

Ars Magica

Dies Irae

A Book of Wrathful Days



by Lawford,
McFarland, Ryan &
Shirley

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Mark Lawford lives in Eastbourne on England's sunny south coast where he is working on his first novel and continues to feed his new-found love of strength sports. Mark is also currently co-editor of Sub Rosa, the Ars Magic fan magazine. He'd like to dedicate his work on this book to David Chart, without whom Mark would never have sent in that first open call submission. It's been a great run and Mark has had the chance to do just about everything he wanted with the game.

Ben McFarland lives in the wilds of Upstate New York, where he continues to venture into mysterious regiones in search of adventure with the priceless support of his wonderful wife, Mandy, his family, and the excellent advice of his steadfast friend, James. He sincerely wishes to thank David Chart, Mark Lawford, Erik Dahl, and James Parks for their excellent friendship, trust, and encouragement. To them and the other authors of the line, it's truly been a pleasure to work with you on this incarnation of Ars Magica. *Ordo Hermae vitae*.

Matt Ryan wrote for Ars Magica for just over a decade, starting in 2004 with *Living Lore* and ending in 2016 with *Dies Irae*. He contributed to almost two score supplements, either as author or cartographer. He had many joys and a few disappointments writing for the game – such is life – and is proud to have participated in creating such a wonderful role-playing game. He hopes players enjoy it and his contributions for many years to come. He thanks his family, KC and Aug, for the many hours they let him spend in his study writing and drawing.

Mark Shirley lives in the no man's land between Stonehenge and Loch Leglean where he works as a zoologist and biomathematician. He would like to apologize to any fans of Norse Mythology for any *jamais vu* caused by using Viktor Rydberg's writings for source material. If you find the mythological details familiar yet not quite right, that is why! Mark considers that working on *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* has been a privilege, not least because of the remarkable and talented people with whom he has worked and would like to thank them all for their encouragement and collaboration.



www.atlas-games.com

Ars Magica players participate in a thriving fan community by subscribing to email discussion lists (like the Berkeley list), compiling archives of game material (such as Project Redcap), maintaining fan-created web sites, and running demos through Atlas Games' Special Ops program. To learn more, visit www.atlas-games.com/ArM5. You can also participate in discussions of Ars Magica at the official Atlas Games forums located at forum.atlas-games.com.

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Chapter One

Introduction

WELCOME TO *Dies Irae* — the Day of Wrath — the culminating story for your *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* saga. Within are four chapters, each setting out a story of the destruction of Mythic Europe as your player characters know it. Yet in the darkness is a thin ray of light; each chapter also offers a variety of means for the magi to stop the catastrophe and save the world, or at least survive in the aftermath.

The title, *Dies Irae*, is derived from the medieval Latin hymn, “*Dies Irae*,” composed sometime during the 13th century and sung most often at funerals during the Requiem Mass, the Mass for the dead. Nineteen stanzas long, the first warrants repeating:

*Dies irae! Dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla:
Teste David cum Sibylla.
(The day of wrath, and in that day
The world in ashes pass away
As David and the Sibyl say.)*

Most troupes will only use one of the following four chapters; pick the one that best suits your troupe’s style of play. Nothing prevents you from using more than one chapter, and if your players’ characters are especially good at saving the world, they may like to do so more than once. While that may be overly dramatic for many troupes, it is well within the bounds of legitimate role-playing. Indeed, some of the chapters work well as a set, if that is what you want.

Why destroy the world? Everything has a cycle, and just as covenants are measured in seasons, growing from Spring to Summer, to Autumn, and eventually to Winter, so too do sagas age and mature. Winter brings the death of things, but Spring sprouts life. Perhaps your saga has run its course and your troupe is looking for a fitting end before beginning anew. If your player characters are exceptionally powerful, as many magi can be, perhaps you need a world-ending chal-

lenge to separate the wheat from chaff, to see which characters are truly powerful enough to withstand such an apocalyptic threat. Perhaps you simply want an epic story to guide your players through, and there are none more epic than the following four.

The following four apocalypses are intended to combine with your current saga and close it. The early stages of each should seamlessly mesh with ordinary events, blending with any current story arcs you are running. As the years progress, the apocalypse moves to center stage, overriding the magi’s current concerns due to its cataclysmic importance. Each of the four apocalypses covers many in-game years, and will take sessions of play to resolve. More than a straightforward series of interlinked adventures, such as we presented in the *ArM5* supplement *Thrice-Told Tales*, each of the following four chapters is an extended campaign, designed to include your current stories before dashing the magi’s hopes and dreams against rocks of impending doom.

The End of Time

The limit of the Lunar Sphere has been a prize for Hermetic researchers since the founding of the Order. Breaking that limit could open up new forms of magic, whole new worlds even. Or it could, in the wrong hands, bring about the Apocalypse and the end of time itself. A doomsday cult within the Order is working to bring about just such an end.

No simple grab for power, the threat comes from the last place the Order would think to look. Driven by an unshakable belief, this cult at the heart of the Order is nearing the end of its plan. As that end draws nigh, signs and portents start to appear to those who recognize them; the rise of the

four horsemen, the rising of the beast from the sea, stars falling from the sky.

Can the magi recognize these signs, identify the cultists, and can they convince a skeptical Order that those they once called friends will submit the Earth to conquest, war, famine, and death. Can they prevent the end of time?

Fimbulwinter

Before the great battle of Ragnarok, before the battle of the Jotnar and the Aesir, the eddas tell of a terrible, unnatural season, a time of three winters without summer where starvation, death, and war rule the land: the Fimbulwinter. And now someone has found a way to bring this winter to Mythic Europe.

Things start slowly, as the plotters seek out the places of power and allies they need to carry out their plans, and as the magi seek out vis and write their books, they may not realize that winter is coming. If the enemies are not stopped, however, they summon Aspects of Primeval Winter from the Magic Realm to blanket the land in unending snow, bringing war, famine, and despair.

The Great Pestilence

Plagues are notorious horrors of Mythic Europe, striking without warning and stemming from no known cause. The Order of Hermes generally ignores such calamities, its magic more than equal to protecting its members from such pandemics. Magi sit

safely and smugly in their ivy-clad towers, waiting out plagues as if they were nothing more than a passing rainstorm.

Until their vis mysterious rots away, their magical animals and creature allies grow sick and die, and the land encompassed by their Magic aura emits noxious vapors that poison the surrounding countryside. All this with no advance notice, no known origin, and with no end in sight. Dubbed "The Great Pestilence," this fearsome blight overwhelms the Magic Realm, eating it away one Form at a time, and slowly rendering its magic inert and useless. As the magi lose power, the Great Pestilence continues to spread. Mankind falters, stricken by wave after wave of various poisons generated from every Magic aura and regio across Mythic Europe.

Can the magi discern what is happening and survive long enough to stop it, or will they too suffer the ravages of the Great Pestilence?

The Twilight of the Gods

Millenia ago, the Magic titans and the Faerie gods clashed in a cosmic battle called the Titanomachy. The titans lost, and were imprisoned in the Magic Realm; their powers tempered by the chains that bound them. Now someone plots to fulfill the prophecy that will bring about a second war with the gods: a war which the titans are fated to win. As the metaphorical chains binding the titans are loosened one by one, the approaching apocalypse is presaged by wars, armies of giants, invasion by monsters, the swallowing of the moon, and the return of the pagan dead. Unless the plan can be thwarted, mankind will be caught in between the warring powers.

Should they fail, the new world that emerges from the chaos of the war between Magic and Faerie is one ruled by magic. Far from being a magician's idyll, magi will discover that magical power can no longer be freely acquired; the titans are back in control and they jealously guard magic and closely regulate its flow. The world has become a dangerous place where monsters roam free and magic warps the edifices of man.



Daimons and Aspects

Daimons are featured in more than one chapter in this book, so some general notes are offered here.

Daimons are spirits that embody the elements of creation. They dwell in the Magic Realm, but interact with the mundane world by a creating a spirit called an Aspect. Aspects are normally in constant mental contact with their Daimon, and are Arcane Connections to them. Creating an Aspect does not cost the Daimon any Might points, and it can have any number of Aspects active at any one time. The Daimon knows what all its Aspects are thinking and doing, although it does not necessarily share this information with other active Aspects. An Aspect has its own Might Score, although its Might pool does not replenish; instead when it is exhausted of Might points it is recreated by its Daimon. Destroying an Aspect has few consequences for the Daimon; the As-

pect can be restored instantly, although it cannot return to the same location where it was destroyed or dismissed until a day has passed. An Aspect also cannot appear within several miles of another Aspect of the same Daimon, or where one has been in the last day. Powerful Daimons have several Aspect types, each with a unique identity and name, personality, and powers. They can also manifest multiple copies of the same Aspect simultaneously. More information about Daimons can be found on page 102 of *Realms of Power: Magic*.

Destroying an Aspect is the same as destroying any supernatural creature, but destroying a Daimon is much harder; *Perdo Vim* directed through the Arcane Connection provided by an Aspect does not work. Even in the Titanomachy, the Daimons were not destroyed, merely imprisoned.



Chapter Two

The End of Time

*Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease and midnight never come.*

Doctor Faustus: Act 5, Scene 1

The Order of Hermes has long wanted to extend their power to the lunar sphere and beyond, but few considered what might happen should that breakthrough come to pass. While magi through the centuries have idly dreamed of the wonders that they might perform and the knowledge they might gain, some within the Order worked quietly to achieve the unthinkable. Theirs was no quest for idle glory, nor even power over the world and its population; theirs is a plan born out of misplaced benevolence, ignorant of the risks; theirs is a plan to destroy the very workings of the cosmos itself, a plan to bring about the end of time and thereby save the world.

Precis

*Heaven fashioned us of nothing, and we strive to
bring ourselves to nothing*

The Duchess of Malfi: Act 3, Scene 5

House Criamon, unassuming mystics of the Order of Hermes, have their own philosophy. Since the founding of their House its magi have sought to escape the eternity of life, turmoil, death, and rebirth. Early in the eleventh century the elders of the House formulated a plan; they would suspend the constant motion of the heavens and bring time itself to an end. That plan is nearly ended.

However, they have made a fundamental error. Their plan to stop eternity is destined to fail. Their understanding of cosmology is flawed and instead of the motion of the heavens peacefully ending, the heavenly spheres are disrupted, the moon is destroyed, and an

apocalypse is visited upon the Earth.

This chapter provides troupes with a series of stories through which the player characters become aware of House Criamon's plan, giving them opportunities to stop them before the fateful day. Stopping House Criamon is by no means certain, and this chapter also describes the world as it falls into ruin.

We also explore House Criamon's Hermetic Breakthrough, the breaking of the Limit of the Lunar Sphere, and the new Form of Aether, the way that the apocalypse disrupts the Order's grasp on magic, and also new research that the Order may undertake to help it survive.

The Invisible Enemy

No idle stargazers or mystics, at the core of House Criamon are members of a doomsday cult who intend to bring about the end of time. Their reasons are grounded in an unshakable philosophy and an understanding of the cosmos as a dreadful eternity. Their intention is to release the world and all its peoples from an endless cycle of suffering, death, and rebirth. What some might see as an abomination, those at the heart of House Criamon see as a just and merciful release.

The magi of House Criamon have not been acting alone, however. There are others across the Order who have wittingly or unwittingly helped the House prepare for the end. Most have no idea of the House's ultimate aims.

While the most significant cultists are described here, you should feel free to add to, modify, or relocate any of them as best suits your own saga. Each of the four refers back to the Biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, which are released at the breaking of the first

The Book of Revelation

This chapter uses the term *apocalypse* to describe the ultimate fate of the world at the hands of House Criamon, but this is not the Biblical Apocalypse as described in the Book of Revelation. The Bible anticipates the end of days when the forces of heaven and hell fight their final battle and those living must suffer judgment for their sins. This chapter on the other hand describes an act of grandiose magical hubris, and while that act lays waste to the world it is still an act born of human free will and not of predestined fate.

That said, much of the symbolism found in this chapter harks back to the Book of Revelation. There are four principle members of House Criamon and they share aspects with the four horsemen of the apocalypse as described in the Bible, and one of their magical

sites is an observatory in the ocean with seven great lenses, reflecting the seven-headed beast that rises from the sea as described in Revelation. However, there is no direct correlation to the increasingly harrowing events of the Apocalypse as described in Revelation. The symbolism used here is borrowed from that work to provide a suggestion of the devastation to come if that fate is not avoided.

Within the context of your game, you need to decide whether it is by chance that these associations make themselves apparent, or whether it is some Divine warning as to the direction of these events. Either way, we describe where these symbols are purposefully used so that you may highlight them in the telling of these stories.

Criamon Player Characters

Given that the plot spans House Criamon, filtering down through the ranks as the magi learn more Enigmatic Wisdom or house lore, it is inevitable that player Criamon will become involved at some point.

Those recently out of apprenticeship are considered young and unreliable but the nearby table suggests the level of knowledge that they gain as their understanding increases.

Their first responsibility is to send vis to the most senior Criamon in the Tribunal. This is likely to be a nominal amount, but may increase. They may then be asked to gather resources of the kind likely to support research. Examples might be water from a high or low tide, horoscopes for certain people, a woman

exhibiting madness, etc.

Once they know that House Criamon is actively working to bring about the end of time, they may be called upon to either undertake specific research or to assist Andrevia in a research project.

Finally, they may be asked to undertake arrangements for the move to Megiddo, including building devices to be installed into a laboratory to aid with the development of ritual spells.

The level of secrecy you apply to the character's involvement with regard to the other players should be in keeping with your troupe's play style.

Divine and Infernal Player Characters

Characters with Divine or Infernal patrons may gain additional insight into each event as it happens. It should be noted that the potential end of time is not the Biblical apocalypse; it is not God's will. While God does not intervene, the creatures of Heaven and Hell understand the dangers.

Any Divine or Infernal visions or premonitions concerning story events should point the character squarely at House Criamon.

Everything is a Lie

Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults explores House Criamon in great depth. This covers not only their organization as a House and the mystical paths that they follow but also their underlying cosmological understanding. The world of the Criamon is one of infinite recursion and of reincarnation. It is one of peace contrasted with strife, and acceptance balanced against resistance. What *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* does not explore is a House-wide plot to bring about the end of time.

The plan to end all time was hatched in the decades that followed the Schism War and is known only to those who achieve a certain level of Enigmatic Wisdom. Numerous approaches were explored before it was ultimately decided to breach the Lunar Sphere. For generations, the knowledge was kept within the most senior of the House's magi and their trusted researchers, but it has recently been filtering down throughout the House. The nearby table suggests the level of knowledge of the plan available at a given Enigmatic Wisdom or House Criamon Lore level.

Enigmatic Wisdom/Knowledge House Criamon Lore

- 5 The end of time shall be House Criamon's gift to the cosmos.
- 6 House Criamon has been actively working to bring about the end of time.
- 7 House Criamon will cause the moon to stop in its rotations and time will end.

- 8 The world will escape all time with the coming conjunction on December 23rd in the year 1277.

In addition, when the final magical breakthrough has been made, magi of House Criamon are offered initiation into the secret new mysteries of the House when they reach Enigmatic Wisdom level 7; the very same magic to be used to bring about the end of time.

THE SCHISM WAR AND OTHER CALAMITIES

The Schism War was neither the first nor the last event that demonstrated to House Criamon that the world had to escape the cycle of suffering within which it was trapped, but it was a decisive moment. The Sundering of House Tremere, the Schism War, the corruption of House Tylalus, the war with Damhan-Allaidh soon after the founding of the Order, the crusades perpetrated by the mundanes; they all reinforce the belief that humanity is incapable of living through eternity without causing suffering without measure.

The mystics of House Criamon were originally set a task: find evidence that the future holds an age of enlightenment. Despite years of intense scrying into portents and omens, and even research into magic able to directly see the future, they saw only

the recurrence of the suffering of the weak at the hands of the strong. Their theologians studied the great religions and even there they found suffering and resurrection into further suffering; any suggestion in those theological sources of peace at the end of all things was considered tenuous at best.

With no hope on the horizon, a council convened in the deepest parts of the Cave of Twisting Shadows and decided the fate of the world.

THE TRUE DESTINY OF HOUSE CRIAMON

It is important to note that House Criamon has committed itself to this path not by some corruption of their beliefs but as a *consequence* of those beliefs. Its magi believe that Criamon the Founder wants them to release him from the duty he performs, namely holding open the path between the material realms and Twilight. As Criamon wanted to escape the suffering of the world, so his followers believe that all must follow him out of the world. They see it as a responsibility to release the world and its populace into the Hypostasis that sits outside of the universe. Bringing about the end of time is their means to this end.



four seals of heaven that herald the end of days.

The statistics below are a baseline; given that the story runs across a number of decades, it is not possible to provide statistics for each point in the story at which they might be encountered.

Brighde Bronach of House Criamon

Brighde Bronach is a follower of the Path of Strife, schooled by House Criamon to bear the most grievous of sins should the need arise. She is charged with protecting House Criamon's research and the furtherance of their plans through Wizard War. Dispassionate and detached, Brighde has had cause to engage in war twice before, once against a member of her own House who discovered the plan before they were prepared for the burden.

She covers herself with a magical salve of white clay designed to prevent the shedding of Arcane Connections, and with her white horse familiar and her bow talisman, fate identifies her as the White Horseman; the first of the four Horsemen to herald the Apocalypse and the first of the four heavenly seals to be broken.

Anaximander of House Verditius

Anaximander of Verditius is a senior figure in the Tribunal of Thebes, recently retired to the covenant of Ingasia on the island of Lemnos (*The Sundered Eagle*, page 86). Over a century in age, he is a noted member of a confraternity of Verditius magi who use their magic to enchant structures, such as towers and laboratories, on behalf of other magi. He has turned this power to the good of House Criamon, allowing large and powerful devices to be enchanted in the furtherance of their plans.

An alchemist at heart, Anaximander yearns for knowledge of new elements and new magic that he knows must exist beyond the Earthly Sphere. This makes him a willing participant in House Criamon's research to breach the Lunar Sphere, although he does not know their ultimate aim. As such, he is a potential weak link in House Criamon's plan.

Anaximander's voting sigil is a staff bearing a red lion's head at its top. He dresses exclusively in robes of deep red and travels in a chariot drawn by an iron horse that has been allowed to rust, giving it a blood-red character. These facets identify Anaximander as the Red Horseman, the second of the heavenly seals.

AGENTS

Anaximander has outlived a number of venditores but still supports agents in three Tribunals, including a Mercere Redcap in Hibernia called Luathan, an Augustan

monk in Provençal, and even a Radhanite merchant in Baghdad.

His agents know of the great observatory (described below) and that it was commissioned by House Criamon, but do not know of its purpose. They are, however, likely to mention it in passing by example of Anaximander's power and the kinds of services he can perform.

His agents may be identified by the symbol of the red lion that they wear as a broach or clasp.

Quaesitor Beatritz of House Criamon

Quaesitor Beatritz is an itinerant maga. Nominally a member of the player characters' home Tribunal, she maintains a sanctum in the Cave of Twisting Shadows in the Tribunal of the Greater Alps and relies upon the hospitality of that Tribunal for much of the year.

She is scrupulously even-handed in the undertaking of her duties as Quaesitor and has been granted jurisdiction over matters pertaining to House Criamon. Her claim, that she alone can understand those of her House, has been accepted. Of course, this puts her in a position to protect those of her House should they ever need her.

Beatritz dresses in modest black, as befits her role as Quaesitor, and she carries a tall staff from which hangs a set of

Brighde Bronach

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

Size: 0

Age: 120 (90)

Decrepitude: 0 (4)

Warping Score: 9 (45)

Confidence: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Flawless Magic, Attraction and Repulsion*, Enigmatic Magic Sensitivity*, Power of Destruction*; The Enigma**, Affinity with Penetration, Fast Caster, Puissant Penetration, Self-Confident, Skilled Parens, True Friend (Beathan); Blatant Gift, Deficient Technique (Intellego), Dark Secret (Part of the House Criamon Plot to End Time); Deficient Form (Ignem), Dispassionate, Higher Purpose (Eat sin on behalf of House)

Initiations: The Avenue of Faith in Strife (Sin), The Avenue that Splinters, The Avenue of Charm and Scorn

Personality Traits: Calculating +3, Diligent +2, Hedonistic -2

Reputations: Protector of House Criamon (Those who know of the plan) 5, Unclean (House Criamon) 4, Fearsome (Magi of Loch Leglean) 3, Fearsome (Magi of the Order) 1

Combat:

Dodge: Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +5, Damage n/a

Short Bow: Init -1, Attack +13, Defense +11, Damage +6

Fist: Init +1, Attack +3, Defense +4, Damage +0

Soak: +3

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: Artes Liberales 5 (astronomy), Awareness 3 (determining effect), Bows 1 (short bow), Brawl 3 (dodge), Concentration 4 (spell concentration), Enigmatic Wisdom 10 (interpreting signs), Finesse 6 (casting speed), Latin 4 (hermetic usage), Leadership 3 (intimidation), Magic Lore 4 (magical traditions), Magic Theory 10 (Corpus), Organization Lore: House Criamon 5 (initiating others), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (personalities), Parma Magica 5 (Mentem), Penetration

7+2 (Corpus), Philosophiae 3 (ritual magic), Ride 3 (battle), Scots Gaelic 5 (Highland), Whittling 4 (sympathetic charms)

Arts: Cr 6, In 12, Mu 9, Pe 25, Re 25, An 10, Aq 6, Au 7, Co 25, He 5, Ig 8, Im 5, Me 7, Te 5, Vi 25

Twilight Scars: Clothes disintegrate after excessive spell-casting; Presence sours wine

Equipment: The White Bow talisman

Encumbrance: 1 (1)

Appearance: Small and wizened, Brighde is a woman of apparently 90 years of age, which implies a degree of frailty. Though covered in the stigmata of her House, she is swathed in a white clay salve that covers her from head to foot. She wears barely anything; sandals to protect her feet and a slip to protect her modesty. Even these she does not own; she borrows them from a willing agent in order to prevent the accumulation of Arcane Connections.

Spells Known:

Convergence of Birth (InCo 10) +21, Mastery 1 (penetration) ***

Touch of the Goose Feather (PeCo 5) +54, Mastery 1 (fast casting)

The Wound that Weeps (PeCo 15) +54, Mastery 1 (multiple casting)

Kiss of Aging (PeCo 20) +54, Mastery 1 (penetration) ***

Bind Wound (CrCo 10) +35, Mastery 1 (penetration)

Gift of the Bear's Fortitude (MuCo 25) +38, Mastery 1 (penetration)

Bane of the Decrepit Body (PeCo 25) +54, Mastery 1 (penetration)

Befuddled Speaker (ReCo 5) +54, Mastery 1 (penetration) ***

Curse of the Unruly Tongue (ReCo 5) +54, Mastery 1 (quick casting)

Ward Against Heat and Flames (ReIg 25) +19, Mastery 1 (fast casting)

Image Phantom (Mulm 20) +18, Mastery 1 (still casting)

Loss of But a Moment's Memory (PeMe 15) +36, Mastery 1 (penetration)

Fading Star of Evening (CrVi 15) +35, Mastery 1 (multiple casting) ***

Wizard's Communion (MuVi 15) +38, Mastery 1 (imperturbable casting)

Paralysis of the Gift (PeVi 20) +55, Mastery 2 (magic resistance, penetration) ***

Opening the Intangible Tunnel (ReVi 15) +54,

Mastery 1 (penetration)

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 20) +63, Mastery 1 (stalwart casting)

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 20) +54, Mastery 1 (ceremonial casting)

Opening the Intangible Tunnel (ReVi 25) +55, Mastery 2 (magic resistance, penetration)

Given her Initiations and great age, Brighde has more Virtues and Flaws than a character constructed with the usual limits does.

* Gained through Initiation

** House Virtue

*** See *Hermetic Projects*, Chapter Five

TACTICS

Brighde never enters a foreign Aegis of the Hearth without first being granted a token associated with that Aegis.

When prosecuting Wizard War, Brighde prefers to plan seasons ahead, usually from within her own Aegis of the Hearth. She studies her target, learning her habits; when she is likely to be outside of her covenant or Aegis and with whom they engage in correspondence. She uses agents to do this rather than involve herself in the details. She attempts to retrieve an Arcane Connection of some kind, however slight, which she immediately fixes. She uses her Craft Ability to carve a symbolic representation of the individual to aid with increasing Penetration, which is also bolstered by divining their horoscope.

With the tools assembled and not before, Brighde offers the mandated warning. At the commencement of the war, she wards herself with some simple spells and then opens an Intangible Tunnel to her victim, increasing the Penetration as far as she can through the use of vis to boost her Casting Total. Her favored means of assault is to diminish the target's ability to use The Gift and then to inflict terrible Warping and aging. These are wounds from which it is impossible to recover.

Brighde Bronach (Cont'd)

THE WHITE SALVE

PeCo 15

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Individual

This salve of white clay destroys skin flakes and hair that falls or is brushed from the individual in order to prevent the easy acquisition of Arcane Connections to the bearer of the salve. The salve is applied all over the body as where it is not the skin and hair is vulnerable to shedding. The salve fades only at the end of the duration, at which point a new dose must be reapplied. Brighde wears the salve, on average, for less than half the year.

This is a charged device and Brighde has a steady supply created for her by House Criamon.

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

TALISMAN: THE WHITE BOW

Opening the Intangible Tunnel

Pen +30, 6/day

ReVi 53

R: Arcane Connection, D: Concentration, T: Individual

As per the spell described in ArM5, page 162. Allows spells of up to level 30 to be cast through the connection. The Penetration is a little low for use against opponents of great power, but the device is useful against mundanes and minor powers.

(Effect: Base +4 Arcane Connection, +1 Concentration; Modifications: +5 device maintains concentration, +3 6/day, +15 for +30 Penetration)

The Fetid Arrow

Pen +30, 2/day

PeCo 41

R: Touch, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Cast through the Intangible Tunnel, this effect causes the target to contract

Febris Semitertiana, which becomes apparent after a week. The disease is debilitating, causing fever, rash, and crippling abdominal pain.

This spell uses the Perdo Corpus guidelines from *Art & Academe*, page 57 and the disease rules from page 45 of that supplement.

(Effect: Base 20, +1 Touch; Modifications: +1 2/day, +15 for +30 Penetration)

BEATHAN, THE SEVEN-LEAGUE DESTRIER

Brighde traveled far to find her familiar, Beathan, having found no such beast in her home Tribunal.

Magic Might: 8 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com -4, Str +6, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik -1

Size: +3

Season: Summer

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Ferocity (when ridden in battle), Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded, Proud (minor), True Friend (Brighde)

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Gift of Speech, Greater Power, Improved Abilities, Improved Might, Improved Power (The Long Road Made Shorter), Minor Virtue (x3) (Improved Characteristics, Tough, Unaffected by The Gift)

Qualities: Domesticated, Fast Runner, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance, Tireless

Familiar Cords: Gold +2, Silver +1, Bronze +1

Personality Traits: Loyal +2, Taciturn +2, Brave +1

Reputations: Aggressive (local) 1

Combat:

Hooves: Init +1, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +7

Soak: +6

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Tribunal 3 (Covenants), Artes Liberales 1 (rhetoric), Athletics 5 (balancing), Awareness 3 (ambushes), Brawl 5 (hooves), Folk Ken 1 (magi), Latin 4 (Hermetic), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (magi), Profession: Mount 4 (courier), Stealth 3 (moving quietly), Survival 3 (woods)

Natural Weapons: The weapon statistics for a destrier's kick are Init +2, Atk +2, Def +2, Dam +1.

Powers:

The Long Road Made Shorter, 0 points, Init -6, Animal (R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Group) Beathan may transport himself and anyone touching him to a point up to seven leagues away which he can see. Level 50 effect (Base ReAn 30, +1 Touch, +2 Group, +1 Co requisite), Greater Power (45 levels, cost -1)

Equipment: comfortable harness, ornate and expensively tooled saddle

Vis: 2 Animal, in head.

Appearance: Beathan is a heavy war horse standing over 16 hands high at the withers. His neck is thick and heavy with a graceful curve and his chest is broad and deep. He has a white coat, turning grey and black around the nose and mouth.

Those traveling with Beathan when he uses his Long Road Made Shorter power experience the full distance of the journey made shorter rather than simply appearing in the target location.

balances. She rides a large black horse, magically trained to ignore the effects of The Gift. Her colors, her mount, and the balances she carries identifies her as the Third Horseman; the third of the seven seals of heaven.

AGENTS

As a Quaesitor, Beatritz may draw upon a number of resources, first from her House, second from the Tribunal itself, and last from House Guernicus, which is inclined to support Quaesitors no matter their House.

Her word is trusted, so those inclined to follow Quaesitors, such as Hoplites, junior members of House Guernicus, and similar-minded magi, may undertake tasks on her behalf with few questions.

Andrea of House Criamon Advancing the Antagonists

Andrea lives not too far from the player magi, but most within the Tribunal consider her too vague and ambiguous to be of any importance. They could not be more wrong. She is House Criamon's most gifted researcher and she has guided much of its research over the last seventy years.

Her pallid complexion and the pale green in which she dresses identifies her as the Fourth Horseman, the pale rider, and the bringer of death. When traveling, she most often takes the form of a pale horse thanks to one of her favored spells. Her birth represented the breaking of the fourth seal of heaven.

The antagonists described above are presented *before* the major breakthrough that House Criamon will use to seize control of the moon and end time. Once the breakthrough has been made, Andrea gains the new Aetheric Magic Virtue and its associated new Hermetic Form of Aether at a score of 13. This Virtue is then Initiated out to members of House Criamon and their willing allies, Anaximander of Verditius included. This grants the new Form of Aether but at a score of zero.

