the storyguide; for information on individual magi these are influenced by any Reputation. Relevant Abilities could be Organization Lore: Order of Hermes, Area Lore: Levant, Code of Hermes, or Organization Lore: House Bonisagus.

Modifiers can be up to +5 for a large collection of texts likely to contain the information sought, like records of Redcaps, other Seekers, or Quaesitores.

ARGOS OF BONISAGUS

Argos is of Trianoma's lineage. Records show him passing his Gauntlet some 20 years ago in the Levant Tribunal. A bit of a loner like his mater Pharla, he followed in his mistress' footsteps as a Seeker, with a focus on local ancient magics. He has made no significant contributions to the Order, yet.

BELLOX THE NECROMANCER

Since he is not a Hermetic magus, very little information can be found about the so-called necromancer Bellox. The name occurs in some legal accounts; he has a history as the villain blamed for various nefarious and sinister acts in the Roman Tribunal concerning breaking into and stealing from old burial sites. He must have crossed paths with Argos previously, since many of the times Bellox is mentioned is in testimony from Argos.

THE SEEKERS

Seekers are a self-declared, informal group of magi looking for secrets of the Old Ones, extinct lineages of pre-Hermetic magic, or other Mystery cults with which to complement and

Argos, Magus of Bonisagus

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

Size: 0

Age: 48 (47, Longevity ritual +5 used from the age of 35)

Decrepitude: 0 (0)

Warping: 2 (26)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Secondary Insight, Lore of the Dead*, Affinity with Mentem, Deft Mentem, Minor Magical Focus (Ghosts), Puissant Guile, Well Traveled, Chaotic Magic, Deficient Creo, Restriction (Sacred Ground), Susceptibility to Divine Power.

* *New Virtue, see later*

Personality Traits: Greedy +3, Enjoys complex plans +3, Callous +1, Perfectionist +3

Reputations:

Seeker (Hermetic) 2, Methodical perfectionist (Hermetic) 2, Bonisagus Acclaim (Hermetic) 1

Combat:

Dodge: Init -2, Attack n/a, Defense +0, Damage n/a

Being no fighter himself he uses his kataphraktoi to fight for him.

Soak: +2

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Levant* 3 (Canaan), Area Lore: Italy 3 (pagan burial sites), Artes Liberales 3 (writing systems), Awareness 2 (alertness), Bargain 2 (spirits), Charm 2 (spirits), Folk Ken 4 (magi), Guile 5+2 (long term), Greek 4 (Romaic), Hebrew 3 (reading), Infernal Lore 1 (infernal ghosts), Italian 5 (Abruzzo), Latin 5 (Hermetic), Lore of the Dead** 5 (eyes of the dead), Magic Lore 3 (spirits), Magic The-

ory (integration) 5, Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (Seekers), Parma Magica 3 (Mentem), Penetration 4 (Mentem), Philosophiae 3 (metaphysics), Stealth 3 (move silently), Survival 2 (desert)

* *As mentioned in Ancient Magic, page 34, Area Lore: Levant is a legal substitute for Area Lore: Canaan when trying to find En-Dor.*

** *New Supernatural Ability, see later*

Arts: Cr 0, In 5, Mu 5, Pe 9, Re 12, An 3, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 8, He 5, Ig 0, Im 4, Me 18+3, Te 5, Vi 12

Twilight Scars: Smell of hot dust

Appearance: Weather-worn face, leathery skin. Slight frame with little muscle mass but sinewy.

Equipment: Practical travel robes on the road, comfortable robes when indoors, always fitting the climate and weather. All are of fine workmanship but old and well-worn. A necklace with fixed Arcane Connections to the kataphraktoi. He carries 8 pawns each of Rego, Corpus, Mentem, and Vim vis.

Encumbrance: 0

Spells known:

The Inexorable Search (InCo20/+15)

Disguise of the Transformed Image (Mulm15/+11)

Veil of Invisibility (PeIm20/+15)

Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit (PeMe5/+41)^F

The Call to Slumber (ReMe10/+35)

Coerce the Spirits of the Night (ReMe20/+47)^F

Incantation of Summoning the Dead (ReMe40/+53)-Ritual^F

Ring of Warding against Spirits (ReMe20/+47)^F

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi5/+23)

^F Includes Focus

Argos originally came from a tribe of shepherds in northern Italy. From a

young age he had some strange abilities and was drawn to old, pagan burial caverns where no sane man would set foot. In such a place he crossed paths with Lucretia, a non-Hermetic necromancer, who taught him *Lore of the Dead*. Soon after, he was taken on as an apprentice by Pharla of Bonisagus, a Seeker from the Levant with an interest in necromancy. Pharla died a decade ago and Argos has continued her work, focusing on single aspects of her initial forays into necromantic secrets. He spreads rumors about the made-up character Bellox, whom he invented as scapegoat and deterrent in order to further his plans.

Using the fixed Arcane Connections to the bodies of the Kataphraktoi ghosts, Argos dominates them by use of the spell *Coerce the Spirits of the Night*. This way he gets them to promise one favor to him at a time, each favor being defined as obeying him for a single long-term action. He orders them to ravage the countryside, and they do this over the course of a few days. Afterward, he may order them to stand by and come to his aid if called.

If Argos is not sufficiently powerful to challenge the magi he can easily be modified to present a greater challenge. Making him older leaves room to raise Arts and invent new or more powerful spells. A higher Rego Mentem Penetration total allows Argos to command more powerful spirits using only the spells he already has. Within the scope of the core rules he could benefit greatly from an owl Familiar, a Talisman (staff, cypress wood, or with green turquoise), or enchanted devices. Several other books for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* contain potentially useful material, and some of these are briefly outlined in Additional Material later.



refine Hermetic theory. Seekers are nominally under the control of House Bonisagus, the House containing the most Seekers, but they are in reality individuals working autonomously. The first Seeker was Lucian, Trianoma's first apprentice. For more details see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* pages 12 & 15.

CANAANITE NECROMANCY

The biblical land of Canaan and its culture is mentioned in religious works like the Bible as well as by some classical authors; see *Ancient Magic*, page 35. The Canaanite necromancers had mastery well beyond Hermetic magic: they were able to affect the dead regardless of physical range, able to create Arcane Connections to the dead with only a trivial effort, and able to sense whether named persons were dead. There are also dire warnings about the consequences. If Hermetic limits are suddenly surpassed, contacting individuals thought dead and gone might easily resurrect old and implacable conflicts, like those of the Schism War. Houses Tremere and Guernicus would rather the secrets stay lost forever.

Dealing with Argos

Argos returns the next day as promised. If asked about the tablets, he briefly explains about them: they are reputed to contain clues

to finding a lost city with secrets of great importance to him. His explanation is littered with phrases that assume that the player magi know very well what he is talking about, such as what kind of magus a Seeker is and where Canaan is. Anybody asking for more detail reveals her ignorance to him, and he answers in patronizing ways. Having spent his entire life in the Levant, he is fascinated with the magics of old, and the spirit mastery of ancient Canaan is his life's project. He wishes to discover these secrets and integrate their powerful potential into Hermetic theory. He speaks of the subject passionately, almost bordering on fanaticism, but gives the impression of having a purely academic interest in it and not being after any glory or power.

The storyguide should secretly roll Folk Ken against Argos' Guile, to see if anybody senses Argos is holding something back. If pressed, he admits to downplaying the risks: the secrets of Canaanite Necromancy could be dangerous or at least have major consequences for the balance of the Order if they fall into the wrong hands, Bellox's in particular. Naturally, as Argos' House, House Bonisagus must take charge and prevent any problems resulting from Argos being first to find En-Dor.

Argos awaits their answer, expecting them now to be sufficiently interested. He has decided that having a set of helpers with him to do the dirty work, or alternatively to draw the attention

of the Teutonic knights away from him, is useful indeed. He is open to suggestions and claims that Bellox is a manageable thorn in his side.

There are several ways this can end. The characters might keep the tablets and send Argos off somehow. They might convince him to cooperate. Or they might just give him what he asks and lose out on the deal.

Aftermath

Multiple stories can kick off from the meeting with Argos. Here are some ideas for possible outcomes of the situation.

Argos Gets the Tablets

If handed the tablets, Argos goes on his way. The ghosts stay behind for another day to finish up their raids to add insult to injury, so they still pose a challenge to the covenant. The kataphraktoi follow Argos home afterward. This is the least desirable outcome, for the story as well as for Argos. The player magi have all but missed the boat on pursuing ancient magic. Argos has decided he prefers to keep the player magi on hand as patsies and he spreads rumors of the affair within weeks. Since many Houses and individual magi feel the secrets of Canaanite Necromancy are best left alone, a superior of the player magi or a Quaesitor asks them

to pursue the matter, foil the attempts to recover the secrets, and keep them hidden. The odds are that they will be sufficiently motivated to either find or eliminate the secrets by themselves.

While not involved in this introductory phase, the Teutonic Knights may play a part later on, as outlined in *Ancient Magic*, page 35, and for this very reason Argos prefers to have other magi bumbling around as well in order to take the heat off him.

The Player Magi Hold the Tablets

The player magi can, with little effort, keep their access to the clay tablets or a copy one way or another. As mentioned earlier, many Houses feel the need to keep these secrets out of circulation, so whether the motivation is to find the place or prevent the finding of

it there are many chances for stories. Because many other tablets exist and at least one other group — the Teutonic Knights — are also known to seek En-Dor, the player magi must do more than just destroy these tablets to hide the place. The big wild card is what deal they strike with Argos. The tablets need to be deciphered and the texts read before an expedition has any chance of finding En-Dor in the Levantine desert. Prudent magi research further to find out all they can and be prepared for the search, as well as for whatever awaits in the ancient ruins. However, Argos is known as a perfectionist and in no particular hurry, so the magi need not feel that they can never catch up. In fact, he readily spreads rumors of himself being engaged in time-consuming activities or suffering setbacks in order to motivate the rivals he is too arrogant to count as serious competitors. Examples

Spectres

A spectre is a ghost defined by its work or role and keeps doing the same thing in the afterlife; it remembers and knows nothing else. Detailed rules for a deceased person returning as a ghost can be found in *Realms of Power: Magic* Chapter Five; information about the different kinds of ghosts is found on pages 115–116. The kataphraktoi are examples of spectres; they keep on taking orders to fight.

Simple rules for converting a dead character to a spectre are as follows. Might is assigned depending on importance and power, typically between 1 and 20. Virtues and Flaws are retained if applicable; note that most social or physical traits become irrelevant after death. Characteristics are unchanged, all Abilities relating to the vocation are kept unchanged but all others are lost.

include him being called on as a witness in a Hermetic case, being severely wounded during his travels, or having set off on a chase for ghosts to bind.

WORKING WITH ARGOS

Although Argos initially just wanted to get the tablets and be off, he has since decided he wants another set of magi investigating and perhaps drawing attention. If the player magi are just a little diplomatic, they easily arrive at an understanding with Argos. He moves his research to the player covenant if need be; he carries with him his notes from his previous research. Otherwise, he can as easily return home to his work, and they can communicate through Redcaps.

Argos now uses the player magi to make his work easier, and does not want to have the deal soured by Quaesitors or those magi wanting the secrets lost forever. His language skills means that the player need not bother learning Hebrew. He plots to allow the player magi to help him all the way to the desert, and then separate from them in a dangerous place. He could insert a cleverly falsified "reliable source" into the research material naming a somewhat vague landmark from the tablets as something else, in order to lead the player magi into a trap in the form of dangerous quicksand, malevolent jinn, or vicious desert bandits. Argos would rather the player magi got

in trouble themselves so he can avoid being charged with stealing their work.

Argo is confident that this is enough to beat them to En-Dor, and that by keeping any secrets of what one must face in the city to himself, he believes they will fail — if they even make it that far.

DENYING ARGOS HIS TABLETS

It is possible that the player magi want the tablets for themselves and attempt to get rid of Argos. He may even be exposed as the one controlling the ghosts, thus being the very villain Bellox. The legal consequences need to be considered, though. Technically, Argos is right; he did lawfully buy the tablets and thus has the right to take them from the cheating merchant. By interfering the player magi are in principle guilty of deprivation of magic, but it is not the strongest or most aggravated case since they acted in good faith, at least to begin with. But if they insist on refusing him they face a Quaesitor, and if this should happen Argos is likely to win the case. Even if he is exposed as "Bellox" it is debatable whether he has broken the Code, since his ghosts have merely destroyed mundane property, not magical. However, destroying the food resources and scaring off the work force seriously hampers the magi's activities. He is willing to accept a fine for this.

Certamen may seem like a solution, but the contest can-

not be used to force a magus to overlook violations of the Code nor to breach it himself. Argos will not accept a certamen challenge in which he gives up the tablets if he loses.

Legal issues aside, the player magi can decide that Argos is enough of a pest to declare Wizard's War. He is not much of a fighter personally, although his ghosts are a force to be reckoned with. He would rather retreat and cut his losses than risk serious injury. If he survives, he becomes an active enemy regardless of the outcome, and he is only more adamant in his charges of deprivation of magic. He tries to spoil the player magi's chances of finding En-Dor and beat them to the place. The Teutonic Knights are certainly tipped off as are any magi wishing for the secrets to remain hidden.

Should he be killed in the Wizard's War, Argos' story ends there, and the player magi now have free rein to pursue the secrets of Canaanite necromancy. If Argos had any intimation of what was coming, he leaves a letter with an ally or a Redcap to be opened on his death in order to tip off the opposition that the player magi are looking for En-Dor.

Appendix

This section contains some new rules used in this story.

New Major Supernatural Virtue: Lore of The Dead

The character can perform certain necromantic spell-like effects called rites, representing powers that are relatively common among cults of the dead, although not very widespread in Hermetic circles. This Virtue gives the character a Score of 1 in the Supernatural Ability *Lore of the Dead*.

New Supernatural Ability: Lore of the Dead

Rites may be cast either ceremonially or casually, using casting totals as shown later, with the Ease Factors listed for each rite.

Ceremonial rites take one hour and may include props to utilize appropriate Shape & Material bonuses, limited by the score in Lore of the Dead.

Casual rites take only one round, but the casting total is halved unless a Fatigue level is spent. Vis cost if any is listed.

All rites need to Penetrate unless noted otherwise.

CEREMONIAL RITE:

Stamina + Lore of the Dead
+ Shape & Material bonus +
stress die

CASUAL RITE, NON-FATIGUING:
(Stamina + Lore of the Dead
+ stress die)/2

CASUAL RITE, FATIGUING:
Stamina + Lore of the Dead
+ stress die

PENETRATION:
Casting Total – Ease Factor
+ Penetration ability

Specialities: specific rite, casual, ceremonial

EYES OF THE DEAD

Ease Factor: 6, Mentem,
no vis cost

R: Personal, D: Moon, T: Vision
This effect mimics Second Sight (ArM5, pages 48 & 67), and as such does not need to Penetrate.

(Non-Hermetic, magnitude 1)

TOUCH OF GHOSTLY CALLING

Ease Factor: 12, Corpus, 1
pawn of Rego or Corpus vis

R: Touch, D: Special, T: Individual

When the target of this ritual dies, he returns the following night as a spectre, a specific kind of ghost (see insert) that keeps living out the role or vocation he had in life. The rite fails if target is given a proper burial. Other types of ghosts are beyond the scope of this ritual. It is treated as an ongoing magical effect until target dies, and causes Warping as a continuous mystical effect. The ritual can be dispelled prior to the target's death, but not once he has risen.

(Non-Hermetic, magnitude 3)



DIRGE

Ease Factor: 9, Vim, 1 pawn of Creo or Vim vis

R: Touch, **D:** Sun, **T:** Room or Group

The Might scores and pools of undead creatures are increased by five. Creatures do not regain Might points while under the influence of this effect.

(Non-Hermetic, magnitude 2)

ANCHORED IN THE VEIL

Ease Factor: 12+, Mentem, no vis cost

R: Voice, **D:** Sun (may be varied); **T:** Group (may be varied)

The caster can alter the nature of physical objects, anchoring them for a time in the veil between the world of the living and the dead. Physical objects now affect ghosts as if they were corporeal, or ghosts may affect physical targets without using any powers, so that it counts as a natural attack regarding Magic Resistance. Against a wholly mundane opponent or item an anchored object is superior and has +3 on relevant rolls, e.g. +3 Attack for a sword or +3 to open a lock for a lockpick. Objects are seen as shimmering and semi-transparent. Base Target covers an individual ghost and all its equipment since this is formed by the ghost. For a mundane, physical target the power affects one person or a single piece of equipment.

EASE FACTOR MODIFIER: -3

EFFECT: Decrease target to Circle (all armaments of all individuals inside)

EASE FACTOR MODIFIER: +3

EFFECT: Increase Target to Room or a Group of 10 individuals

EASE FACTOR MODIFIER: +6

EFFECT: Increase Target to Structure

EASE FACTOR MODIFIER: +3

EFFECT: Increase Duration to Moon

+3 Ease Factor increase per tenfold increase in size of targets Individual, Group, Room or Structure.

(Non-Hermetic, magnitude varies)

Additional Material

This hook utilizes only material from *ArM5*, but troupes may be in the possession of more books and wish to explore these to expand its scope. A few choice references for such are given here.

Ancient Magic, pages 30–40. Some information has been included in this hook, but having the entire book at hand allows the option of integrating the Teutonic Knights. This book also presents the rules and mechanics for integrating non-Hermetic magic, which gives

a better idea of what can be gained from the secrets.

Houses of Hermes: True Lineages, pages 110–143 has in the Tremere chapter a lot of material on ghosts, such as spells and Virtues useful for a necromancer, especially if he works with ghosts who lack the ability to affect the physical world. Some of these could render Argos' *Lore of the Dead* Virtue unnecessary, giving him room for other Virtues. He might want to take Second Sight instead.

Houses of Hermes: Societates, page 89 features in the Tytalus chapter the Supernatural Ability Personae, which would be a way for Argos to expand the use of the fictional Bellox, and make it a long-term, deep cover. However, Argos may very well commit Low Crimes by doing this, or even breach the Code proper if he manages to create Bellox as a Hermetic identity. In this case there could have been a real Bellox in the Order who was a bit of a loner, and Argos kept his death a secret and took over his identity and sigil.

The Mysteries, Revised Edition, page 129–131 mentions the Disciples of the Worm, which could be the sinister necromantic cult Bellox is said to associate with. The Necromantic Spirit Magic on pages 64–74 could be of use, especially Spirit Familiar. In addition, the common mystery of Potent Magic could really boost his Penetration.

Chapter Four

Into the Valley

"Antunnos, the collectors will soon come," whispered Rani.

"The trail has been cut. What shall come has been prepared for." The sharp eyes of the magus glinted with cold cunning. "We have the harvest, now we return to the den. Today, we shall be prey. Tomorrow, we shall commission the hunters."

Antunnos put his robes in a saddlebag, concentrated, and took the form of his stag heartbeast.

All that remained of the covenant's vis harvest were the tracks of a deer and a boar leading off to a nearby town.

Storyguide's Information

This story begins when an outer-covenant vis harvest returns empty handed. When the harvest site is investigated, it is found that the vis has been properly removed. Spells (InCo or InAn) reveal that the magus Antunnos performed the harvest. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that he maintains a sanctum in town.

This story is designed to be linear. Seeking Antunnos brings the characters to a nearby town where he has a sanctum. The characters' investigations incite a gathering at the town's church. This, in turn, forces Antunnos to perform a "Great Ceremony" that awakens a number of heartbeasts in the mundane population. It is during this Great Ceremony that

the troupe are best positioned to end his plans. Thus, what appears to be a simple theft of vis spirals into a much larger threat to the covenant, on both a practical and legal basis.

This adventure has been designed to allow the storyguide to use a nearby urban location. It is assumed that the player characters know of Antunnos. He may



The Town

Characters with the appropriate Int + Area Lore have the following information about the town.

EASE FACTOR: 15+

INFORMATION: The Romans had a permanent camp where the local town now stands named Antunnacum. It was a healers' camp.

EASE FACTOR: 18+

INFORMATION: It is believed that an ancient Celtic (or region appropriate) tribe called this place Antunnuac "Home of the Farmer." All that is left is an ancient stone marker.

The town is a community of 800, with half of its population outside of the town proper. It has an overall Dominion aura of 2, although this may be raised or lowered slightly as you see fit.

have spent time at the covenant during the past year, or used its Redcap services.

Part I: Seeking Antunnos

This section focuses upon confronting Antunnos and the return of the stolen vis. This requires entering the town, and finding Antunnos' living quarters.

Listed here are specific places of interest that pertain to this adventure. Antunnos has set up a sanctum in an estate property, which he refers to as his "den." There is an ancient stone marker, a leather crafter's shop houses Antunnos' apostles, and last, but not least, there is a well-kept church that has strong ties to the local authorities (referred to as the mayor here).

The Estate of Antunnos

Antunnos' "den" is protected by a Level 20 Aegis of the Hearth. Rani, Jane, Olaf, Lince, Igor, and Elsie were part of the ceremony.

This property has been in his possession for five seasons. He is assisted by his bodyguard Rani and two servants named Jane and Olaf. It is a spartan, functional estate that is divided into two general areas.

The public rooms of the house serve the general needs of the estate as well as being the meeting place for Wilderist teachings. The rear rooms are Antunnos' clearly marked sanctum. This is where he sleeps, keeps a small library, and maintains his lab. His past seasons have been dedicated to field research: investigating the ancient marker; performing a handful of heartbeast rituals; making himself useful to the rural folk; and improving his Area Lore.

Confronting Antunnos about the stolen vis will be met with the return of said vis. Antunnos explains that he requires the characters' support, and that this "theft and return" has been meant to illustrate the solidity of a single promise: Should the covenant support him in his Great Ceremony, he will dedicate this area's resources to the covenant's needs. Should there be issues with the Ceremony, refer to Antunnos' Wilderist philosophy (see later).

The Ancient Marker

The immediate site of the marker has a Magic aura of 2, which overrides the local Divine aura at night. The marker itself ancient, predating Roman times. It has well worn pagan symbols shaped into it that convey "strength of the land." The town has developed around it and forgotten about it; it might be a fallen standing stone in a cattle pen, or built into a wall. Last, it is obvious that it has been cared for recently. In game terms, this is the physical site of Rossen-Antunnuac (see later).

Lince's Leather Working Shop

Antunnos' most fanatical followers gave themselves over to the Mystagogue during the early months of his time in the town. Of them, three proved to be cunning enough to continue work-

ing within the town proper. They have taken sept names (see later). This trio became known to other Wilderists as Antunnos' apostles, and eventually gathered together under the roof of Lince the Pelter.

The property itself is well-used, but cared for. Many of the tools have been handed down from father to son. There is a house, a yard filled with drying racks, and a work shed. Worn paths lead from place to place. The buildings are as old as any in the town.

This is the default meeting place of the Wilderists. Each apostle truly loves what they have become, and each passionately discusses the concepts of Wilderist ideals. Every simple heartbeast Wilderist visits at least once per month.

The Church of St Mary

The church of St Mary has a Dominion aura of 5. The entry hall of the church contains a single image of the Virgin Mary sitting on a throne with a church in her right hand and a town in her left. The inscription on this image is Mater Dei Patrona Civium (Mother of God, patron saint of the citizens).

Father John serves this church and manages the nearby gelb. He has noticed a fluctuation in attendance over the past year, but tithing has remained constant and no obvious disrespect has been shown to the church. Given this, he has faith that this minor prob-

lem will work itself out.

The building and immediate grounds are well cared for.

THE GELB

A gelb is a rural church-owned farmland property. This one has a Dominion aura of 2. There are always at least five farmers and their families here, and the leader at this site is a farmer named Golta. These people are all anti-Wilderist Christians. Golta considers Antunnos a devil and had many conversations with Elsie before she gave herself fully to the Wilderist way (see later).

Part II: Enter the Church

Antunnos is being watched by church members who suspect him of pagan rites. When the characters visit Antunnos' estate, or are seen publicly with him, the watchers report this to Father John. Within a day of a visit, Antunnos receives a summons to defend his alleged pagan activities. Antunnos, wishing to maintain a commanding public presence, complies. Father John is not ignorant of magic, and he has interacted with Antunnos for more than a year. Both men have the sense to maintain some level of civility to each other to gain the respect of the townspeople.

John's response is one born

Story Seed: Town and Country

Although the town itself remains in a Divine aura, the countryside is not. After the two years of manipulations by Antunnos, the country folk are now left in a void. They were influenced by magic, with some actually becoming bearers of the heartbeast. Some have even renounced the Church. Many have been manipulated to speak against it. This is prime hunting grounds for Infernal forces. Accusers (Realms of Power: The Infernal, page 43) could pave the way for the Infernal in the area. Vis sources may become tainted. Companions and grogs may inadvertently bring Infernally-influenced people into the covenant grounds.

of concerns about paganism: he suspects the player characters to be in league with Antunnos, who he thinks is the leader. Seeking to prevent trouble before it starts by challenging it publicly, Father John summons Antunnos to the church.