Anaximander of House Verditius

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

Size: 0

Age: 110 (67)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 8 (20)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Verditius Magic*; Major Philosophic Alchemy; Affinity with Goldsmith, Affinity with Magic Theory, Dwarf Blood, Puissant Goldsmith; Ambitious, Weak Spontaneous Magic

Personality Traits: Ambitious +3, Practical +2, Believe the Criamon are Dangerous -1

Combat:

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

Fist: Init -1, Attack +1, Defense +0, Damage -1

Kick: Init -2, Attack +1, Defense -1, Damage +2

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: Artes Liberales 5 (astronomy), Awareness 3 (determining effect), Brawl 1 (dodge), Carouse 2 (staying sober), Charm 2 (being witty), Code of Hermes 3 (political intrigue), Concentration 4 (lab work), Finesse 5

(precision), Goldsmith 13+3 (devices for enchantment), Greek 5 (poetry), Guile 3 (concerning cult activities), Latin 5 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 4 (laboratory work), Magic Lore 2 (regiones), Magic Theory 12 (extracting vis), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (personalities), Organization Lore: Verditius Cult 5 (initiating others), Parma Magica 4 (Mentem), Penetration 4 (Ignem), Philosophiae 5 (metaphysics)

Arts: Cr 18, In 9, Mu 10, Pe 10, Re 10, An 15, Aq 9, Au 7, Co 10, He 8, Ig 8, Im 9, Me 10, Te 10, Vi 18

Sigil: Vis is subtly drawn toward Anaximander's magical effects.

Twilight: His blood carries flakes of gold through it

Equipment: Casting tools (see below)

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Short and broad, with bold rounded features. His eyes are light and clear and his hair still red despite his obvious age.

Spells Known:

Eyes of the Cat (MuCo(An) 5) +20

Conjuring the Mystic Tower (CrTe 35) +38

Fist of Shattering (PeTe 10) +20

The Unseen Porter (ReTe 10) +20

The Wound that Weeps (PeCo 15) +20

The Leap of Homecoming (ReCo 35) +20

Heat of the Searing Forge (CrIg 10) +26

Pilum of Fire (CrIg 20) +26

Words of the Unbroken Silence (CrMe 10) +28

Sight of the Transparent Motive (InMe 10) +19

Shell of False Determinations (CrVi 40) +46

Shell of Opaque Mysteries (CrVi 40) +46

Sense the Nature of Vis (InVi 5) +27

The Invisible Eye Revealed (InVi 20) +27

Piercing the Magical Veil (InVi 20) +27

Sense of the Lingering Magic (InVi 30) +27

Wizard's Communion (MuVi 10) +28

Shroud Magic (MuVi 20) +28

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi 15) +28

Disenchant (PeVi 30) +38

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 15) +28

Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 20) +38

* House Virtue

The above statistics account for the majority of the available experience points for a magus of his age. The remainder have been spent in many years worth of laboratory work, some in service to House Criamon where he has built numerous devices installed in Criamon laboratories across Mythic Europe. He has access to a vast array of laboratory texts, by himself and various colleagues through the years.

CASTING TOOLS

Anaximander's casting tools are the same he uses for his smithing work and include numerous small hammers, pliers, tongs, rasps, files, and snips. When casting, these must be used upon a piece of silver or gold secured in a hand-held vice and strung from a loop upon his belt. The tools are not enchanted.

THE DEATH OF AN ANTAGONIST

The death of one of the four primary antagonists is not necessarily the end of House Criamon's plan. The House will look for alternatives to carry on the work. Anaximander is easy to replace as his involvement is simply in building an observatory. Brighde can be replaced by the hiring of Hermetic mercenaries skilled in combative arts willing to serve for payment. If Andrevia is removed then others from the House will be recruited to fill her place.

The rate of progress may slow, but unless the plan is revealed in its entirety, the House continues.

Cosmology

The cosmos is arranged in a progression of celestial spheres, with the Earth at the center and each successive sphere fully enclosing all those before it. Each sphere turns independently, accounting for the motion of the sun, the moon, the planets, and even the furthest stars against the sky.

From the center, the first spheres are earth, water, air, and fire. These are considered the *elemental* spheres and represent the matter over which Hermetic magic has power. Then follows the moon, or Lunar sphere, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and then Saturn. The final sphere is that of the fixed stars. These are considered to be the *ethereal* spheres and they fall so far outside of Hermetic Magic Theory that directly affecting *each* sphere requires its own Hermetic breakthrough.

Each of these *ethereal* spheres is composed of aether. Unlike terrestrial matter, which moves in straight lines, aether moves in circles; thus the rotation of the stars. Aether possesses no known mundane qualities and can be considered neither hot, nor cold, wet, nor dry. It is also incapable of natural change. Aether *does* have variations in density however, and the planets and stars are made from dense aether, making them visible within the more subtle aether of the spheres. While aether can exist within different states, once in a state it cannot change. It is this incapacity for natural change that

Quaesitor Beatritz

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

Size: 0

Age: 105 (70)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 8 (30)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magic; The Enigma*, Flexible Formulaic Magic, Hermetic Prestige, Quiet Magic, Subtle Magic, Inspirational, Piercing Gaze; Dark Secret (Part of the House Criamon Plot to End Time), Painful Magic; Driven (Bring about the end of time), Susceptibility to Divine Power

Personality Traits: Analytical +3, Political +2, Unforgiving +1

Reputations: Quaesitor (The Order) 3, Even-Handed (Provencal Tribunal) 3

Combat:

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

Fist: Init +0, Attack -1, Defense +0, Damage -1

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: Area Lore: Provencal Tribunal 4 (politics), Artes Liberales 4 (rhetoric), Awareness 3 (determining effect), Bargain 4 (reaching compromise), Carouse 2 (staying sober), Civil and Canon Law 4 (Provencal Tribunal), Code of Hermes 7 (Tribunal procedures), Concentration 4 (reading), Dominion Lore 2 (saints), Enigmatic Wisdom 8 (Twilight), Etiquette 3 (court), Faerie Lore 2 (faerie mounds), Finesse 3 (casting speed), Folk Ken 3 (magi), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Infernal Lore 2 (curses), Intrigue 5 (plotting), Latin 5 (hermetic usage), Leadership 3 (magi), Magic Lore 2 (regiones), Magic Theory 7 (inventing spells), Occitan 5 (prose), Organization Lore: House Criamon Lore 5 (initiating others), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 5 (politics), Parma Magica 3 (Mentem), Penetration 2 (Vim), Philosophiae 2 (ritual magic), Ride 3 (speed), Teaching 1 (Code of Hermes)

Arts: Cr 11, In 15, Mu 15, Pe 15, Re 15, An

11, Aq 9, Au 9, Co 14, He 8, Ig 11, Im 13, Me 15, Te 9, Vi 14

Equipment: Always carries a staff and her mundane attendants normally carry several slim volumes on the Tribunal's peripheral code. Usually carries a rook each of Mentem and Vim vis.

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Modestly dressed in a simple black gown and wimple and carrying a tall staff from which a silver balances hangs. Appearing around 70, her eyes are hooded and her lips are always pursed.

Spells Known:

Opening the Tome of the Animal's Mind (InAn 25) +26

Touch of the Pearls (InAq 5) +24

Revealed Flaws of Mortal Flesh (InCo 10) +29

The Inexorable Search (InCo 20) +30, Mastery 1 (penetration)

The Leap of Homecoming (ReCo 35) +29

Peering into the Mortal Mind (InMe 30) +30

Perception of the Conflicting Motives (InMe 15) +30

Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie (InMe 20) +30

Pilum of Fire (CrIg 20) +22

Prying Eyes (InIm 5) +28

Discern the Images of Truth and Falsehood (InIm) +28

Trust of Childlike Faith (PeMe 10) +30

Calm the Motion of the Heart (PeMe 15) +30

Loss of But a Moment's Memory (PeMe 15) +30

Aura of Rightful Authority (ReMe 20) +30

Impression of the Faded Sigil (InVi 30) +29

The Invisible Eye Revealed (InVi) +29

Wizard's Communion (MuVi 20) +29

Demon's Eternal Oblivion (PeVi 10) +29

Circular Ward Against Demons (ReVi 20) +29

Given her knowledge of the House and of Enigmatic Wisdom, Beatritz knows of, supports, and protects the secrecy of the plot to end time.

puts aether beyond the understanding of Hermetic Magic.

Lacking qualities, aether does not produce species, which hides its shape, but aether does shine and it does shed light. A thing made of aether appears as a shadowy hole surrounded by an aura of light. Such things do not cast a shadow of their own but they do illuminate nearby objects like a mundane light does. This light could be fierce like the sun, or gentle like the moon, depending on the density of the aether and the size it has aggregated into.

Hermetic magic can, however, affect each of the *elemental* spheres, which includes instantaneous travel to a point within those spheres, assuming the magus had a suitable Arcane Connection or other means of affecting his target. As the lunar sphere is the first of the *ethereal* spheres, it *cannot* be affected by Hermetic magic and represents the boundary between the known and the unknown. These mechanisms are entirely separate from the supernatural realms in the same way that

the workings of the spirit and the soul are separate from the workings of the body.

The spheres do, however, have links between their motions. The motion of the heavens can be likened to the movement of a water mill, with the motion of the water driving the wheel, which drives a shaft, which turns a cog, which turns another and so on. In the case of the *ethereal* spheres this interconnected nature is exactly what House Criamon intends to leverage; by disrupting the motion of the lunar sphere the entire working of the heavens can be halted, bringing time and eternity to an end.

See *Art & Academe* for a more detailed discussion of the cosmos.

The Axis Mundi

The domus magna of House Criamon, The Cave of Twisting Shadows in the Tribunal of the Greater Alps, is built upon the *Axis Magica*. This is the central point

around which the supernatural realms turn. This is different and distinct from the *Axis Mundi*, which is the point around which the cosmos turns. House Criamon is intent on controlling both of these powerful nexus points.

The term *Axis Mundi*, the center of the world, has many meanings. It may mean the point about which the world turns, the point where the four cardinal directions meet, or the point where heaven and earth touch. Different cultures across Mythic Europe have their own vision of the *Axis Mundi*. To the Norse, Yggdrasil the World Tree spans heaven and earth, and for the ancient Greeks Mount Olympus served a similar role. Judeo-Christian tradition has numerous references that all feed into an understanding of the *Axis Mundi*, from Jacob's Ladder, to the Tree of Knowledge, to the Garden of Eden itself. Each represents a point within the Earth with heightened cosmological significance.

In keeping with this, there are many mystical *Axes Mundi* across Mythic Europe. Some have an obvious focus, such

Andrea of House Criamon

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

Size: 0

Age: 95 (70)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 9 (35)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift, Hermetic Magus; Affinity with Magic Theory, Cautious Sorcerer, Inventive Genius, Minor Magical Focus (the moon), Puissant Magic Theory, The Enigma*, Dark Secret (Part of the House Criamon Plot to End Time), Driven (Bring about the end of time), Slow Caster

Personality Traits: Driven +3, Impatient +2, Dismissive +1

Combat:

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

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

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: Artes Liberales 4 (ritual magic), Awareness 2 (determining effect), Code of Hermes 1 (Tribunal procedures), Concentration 5 (lab work), Dominion Lore

2 (angels), Enigmatic Wisdom 9 (philosophy), Faerie Lore 3 (faerie forests), Finesse 3 (precision), Guile 4 (concealing House Criamon's plans), Infernal Lore 2 (demons), Latin 5 (hermetic usage), Leadership 4 (laboratory work), Magic Lore 1 (magical traditions), Magic Theory 10+2 (research), Occitan 5 (expansive vocabulary), Organization Lore: House Criamon 7 (Initiating others), Parma Magica 3 (Vim), Penetration 3 (Mentem), Philosophiae 5 (ritual magic)

Arts: Cr 15, In 17, Mu 12, Pe 15, Re 18, An 7, Aq 6, Au 7, Co 12, He 6, Ig 16, Im 5, Me 7, Te 5, Vi 20

Equipment: Rarely found outside her laboratory, Andrea carries little with her. If outside, she carries writing implements, ink, parchment, bottles in which to capture samples, and several pawns of vis of varying Arts.

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: A thin woman appearing around 70 years of age, modestly if untidily dressed. She has pale skin and her strained eyes have a yellow tinge to them. The stigma and tattoos of her House are clear across her hands, arm, neck, and face. Once she makes the breakthrough

she is working on, the tattoos on her face disappear, replaced by a single stylized representation of the moon.

Spells Known:

Shape of the Pale Horse (MuCo(An) 25) +19

Moonbeam (Crlg 3) +31

Heat of the Searing Forge (CrIg 10) +31

Pilum of Fire (Crlg 20) +31

Words of the Unbroken Silence (CrMe 10) +22

Shadows of the Fires Past (Inlg 15) +33

Tales of the Ashes (Inlg 5) +33

Eyes of the Eons (InTe 10) +22

Unseen Arm (ReTe 5) +23

The Phantom Gift (CrVi 15) +35

Scales of the Magical Weight (InVi 5) +37

Sense of Magical Power (InVi 2) +37

Sense the Nature of Vis (InVi 5) +37

Wizard's Communion (MuVi 20) +32

Masking the Odor of Magic (PeVi 20) +35

Disenchant (PeVi 20) +46

Original Research and Integration Effects:

Know the Quality of the Man (InCo 35) +29 *

The Mania of Others (ReMe 30) +25 *

Observe the Color of the (Lunar) Sphere (InVi 50) +37 *

* Described later



as Mount Olympus, while others may go unnoticed with nothing to suggest its cosmic importance. It is one such place that House Criamon have selected as their Axis Mundi: the lost city of Megiddo in the Levant.

Time and the sands have conspired to bury most of the city of Megiddo and there is little left of the city on the surface: just a few dusty ruins that provide occasional shelter to pilgrims, shepherds, and bandits. However, beneath the dust and sand, House Criamon have cleared out a series of tunnels and chambers, which they use as libraries and laboratories. This network surrounds a buried Canaanite temple. This great domed structure has been adapted into a ritual space from where House Criamon can call down the heavens.

PROPERTIES OF THE AXIS MUNDI

While the new Form of Aether (described below) allows magi to manipulate the substance that makes up the ethereal spheres, the Axis Mundi is the only place in Mythic Europe where the ethereal spheres themselves are sufficiently close to the world that magic may act upon them. Outside of the Axis, the connection is too tenuous to allow magic to breach the barriers. At these focal points across Mythic Europe, the spheres are considered to be touching one another.

Those within the Axis Mundi gain a bonus of +5 to any totals relating to the cosmological spheres. This includes cast-

ing totals and totals for Abilities such as Artes Liberales where Astronomy is being used, and Astrology.

There are many locations across Mythic Europe with a legitimate claim upon the Axis Mundi title, and each of these is treated as an Arcane Connection to each and any of the others that the character knows about.

The Axis Mundi exists only within the mortal world. There are no vestiges of it within the Magic Realm and no regiones exist within the Divine or Infernal that touch upon it. Any representation of the Axis Mundi within the Faerie realm is entirely false, valid only within the context of whatever narrative the faeries concerned are pursuing.

The Coming Apocalypse

It is the very error of the moon; she comes more nearer earth than she was wont and makes men mad.

Othello: Act 5, Scene 2

The spheres will collapse and the Earth is doomed. Unless, that is, the troupe prevent House Criamon from succeeding. While later sections provide the projects needed to control the lunar sphere, this section provides the framework for telling

the story of the rise of House Criamon or of the saving of the world before the coming apocalypse.

Stories are outlined in which the player characters gain visions of the apocalypse to come, learn of the Axis Mundi, encounter aether in its raw form, and then see the beginning of the end. The

Options for the Axis Mundi

Characters wanting to reproduce the research of House Criamon need not use the same Axis Mundi as in those experiments. They may instead seek out their own hidden places of cosmological significance. Doing so is a story-driven task and not one governed by game statistics.

There are a number of options they may choose. Any place typically associated with the connection between Earth and Heaven is suitable, such as Yggdrasil or Mount Olympus. Magi may also explore man-made places such as the pyramids of Egypt, the Tower of Babel or a Hermetic covenant built within a Volcano, or even the Great Tower as presented in *Hermetic Projects*.

If the characters gain access to the Great Observatory (see below) then they could use the device to identify numerous *Axes Mundi* across Mythic Europe that they could use.

elements provide enough information to lead the player characters and the Order toward the cult, with enough time to prevent the end of the world.

Expected Run of Play

As presented here, the apocalypse starts on December 23rd, 1277, when a conjunction of the planets can be seen in the sky. Assuming a start date of 1220, that allows 57 years through which the story plays out as House Criamon finally gains the power to achieve its aims. This provides the opportunity to seed the story early and introduce strong clues that House Criamon has an agenda.

The setting is assumed to be the Provençal Tribunal, but that is a convenience only and the action and the characters can be moved with little modification to the events.

The player characters first become connected with the storyline through a number of small stories, each designed around a theme of the moon, planets, and stars and their effects on the Earth and its people. Through these events, the player characters encounter the leading cultists or their agents, which gives recognizable faces to the later events.

The first of the major events is the escape of a number of experimental subjects from Andrevia's laboratory. These tortured souls escaping from the subterranean sanctum represent the breaking of the fifth seal, wherein the souls of martyrs cry out for revenge.

Mirroring the breaking of the sixth seal, a star is seen to fall from the sky. This star is an Adulteration, a magical result of an intense Twilight suffered by Andrevia upon successfully breaking the Limit of the Lunar Sphere. The player characters encounter the fallen star and

an agent of House Criamon sent to secure it. The star is made of a material unknown to Hermetic magic and the magi learn that House Criamon is meddling with forces beyond the Order's understanding.

House Criamon then retreats to Megiddo, pulling all its magi back to prepare for the end of days.

The final seal is broken when the magi of House Criamon complete their ritual to suspend the motion of the moon. At this point, time, as Hermetic magic understands it, is disrupted and all across the world the heavens crack and fracture as their eternal rotations are unnaturally halted.

The first event of the apocalypse occurs when Wormwood falls. This is the first part of the moon to break away and fall to Earth; it may not be the last. It provides a portent of what is to come by poisoning the Earth and its waters and creating a new kind of supernatural aura.

From this point on, while the Order teeters on the verge of a new Schism War, the magi must either work to reverse the damage to the world, or find a way to survive.

Most of the sections below indicate the year in which the event is suggested to occur. Others indicate which of the seals they represent being broken.

A Timeline

The following events, ordered in terms of the earliest accessible events to those covering the apocalypse itself, may help in shaping this story's inclusion in your own saga. You can choose where to start this story within your saga and the list below provides a guide as to the activities being undertaken at that time. The aim is to use at least one story to introduce each of the four cultists, to provide evidence that House Criamon is planning something large, and then to lead into the Apocalypse itself.

- 1178 A Criamon assault on Selene, the spirit of the moon, takes place in the Magic Realm. The assault is visible from Mythic Europe as a fire upon the moon's surface that blazes for days
- 1228 The Grand Tribunal
- 1230 The Great Observatory is completed
- 1231 The Axis Mundi is found
- 1244 The lost souls escape from Andrevia's laboratory
- 1250 Andrevia finalizes the breakthrough to create the new Hermetic Form of Aether
A star apparently falls to Earth
- 1263 The Tribunal of 1263
Knowledge of the new Form of Aether starts to spread into House Criamon
- 1265 The Last Wizard War
- 1270 The Tribunal of 1270
- 1272 The magi of House Criamon retreat
Work starts on the ritual to becalm the heavens
Selene, spirit of the moon, sets out to die
- 1277 The Tribunal of 1277 – the Criamon are missing
December 23rd, the day of the Apocalypse
Wormwood Falls

If concerned at the number of years represented by the suggested time line above, you could reduce the timings by about half from the year 1220. In that case, the Apocalypse starts in 1256, which still provides 36 years of play from 1220, although some of the events will need to be compressed to fit.

1231: The Axis Mundi is Found

The years leading up to 1231 see the construction of an observatory out to sea, sponsored by House Criamon and constructed by Anaximander of Verditius, as described above. The observatory has one aim: to identify the Axis Mundi and thereby provide House Criamon with the most sympathetic point at which to cast their rituals when the time comes.

If the player covenant is anywhere near the coast and has anything to do with nearby ports the player magi may learn of various craftsmen, including masons, blacksmiths, and glass-workers, being transported out to an unknown destination off-shore, and then returning months later. These men are assisting Anaximander with the construction of the tower and the devices that surround it, as described later.

If the player characters do hear of these

things and they do investigate, then allow them to find the observatory out at sea. If they find it before the Axis Mundi has been found, that is before the device has been completed, then they find teams of laborers and craftsmen all led by Anaximander.

Anaximander is surprised by any visitors but not unwelcoming, assuming that his renown can only increase with stories of his Great Observatory. He is happy to describe the basic workings of the device, although there are some secrets concerning the Axis Mundi that he does not divulge. He may even engage the covenant to provide some lesser service for him, such as the obtaining of vis, supplies, or even minor enchantments. He may even ask for any casting tablets or devices they have concerning the location and control of minor spirits (see below).

As 1231 approaches, members of House Criamon, including Lena Kessler (see later) arrive to operate the device. Stories of these tattooed magi heading out to sea may then reach the covenant.

THE GREAT OBSERVATORY

The Observatory primarily functions as a huge armillary sphere, as per *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, page 52, but it also has another purpose: to identify the Axis Mundi.

The tower was raised through Hermetic magic and close inspection of the smooth stones sides reveal them to be engraved with names and symbols associated with each of the ten Hermetic forms. The tower is stepped, made in ten sections, smaller in diameter as they approach the top. Circling the seven upper-most sections is a set of seven great lenses, each the height of a man, mounted on bronze armatures, which are themselves mounted on wheeled devices that allow them to rotate around the tower. Each of the lenses is associated with one of the ethereal spheres: the moon, the sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Astrological symbols related to the target sphere are engraved across the face of each lens. When the device is used, the lenses gather light from the sky but allow only light from its dedicated sphere to pass through into the central chamber.

This central chamber runs almost the full height of the tower and this is where the armillary sphere is suspended. Wheels

and levers around the walls allow the giant sphere to be moved and manipulated. However, some of those levers actually move the lenses around the outside of the tower, allowing the operator to position the lenses in order that each captures the light originating in their associated sphere. The light is sent through a series of lenses and reflectors and onto a mosaic map of the world on the chamber's floor.

This recombined light highlights in particular the various places within the world that touch the Axis Mundi. There is at least one in every Tribunal.

When aligned, the seven lenses, each enchanted with a variation on the *Observe the Color of the (sphere) Sphere* effect (see later), collect and direct the essence of the spheres into the viewing chamber where the pure light allows a magical map of the target sphere to be created, shining brightest where the sphere comes closest to the Earth. When these are overlaid onto a map of the Earthly sphere, they identify the location of the Axes Mundi as bright points of light reflecting off the mosaic floor.

Characters who know their Bible may recognize some of the tower's traits, identifying it as the seven-headed beast that rises from the ocean at the end of days. The seven lenses are the beast's seven heads, while the ten concentric tiers represent its ten crowns. The names of blasphemy borne upon the dragon's heads are of course the astrological symbols engraved upon each lens.

While this chapter assumes that the observatory has been built off the Provencal coast, you should feel free to relocate it as suits your saga so that it is relatively near your player characters. It should be built at sea, but that could equally be a sea of sand if that better fits your saga.

1235: Escape from the Great Observatory

Assuming that the player characters have not already learned of the observatory, this small scenario serves to introduce it.

If you need an incentive to get the player characters looking for the observatory, then Marten Weiss of House Bonisagus, a member of the Magoi of the Stars mystery cult (*The Mysteries: Revised Edition*), arrives at the covenant from outside the Tribunal looking for

Stopping House Criamon

Remember, the apocalypse *can* be averted. Guided by the player characters, the Order can discover the nature of House Criamon's research and put a stop to it. Discovering the research and understanding the reasons behind that research is fully supported by the stories outlined in this section.

The stories outlined allow the players to intervene at any stage in the process. In fact, they may attempt to put a stop to the plot well ahead of House Criamon's plan coming to fruition. On discovering the plot, the player characters might seek to confront House Criamon or individual magi with the obvious dangers of what they are trying to do. While the House itself may be too far gone, individual Criamon may be persuaded, seeing the clear error of their ways. Such characters might then be used to disrupt the research efforts, bringing sufficient evidence to the Order to force an intervention.

If the player characters turn a blind eye or fail to stop House Criamon, all is not lost. While the world does experience apocalyptic conditions as a result of the House's actions, the player characters can help put the world right, perhaps even using House Criamon's own research.

WHY IS THE ORDER LOOKING THE OTHER WAY?

Nobody wants another Schism War. To even consider singling out an entire House for investigation, let alone action, raises too many parallels with what happened to House Diedne to be contemplated. The burden of evidence needed to persuade even junior Quaesitors or others with political influence of House Criamon's activities is considerable, even without considering the outlandish nature of any such claims.

Not until members of House Criamon start disappearing from public view can those with influence be made to listen, and even then they are keen to distance themselves from any direct actions until definitive proof of wrongdoing is presented.

information on a rumored observatory. He and his two astrologer companions are keen to see the device and meet those who commissioned and designed it. Inevitably, Marten appeals to the player magi to help him discover more. He has heard that it was built at sea off the nearby coast and the rumor reached him ultimately from a glass-worker who worked upon one of the great lenses. He has been able to piece together some (inaccurate) drawings of the tower from the glass-worker's limited descriptions.

THE MISSING MEN

As House Criamon have gained the information they needed from the observatory, namely the location of the Axis Mundi, only a token presence has been left. There are signs of three men living in the tower: there are three beds in a common room, three sets of possessions, etc. However, what quickly becomes evident once the player magi arrive, is that these three are missing. Store rooms have been ransacked and the walls are daubed in broken Latin phrases urging visitors to "Go Away" and to "Leave this Place" and informing them "You are Not Wanted Here."

With no sanctum marker barring entry, the player characters are free to explore the observatory and even to investigate its magic, should they wish.

THE OBSERVATORY UNDER SIEGE

The visitors are not alone, however. A spirit of primal bitter loneliness haunts the rock. It was this spirit that possessed one of the three caretakers and forced him to murder the others, throwing himself into the sea as a final act. It wants to be left alone and it uses its powers to control the weak.

While the characters are exploring the tower, one of the supporting characters goes quietly missing, now under the control of the spirit. This possessed character now attempts to drive the visitors from its rock.

The attempts start small, with perhaps new writing appearing on the walls, a stone dropped from a high balcony above the magi, a window broken, a pretense of seeing something demonic in the shadows. After each event, the spirit is able to leave the host, which leaves the host with no recollection of the event. If the party refuses to leave, the spirit escalates matters and looks for opportunities to kill another

of the characters, perhaps jumping between hosts for as long as its Might Pool allows.

The magi and their companions must flee the rock or find and subdue the spirit.

If the spirit can be subdued, it can also be interrogated. It was present throughout the time when House Criamon was using the Observatory to find their Axis Mundi and it is able to mimic the actions taken by the magi when they found the Axes Mundi across Mythic Europe.

CONCLUSION

Early in the overall story of House Criamon and their plans, this story might initially play out as one simply of survival against a murderous monster, but the players may return to the observatory at a later date for further investigations.

The Fifth Seal, 1244: Spirits from the Underworld

In this story, the player magi learn that Andrevia of House Criamon has been experimenting with the effects of the moon upon the human mind. Having finished with this batch of her subjects, her attention turned to other matters and they managed to find their way out of her laboratory and into the countryside surrounding her covenant.

The Spirit of Bitter Loneliness

Loneliness breeds bitterness and this spirit is driven by its bitterness, driven to protect its feelings of desolate despair.

Magic Might: 15 (Mentem)

Season: Summer

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

Confidence Score: 2 (6 points)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Self Confident; Meddler (Minor)

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Sweet Touch of Bitterness), Greater Power (Control Human); Lesser Power (Donning the Corporeal Veil), Minor Virtue: Improved Characteristics x3

Personality Traits: Bitter +3, Jealous +2

Combat:

Dodge: Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

Claws: Init +1, Attack +5, Defense +5, Damage +1

Soak: +2

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

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

Abilities: Awareness 4 (watching for strangers), Brawl 3 (claws), Folk Ken 4 (the low and wretched), Guile 4 (its

true nature), Leadership 4 (intimidation), Magic Lore 3 (ghosts), Penetration 4 (Mentem), Stealth 4 (dark corners), Swim 3 (the ocean)

Powers:

Sweet Touch of Bitterness, 1 point, Init +2, Mentem: The spirit raises feelings of bitterness in the target, giving the target a personality trait of Bitter +3. It uses this power before using *Control Human* as the Bitter Personality Trait works in the spirit's favor. CrMe 15 (Base 4; +1 Touch, +2 Sun): Greater Power (15 levels, -1 Might cost, +3 Init)

Control Human, 2 points, Init +1, Mentem: Allows the spirit to control the actions of a target human, forcing them to violence and murder. See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 101 for more details. ReMe 30 (Base 20, +1 Touch, +1 Conc): Greater Power (30 levels, -1 Might cost, +3 Init)

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 5 points, Init -2, Corpus: the spirit manifests with the physical Characteristics given above. See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102 for more details.

Vis: 3 pawns of Mentem, as an immaterial corpse

Appearance: This spirit appears as a wretched, unkempt, and malnourished man or woman.



ENCOUNTERING THE MADMEN

There are two ways to introduce this story. The first is to give the player magi the opportunity to investigate when talk of a group of pitiable lunatics reaches the covenant. One of these, it is claimed, is painted over with all manner of symbols and they claim among them some lordship over the moon and the stars. If this is insufficient to prompt an investigation then have a number of the covenant's companions or grogs encounter the group directly when in a nearby town buying supplies.

In either case, when the player characters find them there is a mob around them demanding that they be strung up. The five lunatics are chained together, bound at the wrists, the ankles, and the waists so that they may not be free of each other until separated by a blacksmith. They flinch from each assault and shy away from the baying crowd, but in among their jeers, these unfortunates carry on their own distracted murmurings.

The five lunatics are a monk, a doctor, a lawyer, an astrologer, and a miller. Each has their own mania; the monk thinks himself a prince of the heavens, the doctor believes that death is the only cure, the lawyer argues the heavens out of their movements, the astrologer constantly draws charts of the heavens upon himself and others, and the miller claims to change his form as the sun and the moon travel through the sky.

DEALING WITH THE RABBLE

It seems that the jeering rabble, who have only failed to string up the lunatics because of their own arguing about whether all or only some should be strung up and how it might be achieved, have just cause to be afraid of these deranged figures. They report that these men were seen late the previous night in a graveyard and that one of them had been seen with a disinterred leg over his shoulder and an arm between his teeth while he growled like a dog. An examination of the scene, should the players visit the nearby churchyard, confirms that a body had been dug up. The body itself is not important to this story, being just the unfortunate victim of the miller's deranged hunger.