This is the only time when all parties are peacefully gathered, so the player characters should feel free to involve themselves in any way that they see fit. It should be noted that Antunnos may be obsessed to the point of madness, but he is no fool. He does his best to forestall any violence by surrounding himself with his



Breaking the Code

The players should soon realize that Antunnos is breaking the Code of Hermes.

First, interfering with mundanes (ArM5, page 14) should be easy to prove, provided that the characters can prove that Antunnos' actions would bring ruin to his fellow magi. This is the most obvious charge. Characters must take care if they attack him before bringing a case to Tribunal, for Antunnos takes care not to attack them directly, unless to defend himself.

Second, a Peripheral Code ruling in the Rhine Tribunal named The Guardians of the Forests (Guardians of the Forests, page 18)

says that the Order has a responsibility to slow the encroachment of the Dominion to preserve nature's wellspring of Magic. It is further noted that such actions must not incur the wrath of the mundanes, else the Oath of Hermes will be broken, and due punishment meted forthwith. This Peripheral Code ruling is what Antunnos relies on to cover his actions, if he is in the Rhine. He is not harming the mundanes; he is improving them to better live within the aura produced by Rossen-Antunnuac.

Should the player characters join Antunnos, then they too are guilty of breaking the Code of Hermes.

apostles. If he must run, he seeks the safety of the den while his apostles patrol the grounds.

Noon, at the Church

At noon, Antunnos stands next to the pulpit as Father John address him:

"We have no issues with the aid given to our town. Your wisdom in such natural matters is to be commended. However, there are some within the town who have a concern. It is said that you have been seen dealing with persons of questionable natures. Some say that you have engaged in pagan rituals. What say you to this accusation?"

Antunnos retorts that in studying the history of this town, he has simply encountered pagan sites that are part of its landscape. His purpose is higher: The illumination of the history woven within this town. He also points out his current living quarters were a gift from the mayor after saving his family from a servant who shape-shifted into an asp.

Father John warns those observing of the sinful nature of letting go of the human form. He also warns that such magic is bestiality.

Antunnos points out that Adam and Eve were stewards of Eden. He challenges John with a question: Is Eden within those who take animal shapes?

From this, the gathering dissolves as the crowd polarizes

into Wilderists against Christians. Father John quickly clears the hall in fear of further escalation. If there is some form of town guard present, they are slow to react, as Antunnos has previously cast Seed of Betrayal. At the exit, Golta storms over to Antunnos, screaming "Witchcraft! Demon!" He is roughly pushed back to John's group by Mabsuthat and Rani.

Part III: The Great Ceremony

After Father John's summons, Antunnos feels forced into the Great Ceremony at the ancient marker. He devises a historic, celebratory cover story for the event, gathering as many followers as he and his apostles can. Depending on your needs, this may be as low as 20 or as high as 100; the larger the group, the more attention it draws.

On the night of the first full moon, Antunnos begins the ritual Initiation of the Simple Heartbeast (see later). He repeats this ritual until dawn, using Recollection of Memories Never Quite Lived as well as Seed of Betrayal (see later) on any mundanes who attempt to stop him. He is physically protected by Rani and the three acolytes, as well as surrounded by 10 to 20 other simple heartbeast citizens. As this is an Initiation

rite, there is no vis consumed. However, each Initiation is a deeply personal event and must be performed individually. In many ways, it is something akin to a magical baptism, or a marriage rite; it requires true acceptance and takes about 5 minutes.

If the characters attach Antunnos before the ritual, it is likely to appear to Quaesitors that they attacked the Mystagogue simply for harvesting a vis stock. On the other hand, if they wait too long, the issues multiply. They have to deal with a large number of un-Gifted heartbeasts, Antunnos' retainers, and possibly the awakened nature spirit of Rossen-Antunnuac.

If the players decide to hide out in the covenant, bring the issues of the town to them or motivate them with a Quaesitor visit. If Antunnos and Rossen-Antunnuac come to power in a local town, there are many ways in which the covenant will face trouble.

Guidelines

This section provides necessary information not found in *ArM5*.

The Big Picture

Antunnos is a Mystagogue for clan Ilfetu and an outspoken Wilderist. Some may find his

anti-Dominion rhetoric frustrating, but others find wisdom in his meditations on the importance of wilderness spirits.

Two years past, Antunnos and his protector, a man named Rani, entered a town near the player covenant. Both made themselves useful during that winter, providing aid to the hunters and herdsmen. Through these actions, the pair became something of a trusted oddity. One day, Antunnos saved the mayor's children from a local potter who had shape-shifted into an asp (as planned by Antunnos). From that time on, Antunnos and Rani were granted rooms in a previously abandoned estate house in the town.

Antunnos is far from being a helpful wise man. Antunnos sensed Rossen-Antunnuac within the walls of the town. He found that the spirit desired the removal of the yoke of the Dominion from the landscape. Antunnos realized that he could perform this task through his Initiation of the Simple Heartbeast (see later).

To make this happen, he befriended the townspeople, while contacting like-minded Wilderists within House Bjornaer. Then, he drove a handful of rural townspeople away from the Church using Mentem spells, picking the three most dedicated to serve as his apostles within the town. Currently, he is gathering followers to awaken their heartbeasts in order to further soften the presence of

Concepts from Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults

HARMONISTS VERSUS WILDERISTS

Central to the philosophy of House Bjornaer is the idea that the wellspring of all magic exists in those areas that remain in their pristine state, untouched by the hand of man. With mankind comes the corruption of such pure spirits, warping them into aspects of the fay. The defense of these pristine places has divided the House into two factions: The Harmonists, who believe that invasion of the wilderness by humankind is unavoidable, and thus teach that co-existence is fundamental; and the Wilderists, who wish to enclose humankind within the walls

of their cities, where they can do no harm to the wilderness.

CLANS AND SEPTS

The internal structure of the House is tribal, first subdivided into six clans, each of which is further subdivided into various Hermetic-family-based Septs.

This enables the House to maintain its diverse ideals, as well as showing organization and focused strength in times of need. Antunnos is a member of Clan Ilfetu, the most mystically inclined of the six clans. This clan administers to the cult of ancestors, conducting all the public rites of the

House. They are considered to be both blessed and moonstruck, and their core value is to teach. The clan also leads the way in the discovery of new Mysteries. This Clan maintains the Initiation Ritual of Twelve Years, which awakens the heartbeast within seeking magi. The overall political stance of Ilfetu is Wilderist.

Septs are small groups of magi focused upon a singular task in the expectation that wisdom will blossom from the seeds of the like-minded. In the case of Antunnos, any success in this story may well foster a new sept dedicated to reclaiming pure spirits from mortal bonds.

the Dominion. He plans to ally with the players' magi to increase his strength for when the Order seeks to impose the Code.

Eventually, with the town turned and Rossen-Antunnuac strengthened, the measures taken in this town can serve as a symbol for the Wilderist ideal, and an exemplar of a method of freeing nature spirits, should Antunnos survive the political ramifications.

Antunnos' Wilderist Philosophy

The central goal for Antunnos is to raise Rossen-Antunnuac back to its ancient form. Antunnos is convinced that he will rewrite the Code through this ac-

tion, whether out of madness or ego (that's up to the storyguide). An important part of this plan is to have the player characters support the benefits that a magic-held urban center would create, and Antunnos is willing to put a lot of effort in to gaining their support. Below are some of the arguments that Antunnos presents to magi who oppose him.

- I represent all Wilderists in this matter. Humans have taken the magic from the nature spirit Rossen-Antunnuac. It is the responsibility of House Bjornaer to return it to vitality. This town will become a symbol. Do you seek a Dominion-rich environment, or a Magic-rich one?

- We are magi of the Order. You serve as this region's mystical lords, those who maintain the landscape of Magic. You harvest its vis. You tame its beasts. Let the town become your allodial land. Antunnos does not care about property. He is only concerned about releasing Rossen-Antunnuac from the Divine aura. Making the town a kind of covenant seisin releases Antunnos from long-term management and legal responsibilities.
- The die is cast. Is it better to destroy this re-awakening, or should we become the learned master of its evolution? The real argument is this: who should rule the landscape, the humans who depress magic, or the

Mystagogue Antunnos, Dark Strider of Bjornaer

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

Size: 0

Age: 63 (45)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping: 4 (6)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Gentle Gift; Berserk, Clan Ilfetu (training in House Rituals), Heartbeast (Black Stag), Inspirational, Second Sight; Ambitious, Weak Spontaneous Magic; Deficient Form (Ignem)

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Angry +2, Obedient (House Bjornaer) -3

Reputations: Wise One +1 (Clan Ilfetu)

Combat:

Dodge: Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

Fist: Init 0, Attack +3, Defense +3, Damage 0

Fist, berserk: Init 0, Attack +5, Defense +1, Damage 0

Soak: +1 (+2 when Berserk)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Local 3 (wilderness), Area Lore: Local Town 2 (nature spirits), Artes Liberales 2 (rhetoric), Athletic 2 (endurance), Awareness 3 (people), Brawl 3 (dodge), Finesse 2 (targeting), Folk Ken 4 (hunters), Local Language 5 (rural dialect), Gothic 4 (Hermetic usage), Guile 3 (Christian rhetoric), Heartbeast 4 (taking animal form), Hunt 4 (small animals), Latin 4 (Hermetic terms),

Magic Theory 3 (Animal), Organization Lore: Church 2 (Bible quotes), Organization Lore: House Bjornaer 5 (modifying Initiation scripts), Parma Magic 2 (Animal), Penetration 3 (Muto), Second Sight 3 (ghosts), Survival 3 (forests), Teaching 5 (heartbeasts)

Arts: Cr 5, In 12, Mu 14, Pe 10, Re 6; An 10, Aq 5, Au 5, Co 13, He 5, Ig 5, Im 5, Me 13, Te 5, Vi 5

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Spells Known:

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 20/+14)

Blunt the Viper's Fangs (PeAn 20/+21)

Eyes of the Cat (MuCo(An) 5/+25)

Gift of the Bear's Fortitude (MuCo 25/+28)

Grip of the Choking Hand (PeCo 25/+26) Mastery 2 (quiet cast, still cast)

Lifting the Dangling Puppet (ReCo 15/+20)

Peering into the Mortal Mind (InMe 30/+26)

Recollection of Memories Never Quite Lived (MuMe 4/+28)

Seed of Betrayal (MuMe 15/+31)

Mastery 3 (quiet, still, multiple (x3) casting) R: Eye, D: Moon, T: Ind. Changes the target's emotions toward their master(s) to contempt, such that she will readily betray him. Subtract 5 points from the target's relevant Loyal Personality Trait, for the duration of the spell.

(Base 3, +1 Eye, +3 Moon)

Transformation of the Ravenous Beast to the Torpid Toad (MuAn 25/+25)

The Unbidden Task (MuMe 25/+28)

R: Eye, D: Moon, T: Ind. This spell creates a simple prospective memory in the target, which repeats itself so

often that the target infers a reason for the memory. Simple memories, like, "I need to leave the back door unlocked tomorrow night" draw out reasonable inferences like, "because his lordship is sneaking out for a night on the town after her ladyship falls asleep." Characters cannot be convinced to do things that are dangerous unless the character regularly faces that sort of danger as part of his profession. *Houses of Hermes: Societates* page 70.

(Base 5, +1 Eye, +3 Moon)

Viper's Gaze (ReAn 15/+17)

The Wound that Weeps (PeCo 15/+24)

Vis: 5 pawns of Animal vis, in the form of clean bear claws on a string around his neck.

Appearance: Antunnos is a tall, trim man with pale skin, deep brown eyes, and dull black hair that shimmers auburn in the sunlight. He appears regal, yet friendly to those who speak with him. His sigil may be heard as the distant rumble of hoof beats.

A Wilderist, Antunnos believes that humankind must be penned. The modified heartbeast ritual will tether the humans to Rossen-Antunnuac. He also firmly believes that the six Clans of his House are fragmenting; dispersing it as a political force within the Order. From the town, he plans to strengthen Wilderist allegiances within House Bjornaer. This would enable the Wilderists to secure spiritual places, and potentially strengthen the Order's founts of magic.

The Black Stag, Antunnos' Heartbeast

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

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Gentle Gift; Berserk, Clan Ilfetu, Heartbeast (Black Stag), Inspirational, Second Sight; Ambitious, Weak Spontaneous Magic; Deficient Form (Ignem)

Qualities: Defensive Fighter, Extra Natural Weapons, Large Antlers, Fast Runner, Good Jumper, Sharp Ears

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Calculating +2, Obedient (House Bjornaer) -3

Reputations: Noble (local) 2

Combat:

Antlers: Init +4, Attack +7, Defense +8, Damage +5

Hooves: Init +4, Attack +6, Defense +8, Damage +3

Antlers, Berserk: Init +4, Attack +9, Defense +6, Damage +5

Hooves, Berserk: Init +4, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +3

Soak: +2 (additional +2 when Berserk, +5 with Gift of the Bears Fortitude)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

Abilities: Athletics 4 (sprinting), Awareness 3 (predators), Brawl 4 (dodge), Survival 3 (woodlands)

Story Seed: Eden Returns?

Should Rossen-Antunnuac return, plant life seems to thrive. In the midst of the town sits the church of St Mary, unscathed and pristine. Rumors of beast-men have been recorded. The local bishop or archbishop will respond to these changes. Being well educated and not fearful of using the military to support his views of the law, how would he assess the town? Are these beast-men evil or useful? Could this be a sign of Eden's Return?

The Characters

This section provides statistics and descriptions for the important characters in this story.

Rossen-Antunnuac

This spirit is comatose. It should be noted that although it is the focus of Antunnos' energies, it is too weak to function. The ancient marker is where it is bound to the mortal world. It is a Genius Loci (Realms of Power: Magic, page 106-7) aligned with Herbam.

Constant magical activity over the site of Rossen-Antunnuac eventually awakens the nature spirit. It will be weak (Magic Might 5 or 10 at best) on awakening, but given a few months of generous support, it achieves Magic Might 40.

Rossen-Antunnuac's rise also

magi who are intertwined with the landscapes mystical spirits? Think of the new sources of vis that may develop!

- It has been two years. Do you believe I have been idle? He has allies within the Clans of Ilfetu, Maruhs, and Midusulf. He knows the landscape, and its resources. His followers know of the covenant, should Antunnos be martyred.

Preventing Railroad

There are certainly many interesting stories arising if the player characters choose to join Antunnos. However, they focus more on avoiding Hermetic justice than on the philosophy of

House Bjornaer, so storyguides may want to encourage their troupes to oppose him. Here are three suggestions.

- Play Antunnos as a megalomaniac demanding that the magi choose his Wilderist philosophy above the Order's Code.
- Promote a sense of urgency by having a Quaesitor due to arrive in the near future. The Quaesitor is coming to discuss how best to stop Antunnos' activities in the town.
- Bring in the Divine. The ritual might be rendered impossible, pushing Antunnos over the edge and leaving the troupe with a wild mob to contend with.

New Bjornaer Mystery: Initiation of the Simple Heartbeast

Ease Factor: 15 (Minor Virtue known to the Mystagogue)

Script Bonus: +6 + Participation Modifier (see later)

Script Details: The Mystagogue must possess Organization Lore: Bjornaer to perform this ritual. The Initiate must not possess The Gift. At the site of a nature spirit's regio (+3), the Initiate renounces all spiritual beliefs and accepts the rites and practices of the nature spirit in question. This

grants the Flaw Magical Air (+3); however, animals of the same species as the Initiate's heartbeast ignore this modifier. As at the Ritual of Twelve Years, the Participation modifier provides +1 for every witness who has the same temperament as the probationer's heartbeast and -1 for every witness who has an opposing temperament. The Initiate's final Initiation Total must equal or exceed the Ease Factor to succeed.

NOTES

The standard heartbeast rules apply (ArM5, page 91–2). The heartbeast is a Hermetic Virtue, but Clan Ilfetu has also developed an Initiation that awakens the heartbeast of the unGifted. Antunnos refers to this as the 'simple' heartbeast.

Initiation mechanics are discussed in The Mysteries Revised Edition and Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults.

increases the Magic aura, and by the time the spirit has regained a Might of 40, the Magic aura over the town reaches 4, enough to suppress the Dominion aura anywhere outside the church.

Rani

Rani was raised in the forest hovel of a clan of Pomeranian witches, a sworn enemy of House Bjornaer. Set loose to seek a weakness that his clan could exploit, he came upon Antunnos. He knows about the Order, especially House Bjornaer's kill-on-sight doctrine concerning shapeshifters. However, he has carefully exploited this knowledge to gain favor with Antunnos.

Rani assumes Antunnos seeks the goal of House Bjornaer's disruption. He has earned the reputation of being Antunnos' protector, and is very careful with his

Story Seed: Of the Bjornaer

No matter how the characters deal with Antunnos, House Bjornaer takes an interest. At the very least, magi want to talk to the player characters, and they may have much weightier requests, if many unGifted people with heartbeasts survived. If the player characters are interested, it will be a simple matter to become more involved in the House's Mysteries.

shapeshift skill. When Rani shape-shifts, each form requires a specific mental state. The boar form is his preferred shape and becomes available when he scavenges. When threatened, the bear shape becomes available to him. Finally, should he take any wound, the bull form becomes available, allowing him to charge through groups of opponents to safety.

Story Seed: The Ladies Move In

The Witches of Pomerania (Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults, page 9; Guardians of the Forests, page 99) have followed Rani's activities. As the town embraces the Wilderist philosophy, the witches infiltrate the region. After four centuries of fearful hiding, the witches may have found a foothold against the Order. That foothold is Rossen-Antunnuac. Once they are allied to the nature spirit, where would revenge be best taken?

Apostle Mabsuthat, Lince the Pelter

Mabsuthat uses the Specialist template (ArM5, page 21; primary ability: Craft: Hideworking), with the addition of a lynx heartbeast and the Flaw Magical Air. Through

Rani

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

Size: 0

Age: 27 (27)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Warrior; Shape-shifter; Dark Secret: Pomeranian Witch (Guardians of the Forest, page 99), Social Handicap (morose temperament)

Personality Traits: Quiet +3, Wanderer +2, Greedy +1

Reputations: Mercenary +2 (Antunnos' bodyguard)

Combat:

Bow (short): Init +1, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +8

Fist: Init +2, Attack +3, Defense

+5, Damage +2

Kick: Init +1, Attack +3, Defense +4, Damage +5

Knife: Init +2, Attack +5, Defense +6, Damage +4

Knife (thrown): Init +2, Attack +5, Defense n/a, Damage +4

Spear: Init +4, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +7

Soak: +2 (without armor)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21)+

Abilities: Bows 5 (short bow), Brawl 3 (knife), Craft: Hide-working 2 (skinning), Hunt 5 (forests), Local Language 3 (townsfolk), Shapeshifter 3 (boar, bear, bull), Single Weapon 3 (knife), Slavic 5

(fables), Stealth 5 (forests), Survival 3 (forests), Thrown Weapon 3 (knife)

Equipment: Rani is generally clothed in wools that can be easily discarded if he should shapeshift. Any tool or weapon he uses is taken from the immediate environment, although he does keep a knife in his boot.

Encumbrance: 0 (2)

Appearance: A man of average build, with the straight nose, brown eyes, and soft brown shoulder-length hair of the Baltic people. He usually wears simple wool clothes and a heavy, hooded cloak to keep warm. His voice is soft and carries a subtle, depressing tone.

his studies as a devout Wilderist, he has taken a liking to the ideals of the Midusulf Chieftain; he seeks to become a leader of human heartbeats who would rule through action over birthright. His personality type is Choleric.

Apostle Ulama, Igor the Villain

Ulama uses the Hunter template (ArM5, page 21) with a falcon heartbeast and the Flaw Magical Air. The most mischievous of the trio, his beliefs as a Wilderist embrace the Maruhs Puck ideal; he simply wishes to shatter any

forms of human establishment that he can find. His personality type is Sanguine.

Apostle Vivopario, Elsie of the Glebe

Vivopario uses the Priest template (ArM5, page 23) with a viper heartbeast and the Flaw Magical Air. Although a woman, she has been raised as an orphan at the Church's glebe outside of town. Over time, she shared the responsibilities of the farm with Goldt. She had also taken simple vows for an informal religious life. She represents Antunnos' greatest triumph.

Jane & Olaf

These two are the housemaid and guard of the estate. Neither ever leave the grounds and both were part of the Aegis ritual. Jane and Olaf are married, but the process of Antunnos' heartbeast ritual forced them to renounce the sacrament. The pair are still very dedicated to each other (and, in the eyes of the Divine, still married). Jane uses the Witch template (ArM5, page 23) and has a lioness heartbeast, with the Flaw Magical Air. Olaf uses the Tough Guy template (ArM5, page 22) and has a wolf heartbeast and the Flaw Magical Air.

The Mayor of the Town

The farms and herds of the region have produced well this year, with much of the gain due to Antunnos' aid. Although officially a staunch supporter of the Church, the mayor sees to it that people speaking against Antunnos have better things to do with their time.

On the other hand, the mayor detests Rani, and sees many accusations made against Antunnos as Rani's fault. This is caused in part due to Rani's handicap, and also in part due to an occasional magical nudge from Antunnos.

Father John

Use the Priest template (*ArM5*, page 23). Father John stands as the final anchor of the Church's pres-

ence within the town. He takes refuge within the church and seeks to bind the people together under the Word of God.

The Heartbeasts of the Town

People swayed by Antunnos are still few in number, and most live outside the central town area. Antunnos has used these men and women as test subjects in the development of the Great Ceremony.

Should you need characters to represent the townspeople, use the Grog and Companion templates (*ArM5*, page 21–24). Beasts are listed in the Book of Beasts, available as a free download from the Atlas web site, or as an appendix in *Realms of Power: Magic*.

Story Seed: The Rise of Rossen-Antunnuac

As the nature spirit Rossen-Antunnuac continues to gather strength, a regio forms (Realms of Power, Magic, page 103). Over the course of a single year, the local wilderness becomes pristine. Plant growth matures quickly and produces vibrant fruits. Spirit guardians begin wandering the landscape, protecting the passages to the local town. Should he have fallen during this adventure, the spirit of Antunnos may well have become bound to Rossen-Antunnuac. Aside from the immediate problems, the Order will be very interesting in a Magic aura that grows so quickly.



New Deal

An elderly merchant clutches the rigging on a ship as it is tossed about in a violent storm. His frightened gaze flickers between the struggling helmsman and a weak light in the darkness, which he hopes fervently is the lighthouse showing the way to the safety of the port.

A wave the size of a castle rises from the sea and swallows the ship. In the foam and churning waters no debris can be seen.

Introduction

Mythic Europe has aspects not involving faeries, griffins, and demons. Mundanes produce much-needed items with their hands and merchants use their talents and connections to distribute these wares. The explosive growth of towns during the 13th century provides ample opportunity for business as well as adventure.

The story below illuminates the importance of arranging for supplies through well-maintained trade relations. It can

be used as a stepping stone for using *City and Guild* for stories about liaising with traders or setting up merchant businesses. Troupes who resolve bookkeeping and economics in a loose manner may find inspiration in the possibilities for merchant adventurers traveling to far-off lands and meeting foreign cultures at the edge of the known world and the Order's influence.

The Missing Shipment

The player magi realize mid-season that they are missing an important shipment of rare and valuable materials needed to perform their magical projects. The usual supplier — Charles — has failed to deliver the goods within the expected time frame. The delay is beyond what is reasonable considering the distances involved, resulting in an imminent shortage of materials vital for lab work. To add insult to injury, the agreement was that

he was paid in advance because of the exotic nature of the goods and the distance to the sellers. This arrangement has worked without a hitch for a number of years, until now.

Going To Town

A proactive approach is to send envoys to town to check up on things, and to see if any information on Charles is to be found. The journey is uneventful, although since at least the latter half of the trip takes them through populated areas any Gifted individuals in the group draw attention to themselves.

This is a good opportunity to get socially adept companion characters into play. There are a number of logical places to start in town, among others the warehouse Charles usually rents and the taverns frequented by the laborers and teamsters employed by the merchants. Activities of this kind lead to a minor investigation covered below on a location by location basis in The Town.

Waiting

If the magi simply choose to wait, a letter arrives by a mundane messenger within a few weeks. If the covenant has a difficult approach (for example, in a regio) the directions were found in Charles' letters (see later). The letter is from a merchant named Simon who offers to supply what Charles obviously has failed to deliver. He cordially invites a representative of the wizards to his house to negotiate. Should the matter be ignored at this point, the shortage is there to stay. If a character attempts to procure some of the missing materials in town he certainly crosses paths with Simon.

Charles and the Shipment

Charles was an honest merchant adventurer who suffered a stroke of bad luck on one of his risky ventures to exotic lands in search of rare goods and valuables. One setback led to the next, and eventually he was goaded by Simon into borrowing money from him, using the expensive shipment belonging to the covenant as security. He was loath to come clean to the magi since he had already been paid in advance, so he tried to cover his losses. He took even greater risks than usual, skimping on the quantity of manpower and quality of ships, and had the misfortune to suffer a shipwreck with an additional cargo of gems

bought with Simon's money. His original cargo of laboratory supplies are held by Peter as a neutral third party. Simon now believes this cargo to be his to sell to the original recipients at a higher price so he can make a profit.

THE CORONER'S RULING

As Charles' body was found washed up on shore, the coroner (or other regional variation of this office) investigated for evidence of a crime. He found none, and the death was ruled accidental. No goods were salvaged after the accident. Charles' body was buried within a few days of his demise.

Shortages in Labs

Stores of rare consumables and replacement tools have been running low since the

shipment was due to arrive. The shortage affects the magi from the start of the following season. The bulk of the substances consumed by lab work

is missing, as well as any specific items ordered (such as for enchanted devices). The situation both forces magi to postpone projects requiring specific



Use of Magic

Magic is the obvious tool to use for solving this problem, but this is neither easy nor safe.

SUBTLE MAGIC

The immediate resolution of the entire problem by use of magic — Mentem especially — is well within the scope of even recently Gauntleted magi. But remember that Mentem spells used to manipulate people have a limit of Duration Moon for standard Formulaic spells. Any deals made under magical duress will be reconsidered once the magic wears off. If someone is manipulated into signing a written contract, once he comes to his senses he will smell foul play and take the matter further. Bear in mind that sometimes this happens even if only mundane persuasion is used. It is not possible to mentally manipulate everyone for ever, and any Mentem magus worth his salt knows this. This being said, if the characters employ intelligent and creative methods the storyguide should reward this with suc-

cess in manipulating Simon.

Intellego Mentem gives easy access to information that may otherwise be gleaned from skilled use of social abilities. There is no real mystery as to what is happening; the challenge lies in negotiating a long term deal. Although mind reading reveals sinister business methods, it's nothing a spy wouldn't find out by shadowing Simon anyway.

OVERT MAGIC

Apart from using Mentem magic on Simon there are many others ways to easily resolve the immediate problems by means of a spell or two. Finding, stealing, and moving the missing cargo is relatively easy, but Simon misses it and knows where to start looking for it. Again, this draws the attention of several influential individuals, and once the supplies run out again a new supplier must be found. Important authority figures like noblemen, guild magistrates, and senior clergy know of both magic and the Order, and all of them can and

will raise a case with the Quaesitores. Making Simon disappear isn't hard either, but since he is an influential merchant this is also investigated.

A HERMETIC CASE

The Order does not know every thing that goes on in the mundane world. However, if the case with Simon is resolved using considerable magic or foul play the Order might find out in a number of ways. Simon knows he is dealing with wizards, and if he senses interference he will raise a complaint with his guild. The guild knows of the Order and has a way of contacting the Order with a grievance; the same goes for the Church and major nobles.

Depending on the player magi's situation there may be a rival or enemy who smells a rat and fingers them. Once this happens a Quaesitorial investigation starts, which could end with Tribunal proceedings for meddling with mundanes. An allied magus in the city could foresee problems arising and give a friendly warning in advance.

items until such are procured, and results in a general shortage hampering lab work.

If only rules from *ArM5* are used, the shortage means that the number of active labs must be reduced to half (round down). If the shortage is not dealt with

within four seasons, all labs need to be closed down completely.

If using the rules for labs from *Covenants* page 106–124, the covenant can only support the equivalent of half of the sum of Upkeep values of all labs (round down). Labs need to take

Flaws (or remove Virtues) in order to reduce Upkeep to half of the usual value immediately, distributed in any way the magi see fit. Even though the funding in Mythic pounds is there, the materials are missing. Once the shortage has ended, any

new Flaws are removed without needing to spend time doing this, but lost Virtues take time to regain. If the shortage is not dealt with within four seasons, the sum of Upkeep of the labs needs to be reduced to zero.

The Town

The details of the town depend on individual sagas. This is the town from which the covenant buys the bulk of its supplies, so it is probably the largest trading town, or even a full-sized city, in the local area. For the purposes of this hook it is assumed to be a town with chartered trading rights ruled by a council of citizens rather than by a feudal lord. It is inconvenient if it is located too far away, so a location within a weeks' travel fits well. Ideally, the town should be situated on a coastline or on the banks of a fair-sized river. Some of the player characters are almost certainly familiar with the town. It is, however, easy to adapt this hook to any town near the covenant; Simon and Charles could have set up business anywhere.

Information in Town

Facts and rumors are easily picked up at the taverns where the workers and craftsmen go, at

the marketplace, at any harbor, riverside, or grazing common the town might have. The offices of merchants or even the Trading Guild can yield information as well. Intrigue, Etiquette, Carousing, Organization Lore: Trading Guild, and Area Lore are all relevant Abilities, depending on where the player characters go. Characteristics usable are Presence, Communication, or even Perception, depending on approach. An Ease Factor of 9 is sufficient, while modifiers between -3 and +3 apply depending on the location, the Ability used, and on whether tactful bribes of at least a day's salary are offered.

SIMON

- He arrived in town five years ago, and set up a merchant house. His family has trading money in a city far away.
- He deals in high-end goods like fine clothing, armaments, and silverware rather than lower class wares.
- He is hiring manpower for making long trade ventures to faraway places.
- He works as a moneylender, though as a Christian he does not charge interest. But he still manages to turn a hefty profit.
- He rented the warehouse a month ago and paid for two years in advance for a new venture. Before that it was used occasionally by Charles

when he was in town.

- He refurbished the warehouse and told the workers to look for hiding places under floorboards, between the rafters, and so on. No treasure was found, only old letters, for which Simon paid handsomely.

CHARLES

- He lost money when a ship was lost and set off on a risky venture seriously skimping on the manpower and quality of ships/wagons.
- He owed Simon a lot of money, and Simon has Charles' last, exotic shipment as collateral, held by Peter, a neutral third-party merchant.
- He died recently. Depending on the location of the town he has drowned at sea or in the river, or has been killed by a landslide or collapsed bridge. The body was recovered, the coroner ruled it an accident, and he has been buried.
- He had hidden some important papers pertaining to his past trade ventures, probably in his warehouse.

PETER

- He is a moderately wealthy merchant dealing in manufactured goods made from furs, leather, and cloth.
- He is an honest and reasonable man.

Peter the Merchant

Peter is a moderately successful and well-off merchant in his early forties dealing in cloth and leather wares. He does not see himself as a rival of Simon but will, in time, notice that Simon is in fact trying to take over his market. He grudgingly respects Simon's success but fears his schemes rather than admires him.

Peter was chosen as a neutral third party to hold the shipment of goods which Charles used as collateral when borrowing money from Simon. Peter expected this to be a straight-forward transaction and is genuinely sorry for the player characters about the whole mess. However, he can't in good conscience give them the wares before a settlement or official ruling is reached. If he is approached with good sense and treated well he will testify on behalf of the covenant, and he may even offer to

make their case before the Trade Guild officials.

Full game stats are not given for Peter. He has above average mental characteristics and all relevant Abilities for his trade. Key stats are Artes Liberales 3 (arithmetic), Civil and Canon Law 3 (commercial), Organization Lore: Trading Guild 4 (personalities) and Communication +2.

If the player characters do not take matters before the officials but instead do Simon's bidding, they might attempt to sabotage the leather goods in his warehouse. They may then be facing him as defendants in a future court session.

If the situation ends amicably with Peter, he may become a future supplier to the covenant, albeit of necessary consumables and clothing rather than exotic goods and lab supplies.

- He is seen as a rival by Simon, who tries to corner his market.

TIMELINE

At the start of the season in which the magi expected Charles' shipment, Charles borrowed money from Simon. Two weeks later Charles died in the accident, and two weeks after that information of this reached town. Two weeks passed before Simon sent his

messenger to the covenant, and the messenger took a week to get there.

At the Warehouse

The warehouse is located in the trading district and is bustling with activity. All workers are wearing the yellow and red checkered armband which is easily found to mark them as in the employ of Simon the merchant. Builders are finishing re-

pairs and refurbishment of the well-worn building. Teamsters and laborers load and unload cargo. The workers can't and won't say anything in fear of Lucas the foreman, who is surly and points all nosy questioners toward Simon. The warehouse is full of imported goods common to the area.

Simon's Townhouse

The new building has many architectural qualities, but the inside is decorated in tasteless opulence, thanks to Simon's failed attempts to make a sophisticated show of his family's wealth and power. The house has a suitable number of servants, and several are burly thugs acting as bodyguards. The ground floor houses the office and reception chambers as well as the kitchen in the back. The upper floors house Simon's chambers, guest rooms, and the dining hall. Servants live in outbuildings at the back. The basement holds stores as well as the vault. It is built sturdily of thick stone slabs and has a strong iron door with a good quality padlock. Here can be found Simon's cash in silver, account books, and the letters he found at the warehouse.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

If player characters think to break into the house to learn more or steal something, it should be

possible for determined and skilled specialists. Naturally, all doors and windows are secured with deadbolts, and a single thug makes regular patrols through the house.

For game statistics use the Tough Guy template on ArM5 page 22, except that no armor is worn, for Soak +6 and his only weapon is a Club with Init +2, Atk +7, Dfn +7, Dam +4.

Smiling Simon

If the player characters answer the invitation Simon sent, or if they identify themselves at the house as representatives of the magi, they are received politely and with little waiting. If they assume other identities, their reception and waiting time

depends on how important Simon believes they are and how profitable a deal he thinks he can strike. In any case, a meeting is easy to set up. Simon receives his guests in a gaudy room cluttered with various tapestries, furniture, and nicknacks.

Simon is devious and scheming, he is good at what he does, and outfoxing him by mundane

Simon the Merchant

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

Size: 0

Age: 32 (32)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Capo*, Wealthy; Vernacular Education*; Avaricious, Dark Secret; No Sense of Direction

* *These Virtues and Flaws are found in City & Guild page 109. Capo is a Major Social Virtue: Simon manages the trading company in this town. Vernacular Education is a Minor General Virtue, granting additional experience points for trade-related abilities.*

Personality Traits: Avaricious +6, Smiling +3, Devious +2

Reputations: Powerful Merchant 2

Combat:

Dodge: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Dagger: Init +0, Attack +5, Defense +3, Damage +3

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Town 4 (business), Artes Liberales 1 (arithmetic), Bargain 6 (selling), Brawl 2 (dagger), Charm 4 (customers), Etiquette 4 (nobility), Folk Ken 4 (while trading), Guile 4 (half-truths), Intrigue 4 (plotting), Latin 4 (trade), Leadership 2 (merchant), Local Language 5 (upper class), Organization Lore: Trading Guild 3 (personalities), Profession: Merchant 6 (rare goods), Ride 3 (walk)

Equipment: Fine merchant's clothes, writing implements, dagger

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Simon is a handsome man, fair-skinned with a healthy complexion. His lightly curled hair is dark brown as is his neatly trimmed beard. He is al-

most constantly smiling, giving rise to his nickname, but the smile has a sneaky and predatory quality. His sleek frame looks slightly more imposing due to the cut of his clothes, as well as padding in the right places.

Simon's merchant father recently died of old age, and the four sons split the business between them. Simon was tasked with setting up a new venture in this town. It was perhaps the hardest task, but he relishes the challenge as well as the freedom to do as he pleases without interference. Besides his trading, he is also a successful moneylender. Since Christians don't charge interest, his profit comes from impounding wares, ships, or buildings from debtors who fail to pay, and adding any expenses for storage and transport he can get away with.

Court Mechanics

The plaintiff makes his case, presents evidence, and the court hears statements from witnesses. Following this, the defendant makes his case. The statements are not proof and fact, but rather testimony about the character of the plaintiff or defendant, testifying to the fact that he is innocent or guilty as the case may be. A roll of Communication + Civil and Canon Law or Artes Liberales (logic) versus an Ease Factor of 9 results in a credible statement.

Both sides make a Communication + Civil and Canon Law roll with modifiers as listed:

Situation Modifier: -3 for the Gift, -6 for Blatant Gift, if speaking before the court.

Situation Modifier: -1 (to player character's side only) per Gifted (non Gentle) individual in the court room.

Situation Modifier: +1 to Simon in Town Court if the Trading Guild already found in favor of him.

Situation Modifier: +3 for having

the majority of credible witnesses testifying; this may include player characters. Simon should have as many witnesses on his behalf as the player characters (though at least two), but if Peter testifies he may win the character this modifier.

Situation Modifier: +3 for having the better Reputation

Situation Modifier: +3 if the defendant is actually innocent. Note that Simon isn't guilty of fraud, he has a credible contract for the loan. However, if the case focuses on the ownership of the shipment, then the player characters get this bonus.

The court finds in favor of the side which rolls higher. Court officials quickly settle the issue and pass sentence on the basis of the town charter or appropriate written law. In this case it is simply a question of the ownership of the shipment; no punishment will be administered. However, a moderate sum is to be paid by both sides for the court's time.

Story Seed: Double Scandal

The scandal revealed takes on a life of its own. Maria's mother Odile lost her husband to an accident shortly after the birth of the child. The priest took the widow in as housekeeper. On closer inspection, Maria does look an awful lot more like the priest than she does her plump mother. Exposing this scandal can lead to unwanted attention on the priest, who then goes looking for those responsible. Simon is sure to try to ride out the storm as best he can by fingering the player characters as the source of the rumors. A case of meddling with the mundanes can start to form if the player characters are not very careful.

is that Simon genuinely believes the shipment to be rightfully his.

means is hard, as he is well versed in social abilities. Contrary to what one might think, Simon did not contribute by any direct action to the demise of Charles, but he did lure Charles into borrowing money with the covenant's shipment as collateral; this in turn drove Charles to take unnecessary risks, even-

tually leading to his death. Simon does not feel responsible for Charles' tragedy, but is quick to take advantage of it. His long term goals are simply profit and overshadowing his rivals and competitors. It is obvious that he intends to milk the covenant for all the money and magical favors he can. The important point here

The New Deal

A business meeting with Simon is straight to the point. He offers the exact shipment Charles failed to deliver for a quarter more than the original price. He believes he can rightfully do this due to Charles' unpaid debt; he does not know that the covenant paid in advance. If

and when confronted with this and even shown a receipt, he is loath to admit defeat and insists that any fault lies with Charles.

If the player characters give in to his demands, they will have paid two and a quarter times the original price. Even if the troupe does not use detailed rules for economy from *Covenants*, but runs things in a more abstract manner, this must have consequences. The storyguide should enforce the situation by ruling that the covenant lacks funds for long journeys, luxury items, hired specialists, and similar. However, doing Simon a simple, little favor would be worth a discount; see Favors later. Since this seems completely unfair, there are other solutions as well.

Refusing to follow Simon's interpretation means taking the matter to the Trading Guild. Simon is fully prepared to face this. Refer to the section Official Rulings later.

The wares are in town, kept safe by Peter. Simon claims there are some challenges regarding transport. There is a shortage of ships or wagons (whichever is more relevant to the geography of the saga). Simon can deliver the goods in three months' time; he is even so generous that he adds no extra cost for storage in the meantime. Alternatively, the characters could do him a small favor, which will free up transport to get the wares to the covenant in two weeks. See the section Favors, later.

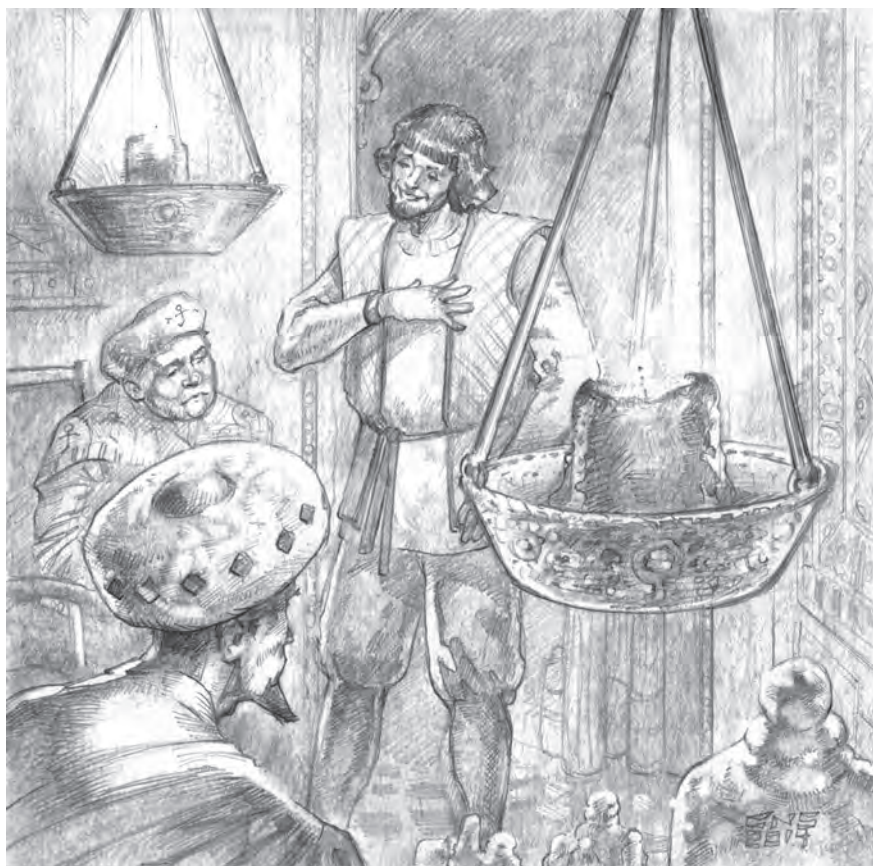
The Old Letters

The old letters found at the warehouse were hidden there by Charles before his last journey. Rumors of them had circulated among disgruntled employees, and the story is that Simon has them now. They are hidden in his vault, but this fact is only known for certain to Simon himself.

The letters are old correspondence and contracts for deals with both sellers and producers of the rare materials which Charles dealt in, as well as with buyers (like the covenant). These are all highly useful for Simon, who wants to

take up this business in order to get hold of the supplies. They also give details of how to get in touch with the covenant.

Simon will not sell the letters, nor will he let them go easily. He does remember most of the information in them, so even if they are stolen he tries to make a profit from the ventures. If the player characters become rivals, they have to compete with him. However, Simon has no particular interest in this business, so if it becomes too risky or low on profit he abandons the project.



FUTURE DEALS WITH SIMON

In the future, Simon offers to continue supplying the covenant with everything Charles used to supply, and he will do his very best to procure anything else they want. However, the prices go up by a quarter compared to what the characters are used to. Simon thinks it is quite obvious that Charles sold his wares too cheaply and was forced to lower his priorities on security measures and quality of travel arrangements. He also goes on about variable delivery times and fluctuating prices. However, there are a number of factors which might help, as his customers are wizards, they might be able to provide valuable wares for him to sell or be able to help in other ways.

Simon suggests that he could easily sell books on magical subjects to nobles and academics in his contact group, fetching high prices. Simon knows of magic, but he does not know that the books are useless to unGifted buyers. Alternatively, he cuts better deals if the characters do him a "little favor."

Favors

Below are ideas for doing Simon favors in order to help secure supplies for the covenant as well as further Simon's underhand business strategy.

SPOILING LEATHER GOODS

Simon asks the characters to spoil a shipment of leather goods waiting in a warehouse. If the player characters choose to do this favor, they get involved with the Tanners' Guild and Peter. The goods need to be taken to a nobleman in the direction of the covenant. Ruining the wares leaves the wagons booked to make the trip free for Simon to hire. He has these pick up another shipment of leathers of slightly inferior quality in a village nearby which the manufacturer there cannot find a buyer for. As Peter cannot deliver to the customer, Simon can get a good price by picking up this deal. The wagons can then take the lab supplies back to the covenant and be there within two weeks.

Simon is expecting something clever like ruining the materials, rotting the leather, rusting the buckles, or something along that vein. Burning the whole place down seems quite crude and is unlikely to have the full effect since guilds patrol the streets at night to watch for fires. Also, Simon has goons who could do that kind of thing anyway.

The warehouse is located in the dense trading and manufacturing district in a small courtyard at the end of a narrow, winding street. The buildings are all close together, and most workshops or small businesses have their owners or workers living in the back or on the top

floor. Under these circumstances, a fire could spread easily and have disastrous consequences for the town as well as cost many lives. It would take callous characters to go through with this. Doors and windows are barred from the inside by the old, lame watchman, who is watching for fires, not intruders.

FURTHER SCHEMES

By doing Simon the first favor, the player characters give him an opening to ask for more favors, and this escalates over time. The following favors initially seem innocent and altruistic enough, like ridding the area of bandits or clearing a road of a landslide. But suddenly there is another problem, and another. They could be dealt with in other ways, but that would mean more expenses or delayed shipments. In time, Simon wants jobs done that are still easy, but smell more and more of sabotage and ridding himself of competitors.

The first favor could be for the player characters to take a group of bandits out of action. The bandits plague travelers and trade routes around the town; they might be pirates or highwaymen and camp out at a natural harbor, river ford, or abandoned farmstead. The bandits are a small gang of eight men including their leader. Use the Standard Grog templates for the bandits and Grizzled Vet-

eran for the leader, from *ArM5* page 22.

Further favors might include: repairing a road and bridge disabled by weather and landslide; cleverly sabotaging a shipment of wares (e.g. wine) so the damage isn't apparent until delivery; framing a craftsman, town official, or rival merchant for a crime; or discovering or fabricating evidence of a scandal in order to ruin a competitor.

These favors ask more and more of the player characters, and eventually they risk drawing unwanted attention to themselves, be it from town officials, noblemen, guilds, clergy, or the Order. These are intended to be future events beyond the scope of this hook. For further inspiration refer to *City and Guild* pages 124–125.

Digging Up Dirt

If a competent character investigates thoroughly, the skeletons in Simon's closet fall out. This can include following Simon around and asking questions among his peers. He has a secret lover, the young and beautiful Maria, who is married to a sailor who is away from home most of the time. Threatening to expose this scandalous behavior helps keep Simon in line if done correctly, at least for a while. If pushed too hard or too crudely, Simon calls their bluff and claim that the

consequences for those spreading such rumors might be dire due to Maria's father (see later). Apart from infidelity, Simon has not committed any crimes or serious offenses. He prefers to have other people do this, and that is why he wants favors from the magi. His books and accounts are in order, and no guild or customer has any serious issues with his deliveries and deals.

Official Rulings

As the first step in establishing their rights to the shipment the player characters need to take up the matter with officials of the Trading Guild. They are the plaintiffs and need someone suitable to make their case. Although this may be a player character, the troupe may hire a local lawyer or Peter the merchant may play this part. A local lawyer can be assumed to have Communication +1, Civil and Canon Law 5, Artes Liberales 2, and Organization Lore: Trading Guild 2. Simon hires the very best lawyer in town with Abilities two points higher than this. Refer to the Court Mechanics insert.

GUILD OFFICIALS

Rulings about trade are made by officials from the Trading Guild appointed from among the masters in town. At this

stage, Organization Lore: Trading Guild may be used instead of Civil and Canon Law, and the modifiers may tip the scales. If the guild rules in favor of the covenant, then they get the shipment. Simon does not take the matter any further, but he also refuses to deal with the covenant and may work against their attempts to trade with others. If the guild rules in favor of Simon, then the player characters may take the matter to the town court since they have good evidence to support their case, and Simon obviously only won because he is better connected.

TOWN COURT

Rulings about crime are made by a council of magistrates selected from among the town's citizens. Mechanics and modifiers as listed in the Court Mechanics insert. If Simon loses here, he may work against the covenant as mentioned earlier.

Setting Up Business

Any deal with Simon most likely sours in time, and enterprising player characters might think seriously about setting up a merchant business of their own. Alternatively, they might refuse to deal with Simon from the start. Such a venture is



beyond the scope of this hook beyond its inspiration, and thus it will not be treated further. It requires a companion or even magus level character to invest a lot of time and money in the process. Details about running a business, maintaining it, and seeing it grow are covered in *City and Guild*, as are seeds for stories to run in this environment. The book also contains many new and useful Virtues and Flaws, details about guilds and trading, as well as a system to keep records of how the business is thriving by means of Labor Points.

A profitable venture takes local wares to sell in a foreign place and brings home valuable goods. The initial investment

Setting Up Business Story Seeds

GHOST SHIP

During the evening, the ship's lookout spots a spectral ship heading to cut off the merchant ship. Once, a group of sailors capsized and drowned while hunting these waters for pirates, and their spectres continue this job. But what makes them think the merchant is a pirate? Is it the lack of permission to travel here, something in the cargo, or some dark secret of one of the crewmen?

HAUNTED WAREHOUSE

A warehouse, empty for a long time, is surprisingly cheap to rent or buy. Too cheap! Rumors say it is haunted and that people get possessed by evil if they go inside. A heinous string of crimes were committed there, giving rise to an Infernal aura tainted with murderous rage. These sins affect the personality of anyone entering and might turn a disagreement into a bloody fight. The place is also infested with a pack of corrupted rats or a minor demon associated with anger.