In among the mob is Simo de Balencs, the weary captain of the town's small guard. He has no wish to see these five men hanged, so clearly are they out of their wits, especially given the arrangements that would have to be made to separate them first. He can be seen appealing for calm and even shielding the unfortunates from the rotten vegetables thrown at them by the mob.

If the player characters show willing to take charge of the five men and promise to remove them from the town, then Simo de Balencs turns them over to their custody.

TALKING TO THE LUNATICS

Once free of the mob, the five affected men are content to talk, each revealing a little of their own manias and also, unwittingly, a little something of House Crimon's intentions.

The Monk: He believes he has been crowned prince of all the heavens and that the sun and the moon rise by his very command. He demonstrates by showing how he commands the sun to move across the sky. If asked to demonstrate some other motion he willingly does so. When the effects of his powers are not apparent, he claims simply that the observers have not the wit to see the truth behind his power... But that one day they shall. His sanguine humor has been strongly and unnaturally expressed.

The Doctor: The doctor has experienced a revelation. While life exists, life shall be subject to frailty and falter. Each illness and complaint may be addressed by the extinction of life, for the dead complain little about the frailties of the flesh. If challenged as to the state of the sore upon his leg and the discomfort and pain it causes him, he claims that he would slay himself but that he is chained to all these others. We must all go together or none at all, he explains. His melancholic humor has been strongly and unnaturally expressed.

The Lawyer: The lawyer pays little attention to those around him, instead saving his arguments for the myriad stars above him. He tries to name each of the fixed stars and the planets as defendants in his case against them. His complaint? That they are inconstant. He is irritable at the stars' refusal to show during the daytime, and at the planets' propensity to wander as they would. Any man he sees with a halberd, spear, or sword he commands to hold fast the fleeing sun or the moon so that they may be brought to account. His melancholic humor has been strongly and unnaturally expressed.

The Astrologer: Armed with burnt twigs, he draws charts and calculations over his own skin and that of his neighbors, frustrated as they twist and move. He is absorbed into his own frustrations and cries out for it all to stop moving, even as he draws upon his own face. If the burnt twigs are taken from him, he bites into his finger and uses the blood to continue his charts. His choleric humor has been strongly and unnaturally expressed.

The Miller: The miller complains that with each passing moment he changes his shape. First a man, then a wolf, then perhaps an eagle, then a boar, then a stoat... Each professed change takes place exactly one Diameter (as per the standard Hermetic Duration) after the last. As he changes, so his behavior changes (treat him as though he had a Personality Trait of +4 appropriate for the beast or shape he currently professes to have). If challenged as to why he looks the same each time he explains that is part of the curse; things would not be so bad if all of him changed for he would truly be a different beast, but as it is, so much of him survives that it would be better for it all to be ended. His phlegmatic humor has been strongly and unnaturally expressed.

Careful examination of the manias present in these five individuals reveals more about House Criamon and their plot than may at first be apparent. The monk has the hubristic belief that he has dominion over the heavens; the doctor believes that all must die so that none may suffer; the lawyer commands that the planets and the stars be held still; the astrologer's

charts written upon any who come near are a clear reference to the tattoos and stigma of House Criamon; and the lycanthrope reborn into the same body, minute, by minute, crying out for an end to his confusion, references the mystical philosophy at the heart of House Criamon's plot.

One clue to the origin of their lunacy lies in the symbols that the astrologer inscribes into his skin. Those observing him may make an Intelligence + Magic Theory roll. On a roll of nine or more, the observing character notices a number of Hermetic symbols. If challenged as to where he learned them, the astrologer explains, while attempting to draw over his questioners, that he saw them on the walls where they were kept.

Furthermore, the charts and calculations the astrologer attempts may be recognized as being Hermetic in nature with a simple Magic Theory roll. His imagination, that part of his mind that recalls images he has seen, contains parts of texts and notes that he saw within Andrevia's laboratory. The specific notes relate to the *Know the Moon's Influence*, an experimental spell detailed in the *Touching the Sky* appendix at the end of this chapter. Enough can be gained from the scrawled notes to learn the spell's Arts and that it is experimental.

TALES OF THEIR CAPTIVITY

Affected their minds may be, but they have some knowledge of what happened to them. They remember being captured, kidnapped by armed men, and taken to a dark place of stone and no windows. There was a woman there in the darkness and in the feeble candlelight they could see that her skin was painted with odd unnatural symbols. She also cursed them repeatedly. However, they are all too convinced of their own particular manias to believe that she caused them.

The learned among the lunatics are clear that the woman spoke Latin, but a very strange form and they think they were words of magic as she conjured up many strange and uncommon thoughts and images in them.

They do not remember how long they were with this woman, but they remember the woman losing interest in them. In truth, they spent a year with Andrevia as she cast her experimental spells upon them.

CURING THEIR MANIAS

Examination of their humors shows an unnaturally strong and persistent influence of one humor over the others. The magi may attempt to cure this imbalance through magic directly affecting their minds, or through magic designed to operate over their bodily humors. Physicians may even prescribe particular diets to bring them back into balance. However, there is a magical effect at work creating something with the power to influence their humors, a persistent effect that continues to operate despite magical attempts to correct those humors; like trying to heal an arrow-wound while the arrowhead is still present. It is the continuing effect, and not the humors themselves, that needs to be addressed.

By the time the magi get hold of these men, the magic has been active for some time; in another week the spell ends, its duration up. At that point, the treatments described above are effective.

Until that time, the magic may be detected and partly identified with an Intellego Vim effect of level 15. This reveals the presence of an active effect, the fact that it is essentially Hermetic in nature, that the effect makes use of Creo and Corpus, and that there is something other involved. This last item is the key information. There is something in the design of the spell that is unknown to the magi. This is the new Form of Aether, as described below.

Once free of the effect, and the balance of their humors addressed, the victims begin to remember where they came from and who they left behind. They each want to be rid of the filth and rags of their confinement and to go back to their own homes and their old lives, assuming that they are there to be found.

FINDING THE SOURCE OF THEIR MADNESS

The men know that their new understanding of the world was given to them by a woman of great learning, a result of the curses she cast upon them. Between the men, they have enough Latin to know that her magic made much of the moon. They are able to describe this woman in some detail. They describe Andrevia of Criamon: a slender woman whose age is somewhat obscured by the markings upon her skin

and whose graying hair is cut brutally and carelessly short.

As Andrevia is a member of the player's Tribunal, her description is sufficient to identify both her and her covenant. There is a mystery left to solve, and that is the mystery of her reasons.

Whether confronted in person, either directly following on from these events or at the next Tribunal, or through correspondence, Andrevia is somewhat forthcoming, if cryptic. She explains that there will come a time when the moon may make short-lived fools of us all. She refuses to say more for fear of making liars of them all, except that she is glad that the men are well.

ANDREVA'S LABORATORY

Should the player characters choose to, they could attempt to access Andrevia's laboratory (acts entirely against the Code, of course). If they succeed, they find numerous volumes of experimental laboratory texts, some successful, others not. The *Touching the Sky* appendix at the end of this chapter provides more information on the kind of effects that might be detailed.

1244: Brighde Bronach Arrives

After her experimental subjects were allowed to wander freely from her sanctum, House Criamon dispatches a senior maga to ensure that Andrevia is kept safe and secure. That maga is Brighde Bronach, from Loch Leglean. Her duties are to protect Andrevia from further investigation and to persecute those who attempt such investigation.

If the player characters visited Andrevia, they subsequently receive a visit from Brighde, who warns them to stay away from Andrevia and her covenant, declaring that any who disturb Andrevia's peace shall be made to suffer through the suffering of others. She's deadly serious and if tested on the matter she does kill one of the covenant's senior grogs or companion characters.

A declaration of Wizard War follows if the warning is not heeded. She does this initially as a further warning, opting to take no offensive actions during the pe-

riod of the war. However, if some should think she is bluffing, she isn't. At the end of the war, she informs her enemy that the second time she declares war it will be final. If pushed at this point, she does declare and carry out her threat.

1245: The Seeds of Doubt

The following story seeds can be used during your saga either as stories that directly involve the player covenant or as stories reported by their allies. In some cases, both may have occurred. They all involve the moon in some fashion and they are designed to introduce some of the important magi of House Criamon involved in the research. These are appropriate to run from around 1245 onwards at a rate of one every two to three years while the House is in the last years of its research.

INTRODUCING BRIGHDE: HUNTER'S MOON

Lycanthropes most often change with the phases of the moon, so Brighde sponsors a hunt of such beasts. The covenant becomes involved in one of two ways:

- The covenant may harbor a lycanthrope character who is hunted and captured alive, destined for laboratory experimentation.
- A band of lycanthropes enters covenant lands, fleeing the magical hunters on their trail; it isn't immediately clear which faction poses the greater risk to the covenant.

INTRODUCING BEATRITZ: THE WITCH

A monk and a detachment of soldiers scour the area looking for witches in order to put an end to their evil ways. As it turns out, they are actually looking for one in particular. With the aid of demons, she escaped imprisonment in Andrevia's covenant where her response to Warping was being studied. The monk is an agent in Beatritz's employ and knows that she was part of their experiments. When the

witch asks for aid from one of the player companions, how far are they prepared to go? Protect a witch who has trafficked with demons? Or cast her to the mercy of a man who has already hanged several innocents in his search?

The witch explains that she was subjected to magical tortures designed to bring about her Witch Moon (see *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition*, page 42) and she can describe her captor — a woman with mystical markings across her face.

If the magi give her sanctuary, the monk contacts Beatritz, who then promptly arrives with Brighde in tow threatening to investigate the covenant for trafficking with hell's agents. This should, though, give the player characters time to identify Andrevia as the experimenting maga.

INTRODUCING ANDREVA: HOROSCOPE

A young Criamon astrologer bearing a letter of introduction from Andrevia of Criamon asks to stay at the covenant for a season in order to make important astronomical observations. His activities seem somewhat clandestine, however, and he frequently leaves the covenant with little word on where he is going.

News reaches the covenant through its companions that physicians, scholars, and astrologers from the nearby town or court have found their precious horoscopes have been going missing from their libraries. They have been taken by the Hermetic astrologer. He is using them as a source of insight into a power to change an individual's horoscope and alter their fate in the process. Though he does not reveal it willingly, this work is on behalf of House Criamon as they research the true effects of the heavens on the populace.

INTRODUCING ANDREVA: THE REBELLIOUS TIDE

Councilmen from the nearest port come cap-in-hand to the covenant with a problem. For the last two months, the tide has been erratic, catching experienced sea captains off-guard, causing damage to vessels, and loss of goods and revenue. The problem started when a magus undertook certain studies near the harbor.

Investigating, it appears that a member

of Andrevia's clutch had been experimenting with spells that forced the spirits controlling the tide to act against their will and against the influence of the moon. The spirits are angry and refuse to resume their normal behavior until reparation is made.

The Sixth Seal, 1250: The Fallen Star

As the deep snows of winter settle across the land, a star falls from the sky, lighting up the night for miles around. The star is a thing of aether that has fallen to Earth through the sphere of fire. This star falls upon a nearby town, causing panic and sending many of the townsfolk out of their homes.

This event did not have a natural cause, however. The star's fall was caused by an Adulteration (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 53), an intense magical side-effect of Andrevia being thrown into Twilight at the moment she made the final breakthrough and reached the Lunar Sphere.

THE BURNING TOWN

Approaching the town, the orange glow of fire is visible rising behind the walls, almost obscured by the smoke still drifting on the wind.

Outside the town walls, there is an impromptu camp where townsfolk have escaped the flames and the threat of a spreading fire. If the magi stop to inquire, they find that a star did indeed fall and that it started a fire in the town. Some were struck blind by looking upon the star and some were killed. The council say that the fire is contained, but many are fearful of returning. The guards at the gates advise against entering.

Inside, the source of the fire is easy to find – follow the smoke and light – but on approach, the magi and their party is stopped by a couple of spear-carriers who block the street and order the party away.

These men, who have had *Aura of Rightful Authority* cast over them, are in the employ of a maga named Lena Kessler. If prompted, the elder of the two men recognize the magi as members of the Order and apologizes before reiterating that they cannot pass under orders of his mistress already on-site. Beyond these grogs, the blackened and smoking re-

Lena Kessler of House Criamon

Lena Kessler has achieved the Degree of Jupiter within the Magoi of the Star, a label she wears with pride. But she is also loyal to her House and knows of the plan to release humanity from the suffering of existence. She is proud to play a part in that noble aim.

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

Size: 0

Age: 55 (44)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 6 (5)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; The Enigma*, Educated, Minor Potent Magic (Aries), Planetary Magic, Puissant Artes Liberales, Special Circumstances (within the Dominion: +3); Dark Secret: House Criamon Working to End Time; Slow Caster; Deficient Form (Corpus)

Personality Traits: Confident +3, Cool-tempered +2, Idealistic +1

Combat:

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

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

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: Artes Liberales 5+2 (astronomy), Awareness 2 (determining effect), Church Lore 1 (liturgical rites), Concentration 4 (spell concentration), Dominion Lore 2 (divine creatures), Enigmatic Wisdom 6 (interpreting signs), Etiquette 2 (the church), Faerie Lore 2 (faerie forests), Finesse 3 (precision), Folk Ken 2 (magi), Guile 3 (lying about House Criamon), High German 5, Infernal Lore 2 (demons), Intrigue 3 (plotting), Latin 5 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 2 (grogs), Magic Lore 3 (regiones), Magic Theory 5 (inventing spells), Occitan 3 (prose), Organization Lore: House Criamon 5 (Initiating others), Organization Lore: Magoi of the Star 2 (Initiating self), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes

2 (personalities), Parma Magica 3 (Mentem), Penetration 3 (Mentem), Philosophiae 4 (metaphysics), Teaching 2 (Artes Liberales)

Arts: Cr 5, In 6, Mu 7, Pe 8, Re 8, An 5, Aq 4, Au 4, Co 5, He 3, Ig 6, Im 9, Me 11, Te 10, Vi 6

Equipment: Quills, inks, vellum, astrological charts, a folding table and chair, writing tools, a cushion, two-dozen pawns of vis of various arts.

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Deep blue robes with slender astrological symbols embroidered into the velvet, a long silver-cord belt, and numerous pouches hung around her waist. She is a sturdy-looking woman with close-cropped fair hair and confident blue eyes.

Spells Known:

Bind Wound (CrCo 10) +6

Aura of Ennobled Presence (MuIm 10) +21**

Words of the Unbroken Silence (CrMe 10) +18

Posing the Silent Question (InMe 20) +19

Trust of Childlike Faith (PeMe 10) +22, Mastery 1 (penetration)

Calm the Motion of the Heart (PeMe 15) +24**

Loss of But a Moment's Memory (PeMe 15) +24**

Aura of Rightful Authority (ReMe 20) +24**

The Crystal Dart (Mu(Re)Te 10) +19

Piercing the Magical Veil (InVi 20) +14

Unravelling the Fabric of Imaginem (PeVi 10) +16

The Unseen Porter (ReTe 10) +20

* House Virtue

** Potent Magic Applied

Lena Kessler has a grimoire of casting tablets with her that provide spells such as *Ward of Heat and Flames* in order to provide protection against the searing heat, in addition to *Pit of Gaping Earth* that she used to collapse the ground beneath the fallen star and contain its intense heat.

In addition to her own vis, she has also been provisioned with ten pawns each of Creo, Perdo, and Rego, and Auram, Ignem, and Terram to help her cast ceremonial magic and deal with the situation.

mains of a market can be seen and there does indeed appear to be a robed woman at work, taking measurements and, readily apparent to the trained eye, casting magic.

THE MAGA

Lena Kessler of House Criamon is a member of the *Magoi of the Star* mystery cult (*The Mysteries: Revised*, page 54). This alone would be enough to explain her interest in the fallen star, but she is there on Criamon business and she intends to collect the fallen star. When challenged, she lays claim to the star, although it is clearly close enough to the player covenant that they should feel they also have a valid claim.

As far as she claims, there is no mystery to her arrival; she is an astronomer and predicted the star-fall. That isn't entirely true. When Andreva entered Twilight and the star fell, Brighde sent Lena to find it. What is true is that she has been instructed to retrieve the object any way she can.

While careful to insist that she has claimed the star, she claims to be willing to share its secrets with magi who might lend their assistance. In particular, if they have an aura or regio nearby to which the star could be moved pending further study, she would be grateful.

She admits to having used magic on certain of the townsfolk in order to ease her access and to allow her to work. She is also aware that the star has a dangerous effect upon those who look upon it.

Lena Kessler has two attendants with her besides the sizable turb of grogs she has posted to guard the approaches to the star, one a grizzled veteran grog and the other a clerk. She has extended her Parma Magica over them to protect against minor magics.

THE STAR

The star is almost impossible to see within the searing light it throws off, but it is a sphere just over a pace across. The heat accumulated from the journey through the fiery sphere is dissipating, but the star shines at the bottom of a pit that Kessler opened up beneath it, which affords some protection against the effects of the blinding light. Kessler is careful to warn others against both the

heat and the light.

Those who see through the light see nothing visible at its heart; there is a physical presence but it does not emit sensory species apart from the blinding light.

An Intelligence + Magic Theory simple roll against an Ease Factor of 9 informs the magi that they are dealing with something that is beyond the limits of Hermetic Magic or something that has been so enchanted as to appear beyond those limits. An Intelligence + Philosophiae simple roll against an Ease Factor of 9 confirms that the object seems to have no discernible properties or qualities, and against an Ease Factor of 15 identifies it with Aristotle's description of aether.

THE ALIEN AURA

Crucially, the area around the fallen star has gained a new and alien supernatural aura (described later in this chapter). This Lunar Aura is of strength 3 and imposes a -15 penalty on casting totals generated within it. Intellego Vim magic designed to identify auras can detect that there is something there but it does not identify it as any of the four auras the Order understands.

The aura does not move with the fallen star and it fades over the course of a season, becoming subsumed beneath the Dominion as it reasserts itself.

RESOLVING THE STORY

Kessler wants the star. She has been sent to fetch it and take it back to her covenant (the stroyguide should decide where this is) for the purpose of studying it and she is not about to give it up easily. However, if confronted by superior numbers she does not act rashly. If threatened, she offers the reasonable option of certamen. She tries to ensure that the Arts are such that she can use the vis she carries with her to secure the outcome.

Her preference is that, if the covenant is insistent on getting something out of the event, that they help her retrieve the star in exchange for some reasonable reward or favor to be agreed with her superiors.

If the player magi exert their dominance, or Kessler loses the certamen, then she escalates the affair back to Brighde Bronach, who then takes up negotiations.

The star itself diminishes over the course of a decade although the blinding power remains until the last of the star finally disappears.

1263: The Tribunal of 1263

This Tribunal plays out as any might, with political squabbles between rivals and spats over the rightful ownership of vis, books, apprentices, and items left by magi fallen into twilight. However, there are potentially three events of interest.

QUESTIONS OVER THE FALLEN STAR

If the player covenant raise any questions over the nature of the fallen star or the presence and behavior of Lena Kessler, then Quaesitor Beatritz listens earnestly and suggests that she work with the covenant to investigate the matter. Thanking them for bringing the matter to the Tribunal, she promises to discuss it further with them and make arrangements for the investigation. As for Lena Kessler herself,

The Fallen Star

The blinding light can be treated like a standard Hermetic effect, although it has no Penetration.

The Searing Light of Heaven

Crlg 38

Pen +0, Constant Effect

R: Personal, D: Sun, T: Spectacle

Anyone looking directly at the fallen star is blinded by its brilliant light. Those affected must make a Stamina stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 to avoid blindness. Magi benefit from their Ignem Form bonus on this roll. Those possessing the Form of Aether may instead use their Aether Form bonus to this roll. On a botch, the blinding is permanent and the character gains the Blind Flaw, otherwise a Stamina stress roll (no botch) against an Ease Factor of 9 can be attempted every diameter until recovered.

This effect uses the Spectacle Target, more commonly associated with magic known to magi of House Bjornaer, which affects any who look at the object in question, in this case the fallen star.

(Effect: Base 5, +2 Sun, +4 Spectacle; Modifications: +1 for 2/day, +3 triggered at sunrise/set)

the maga is currently studying in a distant Tribunal, but the Quaesitor promises that she shall be part of her investigation.

Such is Beatritz's reputation that the Tribunal accepts her at her word.

A GATHERING OF BOOKS

With the research entering its final phase, the magi of House Criamon scour their Tribunal for copies of books on the Technique of Perdo, and on Magic Theory. They are offering to pay over the usual asking price: the recommended prices found in *Covenants*, page 95, plus two pawns of vis.

REPORTS OF ODD BEHAVIOR

A magus known to the player characters approaches them and asks whether they have noticed anything strange about the Criamon. He is not amused by any jokes the characters make. He recounts how one of the Criamon learned that his covenant had a copy of a book around a century old concerning the Magic Realm. The Criamon was keen to acquire it, offering ten pawns of vis outright for the original and any copies that the covenant might have made. He sold it, of course.

If pushed to recall its content, the magus remembers that it was written by a companion to a Criamon magus who had accompanied him on a trip to the Magic Realm. Having read it many years ago, the magus remembers that it concerned some hunters and some enchanted equipment; he considered it to be typically metaphorical for House Criamon as they had apparently set out to capture the spirit of the moon. The book itself was particularly vain, being of low academic quality and a little damaged.

1265: The Last Wizard War

A young magus of House Criamon has reached a level of Enigmatic Wisdom that reveals to him that his House is working to bring about the end of the world. He is unable to accept their arguments and so has fled with Brighde Bronach on his trail, becoming one of the Gorgiastics (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 52). As a result of

his crisis of conscience, he has lost all of his Criamon stigmata.

Finding himself on the player covenant's doorstep, he confides in them that he is engaged in Wizard's War with Brighde. Far from seeking protection though, he seeks understanding. The young Criamon asks that the magi take him to see suffering, despair, hopelessness, and finally hope. He asks them whether all the suffering and despair in the world is worth the small glimmer of hope. He asks whether, if they could, they would end all suffering in an instant, or whether the world needs to suffer. The magus does not break the confidence of his House but it should be clear to the players that he has recently learned something dreadful.

If the player magi use magic to pull information from him then they learn what he has learned: that House Criamon plan to bring about the end of time, thereby releasing all souls from an eternity of torment. He does not know the mechanism through which this will be done.

Brighde Bronach arrives at the covenant as soon as the period of warning is up, the war starting the following morning. The young Criamon chooses to go with Brighde. If he is allowed to go, he is never heard from again. If the covenant refuse to let him leave, then Brighde involves Quaesitor Beatritz; they will have their man one way or another. If the covenant still will not hand the magus over, then the war is declared anew and Brighde bides her time.

What starts as a philosophical encounter, asking the player characters to look hard into their view of the world around them, ultimately allows an exploration of the Criamon philosophy once more, reminding players and characters of their views on suffering and eternity. This encounter can be used to definitively learn that House Criamon has something catastrophic in mind for the world and that it may be possible that other Gorgiastics know more about the plot.

1270: The Tribunal of 1270

With the possible exclusion of player Criamon magi, all the Tribunal's magi of House Criamon now appear with the same stigmatic mark, a crescent moon upon their forehead. If the player Criamon have not yet been brought into the plan by virtue of their Enigmatic Wisdom or Organization Lore: House Criamon scores, then they are told of

the plan during the Tribunal gathering.

This is a potentially dangerous moment for all concerned and the magus is told of the plan in the presence of Brighde Bronach only *after* handing over Arcane Connections to himself. The magus is reassured that there will be no suffering; a fearful and confused response is expected but the Criamon make constant reference back to their founder and his intention that the world be set free. As storyguide, it may be useful to have a copy of *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* to hand so that you can provide the same guidance, showing the player key passages that back up their assertions as to the cruelty of time and the obligation of the House to help the world escape.

A SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

The Tribunal is also an opportunity for the player characters to directly contribute to the laboratories in the Holy Land that House Criamon is planning. A Criamon player character, or one with a reputation concerning laboratory work, is asked to spend several season establishing and developing a laboratory near Acre, while a Verditius character might be asked to create a device to aid in the development of spells (conferring a specialty bonus to inventing spells, as described in *Covenants*, Chapter Nine).

1272: The Retreat to Megiddo

As House Criamon grows ready, they draw their supporters back to Megiddo. This means that some non-player characters that the characters know suddenly disappear, so it is important at least by this time to determine which of your saga characters have been brought into that cult.

Those who leave are careful to destroy Arcane Connections to them over the course of a season or more in preparation. This may include books and enchantments, but also includes anything in their personal chambers, including laboratory equipment. These characters take on unusual behaviors during the season before they leave. Rather than leave their washing to the covenfolk, for instance, they may start doing it themselves. Their colleagues

may notice them taking care not to leave any trace of their presence behind them, and they may request their own books and items from the library, which they magically cleanse of connection to them.

When they leave, they ask that correspondence be kept for their return and that they will be gone at most two seasons. If pressed, they claim to be traveling to visit a contact in Thebes. Always Thebes.

THE TEMPLARS OF HAIFA

The work of House Criamon has been decades in the making and their selection of Megiddo as their Axis Mundi was a decision made years ago. This has given them time to gain agents in the region to protect their interests. Chief among these is a small chapter of Knights Templar based in Acre in the bay of Haifa, some twenty miles north-west of Megiddo.

These knights are part of a doomsday cult, aware of and ready for the end of the world. Promised protection and salvation from the events to come, they are a corrupt chapter of knights, not led astray by the infernal but by magic, believing that the Biblical end of days is being heralded. This is important for two key reasons. Firstly, it provides House Criamon with protection locally, and secondly Acre is the seat of power for the Knights Templar and is home to the order's Grand Master (Thomas Bérard until 1273 and Guillaume de Beaujeu thereafter). This gives the cult a significant reach far beyond Megiddo in the lead up to the apocalypse. More information on the Knights Templar can be found in *The Church*, from page 102.

Troupes playing near Acre will certainly encounter these knights and they may prove supportive of activities that keep the magi away from Megiddo. Interest shown in the lost city, however, results in political pressure not only from the knights themselves but also through their ally the bishop of Acre.

The knights are widely known for their knowledge of the region and they make obvious scouts and guides for magi searching for a specific place and the Criamon hiding there. Engaging the knights in this way ultimately results in the magi being led out into the desert where the knights turn on them, prepared to risk death in protection of the magi of House Criamon.

1274: Selene's Lament

When Andrevia makes her breakthrough, creating the Form of Aether and with it breaking the Limit of the Lunar Sphere, the Daimon Selene starts to lose her influence over the motion of the moon. The first thing those in the Order notice is the duration of their spells: those of Moon Duration start to drift out by a day or two, sometimes shorter and sometimes longer than expected.

This is an important development and should be emphasized to the player characters. If they do not routinely use Moon-duration effects, have their friends and allies inform them of the strange occurrence. Magical investigation shows nothing wrong with the spells themselves, but all magical traditions are equally affected.

Recognizing that her duty and her burden will soon be over, Selene sends Aspects of herself to the mundane world where she is intent to diminish. Her presence, however, causes problems that the magi are soon drawn into. In hearing her story, the magi learn that there are now those within the Order who have broken the Limit of the Lunar Sphere.

INTRODUCING SELENE

There are two ways in which this story can be introduced. The first is that word reaches the player covenant directly of a magical phenomenon in the nearby market town, with an expectation that they will then investigate. While Selene has sent many Aspects of herself to the mundane world, if this feels too convenient then Selene can first be encountered by a friend of the covenant, who deals with the phenomenon in the town and then brings Selene to the magi. The following sections outline these options.

THE GRIEVING TOWN

An Aspect of Selene walks into a small market town somewhere near the player covenant and every person present is moved to uncontrolled grief. The grogs and companions are the first to come into contact with the phenomenon while at the town securing supplies. Unless protected through Magic Resistance, each of

the characters reflects upon a troubling and upsetting loss to come, a sense that the world is dying. The longer they stay in the town, the more the sense of loss increases. Give each character a Grieving +1 Personality Trait, which increases by +1 for each day they remain in the town.

Townfolk can be seen weeping in the streets. The churches are full and many have their doors flung wide open with praying supplicants spilling out onto the steps. While the populace lament loudly and uncontrollably, priests, learned magicians, and even diabolists who benefit from some measure of Magic Resistance, roam the town doing what they can to either console the grieving or at least look after themselves.

It should be clear to the player characters that they are under the influence of a supernatural effect, one that those with Magic Resistance, such as those possessing relics, are able to resist.

Selene can be seen, a wan figure dressed in a dirty white shift, wandering the streets barefoot and alone, outwardly unaffected by the grief.

THE VISITOR

If you want to bypass the grieving town, you can have a magus bring Selene to the covenant. He should be previously well-disposed toward the player magi and his story is just as above: he came across the town deep in grief and discovered that the source of the phenomenon was the woman he now brings with him. He has

Who is Affected by Selene's Grief

Given Selene's Might Score, the points spent activating the power, and the level of the Divine aura, any character with a Magic Resistance of +0 or more is unaffected by the grief thrown off by Selene.

The effect, though drawn from her Might Pool, is not under her control. It is an involuntary response to her loss of influence over the moon. As such, she is unable to stop or otherwise suspend the effect, which is renewed at both dusk and dawn.

not undertaken any magical investigations and knows only that her name is Selene. The first inkling he had that she might be a Magical Spirit was when she could not cross the Aegis threshold.

If the woman is brought in, those within the Aegis who lack Magic Resistance begin to suffer the effects of her power.

TALKING TO SELENE

Selene's grief is for the loss of her connection to the moon. She understands that as a creature of magic that she was in a near-unique position in that she was connected to something beyond, something outside of the terrestrial spheres. With that connection lost, she wonders what she shall do. Will she diminish? Certainly, she intends to send herself across the world and there live out whatever days she has.

Asked why her connection was lost, she explain that the connection was always tenuous. Now that others have learned how to make that connection, hers is gone. She knows that the painted ones have stolen her connection to the moon and that only ruination and the end of the world will come of it. She is very clear; if the spheres are broken, it means the end of the world and she is powerless to intervene.

Come the morning, Selene leaves the covenant, never to be seen again. As a daimon, she is still capable of recalling any Aspect, so there is nothing the player characters can do to keep this Aspect at the covenant.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

By this point, the player characters should have learned that House Criamon are coordinating their efforts and their resources toward some aim and that some are leaving the House, unable to bring themselves to support that aim. Furthermore, the encounter with Selene should suggest that the end of the world is coming.