FAUX PAS

In a port far from home and in a foreign culture, a vital crewmen or trusted grog has the misfortune to anger a merchant. The merchant's guards haul the miscreant off and imprison him, and horrible punishment awaits. But what did he do wrong? Was it a cultural or religious taboo? And how can he be saved: through diplomacy, a daring rescue raid, or the rattle of swords?

is needed to buy such wares, as well as purchase or hire transport and staff. A local warehouse need not be kept on hand by the merchant venturer, only being needed if a permanent local presence is desired. The most pressing need is contacts or clues about what to deal in and where to go. Charles' letters are a good start; the magi can try to get them from Simon. An alternative is for the magi to make use of the extensive network they have in the Redcaps. It would be appropriate to pay a small fee of silver, a favor, or a pawn of vis for information. Leads can be information on a place where the sought-after items

are available as well as names of sellers. Paying still more may even get a Redcap with local connections to act as agent and liaison. The investments could end up being quite significant, but also pay very well in the long run. Details on the merchants and suppliers are up to the storyguide to define for specific sagas. Each journey and each meeting could be stories in their own right.

In addition to a trade business, the covenant could start up workshops to produce some of the equipment needed, but this is a greater endeavor since it requires many different crafts. The most important items needed for labs are glassware and metal

tools, as well as consumables like alchemical compounds, metals, and minerals. The raw materials needed must also be procured in order to manufacture the supplies.

As the power of the guilds does not reach far from the towns, skilled craftsmen are not hard to hire, especially if the covenant employs those tired of the rigid rules or with little possibility of financing a shop of their own. Craftsmen moving to the covenant win themselves a bad reputation in town should they ever return, or may be unsavory characters to begin with.

Nearby are listed a few story seeds to get things going, but beyond this refer to *City and Guild*.

Chapter Six

Salvation

Thick smoke, stinking of roasted human flesh, rises above a devastated church. Charred corpses, the brittle black bones rendered of fat and meat by hot fire, are scattered through the still-warm rubble. The burnt skulls blindly grimace at the ash-flecked sky.

Furiously digging through the rubble is a black-robed,

soot-smear'd young monk. As he digs, plaintively, like a lost lamb of God, he cries out names — "Luke... Paul... Gregory..." — either saints, or his dead brethren; in his hysteria he can no longer be sure. The monk's hands are bloody, blackened, and blistered by his futile search for another survivor, and, with a final despairing cry, he collapses

among the smoldering ruins.

Hours later, the monk wearily trudges away from his dead home. As the monk departs, a bitter wind rattles through the ruined monastery. The rustling ashes almost sound like laughter...

The Damned Monastery of Saint Sylvester

The monks of the Benedictine monastery of Saint Sylvester, in the parish of West Brockshire, were massacred — burned alive in the monastery church by a cruel band of outlaws. Only one monk survived, and the ruined monastery now lies haunted by Infernal spirits. At its heart, in a fiery regio, waits a demon monk who traps hapless mortals behind walls of hellfire so that he can offer a simple choice to his victims: "sell your soul or die in flames."

This Hook introduces *Realms of Power: Infernal*.



Who Burned The Monastery?

The monastery of Saint Sylvester was burned, in the year 1200, by a vile outlaw captain: Owen the Beast. Owen and his men raided the monastery because of its reputed wealth (from the monks' leatherwork). The outlaws burst into the Benedictine monastery during mass, seizing the jewel-encrusted relics, books, and silver platters and cutlery. Unfortunately, Owen did not believe the abbot's protests that this was the extent of their wealth, so the monks were confined inside their church, which was set alight. Owen promised to free any monk who would reveal the hidden treasure trove, but none of the monks spoke and all hideously perished in flames.

Except, one young monk did survive the massacre.

The sole survivor *claimed* to have been outside the monastery complex when the bandits arrived, and unnoticed by the outlaws he witnessed the atrocity. Once the bandits had left, the survivor desperately searched the still-smoking ruins, hoping a miracle had saved at least one of his brothers. However, his hopes were in vain. Tear-stained, with bleeding hands blackened by ash, the survivor made his way to the nearby village.

The tale of the monastery's destruction, originally relayed by the sole survivor, the sub-deacon Guthrie, is known by the nearby

What Could the Player Characters Already Know?

A player character well-traveled within the diocese may have already heard of the ruined monastery. If an Intelligence + Area Lore: Diocese roll against an Ease Factor of 9 is made, the character knows which parish the monastery was located in, and that it was burnt a

couple of decades ago by Owen the Beast. If an Ease Factor of 12 is beaten, she also knows that there was a surviving monk. Finally, an Ease Factor of 15 means that the character additionally knows that the monk relocated and became a canon at the cathedral.

parishioners. Owen the Beast and his band of outlaws were captured and hanged by the sheriff in the diocese's main city several years after the burning of the monastery. The massacre of the monks was only one of many atrocities committed by the bandits.

A Hell Made of Earth

It is twenty years since the massacre of the monks at Saint Sylvester, and the young monk, the sole survivor, is now a canon in the diocese's cathedral. Since the massacre the canon, now Father Guthrie, has suffered terrible torment and wrestled nightly in fevered dreams with his conscience. The problem: his tale of the massacre at Saint Sylvester omitted a dreadful truth.

Guthrie's survival was not a miracle. Guthrie sold his soul.

Father Guthrie was actually trapped in the burning monastery church with the other monks. Desperate, Guthrie managed to flee into the comparative cool of the crypt, where he encountered an unfamiliar, hooded monk, who of-

fered salvation from the flames. The price would be Guthrie's soul. Terrified, Guthrie agreed and as black smoke filled the crypt he collapsed. When he awoke, the fire had died down. The bandits had left. Guthrie's brethren were dead.

Ashamed at his weakness, and fearing retribution by the church, Guthrie lied to hide his bargain with the demon in the burning crypt. To his great shame, his survival was even feted as a miracle of Saint Sylvester. Nightly, in dreams, the demon (claiming to be the Abbot of the Unholy Order of Tempters) has appeared to Guthrie and goaded him into further sins. Under the demon's influence Guthrie has committed depraved acts with fallen women, set fire to a chapel, and provided false testimony at witchcraft trials. Even worse, Guthrie secretly enjoys the demon's depraved temptations.

Involving the Player Characters

Here are the ways the player characters can become involved:

Father Guthrie

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +1(1), Pre +1, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik +1(1)

Size: 0

Age: 47 (47)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Priest; Greater Immunity (fire); Sk-inchanger (crow), Student of the Infernal Realm; Dark Secret (sold soul to hell); Coward, Depraved, Tainted with Evil

Personality Traits: Coward +3, Depraved +3

Reputations: Unpleasant canon +3 (local), Expert on demon worship +2 (ecclesiastical), Survivor of monastery inferno +1 (ecclesiastical)

Combat:

Dodge: Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +1, Damage n/a

Soak: +1 (Sta)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Diocese 5 (evil), Artes Liberales 1 (logic), Awareness 3 (evil), Civil and Canon Law 3 (demon worship), Concentration 2

(vigil), Dead Language: Latin 5 (church usage), Etiquette 1 (bishop's court), Folk Ken 5 (clergy), Guile 5 (lies), Infernal Lore 5+2 (demons), Intrigue 5 (bishop's court), Leadership 2 (clergy), Living Language: English 5 (London dialect), Music 1 (hymns), Organization Lore: Church 3 (exorcisms), Ride 3 (horse), Stealth 2 (hiding), Survival 2 (disasters), Teaching 2 (minor orders), Theology 2 (hell)

Equipment: Habit and priest's stole, necklace of crow feathers (not worn).

Appearance: Father Guthrie has a hooked nose and a frightful scowl on his face.

The father has a bad reputation in the city for setting unpleasant, almost perverse, tasks as penance and so city-folk hope he is not their confessor. Within the church the father is also thought of as unpleasant, although this is charitably attributed to the trauma of the massacre. This means the father is usually left to his own quiet studies within the cathedral complex, without frequent need

to attend to the care of souls. The few who confess to Father Guthrie are those that the other canons find distasteful, such as prostitutes, witches, and the insane.

Conflicted and troubled by the dark path he is upon, Father Guthrie uses his quiet solitude to study the records of the bishop's court concerning evil and the worship of demons. He is considered expert in dark matters, and when cases of devil worship are brought to the bishop's court Father Guthrie provides expert testimony. This dubious specialty feeds the father's unpleasant reputation and greatly amuses the demons who appear in his dreams. Sometimes he has knowingly convicted innocents of devil-worship, who were then burned alive by the secular authorities. In reward for these sacrifices, hell has granted the father a magical necklace of crow feathers, which he can use to turn into a sleek black crow.

As Father Guthrie is a clergyman with unconfessed sins he is irregular, which means he cannot spend Faith Points (see *The Church*, page 37).

- A player character receives a vision which guides him to either the ruined monastery or to the damned canon Father Guthrie.
- Player characters encounter the ruined monastery (or rumors of it) while traveling on other business.
- The marauders who burned the monastery have not yet been captured and hanged, are still active, and also attack covenant property (or the property of the covenant's allies). The player characters discover the burned monastery while following the vile trail of Owen the Beast. For this to be plausible, the monastery has probably been burned only a few years, or even months, ago.
- The bishop (or the local Benedictine authorities) com-

mission the player characters to investigate rumors of the demon-haunted monastery. For this commission to be offered, the player characters must already have reputations within the diocese as supernatural specialists, but not be considered an infernal liability themselves. Ironically, Father Guthrie — an ecclesiastical expert in dark matters — may also be assigned to investigate.

Moving the Monastery

The exact date of the monastery's destruction can be changed if your saga requires. Consider whether you want it to be possible for the player characters to meet Father Guthrie (the sole survivor of the fire). If it is too long ago, he has (probably) died of old age.

The monastery can be located in any parish, anywhere in Mythic Europe, but it is probably easier to introduce if the monastery's parish is in the same diocese as the covenant. A typical diocese contains hundreds of parishes, and some contain thousands, so it should not be surprising that the player characters have not previously heard of the monastery's fate (unless a player character has an extensive local Area Lore Ability; see insert).

It is not crucial that the site was linked to the broader parish via the leather works. However, the reputed wealth of the monks gives a rationale for the outlaws to attack.

What Happens

The main scenes are Questioning Father Guthrie, Getting to the Monastery, Exploring the Ruined Monastery, and Dealing with the Cloven-Hoofed Monk.

Questioning Father Guthrie

This scene might not occur; whether it does (or not) depends on whether the player characters learn that the sole survivor Father Guthrie is now a canon at the cathedral and whether the player characters decide to question him. It is possible that this scene instead plays out at the end of the scenario when the player characters, having realized that the monk's story is implausible, confront him.

Father Guthrie is reluctant to discuss the massacre at Saint Sylvester's, and tries to avoid an interview if he can. If he is questioned, Father Guthrie relays his standard story about what happened during the massacre, and describes the functioning monastery and its location. If the player characters doubt the father's story, he ceases to co-operate, and if a witchcraft trial or similar is conducted the father defends himself. If he is found guilty he tries to escape by turning into a crow. Note that a Gifted character is unlikely to be considered a reputable witness at a witchcraft trial, particularly if his testimony relies upon magic.

If Father Guthrie accompanies

the player characters to the ruined monastery, he contributes as little as possible to the investigation; he is however keen to see that the Infernal regio is entered (see later). Because the father is immune to fire, he can leave the monastery regio at any time without negative effect. The demons in the regio are not above tormenting him, but do know that his soul is already claimed by hell, and thus do not trouble him as much as they might trouble the player characters.

Getting to the Monastery

The monastery is in the parish of West Brockschire, which also contains one small village and a dozen lonely farmsteads. The journey to the parish is not challenging and takes a week on foot from the covenant.

The ruined monastery is a few hours' walk from the main parish village.

MONASTERY RUMORS

The parish priest (Father Michael; his church is in the main village), or other parishioners, explain that the Benedictine monastery was wealthy because of the monks' skill as leather-workers, making belts, bags, and jerkins. The monks' products were mostly exported and sold in the large towns of the diocese. Many parishioners supplied raw hides to the monks, while others worked as teamsters transporting finished

Agatha

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

Size: 0

Age: 19 (19)

Virtues and Flaws: Peasant; Peasant Ability: Second Sight, Second Sight, Student of the Infernal Realm; Infamous (Devil Worshiper), Lost Love (Sara), Offensive to Animals.

Personality Traits: Lonely +3, Scared +1

Reputations: Devil Worshiper +4 (local area)

Combat:

Dodge: Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

Knife: Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +6, Damage +1

Soak: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapaci-

tated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 3 (cattle), Area Lore: Parish 4 (farming), Athletics 1 (climbing), Awareness 1 (searching), Bargain 2 (demons), Brawl 3 (knife), Chirurgy 2 (cuts), Folk Ken 2 (clergy), Guile 2 (fast talk), Infernal Lore 3+2 (curses), Leadership 1 (coven), Living Language: English 5 (slang), Second Sight 4+2 (demons), Stealth 1 (sneak), Survival 2 (cooking), Swim 1 (rivers & streams)

Equipment: simple peasant clothes, a knife.

Appearance: Agatha is a lonely young blonde woman. She works on her father's farmstead, but many parish folk will not drink the milk she collects — with great difficulty — from the cows. (Milkmaid is not the best occupation for someone who is Offensive to Animals.)

was to hold a secret black mass every full moon. Agatha refuses to return to the monastery. Sara is buried in an unmarked grave, outside the village, near the stream where she drowned.

The parishioners also know that a single monk survived the original fire, and fled the parish to the cathedral. The wealthy monks also reputedly had a treasure trove that still lies hidden in the ruins (this is false).

Apart from a wary suspicion of Gifted characters, the parishioners freely offer the information they have. If some of the player characters appear to be clergy, the parishioners erroneously assume the player characters are Benedictine monks scouting the old monastery site for possible recolonization. This pleases the parishioners.

Exploring the Ruined Monastery

Black and soot-stained, the ruins of the monastery stand by a small gurgling stream in an empty, rock-pocked field. The ruined church is splayed open and the half-fallen stone arches, which once held beautiful stained-glass images of devotion, now point skyward like the bleached bone ribs of a carrion-picked corpse. The silent courtyard, which formerly echoed with murmured prayers to God's glory, is now overgrown with grasses.

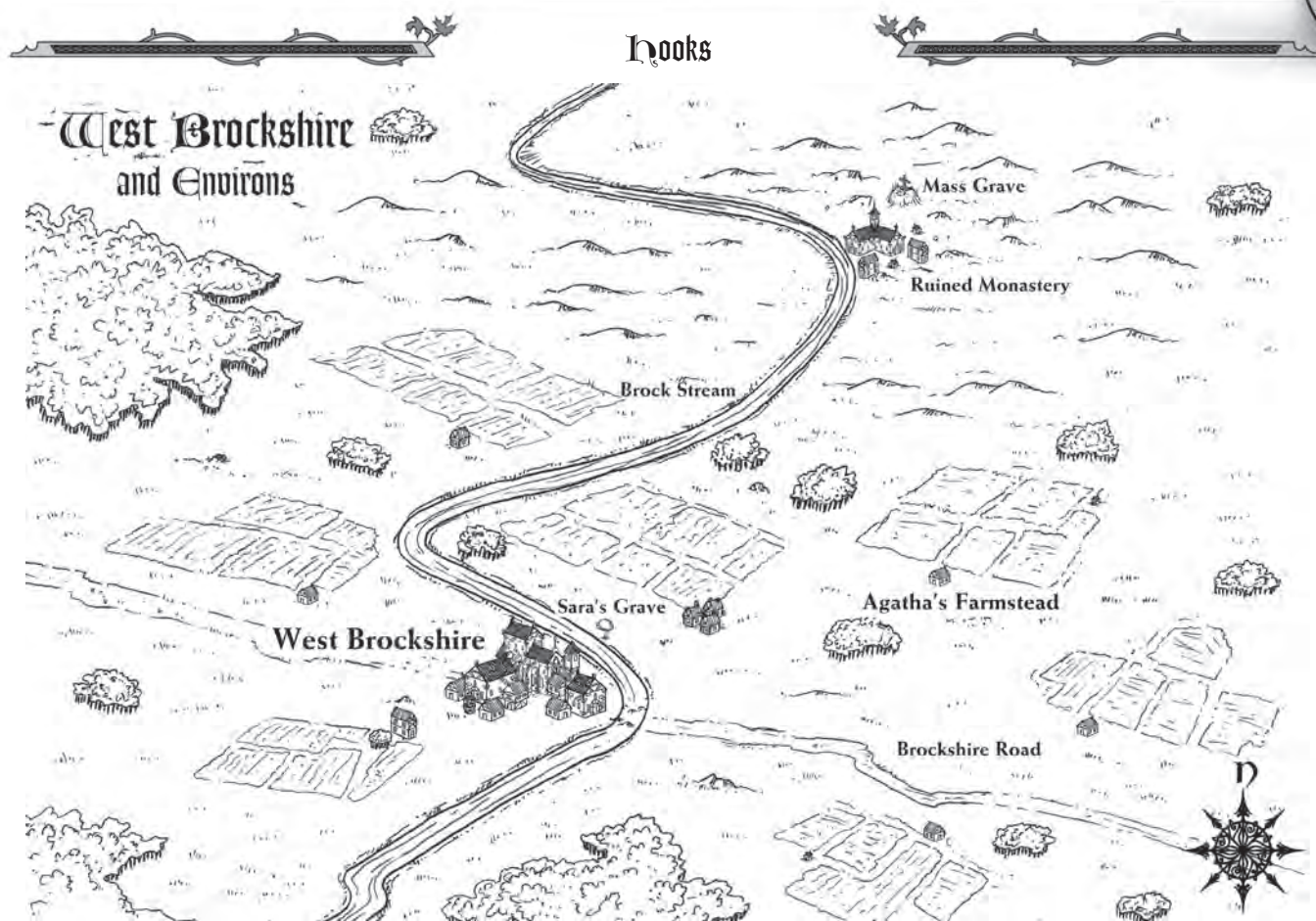
The burned-out Benedictine monastery of Saint Sylvester is composed of half a dozen ruined

leather goods to distant markets. The monks dispersed much of their profit as alms to the poor of the parish, and when the Benedictines did not re-build the burned monastery the parishioners were bitterly disappointed; many left to live in other parts of the diocese.

The locals all know the precise location of the ruined monastery and it is common knowledge that it is now haunted by demons. The parishioners explain that ten years ago two young girls became trapped in the ruined monastery and sold their souls to a demon, becoming witches, in order to escape. The locals know this because

one of the girls later drowned herself in a stream, and the surviving girl confessed her witchery.

The survivor, Agatha, is now aged 19 and lives on her father's farmstead. Agatha is lonely and shunned by the parish menfolk because of her past. Agatha is very repentant and if questioned she gives a garbled account of the Infernal regio: "It is full of flames and screaming monks and there is a red-robed demon abbot in the crypt" (she was very frightened and only nine years old at the time). The bargain that Agatha and the other girl (Sara) made with the demon for their freedom



and unoccupied buildings. The largest and most damaged ruin is the church, once the heart of this monastic community. The other buildings are fire-damaged too, but less so, and were once sleeping, kitchen and dining facilities, a workshop where the monks worked at manufacturing fine leather goods, and (beside the stream) the remains of a small tannery.

Nearly 50 monks lived at the monastery. The only inhabitants of the site, now, are a large, proud, black cockerel and his harem of hens. The birds roost in what was once the monastery kitchens.

The field surrounding the monastery lies fallow, too rocky to be easily farmed.

Other features that the player characters can discover follow.

- The site has an Infernal aura of 3. Characters with Infernal Lore should be able to infer that evil acts occurred at the site, either in the past or currently.
- The relics and other church treasures have been looted long ago by Owen the Beast. There is no hidden treasure to be found.
- A few hundred feet to the north of the monastery is a mass grave.
- There is a crypt underneath the church. The entrance is obscured and obstructed by fallen stones.
- The black cockerel, located in the ruined monastery kitchens, is possessed by the Cloven Hoofed Monk.

- There is an Infernal regio within the church. The Infernal regio has an aura of 5. The presence of the regio can be detected via the usual means (see *ArM5*, page 189). From the outside, the regio appears black, empty, and quiet; it smells of soot and tastes of ash.

THE MASS GRAVE

A mass grave, a few hundred feet north of the main monastery complex, contains the burned bones of the massacred monks.

The grave is hard to find (Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 12), as plants have long since grown over the disturbed earth. The center of the grave is marked by a simple stone



cross, which would be about six feet tall, and easy to find. However, the marker has been pushed over and lies flat on the ground, obscured by grasses and weeds. The surface of the stone cross is covered in scratches that spell out apparently nonsensical Latin phrases. Characters with a score in Infernal Lore recognize that such a defacement is suggestive of infernal rituals. However, there is no other apparent evidence of infernalism at the grave. The scratches are too old to be Arcane Connections to their author.

When the monks were interred they received a proper Christian burial. The burial rites were conducted by a delegation from the Benedictine monk's mother house, but it was such a long time ago that the parishioners have forgotten this detail.

THE CRYPT

Beneath the church is the crypt. This is where the Benedictine monks buried their dead, when the monastery was live and active. Any character searching the ruined church finds the crypt.

The entrance to the crypt is obstructed by fallen masonry and partially burnt and rotted wooden beams, but a very small character (Size -2 or less) can squirm through the gaps. Other characters need to move the obstructions, which could be trivial for a magus. For characters using unaided muscle power, make a Strength roll against an Ease Factor of 12; if

several characters are cooperating, add the positive Strength scores of the assisting characters as a bonus to the roll.

The interior of the crypt is cool and dark. Although soot-stained, it is not badly damaged by fire. The crypt consists of a wide corridor (7 paces long) that terminates in a square chamber (about 400 square feet). The corridor is filled with shelves where the bodies of the lesser monks were laid out. The terminal chamber has stone sarcophagi for the senior monks to rest in. Inscriptions on the sarcophagi indicate that monks were interred in the crypt between 1117 (the date that the monastery church was completed) and the burning of the monastery in 1200.

Looters have already entered the crypt. The bones of the dead monks are strewn about the crypt and the sarcophagi have been pried open, although the bones older than the mid-12th century are already dust. Everything of value has been taken.

THE BLACK COCKEREL

Proudly striding around the ruins of the monastery is a large black cockerel. He spends most of his time pecking at, flapping his black wings at, and otherwise terrorizing a harem of a dozen hens that he keeps sequestered in the ruined monastery kitchens.

The hens are ordinary mundane chickens, descended from the birds kept by the monks. The cockerel is descended from the

same incestuous population, and he is possessed by the Cloven Hoofed Monk.

The demon has invested 1 Might Point in the possession of the cockerel. This means that an independent Infernal Might 1 copy of the demon resides within

the cockerel. The copy is entirely independent of the original demon and has the same powers and statistics (but no physical body and less Might). The possession allows the demon to use the senses of, and to manipulate the body of, the cockerel. The demon amuses

himself by running the cockerel into walls, and making it fall off its perch in convulsive fits; this abuse has turned the cockerel mad. A spell equivalent to *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* can exorcise the demon from the cockerel. This has no other effect on either the cockerel

The Cloven Hoofed Monk

Order: Lord Abbot of the Unholy Order of Tempters (*tentator*)

Infernal Might: 20(19) (Corpus) (1 Might Point used to possess the black cockerel).

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Greater Immunity (fire); Tough

Personality Traits: Deceitful +3, Depraved +3

Reputations: Profane Abbot +3

Hierarchy: +3

Combat:

Fist: Init +3, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +2

Long Sword: Init +5, Attack +14, Defense +11, Damage +8

Soak: +5 (+2 Sta + 3 Tough)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Athletics 3 (grace), Awareness 4 (sin), Bargain 5 (infernal), Brawl 4 (fist), Civil and Canon Law 3 (heresy), Code of Hermes 1 (infernalism), Guile 6 (infernalists), Infernal Lore 3 (demons), Leadership 3 (demons), Penetration 3 (*ball of hell-*

fire), Single Weapon 6 (sword), Stealth 4 (urban)

Powers:

Ball of Hellfire, 1 point, Init +3, Ignem: The demon launches a ball of black flame at the target (within Voice Range), which automatically hits and causes +30 damage.

Coagulation, 2 points, Init -1, Corpus: Allows the demon to form the physical body described below. He can return to his spiritual form at will. When the demon is in his spiritual form he is invisible and undetectable by Hermetic magic (and if he cannot be sensed he cannot usually be targeted by Hermetic magic). In his physical form the demon can be killed, but in his spiritual form the demon can only be destroyed by destroying his Might (see *Realms of Power: Infernal* page 31).

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: Allows the demon to appear in the dreams of a character (see *Realms of Power: Infernal* page 32).

Obsession, 1 point, Init -5, Vim: Whenever a character sins in the presence of the demon he can use this power to infect the character with the Personality Trait: Depraved +1; see *Realms of*

Power: Infernal page 31.

Possession, Variable, Init +2, Mentem: The demon uses this power to possess the black cockerel; see *Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 32.

Equipment: Red robes, long sword, book, black cockerel tail-feather on a silver chain.