If using the time line provided in this chapter, the player characters have a number of years between encountering Selene and House Criamon completing their preparations. This time could be used to put a stop to the plot by finding their center of research and bringing the might of the Order down upon it. If the player characters do not press forward at this

time, they provide House Criamon with the time it needs to complete its research.

1276: Divine Intervention

Word reaches the covenant of a man who is building an ark not far from the covenant. It is claimed that an angel told him the end of the world was coming and that he should build an ark as refuge for all those who remain true to the Lord.

The peasant has been working day and night to fell the trees he needs and to build his ark, which is far from finished and far from likely to hold many individuals. But what at first seems like madness is actually divine inspiration.

The man has True Faith and his strength and stamina are sustained by angels. The ark itself, currently just a skeletal shell, already has a Divine aura. Why is he building the ark? Because man has gone against God and is bringing about the end of the world. He even knows the date, revealed to him in a vision: the twenty-third day of December, in the year 1277. The angels are using him as their instrument on Earth, to save what few they can. Those with Sense Holiness and Unholiness detect the presence of angels watching over the man.

But there is a problem. The trees he has felled belong to the local landowning knight and he arrives shortly after the player characters looking to bring the man to justice for his theft. Do the magi help this man or leave him to his landlord's justice?

And what of the ark if the man is allowed to finish? Does it become just a noble failure or instead a divine regio large enough to save an entire community?

1277: The Final Tribunal

Across the Order, as Tribunals gather, all magi are aware of one thing: the Criamon are missing. Individual magi realized that they were missing from their covenants, indeed the Redcaps of House Mercere had reported such. But the Redcaps found those covenants staffed with mundane servants and protected by grogs — the business of running a covenant carried on seemingly uninterrupted.

Now though, with no Criamon at Tribunal, and the same situation elsewhere,

magi are demanding answers.

There is much discussion about the Criamon before any councils are called to order: has anybody seen them or heard from them; someone suggested they were studying overseas; why didn't the Redcaps do anything before? When at last the council meets, their disappearance is the chief topic.

Preventing the Apocalypse

Despite the disappearance of House Criamon from public life, the Order is not moved to immediate action and so, unless through the agency of the player characters, the apocalypse will not be prevented. What is needed is for definitive proof to be brought before magi senior enough to order an intervention.

Thanks to the man building his ark, the player characters should now know the date the apocalypse begins. Through Selene, they should now understand that this event has something to do with the Lunar Sphere or the moon itself. There have been enough clues pointing to House Criamon, including Lena Kessler and the fallen star. Furthermore, the player characters should also know that Andrevia of Criamon was undertaking magical research. They should also remember Anaximander's observatory, many years previous, with its magical view of the heavens. A convincing case can be constructed by drawing upon this evidence.

Allies may be found within House Bonisagus if senior magi can be convinced that the breaching of the Lunar Sphere is possible, that House Criamon has been secretly experimenting to that aim, and even that they may have succeeded. Bonisagus pride may not allow such a breakthrough to go unchallenged.

OPTIONS

The potential outcomes from this council are too broad to cover here, but some of the likely actions are:

Investigate the Criamon covenants or laboratories: The player magi are tasked with entering the abandoned

Criamon covenants to investigate their disappearance.

Go to the Cave of Twisting Shadows: The player magi are asked to go to the Tribunal of the Greater Alps and the Criamon central clutch at the Cave of Twisting Shadows.

Determine what the House may be working on: Given the nature of the involvement that people have had with House Criamon, can the player characters determine why the Criamon have withdrawn? Remember, they left some six years ago and had been gathering materials on Perdo since before then.

Find House Criamon: Discover where they retreated to, investigate the area, potentially make contact with them, and report back.

Clues to be found at this stage include discarded or forgotten maps of the Holy Land, stray notes on the phases of the moon, and even forgotten letters discussing Andreva's breakthrough in vague terms.

By this point in the saga the player magi can be expected to have some seniority, so it is important that the Tribunal assign them tasks with some authority. Of course, the players may have other actions that they want to take and these should be accommodated.

One Last Chance to Save the World

Once the player characters have committed to ending the madness of the Criamon plot, a doomsday clock is started. House Criamon sees this as their best chance to save the world, and they approach it cautiously. The magic is entirely new, and no one, not even Andreva, fully understands it. They believe that the conjunction on December 23rd, 1277, is probably important to its success, so they do not perform the ritual before that date unless it appears likely that they will not be able to wait. An attack by other Hermetic magi, or a clear risk of the same, does provoke them into starting. In fact, the conjunction is not important to the ritual, and, if the Criamon complete it, it has the effects described later, no matter when they act. Once the Criamon start the ritual, the player characters have ten hours to save the world.

FINDING MEGIDDO

The House has set watch across the area surrounding Megiddo and these spies use magical amulets to alert the House if they see any force that may threaten the plan. If the player characters approach in a way that raises the alarm, it is important that this mundane watchman is seen and caught by the player characters and their companions. This informs them that House Criamon has been warned of their approach. The watchman also knows that the Criamon are can be found in the catacombs beneath the ruins of the old city.

Dealing with the scout and finding the old city takes two hours. If the characters do not raise the alarm, they can get to the old city before provoking the Criamon into starting the ritual.

FACE THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

The watchman does not know that the ruins are protected by around twenty Knights Templar. If they are forewarned, these knights prepare for the arrival of the magi by hiding within the ruins, and attack from ambush. If the characters have not raised the alarm, the knights are alert for intruders, but not organized into an ambush.

The knights fight as five trained groups of four mounted knights. They attack from ambush using lances in the first round before switching to sword and mace. They fight to the last man. Also present and visible is Brighde on her familiar steed Beathan. She uses what power she has to aid the Templars, retreating to the underground sanctum when the Templars finally fall.

Entering the old city and confronting the ambush takes a further hour. If the battle goes badly, then consider the time to have been two hours.

The player characters could also search the ruins for the entrance to the underground sanctum without alerting the Templars. Brighde is not present all the time if the alarm has not been raised, and the characters probably have time to wait for her to go, which might be wise. The search is impossible without the use of magic, and hiding from the Templars by mundane means is almost impossible, but the magi may well have enough magic to make this possible.

ENTERING THE UNDERGROUND RETREAT

The entrance to the underground retreat has been magically sealed and obscured beneath an old ruined temple, the tallest of the remaining ruins. It may also be found by following the trail left by Brighde and Beathan when they left the battlefield, in which case the trail leads to a large stone wall. The way can be opened by moving or destroying the wall, to reveal a steady slope down into the catacombs.

Once beneath the city, the magi encounter an Aegis of the Hearth of level 20 and penetration of +45, which may serve to exclude some familiars or similar characters.

The catacombs are threaded with magical alarms. These alarms do not sound in any way that the characters can hear, but unless magically detected and bypassed they do alert the Criamon, who immediately scry on the characters, and urgently begin the ritual. It is very likely that the scrying magic will fail to Penetrate on at least one magus, warning them that they have been spotted. If the characters have got this far without raising the alarm, they have done very well, but there are so many magical alarms within the catacombs that it is effectively impossible to get through.

House Criamon have had time to prepare and the catacombs have also become a magical labyrinth of illusions and misdirections. For instance, the sounds of ritual chanting may be heard from nearby — following those sounds leads the party away from the ritual site and eventually into a small dead end from where the chanting emanates. Illusory walls appear and disappear (bearing a casting sigil by which canny magi may then recognize them), guiding the magi yet further until they find themselves in an apparently sealed chamber. Illusory guides may also appear, claiming to be apprentices scared at what the House is doing. Following these apparitions leads only to the exit.

Following each of these illusions to their natural conclusion costs the magi an hour each. Seeing through them early costs them no time at all.

Once the player characters are through the illusions, they encounter Brighde one final time. She stands, illuminated in the catacombs, bow ready, defending the path. She warns them that they can only do ill by continuing on their path. If challenged to explain, she outlines the House understanding of infinite suffering that will all be ended in a matter of hours. Beathan waits, hidden in the dark. The old woman uses her guile and magic to disrupt the magic of those facing her while Beathan attacks the unwary from ambush. Neither surrenders. Neither retreats. This is a



fight to the end for both of them.

From this point, the genuine chanting of the assembled ritualists may be heard and leads the party inexorably toward their goal.

The last line of defense takes the form of the final corridor filled with those members of House Criamon not taking part in the ritual itself. They stand, arms linked and blocking the path of any who seek to move through them. They do not offer violence but they do tell the interlopers to go back, that they are interfering in things they know nothing about, that what they do they do for the good of all the world.

Of course, there are many ways through a blockade of some forty peaceable magi and it all depends on how long the player characters are prepared to be held up.

The fight with Brighde accounts for an hour and the blockade of magi the same if the player characters let it. At this point, they reach the ritual.

INTERRUPTING THE RITUAL

The breaking of the seventh seal comes in the form of a great ritual. While the Form of Aether has been discovered and the Lunar Sphere breached, that knowledge on its own is entirely academic; it must be put to use. The ritual takes place in a large domed chamber. Representations of the spheres and the planets painted on the chamber walls revolve around a central circular altar.

Standing over the altar is Andreva, and she is surrounded by the rest of House Criamon, including Quaesitor Beatritz.

Beatritz sees the threat to the ritual as the player characters arrive and she can be seen urging Andreva to hurry.

It is now for the player characters to decide *how* to interrupt the ritual. A sudden or violent interruption forces an immediate spell-casting roll as if the ritual had completed. If a zero is rolled, then the storyguide should roll for a botch as normal, although this is with 30 botch dice due to the magnitude of the ritual and the pawns of vis being used.

The *effects* of any botch are open to the storyguide to determine, but given its magnitude, a significant event can be expected. Here are a few suggestions:

- Solid aether pours from the ritual site, blinding white and crushing everyone and everything in its path, filling the catacombs – the player characters must race to the exit.
- The ritualists are sucked upwards into the Lunar Sphere – the player characters face the same fate unless they can find something to hold on to.
- An explosion of pure magic collapses the catacombs. The player characters must rely on their wits and spontaneous magic to find cover and survive the blast.

Assuming no botch, the vis is consumed and its power wasted. Many of the Criamon collapse from their exertions. Others, such as Andreva, Beatritz, and Prima Muscaria (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 56) remonstrate with the interlopers and plead that they be allowed to continue.

If the player characters fail to prevent the completion of the ritual however, the Seventh Seal is broken and the heavens are becalmed; the Apocalypse begins.

The Aftermath of Success

If the player characters succeed in stopping the ritual, they still have House Criamon to contend with, and the Order may never be the same again. Andreva, if alive, still knows the ritual she invented, and it could be just a matter of time before House Criamon attempts to assemble again.

With the ritual stopped, many of the Criamon magi flee the site, while others race through the catacombs daubing sanctum markers on every door in order to prevent intrusion. It is a vain hope as council of senior magi, perhaps including Primi of the other Houses, arrive and pass whatever emergency measures needed to gain access to the research.

House Bonisagus is well-represented and asks to take charge of any and all research materials and information on new magic. Houses Tremere and Guernicus concern themselves with the future of House Criamon, including the business of bringing the chief cultists to account.

The player characters should be involved in such councils and have direct agency in deciding some of the following matters:

- Which crimes the senior cultists be charged with
- The nature and timing of their trials
- The punishments due for those found guilty
- How to deal with any identified as having helped or supported the Criamon
- The fate of the research materials found in the catacombs
- Whether any magus or House should possess such power
- What to do about the knowledge concerning the new magic already held by individual magi
- The ultimate fate of House Criamon and its members

House Criamon's philosophy is such that Andrevia and Beatritz will attempt the ritual again and they are honest about that fact. House Tremere is clear that there cannot be a new Schism War, despite the outrage expressed by House Flambeau and others. The Order could still tear itself apart, but as the magi who saved the world the player characters are in a strong position to offer guidance.

The Seventh Seal: The Becalming of the Heavens

I cannot by the progress of the stars give guess how near to day

Julius Caesar: Act 2, Scene 1

The ritual is designed to destroy the moon's property of motion. By Criamon understanding, this is sufficient to cause the motion of all the interconnected spheres to end and with it time.

THE END OF ALL MOMENTS

As the ritual is completed, the moon's motion is suddenly halted. The effect radiates out immediately and every sphere from the Earth out to the fixed stars cease their motion. An earthquake is felt across Mythic Europe and a crack forms across the face of the moon.

This is the point at which most Hermetic magic momentarily fails. Just as when a magus crosses from the mundane world into the Magic Realm, all active ef-

fects are suddenly canceled. They may be recast, but spells and effects relying on certain Durations linked to celestial movements immediately fail again. See the section later on Magic after the Apocalypse for more detail.

As the spheres have ceased in their motion, the storyguide should decide whether the characters' home region is plunged into perpetual night, dawn, dusk, or daytime.

Wormwood: The Aftermath of Failure

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

Revelation: 8:11

Once the ritual has been cast, a part of the lunar sphere, Wormwood, falls to Earth. Its fall has four phases, which include its brightening in the sky, the great hail of fire that falls upon the earth as Wormwood starts to break apart, the destruction in the seas and oceans, and then the poisoning of the waters of the land. These events are local-

ized to the player characters' Tribunal, giving a taste of what is to come.

THE BRIGHTENING STAR

Wormwood is actually part of the moon itself, broken off due to the damage caused in the heavens. It spends a season growing bright in the sky. Some draw religious parallels, feeding the idea that this is a precursor to the apocalypse. If the player characters themselves do not light upon the name Wormwood, then a supporting character does. At this point, Wormwood is the only *moving* heavenly body visible in the sky.

Importantly, as this *star* originates in the lunar sphere, most magi are unable to use magic to investigate or affect it. However, House Criamon have their rituals that *can* affect Wormwood and suspend its movement.

A hastily-called Tribunal is held and the magi consider the meaning of the event and their options.

Designing the Ritual

There are two effects that must be created in order to suspend the motion of the heavens as House Criamon intends. The first is a simple effect that allows the ritual caster to see the aether, which she will target with the second ritual.

SENSE OF THE MOON'S PRESENCE

InAe 20

R: Personal, D: Sun, T: Vision

Aether is intangible and invisible, which makes it hard for Hermetic magic to affect. This effect gives the caster the ability to see aether, which is sufficient then to target that aether with further spells and effects.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +4 Vision)

HOLD THE SKY IN THRALL

PeAe 145

R: Sight, D: Momentary, T: Individual, Ritual

This ritual destroys the target aether's fundamental property of movement. Upon completion of the ritual, the effect is instant and irrevocable.

This ritual, given the nature of the power concerned, is unique. It has been designed to target the moon, or rather the aether behind what those below the Lunar Sphere perceive as the moon. Once cast, there is no other target that this ritual can then target.

(Base 5, +3 Sight, +5 density, +20 size)

Required Lab Total: 4 seasons (182), 8 seasons (164), 12 seasons (158), 16 seasons (153), 20 seasons (152)

HAIL AND FIRE

Unless prevented, Wormwood visibly breaks up in the sky into three large parts as it passes through the fiery sphere. The first of these burns bright in the night and then, three days later, fills the sky with a burning hail storm. This hail storm is centered on an expanse of woodland and the surrounding towns and villages within half a day's walk of the covenant. The glow from the fire is visible through the night and the smoke rising from the woods and the farms blots out the day.

The scene is devastating. In each town and village, roughly a third of the population have perished or will without aid. Some were burned in their homes while others fled the flames only to be caught in the burning hail, like a storm of embers from a forge. Burned and blacked bodies litter the ruins, lying next to livestock that suffered the same fate.

Investigation of the scenes shows that the fire is pure elemental fire, which can be affected by Hermetic magic. In places though, a strange invisible stone-like material can be found. This dense aether should be familiar, as it is the same as Lena Kessler was sent to retrieve.

THE SEAS AND OCEANS

After the hail of fire at the end of the season, the largest part of Wormwood reaches the Earth. It crashes into the ocean near to the covenant's Tribunal, causing a great wave that destroys fully a third of all creatures in that sea and a third of all vessels that sail upon it. All along the coast, towns, villages, harbors, and beaches are submerged by the wave. When it withdraws, just as quickly as it came, the bodies of great fish and whales lie inland, mingled among the broken timbers of ships.

The invisible body of Wormwood sinks to the sea floor, where it continues to poison anything that draws close to it.

THE POISONED WATERS

Wormwood's tail falls the following day. This time, as it passes overhead, a third of all the open water in the Tribunal becomes poisoned. This includes lakes, rivers, and streams. The water can be purified through magic or workings of scholars, but those who drink the poison suffer as though having ingested Monkshood, as per ArM5, page 180.

THE APOCALYPSE IN MICROCOSM

The later section describing the Apocalypse in full may be used in the aftermath of Wormwood's fall. Where pieces of the star fall to Earth, the strange new Lunar aura manifests, bringing with it outlandish plants and animals that populate the Lunar Sphere.

The Extraordinary Tribunals

In response to Wormwood and the becalming of the heavens, the Order of Hermes convenes a number of extraordinary Tribunals. Their aim is to order magical investigation of the heavens to gauge whether Wormwood is a sign of worse to come. Due to the disruption of the Parma Magica, the meetings are fractious and riven with mistrust.

Any magi from House Criamon who remain are convinced, despite the apparent crisis, that they have released all humanity from the horror of eternity. They are willing to submit themselves to any Earthly punishment as the price they pay for their success.

Eventually, samples of the aetheric stone are brought before the Tribunal, where debate rages around its origin and the reasons why Hermetic magic is powerless to affect it. Some believe that the biblical apocalypse is nigh and flee to live out their remaining days. Others see it as the Order's duty to set the world straight.

The Falling of the World into Ruin

Every season, there is a chance of the player characters' Tribunal being struck. The first time the Tribunal is struck, the impact is considered very distant from the player covenant. The second time that Tribunal is struck, the impact is closer. The third impact is directly over the player covenant's home region. On a near miss, the impact occurs in a neighboring Tribunal or stretch of ocean. For each season, the storyguide rolls a simple die, treating a roll of 1 as indicating the player Tribunal. For each step removed, the strike happens further away.

Characters may try to anticipate the strikes. Characters may make an Intelligence + Artes Liberales (Astronomy) Stress Roll. The target Ease Factor is 12 in order to determine which area will be affected in the next season. The roll suffers a penalty of -1 for each season beyond the

first that the astronomer is trying to divine. A successful roll informs the astronomer of which Tribunal (or other region) will be struck in the target season and an approximate date.

Example: Hildegard scours the nighttime sky, observing the ruins of the moon as they spread across the heavens. With the storyguide already determining the next few seasons of strikes against the Earth, and secretly determining that the player Tribunal will be struck in just two seasons time, Hildegard makes successive rolls for the next year. With an Intelligence of +2 and an Artes Liberales (Astronomy) of +5, she rolls 7, 9, 0 (with no botch), and 6, for totals of 13, 14, 4, and 9 once the penalties have been taken into account. She knows where the Earth will be struck in each of the next two seasons, but no further.

The World of the Apocalypse

This section describes conditions after the Apocalypse. Not only do fragments of the moon periodically fall to Earth, bringing with them fire, desolation, pestilence, and death, but the careful balance of the four Supernatural Realms is also disrupted.

DESTRUCTION

First comes the raw destruction of the world. With the lunar sphere collapsing and the Moon falling to Earth, many villages, towns, and cities are destroyed outright by aether falling from the sky. In some places, new mountains of aether replace fields, forests, and valleys, and fires burn for weeks on end. Survivors flee, taking what they can, and streams of refugees cross every land looking for safety.

SICKNESS

As the air thickens with smoke and ash, sickness sets in. Coughing, crying, and choking become the most prevalent sounds; that and prayer. The sickness is non-natural, caused by the violent environment. Choleric diseases (as listed in *Art & Academe*, pages 47 to 51 and *City and Guild*, pages 25 to 28) rise in frequency. Livestock and wild animals are similarly affected.

These conditions that promote sickness also impose a -2 aging roll modifier. This extends even to covenants in affected areas. If using the guidelines for covenant loyalty (*Covenants*, page 38) then this may affect the loyalty of the covenfolk.

LUNACY

The manifest aether across Mythic Europe has a direct impact on the mental state of the population. Just as with the *Edge of Reason* effect described below, those with a dominant sanguine humor become hysterical, those with a choler dominant humor become gripped with psychosis, those with a melancholic dominant humor become neurotic, and those with a phlegmatic dominant humor become struck with fear and horror.

Eventually, bands of similarly affected individuals group together and form strange discordant pilgrimages that roam the land. Their cries and wails can be heard in advance of their arrival. They are as much a danger to each other as to those who cross their paths.

FAMINE

Food starts to become scarce. The miller turning wheat into flour, the baker turning flour into bread, and cottage industry of brewing beer, are all gone. Those mills that may be left standing are also left idle as millers flee with their families in the hope of finding somewhere safe.

Unattended livestock die through illness and predation and fields burn and rot in equal measure. The land becomes ravaged as people take what they can from it, no longer managed by farmers and landowners.

Each year after the first, a cumulative -1 living standards modifier is imposed as food becomes more scarce and less nutritious. Covenants devoting magical resources to this problem may alleviate this penalty for their own covenfolk and any other areas that they choose to protect.

LOSS OF RULE

Mundane leaders, kings, princes, landowners, burghers, and boyars alike might quickly lose control of their people.

Each season after the first, leaders who continue to assert their leadership must make a Communication or Presence + Leadership stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9. They have a penalty to this roll equal to any negative reputation they have personally. A failure increases a "Poor Leader" reputation by one point. This reputation is used as the number of botch dice to roll should the leader roll zero. A botch indicates that an uprising is imminent, within the season. More significant botches reduce the time down from season to month, to week, to day, and then to no warning at all. If there is any kind of warning, the leader may try to escape or to confront the situation.

AETHERIC STORMS

Aether has a natural proclivity to move from east to west. As a result, powerful aetheric winds and storms race across Mythic Europe at great speed. These winds largely consist of intangible aether and so there is no physical effect upon the populace or buildings. However, these storms do influence the humors of those they pass over. Just as with the description of lunacy above, the population experiences a

temporary imbalance of their humors that results in extreme Personality Traits while the storm passes through.

Storms containing aether at higher densities can be damaging. Even at the density of stone, aether lacks the quality of hardness, but the impact can still cause harm. Those caught in such storms suffer +8 damage each diameter that they are exposed. Buildings or other shelters are sufficient to protect individuals from damage.

In some cases, aether with the density of earth, stone, and metal are caught up in the storm and these can wreak havoc. Aetheric earth moves at 100 paces per round and is dense enough to damage buildings in its path.

RISE OF THE INFERNAL

The infernal turns this calamity to its own evil advantage; leaders may cling to their rule through infernal influence, refugees may find food ahead of others in return for prayers to their demonic saviors, and demons of sicknesses might pass over those who embrace the devil.

With communities forced to flee the safety of the Dominion, demons and their agents operate more openly. While they may not manifest physically, they use their powers widely to spread fear and call the fearful to them.

RESPONSE OF THE DIVINE

The Dominion is the most accessible aspect of the Divine across Mythic Europe, but it is also the most fragile. Once a community is broken, the power of the Dominion begins to wane and a parish may fall to temptation born of desperation.

Communities led by the pious and those with True Faith may be established, providing sanctuary from the devastation outside. Some may retain the formal trappings of the Church, others may not. Some may be welcoming to all-comers, recognizing their need, others may staunchly protect their resources, perhaps even with violence.

Pilgrims become a common sight, refugees banding together to find safety and salvation. They wind their way through the landscape in search of shrines where saints may be invoked (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 87) to ease their suffering, in

search of protection, or in search of land unmolested by the apocalypse.

Angels of mercy may provide succor to those in need, but ultimately they are powerless to put right the sins of the few.

TIME

Day and night cease to mark the passage of time. Even the tides fail to keep time, and crops and other plants lose the environmental cues they rely upon for seeding, sprouting, and fruiting.

You should continue book-keeping time as normal; advance the world in season and years, but the lines between day and night, weeks and months, become blurred and most soon lose track.

Denizens of the Lunar Sphere

The lunar sphere was populated with its own plants and creatures before the apoca-

lypse and these are now spilled across the face of the Earth, trying to gain a foothold on an unusual world.

CREATURES OF LUNAR FIRE

The lunar sphere has its own deviant creatures, like twisted shadows of earthly beasts. They cling to the lunar auras for the most part, away from Earthly creatures until it is time to hunt.

All creatures from the lunar sphere and beyond possess the Lunar Animal Quality, reflecting their strange physiognomy. See the nearby box for details of this new Quality.

In all other respects, creatures of the lunar sphere can be created as per the rules for Magical Animals in *Realms of Power: Magic*, or mundane animals in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*.

THE POISONED WATERS

Earthly water contaminated with water or material from the lunar sphere is bitter and poisonous. Treat such water as a poison causing a Light Wound with an Ease Factor of 9 to resist if ingested. See ArM5, page 180 for details. The water's poisonous quality can be destroyed by a base 15 Perdo Aquam effect or similar intervention. In particular, Experimental Philosophy may also be used. See *Art & Academe*, page 67 for details.

Aetheric water originating on the moon is dangerous to the touch and is treated like vitriol, as per ArM5, page 181. A character drinking this invisible water suffers non-combat damage (stress die + 9 in this case), which may be soaked by a stress die + Stamina.

Vignettes of the Apocalypse

The following vignettes provide a little background color for those wandering through the Apocalypse.

- A lone horse in a village, trying to eat the dry thatch from a cottage roof. It would make a fair riding horse or it could feed the party for a good few days.
- A pack of dogs roams the near woodlands. They are becoming braver as they grow more hungry and desperate. They are more than a match for the occasional family that enters their territory and may even outmatch a patrol of grogs on the road.
- A peddler stops the characters to trade things he has found along the road for food or something to drink. A forlorn soul, he cannot acknowledge the devastation around him and continues to speak as though he were simply traveling from one prosperous village to another.

New Animal Quality: Lunar

A Lunar creature is invisible apart from its eyes and mouth, which glow with lunar light. Its body dissolves quickly after death, fading into intangible aether. If the creature normally leaves vis behind, this must be collected quickly or else it is scattered on the winds.

The attacks of Lunar creatures sap their victim's will. For each point of wound penalty inflicted, the victim loses one point off their highest Personality Trait. The Lunar creature may then use that point like a point of Ferocity. Should the victim survive the encounter, these lost Personality Trait points are recovered as the associated wounds heal.

A Lunar creature is immune to harmful effects of water and plants from its own Sphere.

EXAMPLE LUNAR CREATURE: WOLF

Characteristics: Cun +2, Per 0, Pre -2, Com 0, Str -1, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2
Size: -1
Confidence Score: 1 (3)
Virtues and Flaws: Improved Characteristics (x2), Ferocity (when hungry), Long-Winded, Sharp Ears, Compul-

sion (killing), Infamous

Qualities: Aggressive, Hardy, Keen Sense of Smell, Lunar*, Pack Animal/Pack Leader, Pursuit Predator, Sharp Ears, Thick Fur, Vocal

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Cowardly +3
Reputations: Bloodthirsty (local) 4

Combat:

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage 0

Soak: +4

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16)

Abilities: Athletics 5 (distance running), Awareness 3 (smell), Brawl 5 (teeth), Hunt 4 (track by smell), Survival 3 (winter)

Natural Weapons: Teeth: Init 0, Atk +3, Def +1, Dam +1. Its thick fur gives it a Protection of +1.

Appearance: The Lunar Wolf has the same shape as a wolf of the Earth, but its body is made of aether. The only hint as to its presence is the tracks it leaves and the faint silver glow from its mouth and eyes.

* Described earlier

FORESTS OF THE DEAD

A Lunar plant uses the matter in which it grows to construct its form. So, a plant growing through a body uses the flesh of that body in order to build its own form. A spore falling on stony ground weaves a body out of those stones, while a spore blown into a graveyard may cause long-buried bodies to sprout from the ground. Hermetic magic may affect these plants with the appropriate Form.

Once the plant has reached maturity, which it does across the course of a season, it buds numerous balls of fluffy spores. These are made of pure aether and the only sign of their presence is the slight sparkle in the air. These balls are delicate and easily disturbed and broken apart and an individual seed may carry far on the wind.

Once embedded in the ground, the spore sends out slender tendrils that lie in wait for a likely host. Lunar plants grow rapidly and may ensnare the unwary, either those sleeping outside or those unfortunate enough to have a spore enter their homes. When a host comes near, the seed seeks it out and latches on. This constitutes an attack roll made by the seed, as described below.

As a Lunar spore is easily missed, it is treated as only leaving faint traces, as described in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 33. This gives the seed +6 to attack, +9 to defense, and +9 to Stealth rolls.

When in the vicinity of a spore, characters make a Perception + (Awareness or Hunt) roll against the seed's Dexterity + Stealth (+9, as above). A roll is permitted each round, and until the character is successful, the spore gives the listed bonuses.

If the spore succeeds in inflicting a Light Wound or greater, then the host becomes infected. This replaces the normal Stamina roll to resist the disease. If the infection is left to grow, the host eventually becomes rooted to the ground. They experience consciousness, fatigue, hunger, and sleep as normal. While rooted, the infection progresses like a disease. Surgical intervention may be used to release an infected individual and this may involve amputation or other surgical work to separate the individual from the root.

THE LUNAR INFECTION

Critical Sanguine Disease, Severity 18
Stable 6, Improve 18, Interval: Week

This disease is the result of coming into contact with a lunar Spore. The spore grows throughout the body. (Contra-Natural)

Symptoms: The veins around the site of first infection grow hard and blackened, visible through the skin. At the end of the incubation period (typically a few days), the individual is unable to move or use that part of their body. These veins soon extrude through the skin and latch onto the ground or other hard surface, locking the infected individual into place. As the disease progresses, more of the body becomes paralyzed until the individual ultimately dies. Each time the infected character fails

a recovery roll, their most distinctive Personality Trait gains or loses a point such that it approaches a score of zero, representing the gradual erosion of their consciousness.

Impact on the Covenant

A well-supplied covenant should have little difficulty in surviving the collapsing of the spheres; they could simply lock their gates,

Lunar Spore

Lunar Might: 1

Characteristics: Cun -5, Per -5, Pre -5, Com -5, Str -5, Sta -5, Dex -5, Qik -5

Size: -18

Qualities: Camouflage (+3 to rolls to hide when not moving)

Magical Qualities: Improved Damage (bite)

Combat:

Bite: Init -5, Atk +4, Def +2, Dam -1

Wound Levels: Dead

Abilities: Brawl (bite) 5, Stealth (shadow) 5

Appearance: a tiny sharp-pointed black seed suspended by a slender stalk from a parachute of fine black hairs.

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Peasant, Enduring Constitution, Weak Characteristics, Poor Dexterity × 1

Personality Traits: Fearful +1

Combat:

Fist: Init -1, Attack -1, Defense +3, Damage +2

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: Animal Handling 2 (cattle), Area Lore: Home Village 3 (people), Athletics 1 (run), Awareness 3 (search), Bargain 1 (produce), Brawl 3 (fist), Carouse 1 (power drinking), English 5 (slang), Farmer 2 (plowing), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 3 (lying to authority), Ride 2 (mule), Survival 2 (sleeping rough)

Equipment: Workman's clothes

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: A forlorn figure of a young man locked into a reclining pose. His limbs are split open and blackened roots protrude from them and from his abdomen into the ground. He tries to cover himself with a blanket out of shame, but it too is now becoming part of him. He has one good arm, which he uses to try to shield himself from those who chance upon him.

Lost Robert suffers a -5 Fatigue penalty to all actions that he takes, which given his condition are necessarily few. He still has his memories, but his personality is all but gone.

Example Lunar Plant: Lost Robert

Robert was a young peasant farmer until the end of the world came. Robert and his family left their village, taking their livestock away to safe ground. Robert, however, was bitten by something in the night and awoke to find himself rooted to the ground and unable to leave. His family left him, fearful of trying to help.

He is almost overcome by the time the player characters come across him and both legs and an arm are now blackened, split, and rooted to the ground. The thick tendrils claw their way to his face and now and then his remaining free arm pulls at them so that he may breathe a little easier.

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +2, Sta +2, Dex -4, Qik 0

Size: 0

Age: 16 (16)

Decrepitude: 0



guard their walls, and protect their resources from the desperate population beyond.

However, as noted above, the effects of the environment and famine on the covenant's area do have an effect in terms of living conditions modifiers. These can be abated through magic and covenants may want to design specific magical effects to protect themselves. It isn't just a lack of food, however. It is hard to procure new glasswork when the craftsmen have fled their workshops and harder still to find herbs and plants when the woodlands are aflame. There is also the question of giving those tradesmen who remain the price they ask for their services. Instead of silver, they may seek safety and sanctuary with the magi.

A covenant that protects itself but not its allies may find itself under pressure or attack. A mundane leader needing to reassert his authority might direct his people to the covenant to take it from the heathen magi. Similarly, the roads become flush with robbers, which makes travel for Redcaps increasingly difficult.

Grogs may seek to bring their families to safety; a trusted and loyal grog may try to bring their brother, sister, or cousin into the covenant away from the horrors of the outside. But how do the magi manage this? If all covenfolk were free to do this then how far would the resources stretch?

The unquiet dead may also seek sanctuary at the covenant. With few burials performed according to scripture, the ghosts of the dead are free to walk. They, along with magical beasts in search of safe and secure auras, may head to the covenant.

Magic After the Apocalypse

With the fall of the lunar sphere, what was once beyond the understanding of Hermetic magi is suddenly very close. The apocalypse introduces a new Supernatural Realm, *Lunar*, representing the scattering of the lunar sphere across Mythic Europe. The working of magic within this new realm is challenging and material originating from the lunar sphere is beyond the understanding of Hermetic Magic Theory.

With the motion of the spheres ended, much common Hermetic Magic ceases to function as expected. Spells and device effects relying on Sun, Moon, or Year Duration become obsolete and fail. Those with Flexible Formulaic Magic or another means of altering the parameters of a known spell or device effect may still be able to use the effect in some way.

The Lunar Aura

In places where the lunar material rests upon the Earth, that matter starts to create a *Lunar* aura. Just as with any other supernatural aura, these Lunar auras range in size and intensity. This is typically defined by the spread of material across the area covered by the aura, and by the quantity of matter involved. Unlike other supernatural auras, this makes judging the strength of a Lunar aura

relatively easy — the greater the amount of Lunar matter, the stronger the aura.

As the aura is closely tied to the material itself, areas under a Lunar aura can be cleared of that material, thereby reducing the power of that aura. Each season's work spent clearing an area of Lunar material reduces the aura strength by one. The same could be achieved through Rego Craft Magic (*Covenants*, page 49), although being unable to directly sense the material remains a challenge.

The cleared material must go somewhere, however. Unless magically destroyed, Lunar material transported elsewhere starts to generate a new Lunar aura. By each point that a given aura is reduced, either a new level one aura is created elsewhere or another target Lunar aura is increased by one level, depending on where the material is moved to.

Impact on Hermetic Magic

The effects of the apocalypse makes working Hermetic magic more difficult in several ways. First, the matter broken off from the Lunar sphere and crashed to Earth has produced a new supernatural Lunar realm, inimical to Hermetic magic. Second, the new cosmology means that the heavens no longer operate as before, which means that certain Hermetic Durations calculated and predicated on those heavenly motions simply fail. Third, as a result of the failure of Hermetic durations, the Aegis of the

Hearth ritual and even the Parma Magica, which are tied to the Year and Sun Durations, do not function.

REALM INTERACTION

The nearby Replacement Realm Interaction Table shows the power of the Lunar Realm as an outside and foreign force imposing itself upon the Earth. The aura is beyond the experience and nature of the Earthly powers and they experience large penalties when operating within a Lunar aura.

Creatures and effects native to the lunar sphere are considered to part of that sphere and any effects they use are considered a *Lunar Power* for the purposes of realm interaction.

DURATIONS

With the heavens disrupted, so too is Hermetic understanding of the world. The calculations used in casting spells and in device effects no longer make sense, given that the spheres are held in their places. The nearby table shows which Durations still function correctly and those that are beyond use. For those that are beyond use, magi may research replacements and a number of these have been suggested.

PARMA MAGICA AND THE AEGIS OF THE HEARTH

The Sun and Year Durations are both disrupted once the lunar sphere falls. This means that both Parma Magica and the Aegis of the Hearth fail. This is a dangerous blow to the Order of Hermes as it leaves members exposed and vulnerable. If the Order can research new Durations, then the next step may be to research new versions of the Parma Magica and Aegis of the Hearth.

New Lunar Durations

The damage done to the nature of the world by the collapse of the lunar sphere means that much of the Order's common magic loses its well-understood frames of reference. For instance, with no moon in the heavens the Moon duration no longer operates and all spells and device effects that make use of it cease to function.

Magi may research new Durations, each requiring a Minor Breakthrough and around 30 Breakthrough Points (or 150 levels of experimental effects). Some examples are provided below but players are free to be creative.

The Burning of a Taper: Effects last for the duration of a lit taper, equivalent to the two minutes represented by standard Diameter effects. There is no requirement to light a taper during spells or effects with this Duration.

At the Waking or the Sleeping: Lasts until either the caster or the target next sleeps or wakes. Equivalent to Sun.

300 Miles: Lasts until the caster or any of the targets travels a total distance of 300 miles. Any distance moved at all adds to the accumulated distance. This is based on the distance on good roads that could be traveled during the standard Moon Duration. Equivalent to Moon.

The Weight of Years: The effect lasts until either the caster or the target is forced to make an aging roll. Where the caster and target are both younger than 35, this means that the effect may last several years. Artificially-induced aging rolls, through magic or other trauma, are sufficient to end the effect. Equivalent of Year. Requires a Ritual.

Of course, magi may invent spells with non-standard Durations (as per ArM5, page 114) without first making the appropriate breakthrough, but the Duration is considered one magnitude greater than it would have been had it been formalized through research.

Summary of Durations

The following table summarizes the status of the spell durations commonly used by Hermetic magi as well as some hedge wizards. Many of these, based as they are on cosmological cues, no longer function.

Standard Duration	Status	Alternative
Momentary	Functioning	This duration remains as it is
Ring	Functioning	This duration remains as it is a form of conditional duration
Concentration	Functioning	This duration remains as it is a form of conditional duration
Diameter	Non-Functioning	The Burning of a Taper
Sun	Non-Functioning	At the Waking or the Sleeping
Moon	Non-Functioning	300 Miles
Year	Non-Functioning	The Weight of Years (until the caster or the target makes an aging roll)

Durations granted by mystery cults or other traditions should be judged against this list.

New Realm Interaction Table

	Lunar Power	Magic Power	Divine Power	Faerie Power	Infernal Power
Lunar Aura	+ aura	– (5 x aura)	no effect	– (5 x aura)	– aura
Magic Aura	– aura	+ aura	no effect	+ (1/2 aura)	– aura
Divine Aura	– (3 x aura)	– (3 x aura)	+ aura	– (4 x aura)	– (5 x aura)
Faerie Aura	– aura	+ (1/2 aura)	no effect	+ aura	– aura
Infernal Aura	– aura	– aura	no effect	– (2 x aura)	+ aura

EXOTIC MAGIC AND SUPERNATURAL BEASTS

Beyond the Order of Hermes, magical traditions across the world also feel the impact of the collapsing of the spheres. Durations used in their magic are affected in the same way, which limits their power just as it does for Hermetic magi.

For the most part, the powers of supernatural beasts are unaffected by the Apocalypse. Even if their powers reference one of the prohibited durations, these are considered to be outside of cosmological influence and tied to the beast itself.

INFERNAL AND DIVINE POWERS

Infernal and Divine Powers are unaffected by the Apocalypse, with the exception of any aura-interaction penalties.

The End of Everything

It is possible that devastation will rain down on Mythic Europe for decades if not centuries to come. Unless it finds a way to deal with the new state of the world, the Order is at risk of losing its binding force; Houses and Tribunals dissolve, Redcap networks become disrupted, and individual magi and covenants are left to fend for themselves. What remains of the Order must move with uncharacteristic swiftness if it is to survive and the player magi are presented with the chance to show leadership.

Strategies for Surviving

The Apocalypse isn't necessarily the end of the saga. The Earth has changed, so the challenge becomes one of surviving this new hostile world. There are a number of ways in which your player characters may approach that challenge, ranging from destroying the Lunar influence on the Earth to fleeing the world to the supernatural realms.

LEARN AETHERIC MAGIC

Slay utterly, old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark

Ezekiel: 9:3

The most immediate option for restoring a region is to destroy or remove the aetheric material that fell from the lunar sphere. The first step is to learn Aetheric Magic (as described below), which can be done either by recreating the research, likely with the help of the appropriate laboratory texts, or by initiation or tuition from members of House Criamon.

If the magi can learn to target the aether then they could move or destroy it. As an alternative, they could bury it deep within the Earth. Riding the area of such material removes the lunar auras from that region, separates any Lunar denizens from their source of power, and restores much of the natural order of the Earth.

LEARN OTHER MAGICS

There may be *other* types of magic to be learned, allowing the Order to rebuild. The experimental philosophy of *Art & Academe* is an entirely natural means of producing wondrous effects. It relies on the natural properties of substances and phenomena to allow the creation of Ligatures, which provide bonuses to given actions, or the invention and use of Formulae, which directly query or affect the natural

world. In particular, Alchemical Reagents may take natural processes to an extreme degree. While unable to mimic an *unnatural* effect, such as turning water into wood, it could turn water into extremely pure, cold, or hard ice. These effects are completely natural, which confounds magic resistance provided by Aegis of the Hearth or Parma Magica. Formulae are typically recorded in academic texts and seeking these texts out and learning their secrets provides a line of stories in this new world.

Similarly, Objects of Virtue, as presented in *Realms of Power: Magic*, provide a low-power but reliable means of working magic. These are supernatural objects, animals, plants, and minerals, that grant powers or Virtues to those who use them. Their power is intrinsic and does not rely on an academic or folk understanding of magic. This means that any duration or similar parameter that the magus finds difficult after the apocalypse still functions as normal for these objects. They are typically of low power, but their reliability could be leveraged. The same is true of Extraordinary Vis, also described in *Realms of Power: Magic*, containing intrinsic spell, ritual, or device-like powers.

REGIONES AND THE SUPERNATURAL REALMS

With strong enough magic, magi could create deep regiones within which they could find some kind of sanctuary. They would exchange the supernatural and harmful effects of lunar auras and storms of aether for areas of confinement and warping for those they bring with them.

Magi who withdraw to the Magic Realm find that their command over Hermetic magic returns to them, within the boundaries set out in *Realms of Power: Magic*. Routes into the Magic Realm operate as before, so if the magi can find either a magical beast able to step from the mundane world to the Magic Realm they can follow. Alternatively, they can get there by traversing a sequence of magical regiones.

Escape into the Divine or Infernal Realms represents journeys from which there is no return. However, the Faerie Realm offers the same haven as the Magic Realm and the same opportunity to rebuild and plan.

It is safe to assume that many magi, both Hermetic and otherwise, would take this route out. Some may intend to return, others to hide out their days. There is great story potential in trying to find those magi who may hold the key to restoring the world who have lost themselves within the Magic Realm.

Initiation Script: Aetheric Magic

Target Level: 21

Script Bonus: +13

Description: The initiate must travel to Megiddo (+3), bringing vis to pay for their tuition (+1), where the mystagogue spends time teaching the initiate (+3). The initiation causes a version of a Criamon Stigma to manifest upon the initiate's brow (+3). This grants the Disfigured Flaw. The initiate swears that they will further disseminate the knowledge of Aetheric Magic any way they can, gaining the Vow Minor Personality Flaw (+3).

Appendix: Touching the Sky

*Now, now, you stars that move in your right spheres,
Where be your powers?*

History of King John: Act V, Scene 7

This section explores the magical research undertaken by House Criamon, providing sample projects and some of the completed effects created along the way. The player characters may discover the research while it is still in progress, and this may offer ways to intervene and stop the Criamon.

In addition to providing Laboratory Texts, Casting Tablets, and devices that the player characters may discover, these also provide guidance for players wishing to learn how to affect the super-lunar spheres, which could be pivotal to reversing the damage done by House Criamon.

The breakthrough of Aetheric Magic (Hermetic Breakthrough requiring 100 breakthrough points) is completed by House Criamon during the course of this story. This opens the door to new breakthroughs related to the other spheres.

There are two means of accumulating the required breakthrough points: through original research or through studying a source of insight. Both require the magus to study and develop new spells, rituals, or enchantments. As the magus develops more of these effects, so they learn until ultimately they complete their breakthrough into a new and unique understanding of Hermetic magic.

The full rules for achieving these breakthroughs are not reproduced here, but references to the relevant books have been provided. In short, magi experiment upon effects with the aim of gaining a discovery on the Extraordinary Results table (ArM5, page 109). Once the discovery has been made and the effect successfully duplicated, each magnitude of effect contributes one breakthrough point toward the specific breakthrough. In the case of a Hermetic Breakthrough requiring 60 points, the magus must experiment upon and stabilize 300 levels-worth of effects.

Alternatively, a magus may study a text, phenomenon, or from a tutor. This insight reveals the workings of a specific effect that may go beyond the accepted workings of

Hermetic magic. Recreating that effect using Hermetic understanding again provides one breakthrough point per magnitude.

It is possible to invent new magical Durations that do not rely on cosmological time, and subsequently new versions of Parma Magica and the Aegis of the Hearth. Each of the new Durations represents a Minor Breakthrough requiring 30 breakthrough points, while a New Parma Magica or Aegis of the Hearth would take 60 points.

Hermetic Breakthrough: Aetheric Magic

The key to breaking the Limit of the Lunar Sphere is in learning how to affect the substance of the ethereal spheres themselves: aether. As discussed above, it has no discernible properties, exhibits a constant motion, and is resistant to change through mundane means. However, aether is present on the Earth. Its presence accounts for the way that the motion of the heavens is able to influence events and the fate and behavior of individuals under its sway.

By understanding these effects House Criamon have gained the ability to affect aether itself; they have created the new Hermetic Form of Aether, allowing them to use the five Hermetic Techniques to create, inspect, change, manipulate, and destroy aether both on Earth and in the heavens. This is a true Hermetic Breakthrough requiring 100 breakthrough points.

The original research projects must investigate or replicate some natural process that either interacts with or is influenced by aether. Insight can be gained from phenomena associated with aether, such as certain spirits. However these points are gained, a minimum of 20 points must be gained from projects associated with each of the Hermetic Techniques, which equates to 100 levels of experimental effects for each Technique.

On completion of this project, the magus gains the Aetheric Magic Major Hermetic Virtue and the new Art of Aether at a starting score of 13 with a further nine experience points left over. This is based on the guideline presented in *Ancient Magic*, page 9, in which the researcher converts the Breakthrough Points to Experience Points, with which to buy the associated Ability. In this case, it is an Art being bought. 100XP buys a score of 13 for 91XP, leaving nine to carry forward.

Appendix: Aetheric Magic

The Major Hermetic Virtue of Aetheric Magic grants knowledge of the new Hermetic Form of Aether. This represents a form of matter previously hidden from Hermetic magic but which exhibits great force over earthly phenomena, such as the tides, the fates of individuals, and even the rise and fall of sickness and madness. As such, Aether spells can be used to heighten or reduce the influence of the heavens, to create aetheric objects, or to make changes to the nature of aether itself.

The new Form is a full addition to Magic Theory and each of the Techniques can be applied to it in order to generate magical effects. The standard rules for accounting for rituals apply.

The Aetheric Library

Until the conclusion of the End of Time storyline, House Criamon possesses the only library of books on the Form of Aether and spells that use it. These spells and effects were created as a means to spread the knowledge of the new Form throughout the House.

NEW SPELLS

It is important to note that spells that create aetheric objects must still penetrate the Magic Resistance of anyone or anything they are used against. However, as aether is a material unknown to Hermetic magic, magi without knowledge of the Form of Aether do not receive any Form bonus either as part of their Magic Resistance or as a soak bonus to reduce any damage received.

Spells exist to create a base individual amount of aether at each level of density and to detect the presence of aether using the Vision Target. As Aether has few natural properties and given that magic finds it hard to create aether at high density, aether is ill-suited to offensive magic in the same way as Ignem or Terram and few such spells exist.

The Unseen Barrier

CrAe 35

R: Touch, D: Concentration, T: Individual

This spell creates a wall of aether, anchored to the ground, in an arc described by the caster. The wall has the density of tightly-packed earth and is four paces wide, by two paces tall, and about one pace thick, enough to arrest the charge of any assailants or projectiles. Like all aether, the wall itself is invisible, but it does give off a glow.

(Base 25, +1 Touch, +1 Concentration)

The Fall

CrAe 35

R: Voice, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Creates an amount of aether with the density of earth that travels 50 paces in an arc during the round in which the spell is cast. If this aether is aimed at an individual, a Perception + Finesse roll is made against the target's Defense roll. If successful, the target takes +30 damage.

(Base 5, +4 for density of stone, +2 Voice)

The Edge of Reason

CrAe(Co) 20

R: Sight, D: Moon, T: Individual

Creates an amount of intangible aether within a target person. This influences the individual's most prominent humor, which increases the individual's strongest Personality Trait by 3 points and grants a new +3

Personality Trait for the spell's duration according to the character's dominant humor.

Sanguine	Hysteric
Choleric	Psychotic
Melancholic	Neurotic
Phlegmatic	Fearful

(Base 1, +3 Sight, +3 Moon, +1 Corpus Requisite)

The Invisible Revealed

InAe 20

R: Personal, D: Concentration, T: Vision

Allows the caster to see all aether in his presence, whether that aether is unbounded, intangible or dense, or manifest within another object or individual. This is sufficient to allow the caster

Sample Aetheric Magic Projects

Laboratory notes for each of the following projects are in the possession of House Criamon. The examples below provide a total of 84 breakthrough points. There are also texts on many other failed experiments. See *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 26 for details on the experimental process and *Ancient Magic*, page 8 for details of gaining insight.

CREO PROJECTS

Beyond the two example projects below, a further 8 breakthrough points are needed from Creo effects.

The Gift of Moonlight

CrIg 25

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Boundary, Ritual

This ritual illuminates a standard boundary with moonlight equivalent to a full moon throughout a standard Moon Duration. Those brought within the boundary who would normally experience any effects or changes due to the full moon experience those while within the affected boundary.

This demonstrates greater power than simple CrIg spells that just create light; the light created is *moonlight* carrying the aether that so affects people.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +3 Moon, +4 Boundary)

Endurance of the Witch Moon

Cr(Mu)Vi 35

R: Voice, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Similar to the common spell The Enigma's Gift (ArM5, page 157), this spell causes the target to gain four Warping Points. However, in the case of characters with a specific response to Warping, the effect of these points is to force the target to undergo the Witch Moon just as if the affected target were a member of the Folk Witch hedge tradition, as described in *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition*, page 42. Enduring the Witch Moon is automatic. This replaces the normal effects of gaining two or more Warping Points, which for Hermetic magi is a roll for Twilight.

This effect is inspired by observing the Witch Moon endured by a subject Folk Witch.

If you are not using the *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* rules, then the following should suffice:

The target immediately develops a fever, treated as a Medium Wound. For the period of a month, the target is unable to draw upon their Gift either to use Supernatural Abilities or to cast spells. This potentially disrupts laboratory work, although the use of enchanted devices is unaffected. At the end of the month, make a roll to see if the Witch Moon has passed:

TO END WITCH MOON:

Stamina – Warping Score + stress die vs
Ease Factor 6

If this roll fails, then the target gains another Warping Point and the Witch Moon lasts for another month, inflicting another Medium Wound on the due to fever. Roll again at the end of the second month and so forth, until the target recovers. If the roll to end the Witch Moon is botched, the target gains an additional number of Warping Points equal to the number of 0s of the botch die. Note that the penalties due to wounds do not affect this roll.

(Base 20, +2 Voice, +1 special)

INTELLEGO PROJECTS

If the projects below are completed, no further breakthrough points from Intellego effects are needed.

Know the Quality of the Man

InCo 35

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Individual, Ritual

The caster of this ritual gains information on the target's location and the state of the humors within the target Individual, who must be present throughout the casting of the ritual, across the duration of a year. This allows the magus to record the changes in the target's humors in response to celestial events and circumstances appropriate for their location. In doing so, the magus learns more about the effects of aether upon the humors, ultimately enough to detect the very aether itself once the final breakthrough has been made.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +4 year)

Sample Aetheric Magic Projects (Cont'd)

Know the Moon's Influence

InMe 15

R: Sight, D: Momentary, T: Individual

Determines the extent to which the moon and its pull upon earthly aether is affecting the target individual. This may reveal, for instance, whether an individual with lycanthropy is close to undergoing a change, an individual with Cyclic Magic tied to the moon is experiencing a bonus or a penalty, or any Personality Traits are under lunar influence.

(Base: 4, +3 Sight)

Observe the Color of the (Sphere) Sphere

InVi 50

Pen +0, 1 use per Day

R: Personal, D: Concentration, T: Vision

Enchanted into a lens, this effect detects subtle variations in light emitted by the specified sphere, with each lens designed for a particular celestial sphere as denoted by the symbols engraved around its edge.

The effect is designed to detect the active magical influence of the spheres, so the base level is relatively low. The effect must collect as much separate information as possible and so the additional magnitudes required increase the level of the effect.

(Base: 5, +1 Concentration, +4 vision, +1 for non-Hermetic, +2 Technique and Form; Modifications: +5 Device maintains concentration)

MUTO PROJECTS

The two projects below provide all the required breakthrough points required from Muto effects.

Curse of the Werewolf

MuCo(An, Me) 45

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Individual, Ritual

Over the course of a year, the target suffers from lycanthropy: the curse of the werewolf. With each full moon, the target transforms into the semblance of a wolf, losing both human body and mind to be replaced by lupine savagery. The effect goes beyond Hermetic understanding through the continued response to the moon without recourse to a device effect or linked trigger.

This effect is inspired by observing the repeated transformations of a werewolf.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +4 Year, +1 for Mentem requisite, +1 special effect)

Alteration of the Birth Horoscope

MuCo(Vi) 55

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Individual, Ritual

Using insight from the observations of three-score horoscopes, this spell masks the essential birth horoscope for the given target, altering the effects of the heavens upon the target. Horoscopes created for this individual fail unless calculated using new birth information defined during the ritual, including the place, date, and time of birth, among other factors. Effects that derive a horoscope from a magical understanding of the target function as normal, but any information gained relates to the altered birth information.

The original horoscope reasserts itself at the end of the spell's duration.

The effect is inspired by taking horoscopes for three-score individuals, each related to one or more of the others.

(Base 30, +1 Touch, +4 Year)

PERDO PROJECTS

If the projects below are completed, a further two breakthrough points are needed from new Perdo effects.

The Becalmed Harbor

PeAq 55

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Part, Ritual

This project removes the naturally-occurring aether from within the waters of a harbor or bay. In doing so, the aether in the heavens is unable to influence the motion of the waters and all tides stop throughout the Moon Duration. The ocean neither rises nor falls as before, but rather retains the level at the point it occupies when the ritual concludes.

(Base 15, +1 Touch, +3 Moon, +1 Part, +3 Size)

Heighten the Mind

PeMe 35

R: Voice, D: Moon, T: Individual

Removes four points of Personality Traits from the individual, which return one-by-one across the Duration. They are taken from weakest Personality Trait first.

When that reaches zero, the next least prominent Trait is affected. Negative Traits are similarly affected, but their scores are increased toward zero.

This has the effect of removing the checks and balances afforded by the lesser Personality Traits, leaving the mind influenced by its most prominent Traits only.

(Base 10, +2 Voice, +3 Moon)

REGO PROJECTS

A further six breakthrough points from Rego effects are needed if the projects below are completed.

The Strengthening Tide

ReAq 40

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Part

This spell makes the movement of the tides more extreme throughout a port or natural bay, forcing them to rise higher and fall lower, and with greater speed. The effects are to impose a -1 penalty to all swimming and sea-faring rolls and totals along the affected coast.

By observing the motion of the tides for a season or more in conjunction with the brightness of the moon, the magus gains insight into the effect that heavenly aether has upon the aether resident within the oceans. By replicating and strengthening that effect across the Moon Duration, the magus learns more about how aether behaves.

(Base 4, +1 Touch, +3 Moon, +1 Part, +3 Size)

The Mania of Others

ReMe 30

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Individual

This spell moves the mania or other mental illness from one individual to another for Moon Duration. The two individuals must have different dominant humors (Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholic, and Phlegmatic) for the effect. The mania returns to the originating individual after this point. This provides the magus with an understanding of how shifts in these humors, as might be induced by the movement of the heavens, affect the mind.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Moon, +1 special)



to then affect that aether with further spells.
(Base 3, +1, +4 Vision)

Aetheric Fire

MuAe(Ig) 35

R: Sight, D: Concentration, T: Individual

This spell gives the target intangible aether the unnatural quality of heat. The default quality makes the aether noticeably warm, but does no damage. However, this effect increases the intensity of the heat such that it does +10 damage to those within the area of effect.

This effect has a number of advantages over the much lower level equivalent Crlg effect. First, the aetheric fire cannot itself be affected by non-aetheric effects, second if the aether is intangible it can pass through physical barriers in its way, and third those caught in the fire do not benefit from any Ig-nem Form bonus they might possess.

(Base 10, +3 Sight, +1 Concentration, +1 intensity)

LABORATORY TEXTS

Translated laboratory texts exist for all spells contained in the library.

ARCANE KNOWLEDGE

The library contains four Tractatus on the Art of Aether at Quality 9 and four at quality 8. These are accompanied by the four summae, each at Level 4, two at Quality 9 and two at Quality 10. Each of these twelve volumes may be studied as a source of insight (as per the rules in *Ancient Magic*) and each provides inspiration for one of the projects

used to create the Hermetic Form of Aether.

There are no books yet on Lunar Lore, the new Ability governing knowledge of the auras across Mythic Europe. There is no knowledge at all of that new supernatural realm until at least after Wormwood falls to Earth. Only then do magi and others start to learn about this strange new power.

The Form of Aether (Ae)

Aether is the Art governing the aether that forms the heavenly spheres and is found within objects, living and dead, upon the Earth.

The base Individual for Aether depends upon its density. The base Individual for intangible aether is a circle of the sky equal in size to the sun. However, it is possible to manipulate aether at higher densities, such as the density of fire, air, water, earth, stone, and metal, though this typically involves increased magnitudes of effect. At these densities, the size of the

base Individual is equal to the equivalent Hermetic Form.

Where the aether *within* earthly matter is targeted, the base Individual is as appropriate for that earthly matter.

Aether exhibits a constant circular motion from East to West. This is also true of aether created through Creo Aethera effects. Its speed of motion is determined by its density; one pace per round for a density of metal, ten paces per round for stone, 100 paces for earth, 1,000 for water, 10,000 for fire, 100,000 for air, and 1,000,000 for intan-

gible aether.

To the best of Hermetic understanding, there are *at least* ten Provinces in the Magic Realm, each associated with one of the ten accepted Hermetic Forms (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 24). Magi who gain knowledge of the new Form of Aether may recognize the associated Province on future visits to the Magic Realm.

Form Bonus: Soak against damage inflicted by aether, rolls to resist the influence of aether on the humors.

Pronounced "AY-ther" and "Ay-ther-Ah"

The Form of Aether (Æ) (Cont'd)

CREO AETHERA GUIDELINES

Creo Aethera spells create a quantity of aether. Creating that aether in some unusual or worked shape is one magnitude higher than the listed values.

Having no conventional physical properties, aether is intangible at its lowest density, but it can be brought together into progressively more dense accretions, accounting for the moon and stars. While aether itself remains invisible regardless of density, it does emit light, which becomes brighter as the aether becomes more dense.

- Level 1: Create an amount of intangible aether.
- Level 3: Create an amount of aether with the density of fire.
- Level 5: Create an amount of aether with the density of air.
- Level 15: Create an amount of aether with the density of water.
- Level 25: Create an amount of aether with the density of earth.
- Level 30: Create an amount of aether with the density of stone or glass.
- Level 35: Create an amount of aether with the density of metal.