Weakness: Abhorrent Material: salt.

Vis: 4 pawns of Corpus in book cover.

Appearance: The demon abbot wears dark red robes and carries (in a leather harness) a large book bound in flayed human skin. Unlike a mortal Christian monk, the abbot follows no prohibition against the shedding of blood and carries a plain-looking yet finely made long sword. Around the monk's neck is a silver chain with a black feather (from the cockerel) woven into it.

The book the monk carries is *The Book of the Morning Star* (Infernal Lore Ability Summa; Quality 10, Level 4).

A character who makes a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 6 notices that the monk has cloven hoofs instead of feet. He otherwise appears to be a normal middle-aged man.

An Infernal Vis Source

The infernal hellfire can be harvested as an Ignem vis source. Five pawns of Ignem vis can be harvested per season, and this vis is tainted with the infernal. The storyguide can adjust the number of pawns available to suit your saga. It is best to err on the side of generosity, as Hell provides the vis as a temptation.

or the original demon. Full rules for possession are given in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 32.

When the player characters arrive at the monastery, the demon-cockerel observes them as they explore the site and tries to gauge the extent of their powers. If the player characters look ready to leave the ruined monastery before midnight then the demon tries to maintain their interest. He can do this by manipulating the cockerel in an unusual way, stealing items, or attacking the characters with his *Ball of Hellfire* power. As the copy of the demon possessing the cockerel has only 1 Might he can only use this particular power once per day.

Player characters who can speak to the cockerel rapidly discover that it is insane. Although the demon can speak through the cockerel, it probably will not.

If the player characters enter the regio, the cockerel enters the regio too, whereupon he dashes to the regio crypt where the original demon waits. The two copies of the demon need to see

each other for the cockerel copy to relay information about the player characters.

Dealing with the Cloven Hoofed Monk

Every midnight, for one Diameter, the Infernal regio in the ruined church opens and characters in or entering the ruined church at this time enter the regio. At other times, characters who can see into the regio can freely cross into the regio.

From the outside, the regio appears black, empty, and quiet, and it smells of soot and tastes of ash. However, inside the regio, the church is intact and surrounded by fierce, black hellfire. The doors are barred and wild dancing shadows flicker outside the stained glass windows. The lead seals in the roof melt and splatter a scalding silvery rain down into the nave. Choking smoke curls up the walls.

Each character who remains in the Infernal regio must make a Deprivation check every Diameter due to the heat and choking smoke (see *ArM5*, page 180), unless the character is immune to such hazards. A character who wraps his face in a cloth receives a +3 bonus to the Deprivation roll.

THE BURNED MONKS

In the regio the church is filled with the panicked spirits of the burned monks, who frantically dash back and forth, screaming, through the nave. Several monks by the altar feverishly pray for

deliverance, while others stand below the tower madly ringing the church bells.

These terrified ghosts are not really the spirits of the burned monks; they are *maligenii*, evil Infernal spirits. Although there appear to be nearly 50 ghosts, there are only 10 spirits (each with many apparent bodies). The ghosts are distressing, and can make other characters hysterical, but are otherwise relatively harmless (see insert).

One of the monk ghosts dashes into the crypt, which is accessible from the church interior. The demons intend for the player characters to see the fleeing monk.

ESCAPING THE CHURCH

The door to the church is bolted and barred by an infernal supernatural power, and cannot be opened by mundane means. However, the infernal lock (an effect of magnitude two) can be dispelled by a suitable *Perdo Vim* effect. Characters can also create exits by breaking the windows, shattering the walls, or destroying the door.

Once the characters have created an exit they must brave the hellfire flames that surround the church. These terrifically hot black flames inflict +15 damage. Any character running through the flames take +60 damage (due to total immersion; *ArM5*, page 181). The hellfire extends all around the church, but characters who can fly can avoid total immersion (so take only +15 damage, or perhaps less). Characters who leap

unaided from the church tower (or roof) avoid total immersion, but also take +15 falling damage.

The hellfire is a "natural" feature of the regio, and so cannot be dispelled or blocked by Magic Resistance, but a magus receives his Ignem Form bonus to his Soak. The flames can be temporarily extinguished with Perdo Ignem effects, but once the magic ends the flames erupt back into life. Teleportation, Ignem wards, immunities, and so on can also save the characters from immolation.

Any characters who survive crossing through the hellfire exit the regio.

The Cloven Hoofed Monk also offers salvation from the flames to those who accept it.

THE CLOVEN HOOFED MONK

In the Infernal regio, the crypt is dark and cool, so Deprivation Checks for heat and smoke need not be made. The cool shadows hide a red-robed, hooded monk and when the characters enter the

crypt he steps forward to make this offer:

"I am abbot and priest of this profane church. Pledge your immortal soul to me, and I will save you from fiery death."

Characters who accept the infernal deal immediately fall unconscious and awake outside the regio in the cold, black ruins of the church. From the perspective of characters who remain in the regio, the corrupted characters merely disappear.

Burned Monks

Order: Tempters (*maligenii*)

Infernal Might: 5 (Ignem)

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

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Hysterical +6

Reputations: None

Hierarchy: 0

Combat:

Dodge: Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

Soak: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Athletics 3 (run), Brawl 1 (dodge), Concentration 5 (*A Problem Shared Is A Problem Doubled*)

Powers:

Coagulation, 1 point, Init -1, Ignem: Allows the demon to form a physical body (see *Realms of Power: Infernal* page 31). The

"physical" body manifested by the burned monks is immaterial (made of hot air, ash, and smoke) and cannot be damaged by normal physical means.

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: Allows the demon to appear in the dreams of a character (see *Realms of Power: Infernal* page 32).

Obsession, 1 point, Init -5, Vim: Whenever a character sins in the presence of the demon it can use this power to infect the character with the Personality Trait: Hysterical +1; see *Realms of Power: Infernal* page 31. Whenever a stress roll is made for a character with a Hysterical Personality, roll an additional number of botch die equal to the value of the Personality Trait.

A Problem Shared Is A Problem Doubled, 0 point, Init -1, Imaginem: This power allows the demon to create a duplicate image of itself. The demon can do this multiple times, but it can only control a

number of images equal to his Perception + Concentration Ability Score. If the demon ceases to concentrate, the images remain but continue repeating their recent actions. The images are of Imaginem Form, have no powers, and can be dispelled. The images must remain within Sight Range of the demon.

Equipment: Robes, torn shreds of bible.

Weakness: The Lord's Prayer.

Vis: 1 pawn of Ignem in ash (the images contain no vis).

Appearance: The screaming, burned monks rush backwards and forth, leaving a taste of ash and fluttering torn pages from the bible in their wake. The monks are transparent and colored in smoky, orange sepia tones. Each demonic monk has produced nearly half a dozen images of itself, so the relatively small number of demons appear to be a larger crowd of panicked ghosts.

Alternative Deals

The demon abbot will not himself propose alternative deals, but if the player characters propose other deals then he accepts. The abbot accepts because he knows that *any* deal made with him damns the characters.

Whatever deal is struck, the demon will not free the player characters without first receiving his payment.

If asked, the demon will claim that the only way to exit the regio is via a deal with him; this is a lie, of course.

If the characters attack the Cloven Hoofed Monk he fights back. However, the demon is a coward, so if he receives a Medium Wound (or heavier) he enters his spiritual form and hides in the darkness of the crypt. If the characters attack the demon's Might (for example, with *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*) he immediately turns into his spiritual form and hides. If the characters have attacked the demon, but not destroyed him, they can still pledge their souls (regardless of the demon's form).

If the Cloven Hoofed Monk is destroyed, the hellfire extinguishes, allowing the characters to freely leave the regio.

Further Tales

However this hook is resolved, the opportunity is created for further stories that involve the Infer-

nal realm, if the troupe wishes.

- If a character has sold his soul to the Cloven Hoofed Monk, the demon tries to tempt him into other sins. The demon can provide vis (tainted, of course, by the infernal), the true names of other demons (which the magi can use as Arcane Connections to summon the demons and negotiate for other powers), and he is more than happy to engage in other bargains with the magi.
- The church believes that confession and penance can save the characters if they have sold their souls. However, a character might not know or believe this (particularly if a demon has told him otherwise), or he may (rightly) fear an arduous or dangerous penance. Also, even though the church may forgive, the secular authorities may not, and may thus still attempt to burn the character as a diabolical witch. For magi the particular risk of confession is that the Order of Hermes may learn of the characters' demonic pact. Under the Hermetic Oath there is never forgiveness for dealing with demons (see *ArM5*, page 14).
- There are a number of demon-hunters in the Order of Hermes (see *Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 120). If it becomes suspected that the player characters have dealt with demons, then demon-hunters will investigate the covenant. On the other hand, if the player characters make it known that they have slain demons, then demon-hunters may instead come to the covenant seeking recruits.
- If the demon is destroyed, then the magi may gather (infernally tainted) vis from the church ruins, but is using this vis a sin? See *Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 18.
- If they have not yet done so, the characters might track down and confront the survivor, Father Guthrie. Successfully exposing the corrupted monk earns the bishop's gratitude, who may call upon the magi to solve other problems with heretics and demons. It is also twenty years since Guthrie sold his soul. He may have since founded a secret corrupt clerical sect that can likewise be tracked down (see *Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 133).
- Was the bandit, Owen the Beast, who burned the monastery an infernalist? If so, what demons did he and his outlaws unleash at the sites of their other crimes? If Owen was a powerful black magician, hell might have returned him to the realm of the living as an infernal ghost (see *Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 36).
- The confessed witch Agatha (who is shunned by the villagers) may seek to return to the covenant with the magi. She may again be tempted by hell.
- Some of the other parishioners may be secret diabolists who worship at the damned monastery.

Small Game

In the hazy dawn light, two men leave the city. One man rests his heavy head against the side of their fully-laden cart, while his companion narrowly avoids steering into the path of the itinerant merchants arriving at the city gate for the day's fair. The heavy-headed man sadly contemplates the lightness of his coin purse — emptied last night into an extraordinary number of tankards — while two small shapes watch this ignominious departure from a vantage atop the city battlements.

One of the observers chimes, with a delicate, silvery metallic voice, "Are we really relying on these men to outwit magi?"

"You worry too much, Ailuros," the other replies, lazily lifting a long leg to scratch behind his ear. "What is done cannot be undone."

The two small observers then turn, elegantly leap onto a nearby house, and chase each other's shadows over the rooftops. Below, the fairground is being prepared.

of animae — self-aware magical automatons created centuries ago by members of a forgotten magical tradition. Details regarding the mechanics and how their powers can be integrated to improve Hermetic Magic are described in *Ancient Magic*, but that book is not required to run this story.

Because the antagonists do not directly interact with the characters for most of this story, they

should be usable by most troupes without alteration. Storyguides wishing to increase the challenge presented by the animae are advised to portray them more assertively and ruthlessly. It should be noted, however, that Ailuros and Maahes can be very dangerous adversaries as they will not hesitate to sic nobility, church officials, or urban mobs upon the magi if they feel threatened.



Introduction

This adventure seed pits the player characters against a pair

Anima and Terminology

Among the innumerable magical practices endemic to Mythic Europe, the ability to generate an anima (vital spark) is one of the most impressive, allowing a magus to imbue an otherwise inanimate object with a life of its own. Despite superficial similarities to Heron's art, however, neither the Anima Magic of House Merinita, the Automata of House Verditius, nor the Augustan Brotherhood's Animo ability can demonstrably create sentient life. Thus, while the relationship between the aforementioned powers remains hotly debated by Hermetic scholars, Maahes and Ailuros would be deeply offended at being mistaken for the products of what they haughtily dismiss as inferior magics. Details concerning the Anima Magic and Automata mysteries can be found in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, while Animo is described in *Rival Magic*.

Mechanica of Heron

Mechanica of Heron refers to both a Major Supernatural Virtue and its attendant Supernatural Ability. Possession of this Virtue allows a character to construct a variety of magical wonders, including sentient magical devices called animae (singular anima). Other arcane secrets known to the mechanicians included the ability to create permanent enchantments without vis, and knowledge of how to create devices whose effects can later be altered (so long as the new power uses same Technique and Form combination as the previous one). For more information on Heron's magic, consult *Ancient Magic*, pages 77–78.

counterpart, but to his chagrin the cats were instantly smitten with each other and soon became inseparable companions.

Being immortal, the felines outlived the magical tradition that spawned them and were residing in Tyre when that city fell to Arab armies in 636. Entering the service of a victorious emir, the felines acted as advisers to the city's Islamic rulers. In 1124, Tyre was captured by the crusaders and the two animae arranged to be smuggled out of the city disguised as figurines. Unfortunately, they were attacked en route and came into the possession of a young knight from the player characters' Tribunal. Shortly after escaping from the knight's manor, Maahes and Ailuros came to the attention of a nearby Hermetic covenant, which promptly had them abducted for arcane experimentation.

The cats do not have fond memories of their imprisonment. Considered little more than toys, they were subject to all manner of torments by the magi. Unable to escape the covenant themselves due to a series of magical wards, the cats eventually succeeded in tricking an apprentices into breaking the wards for them. Believing themselves to be hunted by their former captors, the cats are extremely wary of the Order of Hermes and suspicious of any friendly overtures from magi. Still, they are aware that they cannot oppose a Hermetic covenant by themselves and are looking for allies. They have settled

edged as a paragon of the mechanician's craft, earning her master, who regarded his creation more as a daughter than a pet, great prestige.

Years later Celmis' former pupil, Epimedes Daktyloi, crafted a golden cat whom he named Maahes, believing this would prove that he had surpassed his famous parens. While Epimedes' peers agreed that the gold cat was impressive, most thought that it was too derivative of Celmis' designs and failed to illustrate any real innovation on the part of its creator. Feeling cheated by the judgment of his colleagues, Epimedes urged Maahes to demonstrate his superiority by destroying his feminine

Prologue

In the city of Alexandria in 293 AD, a famed mechanician named Celmis Rodhios constructed his masterpiece, a silver cat anima whom he named Ailuros (a Hellenization of the Egyptian deity Bast). Beautiful, urbane, and well-educated, the feline was acknowl-

in a city near the players' covenant and have entered into an alliance with a local goldsmith, covertly engineering his election as the city's *prevot* (mayor). For further details on town governance, consult *City & Guild*, page 13.

Setting

This hook can, theoretically, be played out just about anywhere in Mythic Europe, but it is easier if the players' covenant is located reasonably close to a town or city where the renegade mechanica can hide from their pursuers. If the players live in a more isolated covenant the story will still work, but getting the characters on site might require more effort.

As written, the adventure is assumed to take place in the Normandy Tribunal (covered fully in *The Lion and the Lily*). To this end, all of the given names are provided in their French form, but as they are all the names of popular saints, they can be readily adapted to fit other regions of Mythic Europe.

Characters

While functionally similar to the magical creatures described in other *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* supplements, this story's antagonists are, in fact, enchanted devices. As such, the cats do not contain vis and are not susceptible to the effects of Might stripping

spells similar to *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*, though they are vulnerable to the *Disenchant* ritual. The primary function of their Might Score is to provide them with Magic Resistance.

The powers of animae work like those of Hermetic magic items in terms of uses per day and Penetration. Consequently, the cats are relatively indifferent to adverse supernatural auras, which reduce their Magic Resistance and Penetration, but have no impact on their ability to affect themselves or normal human beings with their powers.

Finally, it should be noted that the animae's Abilities are somewhat misleading. While Ailuros and Maahes are truly ancient beings and have learned much over the centuries, much of the knowledge they have accumulated is

no longer relevant or useful as of 1220. In game terms, both have several levels of the Worthless Abilities flaw (*Grogs*, page 86).

The Hook

This story begins when it comes to the characters' attention that two of the covenant's teamsters, Jean and Marc, who have just returned from the city with supplies, are behaving very strangely. Soon, the other grogs come to the conclusion that the pair are spying on the covenant. The problem (for Ailuros and Maahes) is that the grogs they've selected are completely incompetent at espionage. Play the scene in a way that suits your saga, but

Mechanica and Damage

Because animae are fashioned from lifeless metal, they do not have Wound Penalties like living creatures, but track damage using Damage Levels like other objects instead. Whenever an anima suffers damage exceeding its Soak, it must make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor equal to the amount by which the damage exceeded the Soak. If the roll fails, the anima loses a Damage Level; if the roll botches it loses additional Damage Levels equal to the number of botches. Maahes and Ailuros each have 5 Damage Levels. They suffer

no Wound Penalties as they accrue damage, but when the last Damage Level is lost, they are destroyed.

Animae do not heal naturally, but can be repaired by a skilled craftsman. Specifically, characters with the Mechanica of Heron or Craft Automata abilities (consult *Ancient Magic*, page 75 and *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 128 respectively) can repair a number of Damage Levels per season equal to their score in the Ability used. Non-functioning mechanica cannot serve as a source of Insight.

Ailuros (Silver Cat)

Magic Might: 9 (Terram)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +1, Pre -2, Com -4, Str -7, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +4

Size: -3

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Perfect Balance, Puissant Awareness, Sharp Ears, Tough; Nocturnal.

Personality Traits: Curious +4, Mischievous +3, Timid +2

Combat:

Claws: Init +3, Attack +8, Defense +10, Damage -5

Teeth: Init +4, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage -6

Soak: +4

Wound Penalties: None, see "Mechanica & Damage" insert.

Abilities*: Arabic 5 (cultured discourse), Area Lore: Alexandria 4 (libraries), Area Lore: Eastern Roman Empire 6 (history), Area Lore: Town 2 (personalities), Artes Liberales 5 (rhetoric), Athletics 3 (jumping), Awareness 4+2 (at night), Brawl 2 (claws), Classical Greek 6 (Koine), Folk Ken 5 (scholars), French 3 (peasants), Guile 5 (obfuscation), Hunt 6 (birds), Intrigue 3 (elaborate schemes), Latin 5 (eastern), Magic Lore 2 (magic users), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (Verditius), Organization Lore: Imprisoning Covenant 2 (wards), Philosophiae 3 (sympathies), Stealth 4 (stalking).

* Cats are excellent climbers and jumpers, gaining a +3 bonus on appropriate rolls.

Powers:

Child of Hephaestus, 0 points, Init +0, Terram: The anima is able to move under its own power in a manner appropriate to its shape. Ailuros & Maaes are somewhat heavier than flesh and blood felines, but not by enough to affect their mobility. ReTe 20: Base 2, +1 Concentration, +2 metal; +5 levels for device to maintain concentration, +10 levels for unlimited uses. (Mechanica Level: 12)

Gift of the Muses, 0 points, Init +0, Auram: The anima has a sophisticated panpipe system in its neck. By selectively opening and closing vents to expose different reeds, the cat can approximate human speech. CrAu 20: Base 2, +1 Concentration, +2 highly unnatural; +5 levels for device to maintain concentration, +10 levels for unlimited uses. (Mechanica Level: 12)

Gown of the Night Predator, 0 points, Init +0, Terram: The anima can camouflage itself by altering the coloration and pattern of its "coat", conferring a +3 bonus on Stealth or Hunt totals. MuTe 13: Base 2, +2 Sun, +2 metal; +3 levels for six uses per day. (Mechanica Level: 9)

Unbound Stalker, 0 points, Init +0, Terram: The anima can temporarily become incorporeal, allowing it to pass through walls unhindered or slip free from ropes and fetters. The magic only persists for a few

seconds, but this is sufficient for the intended purpose. PeTe 20: Base 5, +2 metal; +5 levels for 24 uses per day. (Mechanica Level: 12)

The Wish of Your Mistress, 0 points, Init +0, Mentem: The anima is able to implant a single complex suggestion into the target's mind, which must be obeyed to the best of the victim's ability. Combined with Maaes' "Voice of the Demagogue" power, the cats are able to rapidly recruit a host of servants. ReMe 50: Base 20, +1 Touch, +3 Moon; +5 levels for a Penetration of 10, +5 levels for 24 uses per day. (Mechanica Level: 30)

Vis: None.

Appearance: Ailuros is a lithe silver cat with sparkling emerald eyes, built to resemble an Egyptian Mau. Mischievous by nature, she appreciates the sobering effect Maaes' presence has on her, curbing her more capricious impulses and helping to keep her focused. She enjoys the thrill of the hunt, and Justinian's nightingale (an anima described on page 84 of *Ancient Magic*) still holds a grudge against her for damaging its wing on more than one occasion. She is smarter than Maaes and acts as his adviser on important matters, but defers to his authority completely as she feels a wife should. The sound of a silver wind chime (Celmis' sigil) can be heard when she uses her powers.

Maahes Tyreos (Golden Cat)

Magic Might: 13 (Terram)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com -4, Str -7, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +4

Size: -3

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Perfect Balance, Puissant Awareness, Sharp Ears, Tough; Nocturnal, Proud.

Personality Traits: Curious +4, Prideful +3, Hedonistic +2, Timid +2

Combat:

Claws: Init +3, Attack +8, Defense +10, Damage -5

Teeth: Init +4, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage -6

Soak: +4

Wound Penalties: None, see "Mechanica and Damage" insert.

Abilities*: Arabic 5 (cultured), Area Lore: Alexandria 3 (Library of Alexandria), Area Lore: Eastern Roman Empire 5 (history), Area Lore: Town 1 (geography), Artes Liberales 3 (rhetoric), Athletics 3 (jumping), Awareness 4+2 (at night), Brawl 2 (claws), Classical Greek 5 (Koine), Folk Ken 3 (nobility), French 3 (merchants), Hunt 4 (mice), Intrigue 2 (alliances), Latin 5 (academic usage), Leadership 4 (servants), Magic Lore 3 (items of quality), Normandy Lore 2 (cities), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (hierarchy), Philosophiae 6 (reagents), Stealth 4 (stalk-

ing).

* *Cats are excellent climbers and jumpers, gaining a +3 bonus to appropriate rolls.*

Powers:

Child of Hephaestus, 0 points, Init +0, Terram. See Ailuros.

Gift of the Muses, 0 points, Init +0, Auram. See Ailuros.

Gown of the Night Predator, 0 points, Init +0, Terram. See Ailuros.

Unbound Stalker, 0 points, Init +0, Terram. See Ailuros.

Voice of the Demagogue, 0 points, Init +0, Mentem: The anima appears more intelligent and majestic than it actually is. Those affected by this power are inclined to regard the caster as their natural superior, to be respected and obeyed to the best of their ability. Targets do not find it particularly unusual or noteworthy that their superior is a metal cat. ReMe 40: Base 5, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group; +3 levels for a Penetration of 6, +2 levels for three uses per day. (Mechanica Level: 24)

Tranquility of the Purring Cat, 0 points, Init +0, Mentem: The anima can inspire a sense of supernatural calm in a small group of people by purring. Those affected are oblivious to strange goings on (rhinoceroses crashing through the door, a pair of animated metal cats walking down the street, and so on.) The targets perceive events

normally, but while Maahes purrs, they react to even the most outlandish events as if they were perfectly normal occurrences unworthy of comment. The power persists for as long as Maahes keeps purring and, with repeated applications, can affect several groups simultaneously. ReMe 34: Base 4, +2 Voice, +1 Concentration, +2 Group; +5 levels for device to maintain concentration, +4 levels for 12 uses per day. (Mechanica Level: 21)

Vis: None.

Appearance: Maahes is a golden cat with dazzling ruby eyes who was designed to look like a majestic Persian. Larger and more heavily built than Ailuros, Maahes attracts even more attention than his lovely mate, something he secretly enjoys. Given to indolence and pride, he values his wife's keen intellect and enjoys the sense of whimsy she injects into his life, which prevents him from getting too complacent. Maahes enjoys sunning himself and has a passion for academic debate, particularly on his pet topic of alchemy. Whenever Maahes uses his powers, those in his immediate vicinity can feel the spring sun shining upon their shoulders regardless of the time of day or meteorological conditions.



the grogs' activities should be sufficient to worry the other characters without prompting them to incinerate the unfortunate grogs first and ask questions later. For example, they might be trying to infiltrate areas reserved for magi, making sketches of the battlements, or asking the sergeant about the covenant's magical defenses. Ultimately, it should be obvious to everyone that the teamsters are trying to gather information about the covenant and its magi beyond what is known to most covenfolk.

If interrogated through mundane methods, Marc and Jean fall into a dogged silence. Intellego Vim magic reveals them to be under a powerful non-hermetic Mentem effect of 10th magnitude (base level 1 to detect the Form, base 3 to determine Form and Technique). The sound of a silver chime is also heard. If magically forced

to talk, the grogs reveal that a well-dressed gentleman in hooded cape commanded them to investigate the covenant's defenses and ascertain the resident's attitudes toward non-Hermetic magic, magical creatures, and Hermetic property, then report back to him in a month's time. Nothing more can be extracted from the pair since they simply don't know what the hooded man is planning to do with the information. Although they were supposed to return to the city next month to deliver their report, neither grog knows where the rendezvous is set to occur — the man said that he would find them. Peering into the grogs' minds reveals the image of a sun-shaped gold pendant hanging around a man's neck.