INTELLEGO AETHERA GUIDELINES

Intellego Aethera spells are not affected by the density of the aether. They allow the magus to detect the presence of aether, any unnatural properties or qualities given the aether, and to communicate with entities formed from aether. As aether is naturally invisible, only giving off light, a magus cannot normally see aether even at high densities. Intellego Aethera spells allow the magus to sense aether, which is sufficient to then target that aether with

further magical effects.

- Level 1: Sense the presence of unbounded aether.
- Level 3: Sense the presence of aether within another material.
- Level 5: Sense unnatural properties possessed by aether.
- Level 15: Speak with an aetheric spirit.
- Level 20: Speak with an aetheric creature.
- Level 25: Speak with an aetheric plant.

MUTO AETHERA GUIDELINES

Muto Aethera spells grant properties that aether would otherwise not have and to transmute it into another substance. The guidelines below are for intangible aether. Add successive magnitudes for aether with densities of fire, air, water, earth, stone, and metal.

- Level 1: Give aether the property of emitting one type of sensory species.
- Level 3: Give aether the property of emitting three types of sensory species.
- Level 5: Give aether the property of emitting five types of sensory species. Change the speed of aether's natural motion.
- Level 10: Give aether an unnatural property, such as heat, cold, dryness, or moisture.
- Level 15: Change aether into one of the elemental Forms (Aquam, Auram, Ignem, Terram)

Level 20:

Change aether into one of the living Forms (Animal, Corpus, Herbam, Mentem)

Level 25:

Change aether into one of the intangible Forms (Imaginem, Vim)

PERDO AETHERA GUIDELINES

Perdo Aethera spells may be used to destroy an amount of aether. Doing so is particularly difficult, however.

The guidelines below are for intangible aether. Add successive magnitudes for aether with densities of fire, air, water, earth, stone, and metal.

- Level 5: Destroy a single property of aether.
- Level 10: Destroy a quantity of free aether.
- Level 15: Destroy a quantity of aether contained within other material.

REGO AETHERA GUIDELINES

Rego Aethera moves aether between naturally-occurring densities, allowing the magus to accrete aether into higher densities or to disperse it into lower density. Magnitude adjustments are required based on the highest density. Aether does not naturally return to its former density, instead remaining in its magically-induced state.

- Level 2: Ward an individual or area against aether.
- Level 3: Change the density of aether within the target area.
- Level 5: Move aether from one location to another.



Chapter Three

Fimbulwinter: The Cold Doom

The end of the world need not arrive in fire and blood; it could come with the cold, inexorable march of ice and snow. The Fimbulwinter supposedly heralds the coming of Ragnarok, and while eddas foretell blustery snow for three consecutive seasons, the prematurely invoked winter described here washes over the world and remains until its power is broken. The result is bleak world without summer, full of starvation and misery.

A group of Jotun-bound servants, known as the Muspelli and detailed in *Rival Magic*, plans to precipitate Fimbulwinter. This is the Muspelli's very purpose, but until this moment, their Gift has prevented them from coming together. The player magi might well realize that there is a conspiracy to enact Fimbulwinter before it succeeds. In such situations, a covenant is faced with the hard decision of preparing to survive the coming perpetual Winter or attempting to stop its fulfillment.

What You Need To Run This Saga

Fimbulwinter absolutely relies on the Muspelli section of *Rival Magic*, with some material from *Realms of Power: Magic*. *Rival Magic* should be considered essential. *Realms of Power: Magic* is extremely useful for generating additional magical foes and some of the Muspelli shapeshifting forms. Tribunal books like *Guardians of the Forest*, *The Lion and the Lily*, and *The Contested Isle* provide useful material to storyguides who have not defined these areas but wish to set events there. If desired, *Hedge Magic* has details for those wishing to use hedge witches and vitkir as foes or allies, but their inclusion in this saga isn't required.

Few communities possess the resources for both, and at its heart, this saga is an asymmetric war against a foe who needs no power bases beyond the necessities to create Fimbulwinter, while the covenant must decide whether to oppose the Muspelli or commit to expeditions sent to prepare new sanctuaries, frantically collecting supplies and personnel, all while enduring a situation which is constantly getting worse.

To Stand Against Winter

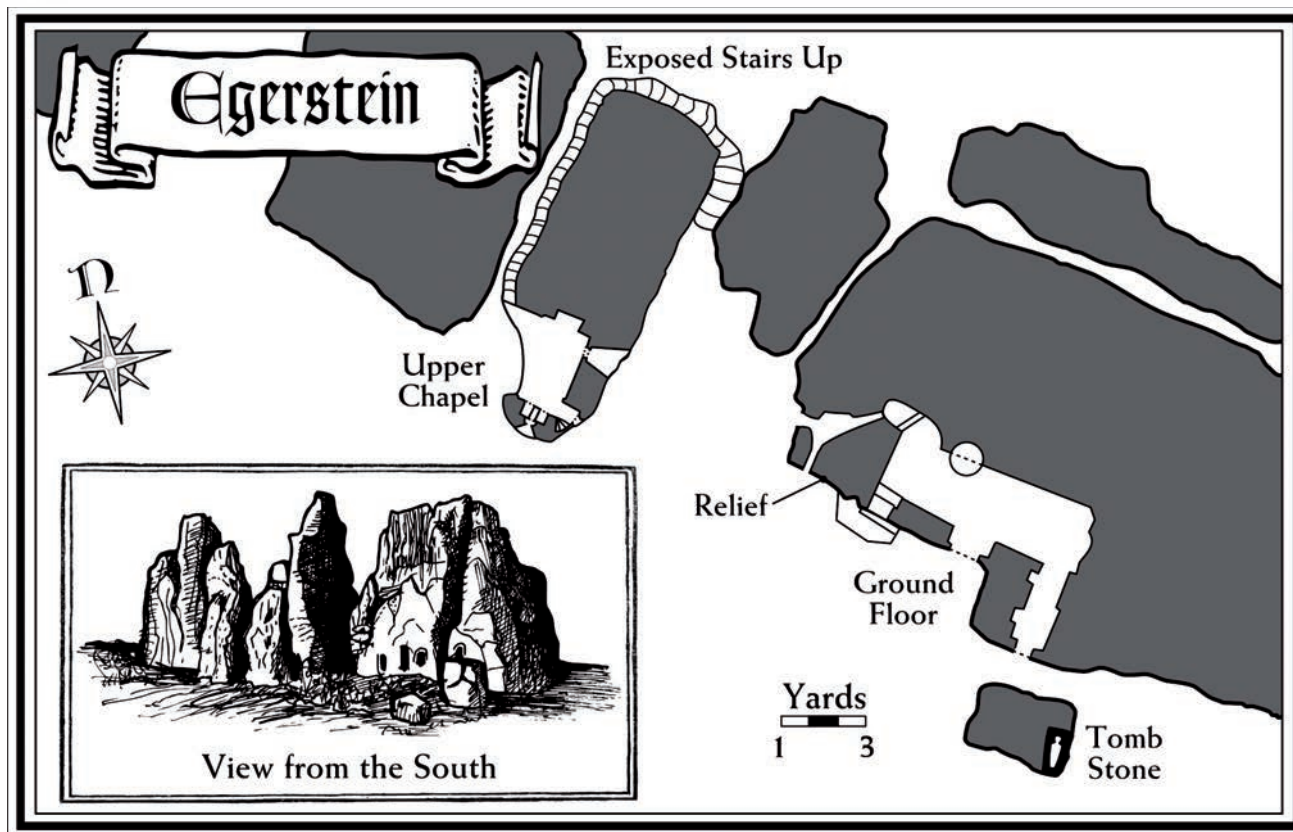
For Hermetic wizards working to stop Fimbulwinter, many options exist for investigating the Muspelli as they prepare to enact their grand strategy, but the saga is ideally set in a Tribunal such as the Greater Alps (the northern portion), Normandy, Novgorod (the Baltic states), or Rhine. Others regions, like Hibernia, Loch Leglean, Provence, or Stonehenge require a bit more work on the part of the storyguide. Sagas set in the latter regions both put the Muspelli at an advantage due to the distance between the magi and the majority of the Muspelli activities, and draw attention to Muspelli operations near the Hermetic magi because of their novelty.

The Saga's Scope and Focus

The Muspelli plan to bring winter to all of Mythic Europe through circumstances enabled by a perfect combination of individual leadership and inspiration derived

from the knowledge of the chained Norse giants. A single, Gently Gifted Muspelli named Ingvar leads them as a distributed cabal. He has managed a breakthrough. Ingvar discovered a way to alter the ritual used to summon their Jotun (pl. *Jotnar*) patrons, and instead summon Aspects of the Daimon of Fimbulwinter, a feat no other Muspelli has managed before. Ingvar believes that once these Aspects are unleashed on Mythic Europe, civilization will be sufficiently disrupted by the ensuing Fimbulwinter that the Muspelli will be able to either rule the ruins or free Loki and bring about Ragnarok. In a situation not unlike the very early Order, he has managed to convince a group of Muspelli to work with him, and they are committed to his plan, even if they don't trust or even don't know each other. Because this plan doesn't require the Muspelli to work together, but simply all perform the same activity in different places, it stands a reasonable chance of success.

The pagan wizards plan to unleash multiple Aspects of the very embodiment of Fimbulwinter itself. By enacting a special variant of their ceremonial spells, called *utisetá*, at various pagan holy places known as *Irminsul*, the Muspelli summon powerful Magical spirits driven to cover the world in snow and ice. This time-consuming and challenging process requires that the Muspelli gather resources, find proper locations, and finally cast their *utisetá* at different locations all across Mythic Europe. However, the fact no one knows their intent or their targets gives the Muspelli the advantage. Only they know they are at war as this saga begins. Once they know the locations of *Irminsul* and learn the ritual to summon Aspects, there is no arbitrary date or time when the summoning must occur; the Muspelli can simply continue unleashing an Aspect for every *Irminsul* they find and replacing defeated



Aspects with new summons when necessary. With Fimbulwinter established, the Muspelli believe the liberation of Loki and the commencement of Ragnarok are imminent, possibly leading into another of the sagas offered within this book.

The saga starts very close to the beginning of the Muspelli's plans, and must consider the Muspelli process of building personal power by acquiring their personal talismans, known as *gandur* (pl. *gandar*), and performing the scouting expeditions later allowing them to create Fimbulwinter. It must hint at the machinations to distract their enemies and the slow acquisition of undead warbands meant to decimate local communities now, and serve as the Muspelli's foot soldiers later. This saga should consider the Muspelli cognizant enough of the Order of Hermes to know they must be wary of it, but not so familiar with Hermetic magi that they take every potential precaution. It considers the divisive internal politics which wrack the Order after their discovery. However, the saga cannot create a story with a foregone conclusion. There's little entertainment in a tale which occurs completely off-screen and then imposes a terrible cataclysm without warning.

The Order of Hermes must have an opportunity to interfere and succeed.

Introducing the Enemy

The presentation of a long-term opponent, like the Muspelli, requires a slow and steady hand. Early in the saga, the Muspelli should be directly encountered very rarely; the only evidence of their existence should be the consequences of their actions, the victims of their ambition, or the broken survivors of their arrogance. This means that the Muspelli should begin with some allies, to better allow for the necessary distance between them and the player covenant.

Consider the saga in three stages.

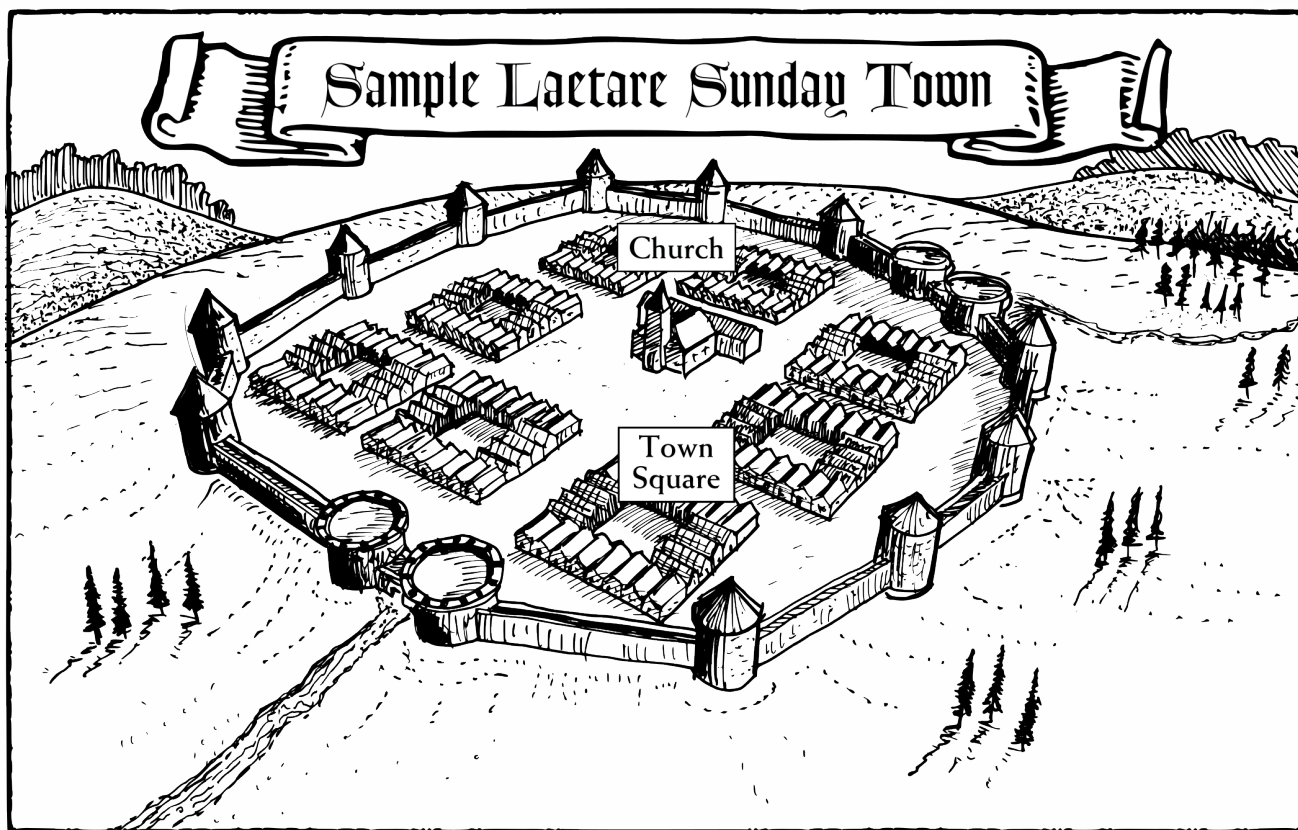
THE FIRST STAGE, BEGINNING THE PATH

The start of this saga involves stories foreshadowing the plans for Fimbulwinter, where the magi encounter the aftermath or the servants of the Muspelli as they search for at least two Irminsul, collect vis, perform personal initiations, develop their powers, and build alliances. Such arcs gradually increase tension, providing opportunities to investigate and possibly discover the larger plot, but often leave

the magi to believe that the individual, strange pagan wizards are operating with unrelated intentions. This stage gradually builds, as the Muspelli roam across Mythic Europe; consider at least one story for the Muspelli to improve themselves, another arc where they are gathering resources like vis, allies, or information on potential targets, and a third storyline where they discover either the covenant's Irminsul or another one in the region. More storylines are certainly possible, as the Muspelli and covenant interact. This phase might take three to seven years, or longer, depending on the pace you wish to set for your saga.

THE SECOND STAGE, EMERGING THREAT

Stage two begins when the Muspelli realize the need to make preparations for Hermetic interference while they continue searching. Many or all of them have found one Irminsul and search for a second. The Muspelli occasionally pause their search to build more alliances with mundanes and create mobs of patiently waiting Walking Dead, sabotage vis sites, and identify other hedge wizards or supernatural creatures for



later sacrifice. The Muspelli are a very patient tradition, who take the time to learn what threats exist around their objectives, and create situations to observe how local powers respond. Muspelli who have located at least two Irminsul return to Ingvar to complete their initiation, learning the ceremony that will summon an Aspect of Fimbulwinter. This phase might take five to seven years.

THE THIRD STAGE, UNLEASHING WINTER

Armed with their newfound knowledge of the Aspect summoning, the Muspelli now scatter back across Mythic Europe, returning to their previously identified Irminsul sites to enact the ritual. With the magic spirits loosed upon the countryside, the Muspelli continue looking for more Irminsul, seeking out other Muspelli whom they can train to master the summoning, and engaging in general acts of disruptive mayhem using the information they learned and the resources they put in place during the first stage. What had been a nebulous or shadowy threat now escalates into active conflict as Fimbulwinter spreads its frigid blanket across the world; the char-

acters must either address the problem or deal with the consequences. If the magi ignored many of the Muspelli threats prior to this stage, then this might prove quite difficult as many Aspects are released. On the other hand, this stage could be easier, with few Aspects released, if the magi effectively contained and addressed the Muspelli threat. This phase may take a year or two years to blossom into its full glory and continues until the Muspelli or the magi die.

Considering these objectives helps link the saga's progression to actual story arcs, and simplifies the process of designing stories.

Winter's Heralds

The distributed and cellular nature of the Muspelli cabal and its supporters means hunting for each member presents its own challenge. While this material presents several members and their etin-mods, a storyguide should also utilize the two Muspelli offered in *Rival Magic* (pages 87 and 88). Statistics for these antagonists are presented in Appendix 1. Remember, they do not suffer from General flaws

while in their etin-mod.

While these individuals regularly operate with a small band of followers who are comfortable with the Muspelli's presence and commands, much like covenfolk, mapping out their development provides storyguides a better idea of where they can be found at any time. Leif and Kotkill are weaker Muspelli, more suited as early foes who might be defeated physically. Gunnvara and Magnus are best considered median foes, challenging the characters as the story builds to a climax, while Ingvar fills the role of grizzled zealot leader.

KOTKILL ULFSBRODIR

Youngest of the Muspelli presented at the age of 25, Kotkill's statistics can be found on page 87 of *Rival Magic*. Feral and Mute in human form, Kotkill lurks on the fringes of civilization where he can hunt man and beast alike while running with the pack of wolves led by his foster brother Wolf of Virtue (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 55). His skill with Sjonhverling means the pack can ambush foes seemingly out of nowhere. He is swift and rapacious, and commonly ranges quite far, seeking out prey and potential uti-

seta sites. He was the most difficult member for Ingvar to recruit, and while he understands the plan, Kotkill sees Fimbulwinter as his chance to hunt anything anywhere in creation with impunity. This glorious world sounds like paradise to Kotkill, and so he happily pursues Ingvar's agenda.

LEIF ORMSBRODIR

Leif favors coastal regions and ports, where he can attack merchants and remote communities with relative impunity. While not as experienced as the other Muspelli, he is a very physical force. His powers of Shapeshifting can prove quite dangerous for opponents, whether he takes the form of a lindwurm or bear for a raid while retaining his intelligence, or turns a foe into a salmon. Storyguides should tailor his known shapes based on the region where they place him, but a wide variety is best. His Mute flaw in human form means he is safe from nearly all mundane interrogation, and he might operate alone, but his Weakness for women and his Curse of Venus mean Leif is inclined to seek out taverns and alehouses, hungering for some kind of social interaction, even if it's impacted by his Gift. He deeply desires to rule men and be desired, to create a legacy, and feels creating Fimbulwinter provides the opportunity to gain those things.

MAGNUS NORN

Magnus actually works to infiltrate aspects of mundane society, despite the negative effects of his Gift. He plants suggestions and coordinates otherwise unwitting mundane allies to support Muspelli actions. Magnus' weakness for alcohol serves as a potential method for thwarting him, how-

ever. His powers of Entrancement, Premotions, Threads of Fate and Sjonhverling mean Magnus can operate very effectively from the shadows, serving as a hated but secretive spymaster who can bring otherwise impossible-to-coordinate forces to bear on Muspelli activities. His regular Premotions and the magical defense associated with Spadomur can help keep the Muspelli one step ahead of the player characters or provide unexpected advantages. Magnus believes in the Muspelli's cause with nearly the same fervor as Ingvar; he hopes to free and serve Loki, becoming a great power in the shattered world to come.

GUNNVARA JARNVIDJA

For Gunnvara, consider exchanging her Entrancement score (9+2) with her Valgaldrar score (6) when referencing her statistics from page 88 of *Rival Magic*. She focuses primarily on acquiring hosts of Walking Dead for later attacks on communities and to defend utisetia sites as Muspelli cast. She uses her Shapeshifting to travel quickly between locations, giving her a vast range, though she is described as being focused in Denmark and Germany, and animals should be appropriate to the regions where she operates. When not hunting Irminsul, she haunts battlefields, plague outbreaks, leper colonies, and war-torn regions, taking up as many of the fallen as possible and marching them away under the cover of darkness. Gunnvara works to conceal many of these hordes all over Mythic Europe. She sees Fimbulwinter as her chance to crush the Church and punish the society which has always marginalized her. She finds Magnus strangely attractive, but doesn't quite know how to address these feelings.

INGVAR SUTTUNGJA

Ingvar is presented as the leader, the visionary founder of the Fimbulwinter campaign, and takes on a persona as "Lokeshafir," or Loki's Goat, when dealing with other Muspelli. His Gentle Gift and wide filial ties to a mercenary company give him an excellent base of mundane power, while his Gentle Gift and Unaffected by the Gift Virtues make him the most capable of inspiring the rest of the Muspelli. Ingvar begins the saga knowing the location of one Irminsul, and when the

first Muspelli locates an Irminsul, he learns of the Egesterenstein (See *The Egesterenstein*, later) as a second Irminsul. He preaches a message of Jotnar supremacy, where the Muspelli need not work together in order to cooperate and achieve their goals, and that is very attractive. Ingvar's strengths in Valgaldrar, Wildfire, and Winter's Breath mean his role becomes more prominent as the conflict escalates. He makes an appearance as a false Aspect of a Jotun or Fimbulwinter, as volcanoes erupt or *Fimbulwinter* utisetia claim communities. More details on his activities during each stage are given later in this chapter. For Ingvar, Fimbulwinter is meant as an act of revenge for the loss of his wife and son, and as a triumph of the Old Ways over Christianity. However, he knows a plan with this many parts has many, many places where it can fail, and that is why he takes the precautions described later in this chapter.

THE TOOLS AT HAND

Much like established magi in the Order, the Muspelli possess companions who are inured to the Muspelli and their Gift and assist them in their activities. Initial allies for each might include:

- Nordic pirates who work with Leif. Consider statistics for the "Tough Guy," on *ArM5*, page 22. They know little, but work with him to capture vessels he damages and give him a cut of the loot.
- Werewolf tribes and wolves who work with Kotkill. These may be from the Baltic or Scandinavian region, or even local, if appropriate. They fanatically serve him as an avatar of their kind. These are men who may become wolves; they use Berserker statistics in *ArM5*, page 21 with a Brawl of 5 (teeth) and the wolf combat statistics given nearby.
- Soldiers and Mercenaries hired by Magnus. Consider statistics for the "Grizzled Veteran" and "Standard Soldier" on *ArM5*, pages 21–22. Often magically influenced, these are really just men-at-arms doing their occasionally distasteful work.
- Folk Witches and Walking Dead commanded by Gunnvara. Sample folk witches are in *Hedge Magic*, pages 47–50. The witches are devoted to Gunnvara, as her patronage has allowed them to

Wolf Statistics

Combat: Teeth: Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage 0

Soak: +4

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1–4), -3 (5–8), -5 (9–12), Incapacitated (13–16)

Natural Weapons: Teeth: Init 0, Atk +3, Def +1, Dam +1. Its thick fur gives it a Protection of +1.



flourish. The Walking Dead are either freshly made or drawn from frozen reserves she has hidden over the years.

- Seasoned Mercenaries and possibly a rogue vitki serving with Ingvar. Use the "Berserker" statistics on *ArM5*, page 21 for his mercenaries, who might even be former members of the Varangian Guard in Constantinople, who have returned disillusioned by what they saw. A good warrior vitki example is in *Hedge Magic*, page 141. These agents trust and believe in Ingvar's vision, but don't necessarily know where he is. Only his sons directly converse with him.
- Manifested Aspects of the Muspelli's Jotun Aspects, which use the Norse giant statistics from *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 87. Ingvar has discovered how to summon these lesser Aspects of the Jotnar with a variant of the ritual used to summon a Muspelli's patron and taught this as a part of convincing the Muspelli to join. However, they are used very sparingly until the Aspects of Fimbulwinter are freed.

Muspelli have these allies create distractions while they perform utisetá, probe defenses, and gather the resources necessary to enjoy a pleasant standard of living during Fimbulwinter.

Seasons of Conflict: Saga Pacing and Structure

While every troupe is different, as a guideline, consider roughly two or three stories per Muspelli for each of the first two stages. By the third stage, there are several potential scenarios offered for different facets of the Muspelli releasing the Aspects of Fimbulwinter, including an attack on the players' covenant. This allows for saga progression at your preferred pace. There is no hard and fast deadline for the actions of the Muspelli; they come to pass when the storyguide wants them to occur. Several methods for introducing these incidents are presented here, along with potential developments and consequences. Naturally, the Muspelli should respond to the actions of the player characters.

FOR EVIL TO TRIUMPH...

This particular saga has a very "scripted sequence" approach, offering the various stories as potential events the player characters may or may not investigate. There is the possibility the Hermetics will do nothing in a given season. It is acceptable to have an early encounter or two with the Muspelli where the player covenant is left baffled, wondering "who were those men?" When presenting a potential hook from the Muspelli, do not force a response from the player characters. It could be the group feels something local, political, or

more immediate should have priority. Such a choice is completely acceptable, because it maintains verisimilitude, but the resulting consequences should apply to the plotline, allowing the larger story to progress even without player interaction, and have greater impact if player inaction results in disaster.

Throughout the first two stages, when a possible Muspelli-associated story arc is presented and the players choose to pursue a different plotline, permit the Muspelli to achieve the intended goal, be it the cementing of a supernatural alliance, acquiring a new *gandur*, completing an initiation, or even discovering or securing access to an *Irminsul*. Then use the consequences and aftermath as potential hooks for later stories in which the Muspelli get closer to achieving their goal. The Muspelli do not initially know a player covenant has taken an interest in them. Until the conflict is common knowledge between the two groups, the Muspelli do not take extraordinary measures to conceal their actions. However, they maintain a minimum level of arcane security, removing any personal Arcane Connections whenever possible.

Saga Foundation: Laying the Groundwork

This saga outline assumes that the player covenant is in a fairly typical situation, with the normal neighbors. This foundation includes *vis* sites, regional groups of known Magical animals or

Faeries, regular Redcap visits, maybe a small group of hedge wizards or a coven of folk witches previously considered weak or innocuous, and perhaps a couple of small towns which have malleable attitudes toward the covenant. All of these elements mean easier hooks for Muspelli stories as this saga progresses, but the saga can easily handle the absence of one or two. If your player covenant is in a very unusual location, however, adaptation may need more work.

The outline does assume that the covenant has one thing among its resources: an Irminsul. This old pagan object was an altar, a statue and a monument combined. Used by Celtic and Germanic tribes through the time of Charlemagne, an Irminsul was a carved standing stone which represented the World Tree, the heart of Creation from which all things came. The Roman Legions claimed or defaced many of these, though more survived. Charlemagne ordered their destruction as part of the pacification and

conversions which took place during the Saxon Wars in the later part of the 8th century. Some stand forgotten in remote and wild places, while others were taken as trophies, toppled by conquerors, and one was even incorporated into the cathedral of Hildesheim as a candelabrum. Irminsul might have even been used by the Diedne. If a player suggests a Pagan magus, consider offering the Germanic background and this vis source as an association, potentially building player investment for later story arcs. This Irminsul could be a covenant vis source, or represented by the Hidden Resources Boon, Contested Resource Hook, Fallen Temple Hook, Roman Ruins Hook, or the Ruined Covenant Hook.

Knowing the local supernatural landscape is extremely important for this saga. Magical beasts and nearby faeries serve as potential targets for Muspelli seeking gandar, sacrificial victims, or possible allies. By determining what creatures roam and lair in the region surrounding the covenant, the storyguide may better plan which story seeds fit best. Some suggested options include courtly fae, tempter faeries like huldra or nymphs, Stags of Virtue, Wolves of Virtue, possibly sleeping drakes or giants in remote areas. These could be represented with the Mystical Allies Boon, the Monster Hook, the Resident Nuisance Hook, the Rival Hook, or the Faerie Court or Faerie Landlord Hooks.

While a Redcap is only required to visit once a year, many reasons could motivate House Mercere to come knocking more frequently. The Redcap might be romantically interested in a member of the covenant. Members of the Redcap's extended family could live there. The covenant could trade in goods, or produce something the Redcap enjoys. A covenant expert or craftsman might share interests with the regular messenger. All of these options provide a good reason for a Redcap to enjoy the covenant's hospitality more often, bringing story seeds from elsewhere in the Tribunal or from a neighboring Tribunal. This could be represented by the Informants Boon, the minor Road Hook, the Mercer House Hook, or as part of a Dedicated Covenant Hook.

Finally, it is very helpful to have an established nearby unGifted hedge tradition or a folk witch coven, which should not be part of the Order of Hermes. As lesser supernatural practitioners who complete Initiations to gain their powers, they could have an arrangement for protection with the covenant or a slightly resentful relationship, owing a

regular delivery of (possibly begrudged) vis, or serving as a source for otherwise rare or hard-won information. Consider making these lesser wizards related to a Companion character, or the source tradition for the Companion's background to build investment in their survival, or present an avenue for their redemption, should the Muspelli turn them against the covenant. The minor Promised Favors Boon, the Protector Hook, the Favors Owed Hook, or the Hedge Tradition Hook could represent this.

THE IRMINSUL

5 pawns of Rego per year

This small stele is carved to resemble a tree with nine branches, and a split, fluted top, vaguely resembling a letter "T" or an uppercase letter "I." Its sides have faded, nearly imperceptible Futhark runes. In midwinter, if it is festooned with boughs of holly, ivy, mistletoe, yew, and pine, the branches contain the vis after the Solstice. Otherwise, the vis gathers in icicles which form on the split arms. There is a Magic aura of 2 here.

This source costs 25 Build Points.