A non-Hermetic magic user inquiring about their magical secrets and facilities should prompt the characters to in-

vestigate. If they don't, after a few months they notice that another pair of teamsters (most covenants have several) have been traveling to the city every month, even when they had no covenant business there. Magical investigation reveals that they are being controlled by the same magical effect that afflicted Marc and Jean. These new spies are just smarter than the previous ones.

The City

At this point the characters are likely to head for the city to investigate. When the characters arrive, it's the feast day of the city's patron saint. That means that the churches are specially attended and the city has an increased Dominion aura of 4. It remains at this level for a week before returning to its usual value of 3. Adding

to the festive and vibrant atmosphere is a fair in progress just beyond the city walls.

The Fair

The fair is situated in a small field just outside the city walls. It consists of a series of lanes marked with ropes, and stalls. The main products being sold are local produce and livestock (or wool, depending on the area), but some of the merchant stalls also sell luxury items and other rare objects. This could be an opportunity for the characters to do some shopping if they are so inclined. The fair is bustling with activity during daylight hours, but is relatively desolate at night. There are a few guardsmen patrolling the area to watch for fires or thieves, but they are easily avoided in the dark.

The Boy in the Barn

One of the rumors described earlier relates to an accused murderer named Jacques. Depending upon the needs of your saga, Jacques can be either Gifted or simply cursed with the Magical Air Flaw. He is dirty, hungry, lonely, and miserable, but apart from the guards this is the same condition in which he's spent most of his brief life. Freeing the boy by force is a simple matter for a Hermetic magus since a pair of village thugs are the only

Danger in the City – Fire!

Medieval cities are highly flammable. Thatched roofs and wooden walls are the norm and, as such, fire is a serious hazard because entire cities can go up in flames quickly if any part of them catches fire.

Characters know this, so the use of *Creo Ignem* spells should be seen as a dangerous proposition in an urban environment.

thing that has prevented him from escaping, but staging a jailbreak can create political and legal problems with the mundane authorities. Players may also wish to make arrangements for Jacques' legal defense in hopes of saving his life. The trial is scheduled to take place in a month's time, however, so the matter isn't a particularly urgent one.

If the characters wish to talk to the boy themselves, the guards acquiesce so long as the characters turn over any weapons before entering the makeshift jailhouse. Jacques is lonely and eager to talk once he realizes that the characters don't want to hurt him. He freely admits to killing Michael Le Long, but claims to have done so in self-defense. Asking around town will confirm that the victim was a well-known robber, and Jacques would not likely have been charged if not for his suspicious air. It is up to you if you

Masterminds of the City

The cats have been using their influence around the city to promote their candidate for *prevot* (mayor). This has left a magical trail that can be found by magi, leading them directly to the cats. However, Ailuros and Maahes have a number of agents around the city, not all of them laboring under mind-controlling magics; many are employees of Philippe l'Orfevrier or supporting him of their own free will. As such, the cats are likely to be aware of the characters' capabilities long before they are encountered.

want to build a story around this hook or even make him a potential apprentice.

Recognizing the supernatural loathing Jacques inspires as a sign of The Gift, Maahes and Ailuros visited the boy along with Philippe l'Orfevrier a few days ago. Jacques does remember the visit but because Maahes was using *Tranquility of the Purring Cat* he doesn't consider the meeting to be worthy of note. If asked about visitors, cats, or the sun pendant, however, he remembers that he received a visitor a few days ago who wanted to know whether he was an "apprentice." The man he saw appeared to be in his late forties with brown hair and a beard. The description of the man and

the sun pendant leads the characters to Philippe l'Orfevrier. Jacques can describe the cats too if asked, but knows nothing of their plans or capabilities. Apart from him, only a handful of townsfolk have seen the animae and most of those have been sworn to secrecy.

Philippe l'Orfevrier

Philippe l'Orfevrier is a wealthy townsman in his late forties. He owns a large house in the richest part of town and sits on the town council. His business as a goldsmith is very lucrative and he maintains a number of busy workshops located throughout the city. He specializes in small intricate pieces of gold jewelry;

his delicate gold designs were one of the things that drew Maahes to him.

Although Philippe believes himself to be the cats' equal in their joint endeavor, the cats are under no such illusions. Philippe has the necessary skills and tools to perform routine maintenance on an anima's delicate mechanisms (though he lacks the magical ability needed to truly repair them) and is in a position of influence high enough to interest the cats, but they have no particular attachment or loyalty to him personally. The cats are currently engineering Philippe's rise to the position of *prevot*. This is a life-long post, so it is very important. Obtaining such a lofty position requires the funding of important

works of art in the city cathedral and donations to hospices and church houses. Philippe is also contributing to the well-being of the city and has offered to host a feast for all the townsfolk on the last day of the fair. He is also pressing for improvements to some of the public areas of the city, offering to pay part of the costs himself.

These activities have made him popular in town, but are also costing him a lot of money. He has had to secure a loan from a local money-changer despite the brisk business he's been doing lately. The cats are engineering this streak of good business, and are trying to delay repayment of the debt, but the True Faith of the rabbi who lent Philippe the money is mak-

Gathering Rumors

Once within the city walls, characters may question the locals about the various clues they've managed to gather. The townsfolk are wary and guarded if the characters are strongly armed and armored, assuming that they're looking for trouble. If they manage to earn the trust of the citizens, however, the following rumors can be overheard in conversations or by talking to the locals in the taverns or at the fair.

- It has been a lean year. The fair is helping, but not by much.
- Taxes are already too high, and the lord and city council want to increase them.

- Philippe l'Orfevrier is gathering support to become the next *prevot*. He is a skilled goldsmith who seems to be doing good business with the Count. Philippe has earned a lot of money recently and is actively recruiting an entourage of learned men.
- Michael Le Long, a fellow from a neighboring village, was murdered recently. The town watch captured a young boy named Jacques not far from the scene. The boy bears the taint of witchcraft and was caught red handed so there's little doubt as to his guilt. He is currently being held in a

nearby barn awaiting trial. The results of the trial, however, are almost a foregone conclusion.

- If the characters ask about a well-dressed man wearing a hood, they are informed that a number of people in the town fit that description. The sun pendant, however, is recognized as the mark of the incipient Merchants' Guild in the city. Its members are the richest merchants in town. They adopted the symbol recently due to its inclusion in the local nobleman's coat of arms and its association with gold and wealth.

ing things difficult for them. The felines are also influencing people's perception of Philippe as a good and worthy member of the city council, and plan to brainwash as many people as possible when the actual election takes place. As it happens, the current *prevot* is quite old, so it's not unusual for Philippe to have announced his candidacy. Other councilmen are making similar overtures, albeit without the same measure of success.

Philippe's house is a two story building with stout stone walls and strong wooden doors. The goldsmith lives on the second floor with his wife Maria, two daughters (aged 7 and 4), and his 3 year old son. Four servants and Philippe's apprentice, Mathieu, inhabit the ground floor.

The family and servants have been living with the cats for a while and have come to trust them as supernatural but benign creatures who must be kept safe at all costs. They will not volunteer any information about the animae to strangers, having been ordered not to.

Encounters in the City and Fair

The following situations may be encountered in the city or fair. Some of opponents described below pose a significant threat while others are merely annoying, but all of them add a bit of extra excitement to the game and

help highlight the importance of grogs in urban settings.

- A belligerent group of drunken youths (statistics as The Rogue, *ArM5* page 23) try to pick a fight with the characters after accusing them of some *faux pas*.
- A pack of stray dogs follows a Gifted character around, barking at him and occasionally nipping at his heels. This makes stealthy movement impossible and attracts all sorts of negative attention.
- Children react as negatively to The Gift as adults, but are less inhibited; babies crying inconsolably when brought into the character's presence makes a bad first impression. Older children may throw rocks or garbage at the character instead.
- Characters who have antagonized the animae may find themselves hunted by an assassin. He too has the statistics of The Rogue, but carries a dagger coated in monkshood (Init +4, Atk +9, Def +7, Dam +2; those wounded by the blade must make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 9 or suffer an additional Heavy wound).

Final Encounter

Eventually, the characters should be able to track the plot to the home of Philippe l'Orfevrier. Naturally, the servants refuse to allow the characters to enter their master's home uninvited and call

for help if attacked. If the characters manage to enter the home anyway they find the two cats lounging in the main chamber. The cats are surprised, but not frightened, and calmly explain that that they were merely trying to determine whether the magi were friendly or not, and wish to parley.

If the characters seem to be set on harming the cats, Maahes controls the characters who are not magically protected (grogs and companions) and turn them against the magi, while he and Ailuros use the distraction to flee though the nearest wall and disappear from the city. Such an attack will convince the cats that the Order of Hermes is intrinsically hostile to magical creatures and will predispose them against further interactions with magi (see *Bared Claws*, later).

The cats' main desire is to be left alone. They tell the players about their long and humiliating imprisonment, stressing that they wish to avoid suffering such a fate ever again. To this end, they want physical and legal protection from the Hermetic magi that had held them captive. In return, they are willing to offer up a wealth of information that might interest the players. In particular, they have a vast knowledge of the history of the Eastern Roman Empire during the last thousand years. Their most enticing offer, however, is information regarding the lost magics of the Mechanica of Heron and the location of a temple of Serapis which contains a treasure

trove of mechanica.

Given all of their previous experiences, the cats are understandably wary of Hermetic magi, and are suspicious of any offer that appears to be too generous. However, they know they need protection if they want to avoid being recaptured so they are quite motivated to reach an agreement with any sympathetic magi, such as the player characters..

Depending upon how the adventure has progressed, this story might end with one or both of the cats being killed or captured by the magi, escaping the city, or reaching a detente with the character's covenant.

Further Stories

The events of this hook could easily lead to many further stories.

Jacques' Trial

Characters try to save the life of Jacques, the boy charged with the murder of Michael Le Long. This is somewhat time sensitive as the trial is set for one month after the events detailed in the main adventure, though it might be postponed for various reasons. While Jacques is guilty of the crime, there are grounds to claim self-defense and have him acquitted with a fine. There are rules for trials in *City and Guild*, page 29, but they boil down to Jacques (or his lawyer) making

a Communication + Civil and Canon Law roll versus an Ease Factor of 9 with success resulting in an acquittal (The -3 penalty to social interactions has already been added to the Ease Factor).

If the characters do not send anyone to defend Jacques he is found guilty and hanged the following day. Even if the court accepts the defendant's plea of self-defense, however, Jacques is still likely to face a hefty fine which, as an urchin, he is unable to pay. If the covenant pays the fine for him, the grateful boy is remanded into the covenant's custody where he makes a fine servant (or apprentice).

Following Heron's Trail

For characters interested in uncovering Heron's lost magical secrets, this hook can serve as a direct tie-in to the adventure described in *Ancient Magic*. The cats make excellent guides since they are intimately familiar with both Alexandria and Constantinople. Ailuros doesn't get along with Justinian's nightingale (*Ancient Magic*, page 84), however, and if both animae are present the characters have to endure a lot of bickering.

The characters might also think to use Ailuros and Maahes themselves as sources of Insight. The cats find the prospect of being poked and prodded in such a fashion to be extremely degrading, but might consent to it as part of negotiations for protection.

Extended Paws

If the cats are granted the magi's protection, they set up court in the city. With time, the city grows and prospers, becoming a center of the arts and sciences, especially poetry and experimental philosophiae, with the two cats acting as the true power behind the city council. Ailuros and Maahes are already engineering the rise of their human proxy Philippe l'Orfevrier to power. If they succeed, academics and artists will flock to the city to practice their trades under his patronage.

As soon as they can manage it, the animae wish to found a university, though this is likely to take several years to come to fruition. Through the artistic and scholarly works they commission, the cats endeavor to portray magic in a positive light. This can improve the relationship of the covenant with the city, and might even benefit the Order as a whole once their ideas begin to enter mainstream academic discourse. The cats also try to assist the magi by keeping them apprised of mundane events in the area.

On the downside, too close a relationship with the animae could expose the characters to charges of interference with mundanes.

Predators

The cats might be being pursued by other magi as they fear. As a result, the characters might well find themselves accused of depriving another covenant of

its magical power. Whether the other covenant seeks financial restitution or blood can vary according to the needs of your saga. Likewise, the strength of the covenant in question should be tailored to fit your saga. In a worst case scenario, the protagonists may find themselves embroiled in Wizard's War with dangerous opponents unless they agree to return the cats to their "owners."

Bared Claws

If the cats have to flee from the city or if one of them is destroyed by the characters, they are convinced that the Order of Hermes as a whole is their enemy. They move to another major city with a university, formulating a long-term plan to influence the Church's policies against the use of magic. Soon, Paris or another major center of learning starts spreading the doctrine that all magic is the work of the Devil.

Creations of Old, Prizes of Today

If the characters return the cats to the covenant they previously escaped from, they eventually learn that Damnameneus filius Acmon, a middle aged Verditius, presented a mechanical cat that fits the description of Maahes or Ailuros as his entry into the Verditius Contest, claiming to have created it as part of an unstabilized breakthrough. The cat appears identical to the anima met by the characters but doesn't seem to have any of its powers (other than locomotion) and seems considerably less intelligent. Has the Verditius been tinkering with the Mechanica? If so, will the players be able to rescue the cats and repair whatever Damnameneus did to them? The discovery has placed the Verditius (previously a nobody) in a strong position to become the next Primus, and he is currently basking in his new-found fame.

If the character's suspicions are correct, they have strong blackmail material. If the other cat survived and is still at large the Bared Claws scenario outlined earlier could be in the making.

Electrum

While insufferably condescending at times, the animae do acknowledge some limitations to their condition — most notably the inability to procreate. If a maga successfully integrates the Awaken Device virtue (*Ancient Magic*, page 80), the cats seek her out immediately to commission a kitten crafted from electrum (an alloy of gold and silver). Is the character comfortable undertaking such a project?



The River

As loud as a thousand galloping knights, the river surges, washes up over its banks, over the piers and into the town. Like an invading army the swirling waters crash down the streets. The ramshackle slums skirting the town instantly disintegrate as the flood engulfs them. The more substantial buildings in the established areas hold for a little longer before either bursting into jagged splinters, or being dragged whole into the waters and thrown against neighboring properties. Even a few of the tall brick towers of the wealthy teeter and fall under the watery siege.

Then the waters slowly retreat.

The river's rapid, unexpected in-

vasion leaves the town devastated and confused. Dozens of battered and drowned corpses drift down the river or lie tangled in the wreckage of buildings.

The river has slain the town.

Trajan the River Guardian

This hook introduces *Guardians of the Forests: The Rhine Tribunal* into a saga that is not set in the Rhine Tribunal.

The Tytalus magus Trajan, from the Rhine Tribunal, claims to be

the Guardian of the Danube river. This status, he asserts, allows him to defend the river, even in ways that violate the Hermetic Code. He bases this upon a Rhine Tribunal Peripheral Code ruling: The Guardians of the Forests. Recklessly, he has acted on this and destroyed several mundane towns (killing hundreds) on the banks of the Danube in the player character's Tribunal. Effectively, Trajan is trying to export the Rhine Tribunal's ruling into the Peripheral Code of another Tribunal.

The young Rhine Quaesitor Siegfried is vehemently opposed to this interpretation. In fact, Siegfried is opposed to the entire Guardians



of the Forests ruling and is trying to take advantage of Trajan's recklessness to engineer the ruling's suppression by the Grand Tribunal.

This political story is about the player characters' support for (or indifference to) either Trajan or Siegfried's position.

The Guardians of the Forests

The Guardians of the Forests is a Rhine Peripheral Code ruling (see *Guardians of the Forests: The Rhine Tribunal*, page 18). It allows a character recognized as a guardian of a forest to take actions otherwise considered against the Code, as long as those actions can be justified as attempts to defend the forest. The ruling has been used to justify mundane interference, faerie molestation, and deprivation of magical power. Sometimes, the Rhine Tribunal has allowed forest guardians very wide latitude to "break" the Code, while in other cases it has allowed forest guardians no special dispensations. The forest guardians ruling is one of many political issues that divide the Rhine Tribunal.

Trajan's use of the Guardians of the Forest ruling is innovative in two ways. First, the ruling is normally only applied to forests. He is attempting to apply it to a river. Second, the ruling is not recognized outside the Rhine Tribunal.

Note that, even in the Rhine Tribunal, guardian status is not given, the magus just claims it. If the Tribunal agrees with a defense

based on this assertion, this makes the status "official."

NATURE LORE

Many forest guardians (although not all) have the Supernatural Ability Forest Lore (see *Guardians of the Forests: The Rhine Tribunal*, page 37). This allows the character to interact in special ways with the forest. Similar Nature Lore Supernatural Abilities exist for other sorts of natural features, including rivers (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 103).

Trajan has the Nature Lore: Danube River Supernatural Ability. This allows him to find regions and vis within the Danube, speak with supernatural river inhabitants, and commune with the river spirit, all without the use of Hermetic magic.

GILDS

Gilds are political factions within the Rhine Tribunal (see *Guardians of the Forests: The Rhine Tribunal*, page 27). Trajan is a member of the Hawthorn Gild. Its agenda is to protect the wild places and creatures from the mundanes. Siegfried is a member of the Oak Gild. Its agenda is to foster respect for authentic Hermetic traditions and rid the Order of hedge wizard influences.

What Does Trajan Want?

Trajan genuinely sees himself as the Guardian of the Danube. He believes that the river's magi-

cal spirit is being slowly poisoned by the Dominion auras and other pollutants (sewage, effluent from tanneries and slaughter-yards) discharged from the river-bank towns. The river spirit believes this too.

Although the Tylus Trajan enjoys this political conflict, he does not really care about the legal situation. Trajan just wants to defend the river. Creating a legal cover is a great outcome, but if he fails to do so, Trajan contentedly pays legal fines. Of course, legal fines do not prevent him from taking similar actions in the future to defend the river. If Marched, Trajan uses his *Return to the Flow* spell to retreat into the Danube (see later).

THE POISONING OF THE RIVER

The river near the human towns really is being poisoned. The water is bad, which can be detected with *Intellego Aquam*, and *Intellego Animal* (or *Herbam*) can detect the unhealthy imbalance of humors in the river-borne wildlife. Sites of great natural beauty (with weak Magic auras) along the river have been either destroyed or swamped by town growth and Divine auras.

What Has Trajan Done?

Trajan has used his *Wizard's Flood* ritual (see insert) to destroy half a dozen towns along the Danube in the player's Tribunal (or another river: see *Moving the River*). This has killed hundreds of mundanes. Many magi find the sheer scale of

Trajan: Master of House Titalus

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

Size: +2

Age: 64 (50; +5 Longevity ritual, +2 Bronze Cord)

Decrepitude: 0 (2)

Warping Score: 3 (11)

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Master Magus; Giant Blood; Gild Trained (Hawthorn Gild), Improved Characteristics, Inoffensive to Animals, Lesser Immunity: Exposure, Minor Magical Focus: Rivers, Self-Confident, Tough, True Friend (Cattus); Oath of Fealty (Danube river), Waster of Vis; Incomprehensible, Obsessed (Danube), Reckless

Personality Traits: Loyal (Cattus) +3, Reckless +3, Obsessed +1

Reputations: Guardian of the Danube 2 (Hermetic), River Spirit 1 (local)

Combat:

Trident + Heater Shield: Init +3, Attack +10, Defense +13, Damage +8

Fist: Init +3, Attack +3, Defense +3, Damage +3

Soak: +8 (+3 Tough, +3 Sta, +2 Bronze Cord)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 3 (fish), Area Lore: Greater Alps 2 (rivers), Area Lore: Rhine Tribunal 4 (rivers), Artes Liberales 1 (rhetoric), Athletics 3 (jumping), Awareness 3 (searching), Bargain

3 (spirits), Brawl 2 (fist), Code of Hermes 2 (forest guardians), Concentration 3 (spells), Dead Language: Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Faerie Lore 1 (river creatures), Finesse 3 (Aquam), Hunt 3 (fishing), Intrigue 4 (Hermetic), Leadership 2 (river creatures), Living Language: High German 5 (Bavarian), Magic Lore 1 (river creatures), Magic Theory 5 (inventing spells), Nature Lore: Danube 6 (finding places of power), Organization Lore: Durenmar 1 (library), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (politics), Parma Magica 5 (Vim), Penetration 4 (Aquam), Single Weapon 6 (trident), Stealth 3 (rivers), Survival 4 (river), Swim 5 (diving)

Arts: Cr 10, In 8, Mu 7, Pe 7, Re 11; An 7, Aq 14, Au 6, Co 17, He 6, Ig 5, Im 5, Me 5, Te 6, Vi 8

Twilight Scars: Trajan's voice is like swirling water, which makes him difficult to understand (other characters need to make a Perception + Concentration roll against an Ease Factor of 6 to comprehend him), but does not affect spell casting or Voice Range.

Equipment: Copper neck-torque, bracelet of topaz beads, robes of rushing water.

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Spells Known:

Tongue of the Fishes (InAn 20/+18)
Mighty Torrent of Water (CrAq 20/+27)
Wizard's Flood (CrAq 35/+37*)
Eyes of Danibus (InAq/Im) 20/+21*)
Lungs of the Fish (MuAq 20/+24)

Comfort of the Drenched Traveler (PeAq 5/+24)

Chaos of the Angry Waves (ReAq 30/+28)

Danibus' Favour (ReAq 35/+39*)

Whispers Through the Black Gate (InCo(Me) 15/+16)

Return to the Flow (ReCo 40/+31)

Wizard's Sidestep (Relm 10/+19)

Arms of Neptune (CrTe 25/+19)

Fist of Shattering (PeTe 10/+16)

Sense the Nature of Vis (InVi 5/+19)

Piercing the Magic Shroud (Magic equivalent of *Piercing the Faerie Veil*) (InVi 20/+19)

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi 5/+18)

Bane of the Fae (Faerie equivalent of *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*) (PeVi 5/+18)

* Includes Minor Magical Focus: Rivers

Vis: 12 pawns of Aquam vis in topaz bracelet.

Appearance: Trajan is a giant, strong man with a ragged, steel-blue beard, clothed in robes of cresting waves. With his voice like swirling water, Trajan appears as the very incarnation of Danibus, the Roman god of the Danube river. Many fishermen have seen a wild river spirit stalking the shallows of the Danube, and Trajan is well known in the Rhine as the guardian of the Danube. Trajan's body is covered in abstract tattoos, which are a coded astrological map of the places of power along the Danube. The tattoos are fixed Arcane Connections to four different locations along the Danube, which all have strong Magic auras (6+).

Trajan: Master of House Tytalus cont.

Trajan's sigil is the sound of rushing water, with volume proportional to the magnitude of the spell.

Trajan is a member of the Hawthorn Gild (a political faction in the Rhine Tribunal) and a member of the covenant of Durenmar. Trajan has a laboratory and sanctum at Durenmar, but he has not used it for over a decade.

Trajan's Giant Blood means many Corpus spells are ineffective on him without including size modifiers.

TONGUE OF THE FISHES

InAn 20

R: Eye, D: Concentration,
T: Individual

This spell allows Trajan to speak with any animal whose natural habitat is the river. Despite the spell name this includes animals other than fishes.

(Base 10, +1 Eye, +1 Concentration)

ROBES OF THE CATARACT

Cr(Re)Aq 24

Pen 0, constant effect

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Individual

Trajan wears this enchanted copper torque, stained blue-green with age, around his neck. The item constantly creates a swirling torrent of water around Trajan in the shape of robes. Any mundanes who see this are impressed and terrified. Most magi consider it to be showing off.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +4 Constant Effect)

WIZARD'S FLOOD

CrAq 35

R: Touch, D: Momentary, T: Individual, ritual

This ritual, when cast in a river, causes it to rapidly rise and burst its banks. This floods the terrain about half a mile from either bank, for a length of about 20 miles, to a depth of two paces. The area inundated depends on the local geography (cliffs, gorges and dams may direct the flow, for example). The flood waters are natural, cannot be resisted by Magic Resistance, and may take days to recede, evaporate, and drain. The flood drowns people and animals, ruins crops, and washes away most wooden structures (and ruins the lower level of stone ones). This ritual is Trajan's master work. He is well known for it in the Rhine.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +7 size)

EYES OF DANIBUS

InAq(Im) 20

R: Arcane, D: Concentration, T: Individual

Trajan can see from any vantage point along a river that he holds an Arcane Connection to. He can see the river itself, anything on or in the river, and anything within a pace of the river banks (subject to the normal limitations of sight).

(Base 3, +4 Arcane, +1 Concentration, +1 Requisite)

DANIBUS' FAVOR

ReAq 35

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Structure

Wards a building against flooding. Trajan can use this spell to save a building from the worst of the *Wizard's Flood* damage.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 Structure)

RETURN TO THE FLOW

ReCo 40

R: Personal, D: Momentary, T: Individual

This spell instantly transports Trajan to a point that he has an Arcane Connection to. He often uses his tattoos as the Arcane Connections for this spell; his tattoos are fixed Arcane Connections to the river (see character insert).