First Stage: Beginning the Path

These events are intended to act as the introduction to the saga, giving hints of the Muspelli while establishing the growth of the Muspelli's personal power. The servants of the Jotnar know they need to find the Irminsul in order to later unleash a world-wide Fimbulwinter, but they also know they need to become more capable before they can execute their plan. They also recognize the need to develop long-term resources to deal with any opposition and learn how that opposition reacts to trouble. Most of the Muspelli begin the campaign without knowing exactly how to accomplish their goal, only that they need to increase their power and mastery of Muspelli Lore, develop resources and learn about the region, and discover two Irminsul sites. It may seem counter-intuitive that the Muspelli do not

Sidebar: "How did the Irminsul get There?"

The Irminsul were primarily a religious aspect of the Celtic, Gaulish, Germanic, and Scandinavian tribes, and as such, they are more common in the Greater Alps, Normandy, and Rhine Tribunals, as well as the Baltic states of the Novgorod Tribunal. They usually took the form of a pillar or standing stone, carved in some way to represent Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

The Roman legions often captured them as trophies, and brought them back to install in old temples, temples which later became churches, or in town squares, which might have suffered any number of calamities in the following centuries. As Christianity spread, many proselytizers appropriated Irminsul and subverted them by establishing churches over them. Local builders, not caring about the history of a conveniently available piece of cut stone, could have incorporated an Irminsul into a structure, left it in a debris pile, or it might have been secreted away by a tribe hoping to save it from the legionnaires' grasp. Earlier, pagan members of the Order may have reestablished an Irminsul in the years

Sidebar: "How did the Irminsul get There?" (Cont'd)

leading up to the Schism War, or as a part of failed Bonisagus research. This variety means you can scatter a number of the lost and forgotten altars where you need them to draw in the Muspelli, even to a region they might not usually operate, and make the saga suitably interesting for the troupe.

The Irminsul should be relatively whole, but may have been reassembled with mortar. It can be moved to a new location and still serve its purpose. It does not matter what kind of aura an Irminsul resides in. None of the Muspelli can create an Irminsul, but a Christian ritual does create one for a short period. This is described in a later section, *Sunday, Laetare Sunday*. Irminsul serve as Arcane Connections to the Aspects of Fimbulwinter, but not to each other. Certainly, one option for the characters is to hunt down the Irminsuls before the Muspelli, and destroy them. For the Muspelli, they use Muspelli Lore to find an Irminsul in a region over the course of a season or story. Magi may only locate Irminsul (other than their covenant's vis source) with a story event for a season.

co-conspirators have before the Muspelli are ready to enact Fimbulwinter, he reduces the chances that the defeat of any one Muspelli might cause the situation to unravel. If a Muspelli is captured and forced to reveal their plan before preparations are complete, they cannot reveal anything too damaging. The Muspelli only know they need to find the Irminsul and then return to the designated meeting place with Ingvar. Once they return, Lokishafr explains the next step and teaches them how to use the Irminsul to summon an Aspect of Fimbulwinter. He then sends them back out to await his signal. Additionally, the Muspelli here are very much like the Order when it was forming; they are still learning to work toward a single goal and laying their foundation. And perhaps most importantly, the Muspelli are working toward Fimbulwinter and beyond, potentially to Ragnarok. With this paradigm of planning for the world after their task is complete, the Order is less their enemy and more of an obstacle to victory which must be understood and contained for the long term.

nate a number of different covenants, while the Muspelli must only find a single blind spot. This makes it far easier for the Muspelli to choose the time and place of their battles, which they prefer. The key to their strategy must be measured patience. For the Hermetics, the key lies in gaining and fixing Arcane Connections to the Muspelli, so they might find them and possibly limit the Fimbulwinter threat.

Saga Consideration: The Call of Winter

Once the saga enters the second stage, the question arises, "how do the Muspelli know it is time to begin Fimbulwinter since they're scattered across Mythic Europe?" After the midpoint of Stage 2 passes, or after they have returned to Lokishafr to learn the Fimbulwinter Aspect summoning, the Muspelli know they are to call upon their Jotun patron for a sign once per month (at a time decided by the Storyguide), using the ritual they generally use for summoning it for advice. This is more frequently than noted in *Rival Magic*, page 93, but the patron is spending little time in the mundane world, and risks are necessary to bring about Fimbulwinter. If at least three Muspelli have found their two Irminsul sites and learned the Fimbulwinter ritual, then Lokishafr passes on the message via his patron to the Jotnar, "Unleash Fimbulwinter." Since the Jotnar all remain trapped together in the Magic Realm, this message spreads to all of the patrons as Lokishafr communicates it. Then, when the scattered Muspelli make their monthly summoning to ask their Jotun patron for a sign, the patron relays Lokishafr's message. This way, the Muspelli can communicate over great distances without ever speaking face to face, but still coordinate their plans. This method can also be used to pass important messages between Muspelli while they search or to share the sites of discovered Irminsul, too, if you need them to do so, but the Jotnar will not stand for being used as casual messengers.

Why All The Plans?

Why don't the Muspelli simply appear, summon Aspects of Fimbulwinter, and disappear? There are several reasons for this beyond the story's metaplot. First, Irminsul are fairly rare. These relic objects need to be found and secured, so that the Muspelli can safely summon the Aspect. Controlling the Irminsul means that not only the first summoning is successful, but that further summonings can be performed, after the Aspect is first defeated. The relative rarity of the Irminsul mean the Muspelli can not simply ignore one controlled by the covenant. Second, only one Aspect may be summoned at a time per Irminsul, and Lokishafr wants to overwhelm Mythic Europe with multiple Aspects at once, which requires locating multiple Irminsuls. If the Aspects appeared individually, they might be easily defeated. Multiple Aspects of Fimbulwinter also create confusion as stories from survivors make it seem as if the Aspects can be in many places at once. Third, Lokishafr wants to minimize the chances his plan will be stopped. By limiting the information his

Saga Consideration: One of a Thousand Gates

The Muspelli anticipate a game of cat and mouse against magical foes with greater resources, but less flexibility. The Muspelli are not necessarily tied to any one site for an extended period, allowing them to drift between locations and strike when and where the situation is most optimal. They can disappear for a year, then return and resume operations with little threat of disruption. The Order of Hermes, on the other hand, has established roots and relationships, and often keeps its homes deliberately unobtrusive. They have rules about scrying they must follow. Going to war for the Hermetics means potentially stirring up trouble with an ever increasingly capable mundane world which distrusts them at best. It means convincing the rest of their Tribunal the threat is real, and this isn't simply an excuse for scrying. Additionally, once the Order knows of the threat, they must watch an enormous range of the countryside and potentially coordi-



Telling Tales

know the whole plan, but their leader does know, and while his fellow conspirators seek out sites and build their strength, he lays the foundations to ensure success, even if he is not alive to see it.

Specifically, the Muspelli are directed to roam Mythic Europe to identify Irminsul sites, extend their powers, and locate resources. The Muspelli know that they risk death if they confront Hermetic magi directly, so they do all they can to avoid that. They prefer to create encounters where they can observe their enemies, so they can tailor *utiseta* to use against them later, and focus these *utiseta* on their foes' weaknesses. The storyguide should consider a particular Muspelli to bring into conflict with the covenant, like Kotkill Ulfsbrodir, Leif Ormsbrodir, or possibly Gunnvara Jarnvidja. Ingvar should remain completely out of the saga at this point, as the cabal's leader.

In this stage, the Muspelli are exploring, beginning their search, but not really aware of the Order's potential threat. The second stage begins after the Muspelli discover Irminsul, realize the danger Order might pose, and begin developing plans to distract or preoccupy the Order while continuing to complete their directives. With multiple Muspelli active, expect some overlap between stages. The storyguide must tailor these story seeds to the player characters' Tribunal, adding details like appropriate regional names or specific locations. For stories involving the Muspelli directly, be sure to review the benefits of their Magic Defenses, on page 9 and page 85 of *Rival Magic*.

During the first stage, if the player characters capture either the Muspelli or their minions, the amount of information available about the Fimbulwinter plot is frustratingly sparse. Regardless of whether the story arc is focused on the acquisition of a resource or the discovery of an Irminsul, a trusted ally of the Muspelli knows only that the non-Hermetic sorcerer is seeking out a magical place in the area, hoping to access its power. Such a servant doesn't even know of the term "Fimbulwinter" in relation to this plot. For now, they remain uninformed beyond what is necessary to complete their immediate task, or have a false cover story they believe true, like banditry, or the Muspelli's personal research.

An interrogated Muspelli knows slightly more. Using magic to completely rummage through a Muspelli's mind provides the following details:

- There is another Muspelli urging and coordinating other Muspelli to complete a task, though the Muspelli are working independent of one another. This coordinating Muspelli is called "Lokeshaftr." Depending on the type of spell used to interrogate the target, the magus can learn what this Muspelli looks like in Etin-mod and where the two Muspelli met. By default, this is Ingvar and their meeting place should be the captured Muspelli's home region, but you should feel free to adjust this as desired.
- The Muspelli have been directed to find at least two Irminsul before returning

to a remote site in Scandinavia. Once there, Lokeshaftr will determine if they are ready to learn more. If so, he will teach them further; otherwise, they will return in a year. They do not know how Lokeshaftr will know when they are at the site, but he will come to them once they arrive. If they encounter potential interference, they should make some preparations to deal with it later on.

- The Muspelli should be alert for other Muspelli, and, if they find them, convince these other sorcerers to seek out Irminsul, and to travel to Lokeshaftr and join their cause. What is this cause? To bring about Fimbulwinter, the long winter without summer which marks the beginning of Ragnarok and the awakening of Loki. When and how will Fimbulwinter start? The Muspelli don't know yet. Only Lokeshaftr knows that part of the plan. Who is Lokeshaftr? They met in Etin-mod, and so the Muspelli doesn't know Lokeshaftr's human form.
- They can learn what an Irminsul generally looks like and its former purpose. They do not know how it will be used for Fimbulwinter, and whether that means it will be destroyed, used in a ritual, or otherwise exploited.

THE PRICE OF IGNORANCE

Should the covenant fail to respond to a particular Muspelli activity, then the storyguide should consider one of the following consequences.

- The Muspelli now knows either how to reach the intended Irminsul site or acquire vis from the vis site. They possess an Arcane Connection to the site as well as a sample of vis from the site, if it produces vis.
- If they were seeking a potential gandur, they acquire the suitable materials or objects to create one.
- The Muspelli gains 5xp in Muspelli Lore, increasing this score for later use. This is in addition to any other relevant experience resulting from the task, such as Area Lore, Magic Lore, or possibly weapon skills.
- Some story seeds specify particular benefits for the Muspelli.

While these consequences seem minimal, they are the foundation of later Muspelli activity. It is especially important to note how many Irminsul sites the Muspelli uncover.

The End State

With the end of the first stage, the Muspelli become an element on the fringe of the covenant's awareness after a few brief encounters with the servants of the Muspelli. They might have seen the Muspelli or the traces of their passing. Unless the Muspelli have been very clever, or very lucky, the player magi should know there is a strange, new non-Hermetic sorcerer active in the region, perhaps even a small cabal of this tradition, but unsure what their actual focus or intention is. While a hint of danger or trouble lingers on the horizon, the magnitude of the Muspelli plans should remain shadowy or puzzling. The Muspelli themselves might remain a mystery for the first story or two.

For every two seasons where the Muspelli are not directly involved in stories, the storyguide should provide them with 15 experience points to increase their abilities.

Back at his stronghold, Ingvar uses Valgaldrar to bind a corpse to his meeting place for a Decade duration. This corpse (Might 10) watches from afar and notifies him of a Muspelli recruit's arrival. If he dies, it remains until the effect expires. It does not otherwise confront or engage visitors.

Story Seeds for the First Stage: Initial Explorations

The storyguide has a reasonable amount of latitude in the number and types of stories used to complete this stage. As previously mentioned, consider one to three stories per Muspelli in the cabal. Each one will later serve as a foe for the covenant, and more Muspelli mean both a more difficult conflict later, and that a quicker, harsher Fimbulwinter arrives in the third stage. Not all of these stories need or should take place in the covenant's home Tribunal. Expanding the scope of the stories to occur when the characters are abroad helps demonstrate the problem isn't limited to the covenant's home.

The hunt for Irminsuls takes the Muspelli across the formerly Celtic and currently pagan regions of Mythic Europe, from Hibernia to Provence, across the Rhine Tribunal and into the Novgorod. Because these pagan religious altars were toppled, taken as spoils by Christians and Romans alike, and even established in remote, wild places, it means a searching Muspelli most often serves as a secondary storyline, perhaps a red herring distracting from the active plot, a moment of chance presented as a sideline during the current arc, or an opportunity to discover the actual storyline as a more significant incident over the course of play.

However, building a Muspelli's power involves trials, sacrifices, or even the creation of allies or servants to be utilized later in the saga. Because the Muspelli cannot quickly use powerful effects, they are interested in acquiring magical items, such as extraordinary vis, or items enchanted by hedge wizards. Hermetic items would be very welcome, but might be dangerous to get. This process of acquiring enchanted items provides a second source for stories. A couple of sample vis sites are described below. Other forms of Extraordinary Vis may be found on pages 120–122 of *Realms of Power: Magic*.

Vis Site: SUNSTONE QUARRY

Lesser Enchantment
Pawns of Intellego Vis
Inlg Level 25
Pen 0, constant effect
R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Vision

Cut from a vein of high quality crystal, these rhomboid-shaped calcite stones allow

the bearer to always know the direction of the Sun. They are immensely useful for navigators and travelers in snowbound regions with little in the way of landmarks, as viewing an overcast daytime sky through these objects allows the bearer to ascertain the Sun's position and avoid accidentally going the wrong way.

Vis Site: MAGICAL HONEYCOMB

Spell-like Pawns of Rego Vis
ReAn Level 45
Pen 10
R: Arc, D: Sun, T: Ind, Ritual

This aromatic fragment of beehive still drips with tiny beads of honey. By placing an Arcane Connection to a particular beast (of Size +4 or less) inside the sticky beeswax, then crumpling the honeycomb into a ball and consuming the wax or destroying it in fire, the caster gains total control over the targeted creature until either the next sunrise or sunset.

(Base 15, +4 Arc, +2 Sun, +1 Size)

STORY SEED: THE FIGUREHEADS

Leif keeps a secret lair with a precious collection of dragon figureheads taken from ships. He takes great pride in the wooden carvings. As Fimbulwinter escalates into a full fledged conflict, a deceptive magus could exploit this habit and steal his figureheads while the Muspelli is abroad. Then, with some clever trickery, the player character might frame another Muspelli for the theft and arrange for Leif to learn of the supposed perpetrator. This way, player characters could trick Leif into either weakening or eliminating another foe, while using the raging Muspelli's acts as an opportunity to exhaust his resources before the player characters act. As long as the Muspelli don't uncover the deception, the magi could potentially eliminate two enemies, as one of the Muspelli is likely killed by one of his peers and the cabal planning Fimbulwinter is poisoned with the seeds of distrust and paranoia. Everyone wins... well, really just the player magi.

Regional Troubles

These are chance events, ones caught by a nosy covenfolk in town, or told to a grog over cups in a nearby tavern, perhaps even spotted by apprentices sneaking out of the covenant.

The Event: A week before the Winter Solstice, woodcutter sees one of the Muspelli in monstrous etin-mod, fighting an elk or stag to the death, barehanded, in the snow-bound woods. The local retreats back to town, and over his cups, he talks about how a giant troll or creature is menacing the community. The Muspelli is performing an Initiation designed to give him more physical power, and has completed the first part.

If Ignored: If the covenant does nothing until after the Winter Solstice, the Muspelli gains the benefits of performing the Initiation twice, gaining the Claws and Fangs Quality, or if these are possessed, giving them the Improved quality and increases their stats by Atk +2, Dfn +1, Dmg

STORY SEED: FOR LOVE

Leif, with his Curse of Venus and Weakness for women, is likely to become obsessed with the wrong woman, or she with him, and this obsession can serve as his downfall. Perhaps a maga or companion leads the hunt for Leif after an encounter. Leif sees her at a distance and becomes smitten. He arranges an attack at dusk. During the attack, he incapacitates her, but instead of killing her, he leaves her a small token of his affection while killing her shield grog. He might become distracted from his search, taking the form of a small animal and attempting to show his feelings for the woman in a strange way, bringing her mice, songbirds, or fish. These interactions might become the basis of a relationship where he inadvertently reveals his plan, or his travel destinations, or pauses in a crucial attack to spare the object of his affection. The combination of Flaws provides an Achilles' heel for Leif which relies on developing relationships through nonviolent encounters made more emotionally powerful through the struggle to overcome his Gift and communication issues.

+3. The Muspelli also becomes familiar with the area. As an additional result of the Initiation, the Muspelli gains the Afflicted Tongue Flaw and suffers the Incomprehensible Flaw. Alternatively, the Muspelli could gain the Disfigured Flaw and Missing Ear Flaw. The Muspelli remains in the area through the Spring to search for an Irminsul as a potential second story event.

If Captured: This provides the Muspelli as a live captive. However he cannot speak clearly and must be interrogated magically. No other potential captives exist in this scenario.

If Thwarted: Acting before the Solstice scares off the Muspelli before the second Initiation can be completed and he

only earns one of the benefits described in the "If Ignored" option. The antagonist gains 5xp in Muspelli Lore.

The Spoils: Studying the animal's corpse provides two pawns of vis, either Muto, Animal, or Vim, and serves as a source of Insight for any investigation of Muspelli magic. If killed in his etin-mod, the Muspelli's corpse may also act as a source of Insight if preserved and studied. The body is also an Arcane Connection to the Muspelli's ghost.

Hermetic Correspondence

This section offers story seeds delivered by Tribunal gossip, bits of conversation

What is Insight?

Insight is part of the Original Research rules from *Ancient Magic* or *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*. It includes objects, texts, or other sources which could assist a researcher trying to achieve a Magical Breakthrough of some kind, such as incorporating Muspelli magic into Hermetic theory. If you're not using these rules, then consider allowing sources of Insight to provide experience to the researcher on other topics, such as Muspelli Lore, Jotun Lore, or even Magic Lore. Once dead, Muspelli are no longer Arcane Connections to their Jotun patrons. At the storyguide's discretion, studying a body for Insight effectively destroys it.

STORY SEED: TO CONTACT GULLVEIG

Attempting to contact Gullveig, a Muspelli captures two magicians – some combination of folk witches, other hedge wizards, vitkir, or even Hermetic magi, such as a Verditius captured without casting tools or one whose Necessary Condition or Restriction is exploited, and prepares to force them into a fight to the death. The Muspelli intends to sacrifice the winner while summoning Gullveig's Aspect. She appears after this sacrifice, claiming the victims' hearts as gifts, and promises to teach the Muspelli, increasing a Trolldomur ability. The apprentices,

covenmates, or sodales of these victims seek out the covenant, hoping to prevent the death of the prisoners. If magi arrive too late, they face the angry Jotun Aspect while the Muspelli withdraws.

STORY SEED: SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

When Magnus claimed his gandur, he drove silver nails into the feet of the interred corpse before the spirit there could animate it as a draughir. This spirit might have been a vitki or a Diedne magus in hiding, who, even in death, knows the location of lost caches of magic. If the magi can recover the sickle for the ghost, putting the ghost to rest, then the player character can acquire a war chest of resources while striking a blow against the Muspelli cause. The covenant might discover the draughir's barrow as they search for vis near their covenant, in the course of their travels, or through the reports of a visiting Redcap. If the magi are willing to parlay with the unquiet spirit rather than simply destroy it, they can be put on the path to opposing Magnus. Hasty magi might be given a second chance as the ghost returns to haunt them for denying it the chance at vengeance.

made in passing by traveling magi who seek hospitality, Redcap-delivered correspondence, or at events such as Tribunal gatherings, House meetings, or chance encounters on the road or in towns. These events are near the covenant, but primarily affect other members of the Order.

The Event: An urgent letter from a distant Jerbiton magus indicates that one of his relatives has recently gone missing. He cannot attend to the matter directly, and offers an appropriate reward if the covenant can investigate the disappearance, more for a successful rescue. Alternately, this may be a fellow Jerbiton in the local Tribunal, who asks the covenant to help. A Muspelli seeking Leiken's favor has kidnapped the relative, and is in the process of starving them senseless, then sacrificing them in a ritual for the Aspect. (A similar event could also target the covenant directly, but it is important to drop hints that the Muspelli's plots are widespread.)

If Ignored: The Muspelli gains the ability of Valgaldrar at 1, gains 15xp in this ability next season, and starts utilizing the Walking Dead in his plans. Increase the antagonist's Muspelli Lore by 10xp.

If Captured: This provides the Muspelli as a live captive, or possibly a few guards at the storyguide's discretion.

If Thwarted: The relative isn't specifically essential to the ritual, and so the Muspelli is willing to abandon the victim if the situation becomes too dangerous. If the antagonist escapes, he seeks out another victim to sacrifice next season, and learns of the covenant's interest in his activities. Increase the antagonist's Muspelli Lore by 5xp.

The Spoils: Magi who spend a season researching the victim's body may use the corpse as a source of Insight in any investigation of Muspelli magic. The victim's corpse can also provide a description of the Muspelli involved, but only what he looks like in etin-mod. If killed in his etin-mod, the Muspelli corpse may also act as a source of Insight if preserved and studied. The body is also an Arcane Connection to the Muspelli's ghost. Destroying the Aspect leaves behind vis as described in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 87.

The Event: A Tremere magus mentions

issues he's experienced dealing with hunters from outside the region poaching some wolves from his protected pack. His contacts witnessed the activity, but the hunters seemed very sophisticated and eluded them. He can arrange some favor for the covenant if they can investigate the issue and stop the hunters. A group of werewolves led by a Muspelli is responsible for the kills, but is more interested in locating an Irminsul site or good resources for Fimbulwinter than taking trophies.

If Ignored: The Muspelli capture several Wolves of Virtue for sacrifice when performing utisetra in the area, and identify an old Irminsul within a cave. Additionally, the Muspelli strengthens an alliance with the werewolf tribe, expanding the number of allies available to this Muspelli when pursuing other endeavors.

If Captured: This provides the Muspelli or guards as captives. The werewolves know of the concept of "Fimbulwinter," but only the myth of three winters without summer. They know of Muspelli as a tradition of individuals, and know their master or employer in both etin-mod and human form. They do not know what the Muspelli wanted to do with the Wolves of Virtue, but they intended to take them alive. If the werewolves escape but the Muspelli does

not, they carry word of the Muspelli's capture back to another member of the cabal, alerting the Muspelli to the covenant's interest in any activity in the area.

If Thwarted: The Muspelli attempt this raid twice more, alternating the season it is conducted. The werewolves are initially willing to assist in exchange for slaves or loot, but consider revenge an acceptable reason if any werewolves died during previous hunts. The Muspelli gains 10xp in an appropriate Ability based on the adventure.

The Spoils: The Muspelli carries five pawns of vis and his gander, which may or may not still have utisetra stored in it. If killed in their etin-mod, their corpse may also act as a source of Insight if preserved and studied. The body is also an Arcane Connection to the Muspelli's ghost.

Second Stage: Enemy Apparent

As they explore, the Muspelli both realize the scope of the threat posed by the Order of Hermes and locate an Irminsul each.

When Do Other Muspelli Find Irminsul?

Storyguides are not likely going to want to play out the discovery of every Irminsul by every member of the Muspelli cabal. Instead, use the success or failure of the player characters' encounter with the Muspelli searching near their covenant as the indicator for the other searching Muspelli. If the Hermetics fail, then all of the Muspelli discover an Irminsul site. If they capture the Muspelli, then the other Muspelli fail that season. If the player wizards chase away the Muspelli, then each other Muspelli has a 50% chance of securing his Irminsul. Alternatively, if the storyguide wants the option of a story, a regularly visiting Redcap or passing traveler might bring news of strange sightings in another Tribunal or region. Failure to respond, even with a trip to another covenant in the area, roleplaying the exchange of a warning, means the Muspelli involved finds

the Irminsul they were seeking. When at least half of the Muspelli have located two Irminsul, the storyguide may proceed to the third stage of the saga at any time.

Taken literally, these rules mean that a skilled and lucky troupe might hold up Fimbulwinter indefinitely without ever even noticing that there is a Muspelli plot. However, if they capture at least two Muspelli (which, in practice, is likely to be necessary to delay things for long), they should become aware of a wider plot, and are very likely to take action on their own initiative. If they do not, but seem to be becoming bored with the repeated events, you can either fudge the rolls, or decide that the Muspelli give up, at least for now. On the other hand, if everyone is enjoying the "whack-a-mole" version of averting Fimbulwinter, there is no reason to stop.

This initiates the saga's second stage, when the Muspelli begin expanding their power, not only personally, as they did earlier, but also in terms of building their forces through alliances and creating hordes of Walking Dead while seeking out a second Irminsul. They strengthen their magical abilities to call Aspects, using them in combat, in conjunction with casting *utiseta*, and to broaden their skills. They attempt to distract the covenant by denying resources, realigning or destroying auras with *Trolldomur*, capturing Magical beasts and striking at the mundane population.

This stage might be dominated by a younger, less cautious Muspelli who engages the magi, while trying to locate the covenant's Irminsul vis site. Consider Gunnvara Jarnvidja or Kotkill Ulfsbrodir, with the "The Fruits of Loyalty" seed being another chance to hint at the more powerful Ingvar Suttungja in the background.

In this stage, the Muspelli have discovered at least one Irminsul each, realize the danger Order might pose, and begin developing plans to distract or preoccupy the Order while continuing to complete their directives. For stories involving the Muspelli directly, be sure to review the benefits of their Magic Defenses, on page 9 and page 85 of *Rival Magic*.

Telling Tales

The information player characters can learn by interrogating the Muspelli or their minions in the second half of the stage is similar to the intelligence available in the first half, except that now even the thugs and reavers aiding the pagan sorcerers know the Muspelli are seeking out Irminsul, but they don't know why, or what the Muspelli will do with the old monuments. In most cases, they can provide human and *etin-mod* descriptions, and can describe what Irminsul look like.

The Price of Ignorance

Left to their own devices, the Muspelli locate at least two Irminsul sites in the Tribunal, and establish additional resources to assist them when they return later. This stage should probably take at least two years, with one year dedicated to finding Irminsul, and a

second spent creating resources. It may take much longer, if a Muspelli becomes involved in a feud or running war with a covenant that is not consistently focused on finding and stopping the non-Hermetic sorcerers.

The End State

By the end of this stage, it is very likely the covenant has faced and possibly defeated one of the Muspelli in combat. Through this loss, the Muspelli not only learn what the covenant is capable of doing, but force the magi into open hostilities with them. After such an encounter, neither group operates unknown to the other, but the scope of the Muspelli plans may remain shrouded. The aftermath of this battle hints to the magi at the wider scope of the Muspelli plan and could potentially give them prisoners or spirits to interrogate. Now, where they may have seen simple raids or banditry, the acts of a single, lone non-Hermetic wizard, they may view events with a lens of conspiracy and paranoia, and in some aspects, rightfully so. Even as the saga enters the next stage, the larger portion of the Muspelli cabal remains still hidden, or at least beyond easy observation, and they work to shift focus toward other potential culprits while putting their resources into position to complete their Winter-bringing rituals.

For every two seasons where the Muspelli are not directly involved in stories, the storyguide should provide them with 15 experience points to increase their abilities.

Ingvar and the Muspelli continue to take precautions to ensure that Ingvar's location is not revealed, and unless the characters are both skilled and lucky they do not face him at this stage. Once each of the Muspelli have located their two Irminsul, they return to Ingvar and spend a season learning the summoning ritual from him. Afterward, they venture back out into Mythic Europe, and prepare to unleash the Aspects on the next winter Solstice, a date decided upon by Ingvar.

Story Seeds

The stories for this phase of the saga focus on the development of resources for later use, either to distract the Order of Hermes while the Muspelli are enacting an Aspect

summoning ritual, or to allow the Muspelli to secure a captured Irminsul. They might be combined with actually finding or claiming an Irminsul, as well.

REGIONAL TROUBLES

These are chance events, ones caught by a nosy covenfolk in town, or told to a grog over cups in a nearby tavern, perhaps even spotted by apprentices sneaking out of the covenant.

The Event: The local lord recently killed two groups of pirates, bandits, or criminals and ordered their bodies left to the birds as an example, despite protests from the clergy. A shepherd swears he saw them stand up and walk into the hills. The priests are claiming a miracle, and the noble suspects the churchmen are defying him, burying the bodies under cover of night. A third group is slated to die soon. A Muspelli has been luring these groups into the area with *Entrancement* as well as stories of rich churches and traveling merchants, then collecting the corpses with *Valgaldrar*.

If Ignored: If the Walking Dead aren't discovered in a hidden cave and destroyed, they emerge later to attack the covenant's interests or cause trouble in the region.

If Captured: Captives interrogated before they are killed can describe the human form of the Muspelli behind this plot, and where he was encountered. They do not know of *Fimbulwinter*, or Irminsuls, or that the person who sent them here was a Muspelli. They are dupes. A captured Muspelli knows a larger conflict is brewing. He knows the approximate size of the Muspelli group, and that *Lokeshafir* has been working to increase their number. The Muspelli still do not know how the Irminsuls will be used to bring about *Fimbulwinter*.

If Thwarted: The Muspelli departs and resumes his search for other Irminsul sites. He notes the Hermetic interference for later and alerts any other Muspelli he knows.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any *gandur*. His body, *gandur*, and any still active Walking Dead could serve as a source of *Insight*.

The Event: The sister of a locally-born grog approaches the covenant, wanting to talk to her brother. Her husband, the grog's brother-in-law, works with the regional noble's huntsman, and more than once he's complained of being slighted by the lord or the lord's son. Lately, he's vocally mentioned how "his betters" might not remain so for long, and disappeared for an evening meeting with several foreign men. Worrying for her family, she followed and believes she heard them discussing something terrible. She isn't sure what will happen, but asks her brother to investigate. The Muspelli are looking to subvert or usurp the noble's position, and plan on using the husband's knowledge of the target's hunting habits to accomplish it.

If Ignored: If the Muspelli's ambush isn't prevented, then either the noble is replaced with a Muspelli, or the lord's son rises as a new leader secretly serving the Muspelli. This gives the Muspelli a safe base of operations in the area, and freedom to execute preparations for Fimbulwinter with little mundane interference.