(Base 35, +1 size modifier)

ARMS OF NEPTUNE

CrTe 25

R: Touch, D: Diameter, T: Group

This spell creates, in Trajan's outstretched hands, an intricately wrought trident and a metal shield engraved with the image of a raging river. The weapons have standard game statistics. When the spell is cast make an Intelligence + Finesse roll against an Ease Factor of 6. If the roll succeeds the weapons are beautiful, if it fails the weapons are serviceable but ugly. If the Finesse roll botches the weapons are flawed and break when used. Record the Penetration of this spell, as the weapons must Penetrate the Magic Resistance of opponents.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Diameter, +2 Group)

Cattus, Daughter of the Danube

Characteristics: Int 0, Per -2, Pre -5 (1), Com -6, Str -5, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik +3

Size: -3

Age: 20 (14; ages with Trajan)

Decrepitude: 0 (1)

Warping Score: 0 (3)

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: Dowsing, Self-Confident, True Friend (Trajan); Nocturnal

Qualities: Aquatic (breathes water), Camouflage (+3 hide when stationary), Pursuit Predator (extra Fatigue Level), Slippery (+6 Defense against Grapple), Thick Scales (+1 Soak)

Personality Traits: Loyal (Trajan) +3, Confident +2, Nocturnal +1

Reputations: Trajan's Familiar 1 (Hermetic)

Combat:

Dodge: Init +3, Attack n/a, Defense +6, Damage n/a

Teeth: Init +3, Attack +9, Defense

+8, Damage -4

Soak: +5 (+1 Thick Scales, +2 Sta, +2 Bronze Cord)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-2), -3 (3-4), -5 (5-6), Incapacitated (7-8), Dead (9+)

Abilities: Awareness 2 (food), Brawl 3 (teeth), Dead Language: Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Dowsing 5 (vis), Hunt 4 (smaller fish), Living Language: High German 5 (Bavarian), Magic Theory 3 (lab assistant), Stealth 2 (shallows), Survival 3 (rivers), Swim 5 (upstream)

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Vis: None.

Appearance: Cattus (Cat) has been Trajan's familiar for 14 years. She is a playful, speckled brown trout, and very difficult to spot as she swims along the Danube. When Tajan is away

from the river Cattus patrols for perils to the river's spirit (unless set some other task).

Cattus is not a magic creature, but she was born with the Supernatural Ability to find things in the river bed (Dowsing) and she found Trajan when he was ready for a familiar. Trajan later paid another Rhine magus to cast rituals to increase Cattus' Intelligence to 0. As she has no Magic Resistance of her own, Cattus uses Trajan's Form Art Scores as her Magic Resistance.

Trajan created the Familiar Bond with an InAq Lab Total of 25 (Gold Cord +1, Silver Cord +1, Bronze Cord +2). The bond has been enchanted with *Mental Communication* which allows Trajan to speak telepathically with Cattus (and vice versa, thus, two powers; see ArM5, page 105).

these casualties to be abhorrent. However, murder of mundanes is not actually a Hermetic crime (although it is, of course, a mundane crime). For Trajan to face Hermetic justice he must be convicted by the



Tribunal of a Hermetic crime, such as "interference with the mundane."

Siegfried the Quaesitor

Siegfried is a young, smug-looking Quaesitor of House Guernicus. He represents Rhine magi who are strongly opposed to the Guardians of the Forests ruling. Depending on your saga Siegfried may be either the lead prosecutor of Trajan or helping other characters to prosecute Trajan.

Siegfried personally finds the Guardians of the Forests ruling an embarrassment and a hideous testament to the bestial Mystery Cults and pagan nature-worshippers whom he believes to dominate the Rhine Tribunal. He wants Trajan to be prosecuted and Marched by the foreign Tribunal for interference in the mundane and he wants the Quaesitors (or other officials of the foreign Tribunal) to appeal the Rhine Tribunal's rulings to the Grand Tribunal. Siegfried's ultimate goal is for the Grand Tribunal to overrule the Rhine Tribunal, eliminating the legal abomination of the guardians of the forests.

Siegfried thinks he is the best magus to prosecute Trajan. However, he cedes control of the case to others if it becomes apparent, to him, that those others have a better chance of success. Also, the saga Tribunal might not allow Siegfried (a non-resident) to mount a prosecution.

Moving the River

Trajan has destroyed mundane towns on the banks of a river, in the player characters' Tribunal, and claims he is permitted to do this as he is the guardian of the river. The scenario is written as if that river is the Danube, but this can be changed depending on the player character Tribunal.

GREATER ALPS TRIBUNAL

The Danube river is suitable. The upper reaches are the southern border between the Rhine Tribunal and the Greater Alps Tribunal.

NORMANDY TRIBUNAL

The Scheldt river (along the northwestern border of the Rhine Tribunal) originates in northern France in the Normandy Tribunal, where it is called the Escaut river. The river enters the North sea near Antwerp.

NOVGOROD TRIBUNAL

The Oder River has its headwaters near the border of the Rhine and Novgorod Tribunals in the Giant Mountains, and flows north through the Novgorod Tribunal, entering the Rhine Tribunal in Pomerania before flowing out into the Baltic sea.

TRANSYLVANIA TRIBUNAL

The Danube river flows from the Rhine across the Transylvania Tribunal, ultimately emptying into the Black Sea.

THE RHINE TRIBUNAL

If your saga is set in the Rhine Tribunal, then this story can still be used. Can a magus claim to be a river guardian modeled on the forest guardian ruling? Alternatively, Trajan could still assert the right to be the guardian of the Danube in a foreign Tribunal, with the player characters asked to either help prosecute or defend Trajan.

OTHER TRIBUNALS

There are no rivers that flow over natural geography between the Rhine Tribunal and the Tribunals of Hibernia, Iberia, Levant, Loch Leglean, Provence, Rome, Stonehenge, and Thebes.

If your saga is set in one of these tribunals then Trajan has discovered a regio with an entrance in the Danube and an exit at the headwaters of a river in the player characters' Tribunal. Water flows from the Danube through the regio and feeds the remote river. This, Trajan claims, makes the other river a part of the Danube. Thus, he claims, as the guardian of the Danube he is also the guardian of the river in the player characters' Tribunal.

Trajan knows the way through the regio and can easily travel between the two rivers.

Siegfried of Guernicus

Siegfried is young, blond-haired magus. He is an arrogant and expert Guernicus lawyer, but he has recently lost a high profile case in the Rhine Tribunal when he attempted to prosecute the leader of the Hawthorn Gild (the Bjornaer archmagus Urgan) for dangerously interfering in the mundane by murdering a band of woodcutters. Although Siegfried's prosecution was unsuccessful, the attempt has earned him the enmity of the Hawthorn Gild. Siegfried is determined to redeem himself by prosecuting Trajan and undermining the forest guardians.

Siegfried is a member of the Oak Gild in the Rhine Tribunal. Note that Siegfried has the Curse of Venus, which may create inconvenient distractions for him.

Use the Guernicus magus tem-

plate in ArM5 (page 26) for Siegfried's characteristics, but make the following changes:

- Change his Personality Traits to: Arrogant +3, Smug +3, Careful +1.
- Increase his Age to 29.
- Add the Reputation: Rhine Tribunal Quaesitor 3 (Hermetic).
- Add the Minor Hermetic Virtue Gild Trained (this adds 90 experience points; see *Guardians of the Forests: The Rhine Tribunal*, page 20). Add the Minor Hermetic Flaw Gild Enmity (Hawthorn Gild).
- Increase his Code of Hermes Ability Score to 5. Increase his Dead Language: Latin Ability Score to 5. Increase his Magic Theory Ability Score to 4. Increase his Organization Lore:

Order of Hermes Ability Score to 3. Increase his Artes Liberales Ability Score to 2. Increase his Parma Magica Ability Score to 2. Increase his Vim Art Score to 5. Add the Ability Intrigue 3 (Hermetic). Add the Ability Penetration 1 (Mentem). Add the spell *Stench of Magic* (InVi 25/+20)

STENCH OF MAGIC

InVi 25

R: Personal, D: Concentration, T: Smell

The caster can smell the presence of spell traces down to magnitude zero. See Detecting Spell Traces insert.

(Base 10, +1 Concentration, +2 Smell)

What Happens

This story depends on the political attitudes of the player characters, the characters' involvement in Tribunal politics, and the characters' willingness to settle political matters outside Tribunal meetings.

Involving the Magi

The troupe can involve the player characters in these ways:

- Allies of the covenant have been killed in the terrible floods, or the player charac-
- The player characters may investigate the floods because of the terrible damage caused to the mundanes.
- If the player characters are Quaesitors they should be informed about Siegfried's investigation and prosecution, and may want to monitor, assist, or take over Siegfried's case.
- The player magi might be approached by either Siegfried or Trajan (or both) for support.

ters have mundane or magical resources (perhaps vis sources) destroyed. The player characters might thus investigate the floods and encounter Siegfried likewise investigating the sodden ruins.

Investigating Trajan's Crimes

Trajan's floods have destroyed half a dozen towns in the Tribunal over the last few months. They have since been abandoned; this was, of course, his goal. Siegfried intends to prosecute Trajan for dangerous interference in the mundane.

Trajan has made no attempt to hide his involvement from Hermetic investigation. His sigil can be detected in the spell traces (see insert). Once detected Trajan's sigil can be identified as specifically his by any character familiar with the magi of the Rhine Tribunal; make an Intelligence + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes roll

Detecting Spell Traces

When a spell's Duration expires it leaves behind spell traces equal to half the magnitude of the original spell. The trace then decreases by one magnitude for every Duration of the original spell that passes. When the trace reaches magnitude zero it continues to decay at a rate of one magnitude per month, if the original spell was a non-ritual Momentary, Concentration or Diameter Duration effect, or one magnitude per year for other original Durations.

Traces down to magnitude zero can be detected by a base InVi 10

effect. Traces down to magnitude -10 can be detected by adding an additional magnitude to the detection effect per negative magnitude of trace.

Traces from Trajan's *Wizard's Flood* can be detected with a base InVi 10 effect if the detection spell is cast within a year of the ritual. If longer than a year has passed an additional magnitude is required for each year, after 10 years the traces are no longer detectable. An additional two magnitudes reveals the Form and Technique and another magnitude reveals Trajan's sigil.

against an Ease Factor of 9 (or 15 if the investigator is unfamiliar with Rhine magi).

A handful of stubborn survivors remain in the ruins, but most inhabitants are now refugees in other nearby towns. The mundane survivors believe the floods were Divine punishment for the sins of the townsfolk; survivors, of course, being spared because of their good and worthy nature. However, there are rumors of a river god who appeared prior to the floods.

Trajan's familiar, Cattus, keeps watch (from the river) on the wrecked towns to see whether the sites are truly abandoned or not. Depending on what occurs she may notice the player characters; she can recognize Hermetic spell casting. If she notices any magi she reports this to Trajan and tries to avoid the magi.

Magi might encounter Siegfried investigating the flood sites.

At all times — unless he is traveling to speak to his Hermetic allies — Trajan can be found somewhere upon the river.

Arousing Mundane Anger

Mundanes do not blame the Order of Hermes for the floods, so Siegfried's case against Trajan may be considered weak (depending upon the Peripheral Code in the Tribunal). If so, Siegfried (or his supporters) may think to strengthen the case by either informing mundane authorities of Trajan's involvement or allowing this information to be discovered.

Once mundane anger is aroused, Redcaps are detained, and nearby known covenants are approached and held accountable for the floods and massive casualties by the bishop (or nobles). This clearly makes the case that ruin

has been brought upon magi by Trajan's actions.

Informing mundanes might itself be considered a Hermetic crime, but if Siegfried (or his allies) are careful they might not be caught. Mundane anger could be secretly aroused by sending agents to spread rumors, or using magic to implant suggestions in the minds of the influential.

Gathering Political Allies

If the characters want to help prosecute Trajan, they need to gather allies for the Tribunal vote. In general, Wilderist magi of House Bjornaer support Trajan, largely to set precedent for themselves in the future. Traditionalist magi of Bonisagus or Guernicus are likely to oppose Trajan. However, the position of an single magus depends on his temperament or circumstances.

Undecided magi (possibly including the player characters) may be persuaded to support either Trajan or Siegfried in return for support for their own Tribunal agenda. Trajan or Siegfried can also offer resources from their respective Rhine Gilds as persuasion, including: vis, hospitality, access to books and lab texts, and so on. Collecting on such offers may lead into further stories.

The River Spirit

Trajan can commune with the river spirit, using his Nature Lore, whenever he is standing within

Tribunal Politics in the Saga

This story involves Tribunal politics, so some issues should be considered prior to using this story. Your troupe may have already considered the Tribunal's politics. If not, this story is a good opportunity to do so. The main decisions are:

- Which river is Trajan claiming to be the guardian of?
- Which towns have been destroyed by Trajan and has this directly affected any magi (or their allies)?
- When is the next opportunity for Siegfried to bring his prosecution against Trajan? This is normally the next Tribunal meeting.
- What is the procedure for bringing a prosecution against Trajan? Who needs to be notified (when and how), can cases be settled outside a formal Tri-

bunal, what sort of evidence and testimony is usually permitted, and how is the truthfulness of evidence and testimony determined (if at all)?

- What is the attitude of most magi in the Tribunal to trials for Hermetic crimes? Do magi cast votes according to political favor (like a noble court), according to the character of the accused (like a canon court), or according to the facts of the case presented (like a secular court). This preference might depend on the particular case or the particular voting magi.
- What is the attitude of most magi to Trajan's case (overwhelmingly in favor of either Trajan or Siegfried, or split, or apathetic); obviously this may change based on player character actions.

the waters of the Danube. Trajan refers to the river spirit as Danibus, who was the Roman god of the Danube. This does not necessarily mean that the river spirit actually is the Roman god. Choose another suitable name if your story involves a different river.

Trajan has sworn an Oath of Fealty to Danibus. This may be illegal in the Tribunal, depending on the their position on Oaths of Fealty to supernatural overlords. In any case, neither Trajan nor Danibus (nor Cattus) has any reason to reveal this oath. Trajan serves Danibus, but Danibus generally allows Trajan to decide how. In return, Trajan receives some of his power and re-

sources (vis, for example) from the river. Although he approves of Trajan's recent actions, Danibus has no desire (or capability) to interfere in the legal case or Hermetic politics.

Danibus is located in a well-hidden river regio with no reason to leave it during this story. If you need game statistics for Danibus for subsequent stories, you may like to use the rules in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 100. Danibus has an Aquam Magic Might of at least 40.

Wizard War

Neither Siegfried nor Trajan plan to declare Wizard War. Sieg-

fried will not do so because he is not powerful enough to defeat Trajan, and also because his goal is to set a favorable legal precedent rather than exact revenge upon Trajan. Trajan will not because he is confident that he is in the legal right, and he is looking forward to the legal conflict.

However, the player characters, or others, may decide to resolve the situation by killing either Siegfried or Trajan in Wizard War. This is entirely legal, assuming the Wizard War is conducted properly.

If Trajan is killed, the killer acquires the enmity of the Hawthorn Gild (Trajan's Rhine Tribunal allies). The killer also acquires the enmity of Siegfried, because this actually undermines his goal of creating a legal precedent against the Guardians of the Forests.

If Siegfried is killed, Trajan expresses gratitude for this unexpected help, and the killer earns the enmity of the Oak Gild (Siegfried's Rhine Tribunal allies). Whether the case still proceeds depends on the enthusiasm of the local Quaesitors for Siegfried's case. If the Quaesitors consider Trajan has a substantial case to answer, prosecution is likely to continue. However, the local Quaesitors may either abandon the case, or resolve it informally with the imposition of vis fines outside of a full Tribunal hearing.

Extrajudicial Execution

The player characters (or other magi) may attempt to track Trajan down and execute him outside

of Wizard War. For some magi, Trajan's murder of hundreds of mundanes is so abhorrent that it is justification for murder in kind. However, murdering Trajan (outside of Wizard War) is itself definitely a Hermetic crime, as Trajan is a magus.

Magi who murder Trajan thus (if discovered) find themselves prosecuted at Tribunal by Trajan's allies. Apart from denial, the only real defense is to convince the Tribunal to retrospectively March Trajan.

The Tribunal Hearing

Unless resolved earlier, the prosecution of Trajan occurs at the next Tribunal under the usual rules for that Tribunal. This may be several years away. Unless magi offering support lie, the principals should have a good idea whether the Tribunal votes in their favor prior to the meeting. Trajan and Siegfried both attend the Tribunal to argue their respective cases, and if the Tribunal appears to be split both are confident of swinging enough support through testimony and argument. Obviously, Trajan's familiar Cattus does not attend; she is confined to the river.

If Siegfried cannot prosecute the case then a local second (perhaps a player character) will present his case for him.

WHAT HERMETIC CRIMES HAS TRAJAN COMMITTED?

Siegfried (or his proxies) accuse Trajan of dangerously interfering in

the mundane by destroying towns and drowning hundreds of mundanes. At face value this is a High Crime. However, as the mundanes do not associate this devastation with Hermetic magi (unless this has changed during play), it may be questionable whether Trajan's interference has really resulted in "ruin to his sodales."

The excessive mundane deaths may be a factor in the Tribunal's decision. If Trajan's actions have damaged covenant property, vis sources, or other magical resources, then Siegfried also (or instead) accuses Trajan of deprivation of magical power.

Trajan claims he is the river guardian, and that this excuses both his intended actions and any collateral damage.

IF TRAJAN IS FOUND GUILTY

If Trajan is found guilty he could be fined, Marched, or the Tribunal might decide to impose some other penalty, such as labor, or the execution of his beloved familiar, Cattus.

Trajan pays any reasonable vis fine (although he needs to return to the Rhine Tribunal or the Danube to collect it). Usually, he would be granted time until the next Tribunal to pay the fine.

Trajan likewise completes any reasonable labor fine.

If Trajan is Marched, or if he is asked to give up Cattus, then he immediately attempts to use his *Return to the Flow* spell to return to the Danube. Once at the Danube he — with Cattus — hides along



the river until he can escape back to the Rhine Tribunal.

This escape strategy is not infallible. For example, very quick characters may be able to disrupt Trajan's *Return to the Flow* spell, or forward thinking characters may have acquired Arcane Connections to Trajan, which might allow Trajan to be followed (or killed from Arcane Connection Range). The player characters may also search for Trajan's hiding place and confront him there.

Siegfried, flush with success, tries to gather support for the Tribunal to appeal and thus over-rule the Rhine Tribunal's Guardians of the Forests ruling at the Grand Tribunal. If Trajan has been Marched, and especially if he has then escaped, there could be considerable support for this idea. However, if Trajan has only been fined, then the Tribunal is probably reluctant to challenge the Rhine Tribunal in this way.

IF TRAJAN IS FOUND INNOCENT

If Trajan is found innocent, this Tribunal has effectively imported the Rhine Forest Guardians ruling by creating a similar ruling (pertaining to rivers) in this Tribunal's Peripheral Code. Whether this precedent can be effectively used by other characters may be the basis of future stories.

If the player characters helped Trajan they earn the enmity of Siegfried, and Trajan is grateful to them afterward.

Disgruntled by proceedings, Siegfried still tries to gather some

supporters to help him appeal the Tribunal's — and the original Rhine rulings — to the Grand Tribunal. If the player characters Siegfried's allies, they might try to help him.

If Siegfried, or his allies, have been discovered to have informed the mundane authorities about Trajan's role in the devastating floods, then Siegfried *might* be found guilty of interfering with the mundanes, rather than Trajan.

Further Tales

Further stories involving the Rhine Tribunal include:

- If Trajan has testified to a regio linking the Danube and another river in the Tribunal as part of his legal defense, then the existence of this regio becomes common knowledge in the Tribunal. If the player characters can locate it (which should not be difficult if Trajan's testimony is accurate), they can use the regio to easily travel to the Rhine Tribunal. Closer links between the two Tribunals may lead to conflict between the respective political structures.
- If he survives, Siegfried tries to make a case for the Grand Tribunal to suppress the Rhine's Guardians of the Forests ruling, supported by either his failure or success in prosecuting Trajan. The player characters might try to assist or hinder Siegfried and his Rhine allies.
- If Trajan is Marched, but escapes immediate death, then Siegfried assembles a team of hoplites to hunt Trajan down, and the player characters may be recruited. The assassination team may need to travel to the Rhine Tribunal to find Trajan's trail.
- The magi may have accepted the offer of resources from either Siegfried's or Trajan's Rhine allies as payment for their help. They need to travel to the Rhine to collect these debts.
- If the player characters have become close to Trajan (and he survives) he might try to recruit them as fellow minions of the river spirit. They can gain power from this, but need to perform quests for the river.
- If Trajan is killed, Danibus may have the power (and inclination) to raise him as a ghost. Trajan might thus continue to serve the river after death, and his ghost may need to be destroyed by the player characters.
- The player characters may acquire enemies or allies in the Rhine as a result of the case.
- If Trajan is found innocent, the player characters (or others) may try to use the new precedent to declare themselves guardians of natural features within the Tribunal.
- If Trajan is found innocent (or only fined vis or labor) he continues in the coming years to clear the banks of the Danube of human habitation. This may lead to conflict with the player characters and more Tribunal cases.

To the Dark Tower

Above, the sky is filled to the horizon with wrinkled gray clouds that race overhead like the mottled underbelly of a great beast swimming through the heavens; endlessly, blindly, searching for food, oblivious to the tiny dramas crawling beneath.

Looking downwards, down the sheer face of the tall stone tower, a small group of figures is seen dismounting from their horses at its base. One figure holds the reins of his companions' horses, as the others stride purposefully across the broken ground toward the tower gate. The horses' nervous whinnies spiral up into the gray sky, and carry up to those watching from the parapets above.

It is the end of day and the men's long shadows, faint and ghostly, stretch out to touch the tower gate long before the men reach it. The shadows dance as the men draw swords and throw off their traveling cloaks. Beneath are emblazoned tabards — bright yellows, greens, and blues, embroidered with furled leaves, fierce beasts, and crazed geometries. All proud signs proclaiming ownership and descent, glorious deeds done, and threats of deeds

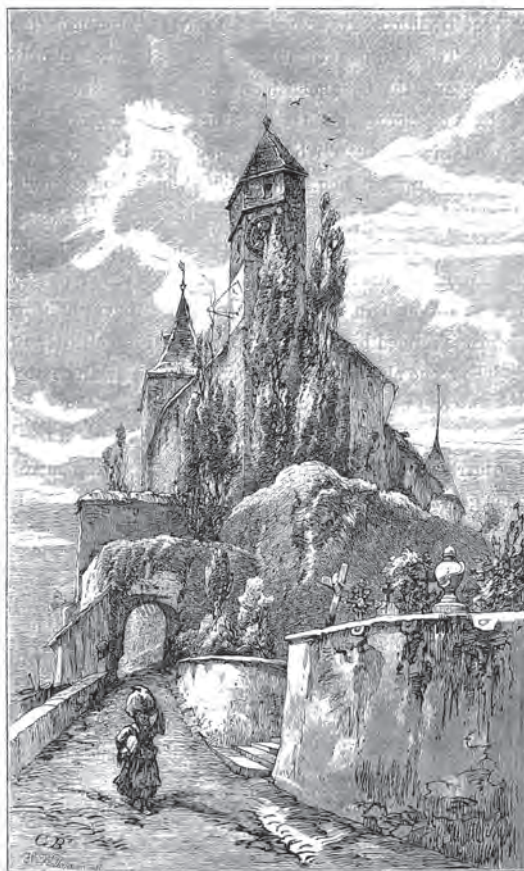
yet to come. Deeper still, beneath the tabards, there are glimpses of the darker, solid, glistening patina of armor. The lead figure reaches forward with a gauntleted fist and bashes at the tower gates.

Those watching from the tower heights, above, exchange glances. The younger sentinel races down stairs to the laboratories...

Sir Erwan

Sir Erwan and his companions have arrived at the player characters' covenant. Sir Erwan is a noble, the younger son of Henry II of Avagnor, Count of Penthievre.

Sir Erwan had a vision which revealed to him that this towering wizard's fortress — the covenant — on the border of his father's



lands is a terrible evil. His vision revealed that the sorcery and rituals cast in the equinox dawn by these wizards will bring death and devastation to his father's lands and peoples. Being a direct man, and a highly trained and skilled warrior, Sir Erwan has resolved to solve this problem in the most straight-forward manner he can think of. He has left his father's court and traveled on a quest to the wizard's tower. He intends to challenge and defeat the magi in single combat.

The magi need to respond, somehow, to this challenge. The significance of this story is not really whether the magi *can* slay Sir Erwan (they almost certainly can), but about whether they choose to slay a major local noble and deal with the consequences, or find some other way to solve the problem. Whatever the magi do, Sir Erwan's quest to their tower embroils them in the noble courts. This hook thus serves to introduce the *Lords of Men* to the saga.

Sir Erwan's Vision

Sir Erwan has been guided to the covenant, to challenge the magi to combat, by the terrible vision he has seen that prophesies the destruction of his father's lands due to the arcane meddling of the magi.

The exact source of Sir Erwan's vision is left to your troupe to decide. It may not be true. It may even be that the magi's response

to Sir Erwan fulfills the prophecy. There could be a Divine or Infernal source for the vision. Another possibility is that Hermetic enemies of the covenant have sent the vision. The visions might also be the result of spells cast by court wizards, either hedge wizards from Sir Erwan's father's court or from a foreign court.

Regardless of its source, Sir Erwan's vision is accurate at least in the sense that if the covenant is normally hidden somehow from the mundane world (perhaps within a regio), then the vision reveals the covenant's existence and guides him to the correct location.

Sir Erwan and His Father's Court

Sir Erwan is a respected member of his father's court. He gets on well with his father and wider family, and he is noted for his chivalry and noble demeanor. Sir Erwan also has a reputation for being wildly confident of his own abilities as a warrior — on the other hand, it seems that his confidence is usually very well placed.

Sir Erwan has a wife, Lady Danielle, and two infant sons, Alain and Roland.

As Sir Erwan is himself a younger son he will not inherit his father's lands (unless his elder brothers are killed). However, Sir Erwan does live on his own manor and collects taxes and rents from a cluster of coastal villages within his father's lands. These taxes are

collected in his father's name, and Sir Erwan dutifully forwards a proportion of these taxes to his father. Sir Erwan uses the remaining taxes to support his own household. Sir Erwan expects that when his brother inherits this situation will continue. However, he is not particularly interested in the detail of his manorial lands, preferring to engage in fighting, hunting, feasting and other noble pursuits, and so devolves much of the administration to his servants. Sir Erwan's peasants admire his prowess as a hunter but otherwise have nothing particularly good or bad to say about him.

The County of Penthievre

Penthievre is a county along the northern coast of Brittany (in the Normandy Tribunal; see *The Lion and the Lily*, page 38). The coast is rugged and broken by numerous islands, and the county extends inland into thickly forested hills. Sir Erwan's father, Henry II of Avag-nor inherited the county in 1212, when Sir Erwan's grandfather Alain killed himself by leaping off a cliff.

Sir Erwan's family is a minor branch of the Duke of Brittany's family, and were granted the county in the early 11th century.

Re-Locating the County

For this story, Sir Erwan is the son of the ruler of the county,

barony, or some similar feudal unit that the covenant is either in or neighboring. Sir Erwan's father does not need to be the feudal overlord of the covenant (although he can be). The only criteria is that Sir Erwan's family owns land geographically *near* the covenant, so that the "evil" inhabitants (the player characters) are a plausible threat.

Even if the covenant was constructed with "permission" from Sir Erwan's father, an ancestor, or another noble, Sir Erwan still considers the magi a threat. The magi may need to re-assert any such rights in a court and still need to deal with the immediate problem of angry knights at the covenant gate. Of course, the covenant's legal rights might be revoked in the light of either their actions or Sir Erwan's visions.

Change the details of Sir Erwan's family to whatever is suitable for your saga. There is no difficulty with moving Sir Erwan and his companions to any other place in Mythic Europe — just replace Area Lore and Language Abilities, names, and family backgrounds as appropriate.

Sir Erwan's Greater Malediction

Sir Erwan has a Greater Malediction of Hereditary Madness. This curse has affected all the male members of his family for the last three generations. This Greater Malediction has no real effect in

Sir Erwan

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

Size: 0

Age: 34 (34)

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: Knight; Wealthy; Affinity with Single Weapon, Educated, Improved Characteristics, Self-Confident, Tough, Warrior; Greater Malediction (hereditary madness), Oath of Fealty, Overconfident; Visions

Personality Traits: Confident +6, Chivalrous +3

Reputations: Valiant Knight +5 (nobles), Huntsman +3 (local)

Combat:

Gauntlet: Init +2, Attack +5, Defense +6, Damage +3

Long Sword: Init +4, Attack +15, Defense +12, Damage +7

Heater Shield: Init -, Attack -, Defense +3, Damage -

Great Sword: Init +4, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +10

Short Bow: Init +1, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +7

Soak: +13 (Sta + Tough + Full Chain)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (falconry), Area Lore: Brittany 3 (Penthièvre), Artes Liberales 1 (rhetoric), Athletics 3 (racing), Awareness 3 (spotting prey), Bows 5 (short bow), Brawl 3 (fist), Carouse 1 (courtly), Charm 1 (courtly

love), Chirurgy 1 (binding wounds), Dead Language: Latin 4 (clerical), Etiquette 2 (heraldry), Folk Ken 2 (nobles), Great Weapon 4 (great sword), Guile 1 (disguise), Hunt 4 (deer), Leadership 4 (battle), Living Language: Breton 5 (courtly), Living Language: French 2 (Orleanais), Ride 5 (battle), Single Weapon 8 (sword), Stealth 2 (forest), Survival 2 (forest), Swim 1 (rivers), Thrown Weapons 2 (throwing axe)

Equipment: Long sword, heater shield, full chain armor, warhorse, great sword, short bow and arrows

Encumbrance: 3 (4; armor + long sword + heater shield)

Appearance: A tall man with black hair, strong arms, and dark eyes, Sir Erwan rides like a descendant of the centaur, hunts like a soaring bird-of-prey, and fights like a grinning yellow-toothed wolf. He is the incarnation of nobility: strong, violent, and entitled. Sir Erwan does not routinely carry a lance (although he can use one).

Sir Erwan is heavily armed and rides a magnificent warhorse; reputedly, a descendant of Charlemagne's steed. Over his armor, Sir Erwan wears a vibrant, expensively embroidered tabard. This heraldry proudly reveals his family's lineage and lands and status as a branch of the ducal family.

Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph

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

Size: 0

Age: 28 (28)

Confidence Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Knight; True Friend, Warrior; Ability Block (Academic), Afflicted Tongue (Louis only), Missing Eye (Rudolph only), Vow (Code of Chivalry)

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Chivalrous +2, Loyal +2

Reputations: Twin Valiant Knights +2 (nobles), Vicious Brawlers +1 (local)

Combat:

Gauntlet: Init +1, Attack +4*, Defense +5, Damage +4

Long Sword: Init +3, Attack +11*, Defense +8, Damage +8

Heater Shield: Init -, Attack -, Defense +3, Damage -

Lance: Init +3, Attack +13*, Defense +9, Damage +7

Long Spear: Init +4, Attack +10*,

Defense +8, Damage +9

* *Sir Rudolph's Attack values have a penalty of -1 due to his Missing Eye.*

Soak: +10 (Sta + Full Chain)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (hunting dogs), Area Lore: Brittany 3 (Penthièvre), Athletics 2 (racing), Awareness 2 (battlefield), Brawl 3 (wrestling), Carouse 2 (soldiers), Chirurgy 1 (brawling injuries), Concentration 1 (vigil), Etiquette 1 (heraldry), Great Weapon 5 (spear), Hunt 3 (tracking), Leadership 2 (men-at-arms), Living Language: Breton 5 (courtly), Ride 5 (battle), Single Weapon 5 (sword), Stealth 3 (forest), Survival 1 (forest)

Equipment: Long sword, heat-

er shield, full chain armor, warhorse, lance, long spear.

Encumbrance: 2 (4; armor + long sword + heater shield)

Appearance: The twins Louis and Rudolph are heavily armed and wear virtually identical heraldry, such that only the most skilled heralds can distinguish them from each other on the battlefield. Even their warhorses appear to be twins.

When they remove their helmets, both brothers reveal long mustaches, and blue eyes set in nearly identical faces, albeit both somewhat beaten and weathered by a brutal career of hunting, drinking, and fighting. Stripped of the anonymity of his steel helm, Rudolph is easily identifiable by a large, long-healed, scar that cuts through the entire left-side of his face.

this scenario, but if Sir Erwan remains in the saga it may become a source of further stories.

The curse means that every time Sir Erwan's Decrepitude Score increases he gains a Minor Personality Flaw, in addition to any other aging effects (see *ArM5*, page 17).

To determine the Personality Flaw roll a simple die + Decrepitude Score and compare to the list that follows. If he already has that Minor Flaw then the Flaw

becomes Major instead. There is no additional effect if he already has the corresponding Major Personality Flaw.

| ROLL | EFFECT |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 1-3 | Gains Compulsion Flaw |
| 4-6 | Gains Delusion Flaw |
| 7-9 | Gains Short Attention Span Flaw |
| 10-12 | Gains Poor Memory Flaw |
| 12+ | Gains Depressed Flaw |

Sir Erwan's Companions

Sir Erwan has three companions: the twin vassal knights, Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph, and a young squire named Andru.

All the characters, including Sir Erwan, are mounted on warhorses. If you need game statistics for a warhorse these can be found in the *Book of Mundane Beasts* (see *Realms of*

Power: Magic). Alternative horse statistics are available in *Lords of Men*, page 55.

Sir Erwan may also be accompanied by a dozen or more lesser retainers (use The Standard Soldier template; *ArM5*, page 22). If he needs to stay in the field for a long time he can recruit more such men from either from his home or from a local manor.

Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph

The twins Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph are vassal knights of Sir Erwan. They are several years younger than Sir Erwan, but the trio were brought up together. In their childhood Sir Erwan acted like an older brother to the young knights.

Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph are loyal to Sir Erwan. However, the twins have a much stronger bond to each other (represented by the True Friend Virtue). The twins feel a tremendous psychic emptiness when they are apart, but their love for each other gives them bonuses to Personality Trait rolls (and, at the storyguide's discretion, to other rolls); see *ArM5*, page 50.

Sir Louis and Sir Rudolph are identical twins. However, they can be easily told apart, as Sir Rudolph has a terrible scar that crosses from the left-hand corner of his mouth, through his left eye-socket, and up into his hair-line. This injury destroyed his left eye, and he usually wears an eye-patch to hide the

empty socket. Sir Rudolph's scar was inflicted in a vicious knife-fight that the twins were embroiled in as teenagers. After the brawl, Sir Louis tracked down and slit the throat of Sir Rudolph's assailant in retaliation. To this day, the twins are still paying the fines consequently imposed on them by the town magistrates.

Sir Louis has a stutter (Afflicted Tongue). He was born with this impediment, and so he usually lets Sir Rudolph speak for him.

As the twins are identical a single set of character statistics is given for the pair (note the modification to combat statistics due to Rudolph's missing eye).

Andru, a Squire

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

Size: 0

Age: 21 (21)

Confidence Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Custos (squire); Premonitions (Magic Supernatural Ability), Warrior; Poor Student, Social Handicap, Weakness (solving social mysteries)

Personality Traits: Curious +3, Loyal +3

Reputations: Interfering +3 (local)

Combat:

Gauntlet: Init +1, Attack +5, Defense +6, Damage +3

Long Sword: Init +3, Attack +11, Defense +8, Damage +6

Heater Shield: Init -, Attack -, Defense +3, Damage -

Soak: +9 (Sta + Full Chain)

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 3 (horses), Area Lore: Brittany 2 (towns), Athletics 2 (grace), Awareness 2 (things out of place), Bows 1 (short bow), Brawl 3 (gauntlet), Carouse 1 (courtly), Chirurgy

1 (light wounds), Etiquette 1 (courtly), Folk Ken 3 (social problems), Great Weapon 1 (spear), Hunt 3 (falconry), Leadership 1 (battle), Living Language: Breton 5 (courtly), Premonitions 3 (domestic problems), Ride 3 (racing), Single Weapon 5 (sword), Stealth 1 (urban), Survival 1 (forest)

Equipment: Long sword, heater shield, full chain armor, warhorse.

Encumbrance: 4 (4; armor + long sword + heater shield)

Appearance: A young, clean shaven man with short unruly, curly brown hair, Andru is a keen observer of how others interact socially. Andru is particularly adroit at spotting unresolved social tensions, which he often then attempts to resolve, despite the anger his interference usually provokes. Like the others he is heavily armed and armored. He wears a simpler tabard than the others, which reveals to those with suitable heraldic knowledge that he is a retainer of Sir Erwan.

Andru

Andru is Sir Erwan's squire.

The squire is an intelligent and perceptive young man. In fact, he is supernaturally perceptive (represented by the Premotions Supernatural Ability), but he is not well liked within Sir Erwan's household. This is because he has a particular weakness for using his enhanced perception to try to unravel the social problems of others, and unfortunately, he is not quite perceptive enough to realize when others do not want to hear his so very perceptive insights into their

lives. Although he makes a reasonable first impression, Andru's inability to keep his counsel to himself usually leads to others growing to dislike him. However, Sir Erwan is very tolerant of (and in fact encourages) Andru's social bluntness.

Andru has had a premonition, which increases with urgency as the knights approach the covenant, that Erwan's plan to challenge the magi will lead to Sir Erwan's death. Andru has done his best to dissuade Sir Erwan, and, fearing for his master's life, attempts to negotiate a compromise between the magi and Sir Erwan.

Fighting As A Group

Sir Erwan and his companions may fight together as a trained group if needed, with Sir Erwan normally taking on role of leader and vanguard. However, if Sir Erwan is heavily injured one of the twin knights will be the vanguard. In any case, the members of the group provide a combat bonus of +15 to the vanguard (see **ArM5**, page 172-173).

Also remember that if Sir Erwan and his companions fight mounted (either as a group or individually) they each receive a +3 bonus to their Attack and Defense Totals.

Knights, Women, and Old Men

Sir Erwan is expecting the magi to appear as clerical, middle-aged men. He is confident that he can beat such opponents in combat, whatever sorcery they may be able to conjure. If some (or all) of the magi appear to actually be proficient warriors, or even knights, Sir Erwan is not put off. Indeed, engaging in combat with such worthy foes is an unexpected, but preferable and glorious outcome of his quest.

What will discomfort Sir Erwan is if he discovers that the magi are women or very old men.

Putting an apparent convent (the covenant) filled with women and elderly men to the sword is not exactly

what Sir Erwan envisaged when he left for his quest. So, he proposes that such non-combatants nominate champions from among their younger and male colleagues and retainers. When he has defeated a maga's champion Sir Erwan expects the maga to flee into exile either far away or possibly into a nearby convent (or monastery).

On the other hand, if elderly or female magi do demonstrate proficiency in either weaponry or battle worthy magic, then they are no longer considered non-combatant by Sir Erwan. He subsequently has no problem in attacking such diabolical sorcerers, however frail or womanly a mortal guise they take.

How Do The Magi Respond?

The magi can respond to Sir Erwan's challenge by rising to it, ignoring it, attempting to use magic to solve the problem, or trying to use mundane contacts to defuse the situation. It is possible that the player characters will devise another strategy, which your troupe has to judge on its own merits. However, whatever the magi do they are doing so in the knowledge of who Sir Erwan is (a son of the noble who owns the land the covenant is built on or near). That is, the magi should know that Sir Erwan is a well-connected, well-known lo-

cal noble. The magi should thus be very aware that their response to Sir Erwan may embroil them in a noble court, and thus open the covenant to prosecutions for mundane interference.

Making peace with Sir Erwan, particularly if the magi do this by demonstrating how their "evil" magic is not really evil but in fact beneficial to the nobles, may be seen as straying toward acting as court wizards. On the other hand, it is obvious that slaying Sir Erwan will cause other nobles

to look at the covenant (and the covenants of other magi) as sources of supernatural peril.

Even if the magi do not personally know very much about the local nobility, the covenant servants who more routinely deal with the mundane world recognize Sir Erwan's name and lineage and can inform the magi. However, only people who personally liaise with the court can positively identify Sir Erwan.

Sir Erwan makes no secret of who he is. In fact, he loudly

proclaims his identity, titles, and lineage upon arrival at the covenant. The magi may suspect that "Sir Erwan" is a mundane or supernatural imposter, but suitably skilled magi can prove Sir Erwan's identity with Intellego magic.

Andru, Sir Erwan's squire, greatly fears for his master's life, a fear reinforced by his supernatural premonitions. Andru will thus attempt to negotiate to save his master's life.

Supernatural Protection

If Sir Erwan is interfered with by magic, but not killed, he returns at a later time with supernatural protection. Alternatively, he can initially approach the magi with some of this supernatural protection if the troupe feels that it is necessary. However, remember that the significance of this story is not really whether the magi *can* slay Sir Erwan, but about whether they choose to slay a major local noble and deal with the consequences, or find some other way to solve the problem.

It is common knowledge that church relics provide protection against the supernatural, so Sir Erwan may think to borrow a relic from the cathedral. Presenting the relic gives him a Magic Resistance (ArM5, page 189). If he has a relic Sir Erwan's retinue expands to include a nervous cathedral canon, Father Otto, who tries to ensure that no harm comes to the relic. Use The Priest

template (ArM5, page 23) for the canon's game statistics.

Sir Erwan may have a Guardian Angel (which gives him a magic resistance of 15; ArM5, page 43). The angel may in fact be the source of Sir Erwan's visions. Alternatively, if Sir Erwan prays to a saint for intervention the saint may assign a temporary guardian angel to Sir Erwan.

Sir Erwan may be able to obtain folk charms against magic. Sir Erwan has nothing against magic in general, and his vision only concerns the magi at the covenant, so he is perfectly willing to track down folk witches, learned magicians, hedge wizards, or even other Hermetic magi, for assistance. Of course, much "assistance" such characters can provide will be ineffective, but Sir Erwan does not know this. Possible folk charms that will actually be effective include:

- *Charm Against Shape-Shifting Magic*, allows Sir Erwan to make Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 6 to return to his normal shape if he has been shape-shifted.
- *Charm Against Befuddlement*, allows Sir Erwan to make a Presence roll against an Ease Factor of 6 + Magnitude of Effect to shake off the effect of an ongoing Mentem spell.
- *Charm of Strength*, gives Sir Erwan a +3 Soak bonus against magic sources of damage.
- *Charm of the Immovable Object*, allows Sir Erwan to make a Strength roll against an Ease Factor of 6 + Magnitude of Effect to shake off the effect of an ongoing Rego spell.
- *Confounding Charm*, raises the Concentration Ease Factor by 3 of Concentration Duration magic effects that target Sir Erwan.

Rising to the Challenge

The magi can quite simply fight Sir Erwan.

If the magi agree to Sir Erwan's terms he fights the magi one at a time, until he has slain them all (or has been slain). If Sir Erwan wins but is seriously injured in a bout, he attempts to parley with the surviving magi, to allow time to recover before the remaining duels. Sir Erwan believes that a chivalrous opponent would allow such respite; he would under similar circumstances. However, he is not surprised if the infernal, deceitful sorcerers do not agree.

Sir Erwan expects a magus to use magic to fight, and so he does not attempt to negotiate duel terms that

limit or exclude magic, unless the magus proposes such a limit himself.

If the magi do not want to fight immediately, Sir Erwan and his companions camp outside the covenant gates until the negotiated duel-time. Sir Erwan accepts a delay of several weeks, but no longer.

Sir Erwan accepts one magus (or even a mundane servant of the magi) standing as champion for the others. In this case, Sir Erwan expects the surviving magi to leave his lands and travel far away into exile if their champion is defeated. Such terms should be negotiated before the duel with the champion begins.

Sir Erwan cannot easily be convinced to fight only until first-blood or similar. However, Andru,

his squire, attempts to negotiate such terms on his behalf. If Andru and the magi do convince Sir Erwan to fight in this manner (agreeing to exile if they lose), then Sir Erwan is honest and keeps to the agreed conditions and stakes. If Andru is unsuccessful in negotiating terms he attempts to interrupt and end the fight if Sir Erwan suffers a Medium Wound (or worse). The twin knights reluctantly support Andru in his actions.

Of course, the magi may merely attack Sir Erwan en masse, rather than agreeing to his duels. In such a case, Sir Erwan's companions come to his aid. Andru attempts to negotiate a truce as soon as one of the knights suffer a Medium Wound (or worse).



Autocephalous

Some covenants hold charters or other documents that grant them exclusive rights to their lands, while other covenants merely hold such rights by custom (see *Covenants*, page 20). Such a covenant may argue that Sir Erwan has no legal rights over them. Sir Erwan will not be dissuaded by such a legal argument, claiming that such documents are invalid or forgeries, or that the rights are revoked due to the unholy nature of the magi. The covenant has to prove any such rights in order to sway mundane courts, and charters can always be revoked.

Ignoring the Challenge

If the magi ignore Sir Erwan he camps, with his companions, outside the covenant wall until the magi do respond.

If no response is received after a month or so, Sir Erwan finds a place to live nearby; perhaps the manor house of one of his father's vassals. He uses the manor house as a base to interdict any supplies that the covenant receives by mundane means and to harass the covenant's servants as they travel, tend fields, and so forth. If the covenant servants are unarmed there is little that they can do to object to the belligerent knights. The knights confiscate and destroy supplies, and detain the covenant servants. As they do not have a jail, the knights are not able to detain the covenant servants indefinitely, so after being stripped of equipment and valuables, prisoners are turned loose. The knights try to prevent outgoing servants from leaving the covenant, and to prevent incoming servants from entering the covenant.

This small-scale siege, Sir Erwan hopes, will force the magi to rise to his challenge. The troupe needs to decide how effective the siege is, depending upon the covenant's reliance on mundane supply. It is possible that the siege may even affect the magi's Hermetic interests — as it may disrupt the collection of vis.

The covenant may be able to bypass Sir Erwan's siege if the

covenant servants are sufficiently stealthy (magic may help with this, of course). Alternatively, the covenant may be able to muster a large armed turb to break the siege. Sir Erwan and his companions are good judges of the strength of mundane forces, so they will not attempt to foolishly engage a superior mundane force. Instead, if the covenant deploys (or appears to deploy) a large mundane force, Sir Erwan and his companions return to his father's court, where they raise an army sufficient to quash the magi's armed insurrection (see *Lords of Men*, page 102, for details on raising an army).

Using Magic

Apart from using magic to slay Sir Erwan, the magi may be able to use magic to scare Sir Erwan off, to teleport him far away, or to interfere with his mind. The magi may even take the opportunity, with *Mentem* magics, to convert Sir Erwan into an ally. Andru, the squire who has premonitions of Sir Erwan's death at the hands of the magi, tacitly supports any sudden change in Sir Erwan's attitude due to magic.

As Sir Erwan and his companions have no Magic Resistance, any magic-based schemes are quite likely to succeed in the short-term, but Sir Erwan just returns to complete his mission at a later date. If the

storyguide has doubts as to what Sir Erwan would do in the face of powerful magical opposition, try to consider what a group of player characters would do if they encountered similar formidable opposition.

Once he discovers that he is very vulnerable to magic, Sir Erwan tries to bring some supernatural protection when he returns (see insert).

Mundane Responses

If the magi are well-connected to the mundane world they could appeal to a clerical court or higher feudal authority for a declaration that Sir Erwan's actions are illegal.

To determine whether a clerical court (probably the local bishop's court or possibly the pope) finds in favor of the covenant, the petition rules in *The Church* (page 46) can be used. As canon law has outlawed trials by combat (which is effectively what Sir Erwan is proposing) the church tends to look favorably upon the covenant's appeal, but the church may still propose a compromise solution such as exile for the magi.

The attitude of feudal courts will likely depend on the past interactions between the court and the covenant. No local feudal courts have had particular problems with Sir Erwan in the past. See *Lords of Men* page 80, for details on feudal courts.

Further Tales

If your troupe wishes, dealing with Sir Erwan can be a one-off story. On the other hand, the consequences of how the magi deal with Sir Erwan can lead into further stories that involve nobles.

Some options include:

- If the magi kill Sir Erwan, his companions (if they survive) try to recover his body and return with it to his father's court. Sir Erwan is popular and the news of his slaying makes the covenant an enemy of the court. Even if Sir Erwan's companions do not return, Sir Erwan's quest is well known in the court. Therefore, rumors of Sir Erwan's apparent murder (by the magi) spread and eventually other knights make their way to the covenant to discover the truth of what has happened to Sir Erwan.
- If the magi deploy sufficient mundane forces to cause Sir Erwan to retreat, he raises an army to quash the magi's rebellion. If the magi's forces appear to be very large the subsequent conflict may entangle neighboring nobles. The neighboring nobles may take Sir Erwan's side, but might be tempted instead to use the opportunity to settle old scores with Sir Erwan or his father.
- If the magi use magic to make Sir Erwan forget his quest or flee, or use a similar stratagem, then (as his quest is well known in the court) he eventually regains his equilibrium and returns to his quest. At the very least, his visions (which prompted the quest) return.
- If the magi manage to make an ally of Sir Erwan (perhaps through magic) then he may call upon them to assist in his mundane court. An uneasy alliance between the covenant and the court may also be the outcome if Andru, the squire, manages to negotiate a truce between Sir Erwan and the magi.
- The magi might investigate the source of Sir Erwan's visions, perhaps discovering hedge wizards, Hermetic magi, or other supernatural forces active in Sir Erwan's father's court.
- If the magi flee Sir Erwan, news of their defeat travels through the mundane courts, and encourage other nobles to challenge their local magi.
- If the magi resorted to mundane authorities to resolve the problem with Sir Erwan, then mundane courts may try to enforce their jurisdiction over the covenant in other matters too, such as the gathering of the tithe or taxes.