If Captured: Searching the husband's mind with Mentem magics provides the face of one of the Muspelli's lieutenants responsible for organizing the plot, who, in turn, could be used to seek out his master. The Muspelli knows the rough size of the conspiracy, and

that Lokeshaftr is trying to expand it.

If Thwarted: The Muspelli gives up on this plan for now and continues searching for Irminsul sites. He remembers the Hermetic interference and adjusts his plans to account for it.

The Spoils: If captured, the Muspelli has his gandur and 5 pawns of vis. His gandur and body may both serve as sources of Insight.

HERMETIC CORRESPONDENCE

These story options arrive via Tribunal gossip, bits of conversation made in passing by traveling magi who seek hospitality, or House Mercere's messengers. These events are near the covenant, but primarily affect other members of the Order.

STORY SEED: THE FRUITS OF LOYALTY

A Muspelli begins driving out the inhabitants of a remote area as winter begins, leaving no communities standing in a 5 mile radius, roughly nine villages. Then, as the new shoots of trees and plants sprout in the ruined sites during the following spring, the Muspelli intends to sacrifice the religious symbols of the communities' religious leaders at the most central site. Once the task is complete, the Aspect of Gymir appears and instructs the Muspelli over the next season in any of the Supernatural Abilities listed on page 82 of *Rival Magic*. This sets the ability at 1 and provides 15xp in the next season. Some of these refugees approach the covenant in the dead of winter, asking for sanctuary and permission to join as covenfolk. In the course of their incorporation, they explain the raid, giving details about the nature of the attackers, which might put the covenant on their trail. The lord of the area is too distant to intervene before winter starts, and the weather makes it impractical during winter, but he will raise an army the following spring. The Muspelli intends to be long gone by then, giving the characters a deadline.

The Event: A Bjornaer acquainted with the covenant sends correspondence regarding werewolf sightings in the area. The Bjornaer asks the magi to investigate, but with discretion. In exchange for their report, the Bjornaer acquires a requested text from Duranmar for the magi. The werewolves are scouting the area for Beasts of Virtue, vis sites, and Irminsul for the Muspelli, as one of their number is Magically Sensitive. Along the way, they are raiding the countryside for easy loot, food, vis, and sport.

If Ignored: The Muspelli learn about the vis sites in the area and begin poaching them once they begin enacting their plans in the next stage, using the vis to help fuel their rituals. They take Arcane Connections to the sites, and in particular, to the covenant's Irminsul vis site.

If Captured: The werewolves know nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: Should the werewolves escape, they notify the Muspelli regarding the Hermetic presence in the area. The Muspelli arrives in three seasons to investigate the area himself.

STORY SEED: GAINING SURTUR'S FAVOR

A Muspelli hunts down a local vitki or eremite pagan Hermetic magus, forcing him to surrender his personal weapon, Thor's Hammer amulet, or talisman to the Muspelli. Then, using the item, the Muspelli prepares to sacrifice an individual important to the previous owner. In exchange for this deed, the Aspect instructs the Muspelli over the next season in one of the Supernatural Abilities listed on page 82 of *Rival Magic*. This sets the ability at 1 and provides 15xp in the next season. Realizing the danger, but lacking the resources to stop the Muspelli, the magus or vitki approaches the covenant for help, creating a political ally or friend useful in other Tribunal business and storylines. Depending on the sort of conflict desired, the covenant might face the Muspelli or the Muspelli's minions, with the potential to trace the attack back to the Muspelli.

STORY SEED: GAINING GULLVEIG'S FAVOR

After discovering a local coven of folk witches, a Muspelli and a detachment of his followers subjugate them, receiving tribute from them on the Summer solstice. Once they are dominated, the Muspelli prepares to sacrifice the oldest and the youngest to Gullveig on pyres during the Winter solstice. Rising out of the smoldering ashes, the Aspect of Gullveig promises to instruct the Muspelli and the eldest remaining folk witch in any of the Supernatural Abilities associated with her, listed on page 82 of *Rival Magic*. A relative or rebellious member of the coven accidentally overhears this plan and seeks out the covenant, asking for assistance, but the surviving folk witches have joined the Muspelli's cause.



The Spoils: The werewolves have some easily portable loot, and a rook (ten pawns) of Animal vis.

The Event: A recent rash of disappearances among the local folk witch community, which is composed primarily of village wise women, convinces a Bonisagus or Ex Miscellanea maga that something sinister is happening, and she contacts a member of the covenant to discuss her suspicions. A covenant that acts quickly rescues the witches from hidden captivity. A Muspelli's band captured them and plans to sacrifice them in a ritual to summon an Aspect of Gullveig. The Muspelli is willing to find other lesser practitioners, and abandons the captives if the situation becomes too dangerous.

If Ignored: Those who delay too long discover bodies of the witches who were forced to fight, then had their hearts torn out. The Muspelli gains an ability associated with Gullveig, augmenting his abilities with an additional power, such as Entrancement, Valgaldrar, or Winter's Breath. Alternatively, the Muspelli might gain a gandur, or learn the location of an Irminsul used by the folk witches.

If Captured: The Muspelli knows nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: Should the Muspelli escape, he resumes his search for Irminsul sites and another hedge wizard group for a year before reattempting this operation. The bodies can identify the Muspelli's etin-mod form.

The Spoils: If the witches are killed, searching the site reveals similarities between these deaths and with those from the previous stage's story seed, "To Contact Gullveig." The bodies may be used as a source of Insight regarding Muspelli magic, and each contains two pawns of Corpus vis. If the characters save the witches, they have some new allies.

CORRUPTING AURAS

By transforming Magic auras into ones aligned with Trolldomur, the Muspelli destroys the resources available to their Hermetic foes while predisposing the area toward their plans and continuing the process of breaking

the chains that bind Loki. While Divine auras are immune and Infernal auras nearly so to the decay of Trolldomur, destroying Faerie auras and converting Magic auras into Trolldomur provides Muspelli with locations where their magic remains strong, but their enemies' magic suffers. To accomplish this transformation, the Muspelli must enact utisetu with an Ease Factor equal to or greater than 5 times the Faerie Aura, or 10 times the Magic Aura. See *Rival Magic*, page 81 for details.

Potential stories associated with this option include:

The Event: Covenant servants observe a group of Entranced mercenaries or raiders either belonging to the Raudskinna Compact or connected to a local hedge wizard making a blatant attempt steal from or damage one of the covenant's vis sites. The thieves fight bitterly, but ultimately attempt a retreat.

If Ignored: The attack conceals the true target. While the covenant is preoccupied with the overt assault on their resources, a Muspelli visits the covenant's Irminsul vis site. Possibly escorted by Walking Dead or another ally, the Muspelli gathers an Arcane Connection and completes a ritual reducing the aura by one and realigning it to Trolldomur.

If Captured: Mentem or Corpus magics reveal that the raiders had orders to destroy the site and claim the vis. They can identify the human form of the Muspelli.

If Thwarted: Should the Muspelli escape, he waits two seasons and attempts this attack again.

The Spoils: If damaged, the aura could be studied as a source of Insight regarding Muspelli magic. Utilizing vis from before and after the transformation should provide a benefit to either the ease or quality of the research.

The Event: A lone Muspelli is wandering the Tribunal in disguise. The Muspelli might have a chance encounter with grogs or a Redcap. He is seeking out Irminsul and vis sites throughout the region, and attempting to damage or destroy as many vis sites as possible by completing utisetu within the auras. This event requires the storyguide to have a good accounting of the larger area's vis sites, their strengths, their locations, any nearby inhabitants, and when the vis is har-

vested. Then the storyguide should plan a specific itinerary for the Muspelli, so there is no question as to where their enemy will be, should the magi come hunting for them.

If Ignored: Left unopposed, the Muspelli locates an Irminsul and manages to damage at least a third of the vis sites in the region, causing numerous accusations of Low Crimes between rival covenants and forcing the initiation of an investigation by the Tribunal's Head Quaesitor, who delegates this responsibility to the player characters. They are charged with determining what has occurred and presenting an initial report to the Quaesitor and the Praeco within a year.

If Captured: The Muspelli knows he must seek out Irminsul, and where he must go to meet Lokeshafir, but does not know the summoning ritual or what he will do with the Irminsul.

If Thwarted: Should the Muspelli escape, he stops damaging sites and resumes his search for Irminsul sites.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gander. His body, gander, and any damaged auras could still serve as a source of Insight.

The Event: Exploiting faerie weaknesses and habits, the Muspelli uses Entranced proxies or loyal servants as bait. After luring the fae into traps where they can be captured, the Muspelli goes about destroying their Faerie auras. It is possible that an incognizant or partially cognizant faerie escapes and tries to find help.

If Ignored: Depending on the relationship between the covenant and the local faeries, the player magi may not become aware of this event, except through its consequences. In such cases, the fae become weaker, but make oaths to serve the Muspelli in exchange for preserving their Faerie auras. Alternatively, the faerie may lead the Muspelli to an Irminsul.

If Captured: The Muspelli knows he must seek out Irminsul, and where he must go to meet Lokeshafir, but does not know the summoning ritual or what he will eventually do with the Irminsul.

If Thwarted: This situation offers the player magi not only an opportunity to engage the Muspelli, but forge a stronger alli-

ance with local faeries. Should the Muspelli escape, he stops seeking out faeries and resumes his search for Irminsul sites.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gander. His body, gander, and any damaged auras could still serve as a source of Insight.

DEATH WHICH DOES NOT DIE

Why do the Muspelli regularly kill the inhabitants of an area directly or indirectly when their primary goal is to unleash Fimbulwinter? Whether the populace dies at the hands of raiding bandits, through starvation, or from exposure, their unfortunate demise allows the Muspelli to create unquestioning and trustworthy soldiers. Muspelli take a long time to cast their spells, and Walking Dead serve wonderfully as sentries and protection while they perform utiseta or summons. Once the situation escalates to open conflict with the Order of Hermes, armies of the dead can be turned upon upon trade routes, outlying communities, and small strongholds, creating problems for allies or resources the magi rely upon. They can be sent to create distractions or ambushes. Additionally, walking corpses do not care about the weather, need no sleep, and require no supply train. They can be buried in shallow graves or hidden in snow, left lying around a ruined wagon, or standing unseen on a lake or river bed, waiting for the right moment to ambush their target. Using animated bodies as the core of their forces, Muspelli can better fortify the sites established to create Fimbulwinter with troops capable of standing guard forever. And when Fimbulwinter is finally achieved, the Muspelli will likely have hordes which will serve them quite well in the aftermath of Fimbulwinter while others are desperately seeking able-bodied warriors.

Statistics for these levies can be found in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 98. Commonly, they possess a Might of 9, and so most covenants' *Aegis of the Hearth* keeps them outside. However, the Parma doesn't protect from the physical attacks of Walking Dead, so being caught by a mob of them could prove quite deadly. Walking Dead with no Might are possible, but only as part of an ongoing utiseta effect.

Third Stage: Calling Down the Storm

Now is the time of the Muspelli. With the third stage, the hour has arrived when they return to the previously identified Irminsul sites and enact the rituals summoning Aspects of Fimbulwinter to blanket the world in freezing death for as long as they are free to roam the land.

One of these attacks and utiseta ceremonies should take place at the covenant's Irminsul, if it still stands. Another occurs at a random town within the Rhine Tribunal on Laetare Sunday. Another happens at the Egesterenstein in the Teutoburger Wald. Other Aspect summons might occur in locations of the storyguide's choice, or "off-screen" as appropriate, such as in those sagas where Fimbulwinter is inevitable and the storyguide expects to run another apocalypse story from this book as a direct result of the actions of this saga, or simply in those games where the storyguide wishes to increase the difficulty of the task posed to the player magi.

The third saga stage has two phases. The first phase involves surviving Muspelli and their allies, acting as intelligently as possible. It represents the culmination of long preparations for the Muspelli. Success means they've established one of the first conditions for Loki's awakening and revival while demonstrating they are a power to be respected. The storyguide should decide the sequence of events in advance, determining when each summoning occurs. It is also important to consider whether the player characters know enough to potentially stop the Muspelli at any particular location before an Aspect's release, if they will be provided opportunities to learn, or if the storyguide intends for them to learn after Fimbulwinter howls across Mythic Europe.

The second phase begins after the Muspelli have released at least three Aspects of Fimbulwinter. The Muspelli unleash the remainder of their preparations, attempt to create a conflict of distraction between the Raudskinna compact and the Order of Hermes, attack the infrastructure of society with Walking Dead, enact actual *Fimbulwinter* or Wildfire utisetas to further damage the environment, and lead any supernatural

or mundane allies they have acquired on various acts of mayhem. They also work to convert as many auras as possible to Troll-domur, thereby attacking the chains holding the Jotnar imprisoned. At this point, the saga becomes a war between the Muspelli and Mythic Europe, although, it is likely, only the covenant truly knows who is responsible.

Be sure to review the benefits of the Muspelli's Magic Defenses, on page 9 and page 85 of *Rival Magic*.

Calling Winter

The Muspelli endeavor to release Aspects of Hvergelmir, the Primal Cold which gave rise to Niflheim. Hvergelmir sired Ymir, and lingers in the Magic Realm as a Protogonoi, along with Urdarbrunnr, the Primal Warmth. Eleven rivers spewed forth from Hvergelmir, each one considered an Aspect of winter and they now serve as the embodiment of Fimbulwinter in Mythic Europe. The rivers include cool Svol, defiant Gunnthra, Fjorm, bubbling Fimbulthul, fearsome Slidr and storming Hrid, Sylg and Ylg, broad Vid, bounding Leiptr and freezing Gjoll.

In Norse mythology, biting cold and poison are linked, stories described these rivers as filled with both bitter poison and clashing swords tumbling just beneath the surface. Embodied through Aspects, each brings a slightly different type of cold, such as deep-clinging frost, bitter winds, encrusting ice, inexorable glaciers, or freezing wet fog. However, they all serve as harbingers for the coming snows.

To release these Aspects, the Muspelli perform a special utisetat at an Irminsul. This utisetat is based on Intelligence and Muspelli Lore, like the rules for summoning a Muspelli's Jotun patron, but otherwise uses the rules for utisetat, with an Ease Factor of 50. The Irminsul used in the utisetat and provides an additional Power Modifier of 1, cumulative with all the standard ones. Other modifiers associated with the Muspelli's specific patron for elements of Hamur, Ond, Blot, and Litur, all apply to the summoning ritual. See *Rival Magic*, pages 90–91 for different modifiers which might be appropriate. This is where magical or faerie creatures might be sacrificed, or the Muspelli might utilize a stolen gander, or even mutilate themselves. The Muspelli should be able to manage a Power Modifier of 7 or 8, and need to

raise their Muspelli Lore scores to a similar level in order to successfully complete the ritual. As they gather power based on Intelligence + (Muspelli Lore – Gleipnir) + a simple die, they have an interest in raising this total as far as possible, so that they can complete the ritual before Etin-mod kills them. In any case, the ritual takes many hours, providing a dramatic opportunity for the characters to interrupt it.

Additional Irminsul which might serve as the focus of the Muspelli's summoning rituals include a toppled Irminsul near Warburg, now covered in moss and ignored, the Irminsul standing in the cathedral of Hildesheim as a candelabrum, the Cross at Bewcastle, Cumberland, which supposedly began as a cross, but remains an Irminsul covered in Futhark runes and Pagan symbolism after the top portion was removed, or the runestone of King Harald Bluetooth at Jelling, Denmark, depicting Christ and Fenris on either side of the Irminsul. Obviously, given the repeating nature of Laetare Sunday (see later), it is possible for this threat to persist until either every Muspelli who knows the ritual is killed and all record of the ritual is destroyed, or the abolishment of the Laetare Sunday tradition.

Reducing an Aspect to 0 Might doesn't destroy it, but forces it to return to the Magic Realm, where it could be summoned again.

TELLING TALES

The information player characters can learn by interrogating the Muspelli or their minions in the first half of this stage is much greater than in the last stage. The thugs and reavers aiding the pagan sorcerers know that the Muspelli are seeking out magic sites, but don't know what the Muspelli do there. Dead or alive, they can provide human and etin-mod descriptions. In all cases, the Muspelli want to carry away their dead, having learned that Hermetic magi can question spirits and corpses. The Muspelli must accept that they will be discovered, but want their purpose to remain secret as long as possible.

Muspelli know the location of their Irminsul sites, the details of the summoning ritual, the face and etin-mod of Ingvar, and likely the etin-mod of at least one other Muspelli.

THE PRICE OF IGNORANCE

Failing to respond to events at this stage likely results in either the release of an Aspect of Fimbulwinter or the escalation of hostilities between the Order of Hermes and another organization, such as the mundane rulership, the Church, or the Raudskinna Compact.

THE END STATE

Welcome to Fimbulwinter. The only way this stage can end is with the deaths of the player characters or the Muspelli responsible for this cataclysm.

First Phase: Winter Arrives

Encounters involving the Aspects of Fimbulwinter, the Muspelli and their allies, and mundane elements managing the catastrophe dominate the stories for this stage. However, the crucial moments are those times when the Muspelli summon new Aspects to Mythic Europe, tightening their icy grip on the environment.

REGIONAL EVENTS

These are chance events, ones caught by a nosy covenfolk in town, or told to a grog over cups in a nearby tavern, perhaps even spotted by apprentices sneaking out of the covenant.

Ritual Confrontation: Sailors tell how several longships attacked a merchant vessel; it foundered and sank after being hit by lightning, and they are among the few survivors. A Muspelli is leading a force to a nearby area or island to perform the Aspect summoning ritual, and wanted to ensure there were no witnesses to their arrival.

If Ignored: Neglecting to stop the Muspelli within four days means he successfully summons another Aspect of Fimbulwinter.

If Captured: Mundane allies know they are escorting the Muspelli to visit a special site, and protect the Muspelli while he spends perhaps a day there. They can identify the human form of the Muspelli, and know he seems very unsettling. Supernatural allies know the Muspelli's true

Slidr, the Merciless Blizzard

Magic Might: 50 (Auram)

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre +3, Com 0, Str +2, Sta +4, Dex +2, Qik +4

Season: Winter

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit, Daimon, Great Quickness, Great Stamina, Improved Characteristics x6, Wilderness Sense, Blatant Magical Air, Driven (To Make the World Winter), Magical Monster, Anchored to the Sky, Deleterious Circumstances (Summer), Overconfident, Susceptible to the Divine

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Focus Power: Auram x2, Greater Power (*Donning the Corporeal Veil*, *Eidolon*, *Madness of the Perpetual Winter*), Ritual Power (*Eternal Snows*) x2; Ignem Resistance, Improved Confidence, Improved Might x5, Improved Powers (*Breath of Unfathomable Cold*, *Eternal Snows* x2, *Madness of the Perpetual Winter*), Improved Recovery, Improved Soak, Lesser Power x2 (*Breath of Unfathomable Cold*), Magical Meditation, No Fatigue, Personal Power (*Flight of the Biting Zephyr*, *Sight Beyond Sight* x2)

Personality Traits: Driven +6, Fierce +3, Persistent +3, Uncaring +3, Winter +3*

Reputations: Awesome Force of Nature (local) 5

Combat:

Dodge: Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +9, Damage n/a

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

Icy Battleaxe: Init +3, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +5

Soak: +6

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

Abilities: Athletics 5 (charging), Awareness 5 (sneak attacks), Area Lore 1 (local region), Brawl 5 (dodge), Concentration 5 (Auram effects), Finesse 5 (shaping effects), Etiquette 1 (Muspelli), Folk Ken 5 (first impressions), Guile 5 (misleading), Hunt 4 (tracking), Ignem Resistance 3 (ice), Living Language: Local Language 2 (warnings), Living Language: Norse 5 (warnings), Magic Lore 5 (Regiones), Organization Lore: Muspelli 5 (Jotnar), Penetration 6 (Auram effects), Second Sight 5 (invisible things), Single Weapon 6 (axe), Stealth

5 (stalking), Wilderness Sense 6 (finding settlements)

Powers:

Breath of Unfathomable Cold 3 points, Init -14, Ignem

R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Part

Cools the air within 1000 paces of the target, leaving it freezing. All nonliving things are chilled thoroughly, not just on the surface. All living things, except the Aspect, suffer +5 damage. Armor does not add to Soak against this spell. House fires become as small as campfires, bonfires become as small as torch fires, and campfires and smaller fires go out. Pelg 45 (Base 5, +2 Voice, +1 Part, +4 size): Lesser Power (x2, 45 levels; 1pt Mastery for -2 Might cost); Improved Powers (-4 Might cost)

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +3, Corpus: Slidr can assume material form. Cr(Re)Co 25 (Base 5 +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite): Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost, +10xp Penetration)

Eidolon, 0 points, Init +4, Imaginem

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

Creates an illusionary form visible and audible to material beings. The image can move and speak as directed by the spirit and lasts until the spirit has no use for it. Crlm 15 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Conc, +2 Move on command, +1 intricacy): Greater Power (15 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init, +15xp Penetration)

Eternal Snows 1 point, Init -16, Auram

R: Voice, D: Year, T: Group

Creates clouds dropping snow over an area about 10 miles across. The clouds gather over a few seconds at the beginning of the spell, and dissipate over the same sort of time when duration concludes. The spell does affect temperature, chilling the air thoroughly. Cr(Pe)Au(Ig) 50 (Base 2, +2 Voice, +4 Year, +2 Group, +2 Size, +2 Requisites): Ritual Power (50 levels): Improved Powers (x2, -9 Might cost, +5 xp Penetration)

Flight of the Biting Zephyr 1 points, Init +2, Corpus

R: Per, D: Sun, T: Ind

Slidr can fly through the air in any direction, simply by concentrating. If distracted, this control is lost but the

power still holds the spirit aloft indefinitely. ReCo 25 (Base 15, +2 Sun, constant): Personal Power (25 levels); Improved Powers (-1 Might cost)

Madness of the Perpetual Winter 0 points, Init -8, Mentem

R: Sight, D: Moon, T: Group

Groups of up to 1000 people within sight of Slidr are filled with anger and resentment, looking for any excuse to take it out on those around them. In almost all cases, this quickly develops into violence. CrMe 45 (Base 4, +3 Sight, +3 Moon, +2 Group, +2 size): Greater Power (50 levels); Improved Powers (-5 Might cost)

Master of Winter's Cloak, up to 8 points, Init +4-Magnitude, Aquam

Slidr may create non-ritual Creo/Muto/Rego Aquam effects pertaining to snow and ice up to 8th magnitude. (Focus power x2; 2 Mastery points spent on Ignem prerequisites, 1pt Perdo prerequisites)

Through the Winds of the Storm, 1 point, Init +4, Corpus

R: Per, D: Conc, T: Vision

All five of Slidr's senses operate at a distance, as far as the Aspect can see. This gives Slidr supernatural awareness of everything which occurs, and it is exceptionally difficult to catch it by surprise. InIm 30 (Base 5, +1 Conc, +4 Vision): Personal Power x 2 (20 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init)

Vis: There are three pawns of Aquam and Auram vis in the frost on the Slidr's clothes, and there are two pawns of Ignem and Mentem vis in its eyes.

Appearance: Slidr looks like a platinum-blond Nordic man with an extremely pale complexion and a white, ice-encrusted beard stretching down to his chest. He wears heavy, fur-lined hide armor coated in frost and carries a battle axe with a head and haft of pale blue ice.

Design Note: This is only one example of an Aspect of Fimbulwinter. Others may have different powers associated with the particular Aspect's reputation or specialties.

nature, and that the site has magical significance. They may know this operation is related to the coming Fimbulwinter, depending on how significant they are. A captured Muspelli knows the Fimbulwinter plot, and the plan to use Irminsul sites to summon Aspects of Fimbulwinter. They all know what Lokeshafir looks like in human and etin-mod form, and know the etin-mod of at least one other Muspelli.

If Thwarted: As long as the Muspelli escapes, he returns to enact the summoning ritual in a month. He returns whether or not the Irminsul remains here; if it is moved or destroyed, he uses an Arcane Connection to determine its fate with Spadomur.

The Spoils: Searching the sailors' minds with Mentem magic provides a weak image or description for scrying attempts, and only if the Muspelli is not in etin-mod. If the Irminsul is discovered, it could be moved to provide a vis source for the player covenant.

Ritual Confrontation: Several grogs report being attacked and chased away from a distant vis source by large group of enormous wolves. They only escaped after falling down a steep, snow-covered slope. One believes he saw men clearing some kind of space at the site. A pair of Muspelli and their servants plan to enact an Aspect summoning ritual there with the new moon.

If Ignored: Neglecting to stop the Muspelli means he successfully summons another Aspect of Fimbulwinter.

If Captured: The wolves are a combination of Wolves of Virtue and werewolves. They know the human and etin-mod forms of the Muspelli, and understand he intends to perform a ritual at the Irminsul. They do not know the result of the ritual. The Muspelli knows nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: As long as the Muspelli escapes, he returns to enact the summoning ritual in a month. He returns whether or not the Irminsul remains here; if it is moved or destroyed, he uses an Arcane Connection to determine its fate.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gandrur. His body, gandrur, and still functioning Walking Dead may serve as sources of Insight into Trolldomur magic. The Wolves of Virtue contain vis.

HERMETIC CORRESPONDENCE

These story options arrive via Tribunal gossip, bits of conversation made in passing by traveling magi who seek hospitality, visit-

ing Redcaps, or House Guernicus' quaesitors prosecuting an investigation. These events are near the covenant, but primarily affect other members of the Order or the inhabitants of the region.

Ritual Confrontation: A local, incognizant faerie approaches the magi in search of assistance. One of its faerie allies has been captured by the Muspelli. The pagan sorcerer plans to do something terrible very soon, unless the magi can stop him. The Muspelli will kill the victim, and then use its external vis in the utisetia, utterly destroying the faerie.

If Ignored: Neglecting to stop the Muspelli means he successfully completes the intended summoning. It may also draw the ire of the faerie the magi spurned, creating another foe the magi don't need, one who may become cognizant enough to take the role of the traitorous ally.

If Captured: The Muspelli knows nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: As long as the Muspelli escapes, he returns to enact the summoning ritual in a month, though he lacks the captive faerie. He returns whether or not the Irminsul remains here; if it is moved or destroyed, he uses an Arcane Connection to determine its fate.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gandrur. His body and gandrur may serve as sources of Insight into Trolldomur magic.

The Event: A Redcap arrives in early winter, after several very cold days, explaining how he encountered numerous Walking Dead plaguing a town that acts as a regular resting point for traveling Mercere, and requests assistance from the covenant. The Muspelli are preparing to overwhelm the town and enact a *Fimbulwinter* or Aspect summoning ritual there. They had hoped to capture the Redcap for intelligence and sacrifice.

If Ignored: The town is engulfed by a *Fimbulwinter* utisetia and the population is turned into Walking Dead. The effect lasts for a year.

If Captured: The Muspelli knows nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: The Muspelli abandons this scheme if it does not meet with success, unless the town contains an Irminsul, in which case he returns in a month to attempt to summon an Aspect.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gandrur. His body, gandrur, and still functioning Walking Dead may serve as sources of Insight into Trolldomur magic. The Muspelli may also have any easily portable loot from the sacked town, such as gold church items.

A WINTER HOMECOMING

The Muspelli intend to perform a summoning ritual at the covenant's Irminsul. To conceal this action, they plan an attack on the covenant itself, to distract the magi from their true purpose, but only if covenant is established above ground and not in a regio. Even if the Irminsul is distant from the covenant, they engage to keep the covenant occupied and ensure the Muspelli can summon the Aspect without interruption. Ideally, if they've gained sufficient intelligence through captured or subverted covenfolk, they attack on the day of the Aegis ritual, hoping to prevent its conclusion, so that the newly arrived Aspect can affect the whole community. Otherwise, their attack arrives in the small hours of the night, after any shift change. The Muspelli's forces open with massed volleys of mundane fire arrows, attempting to ignite as many structures as possible. If possible, they use Entranced proxy forces from nearby mundane lords or outposts, or stage a false flag attack on the nearby lord, with a "captured" Muspelli soldier who claims to serve the covenant. This planted prisoner threatens the local leadership with terrible acts against the members of their households.

Meanwhile, the Muspelli and a small escort travel to the Irminsul vis site. There, they perform the summoning ritual. Once complete, the Muspelli conceals the Irminsul in a new, nearby location and departs, suggesting the newly freed Aspect start by bringing winter to the magi's covenant.

Appropriate Muspelli for this event include Magnus or Gunnvara, who complete the utisetia, and possibly Leif or Kotkill, who lead or guide the attack on the covenant proper, depending on whether the attackers are proxies or Muspelli forces. Other options include only mundane, but either loyal

or Entranced forces attacking the covenant, and supernatural allies protecting the casting Muspelli. Once the Aspect arrives, any Muspelli attacking the covenant immediately retreats, but says nothing to the other attackers, leaving them to unwittingly cover the retreat. Should the Muspelli succeed, the covenant finds itself truly in the thick of both winter and a vicious brawl against a powerful Magic Aspect. The spirit means to cover the world in perpetual snow, drifting in banks up to four feet tall, starting here. The aftermath of this battle could have serious repercussions for the survival of the covenant, depending on the damage to the infrastructure, and the magical effects in place from the Muspelli or the Aspect.

If any of the Muspelli died during this attack, their bodies and gandar serve as sources of Insight for magi investigating Trolldomur. Additionally, enduring utiseta effects could be researched for a season, if the duration is sufficient. If killed in their etin-mod, the Muspelli corpse may also act as a source of Insight if preserved and studied. The body is also an Arcane Connection to the Muspelli's ghost.

Captured or dead allies of the Muspelli know their attack was the distraction for another ritual nearby. The don't know what the ritual was, or exactly where. They can provide images or descriptions of the Muspelli in human and etin-mod form. If interrogated, the Muspelli can provide information any remaining plots he may have planned, such as framing the covenant, starting a false conflict with the Raudskinna, or the location of another Irminsul.

If the rest of the player characters' Tribunal members doubted the possibility of Fimbulwinter, the aftermath of the attack and the likely presence of the Aspect should go a long way toward convincing them.

If prevented from completing the utiseta, the Muspelli returns two seasons later to attempt the operation again.

THE EGESTERENSTEIN

As the third stage progresses, the Muspelli claim the Egesterenstein in the Teutoburger Wald. This ancient stone monument served as a pagan holy site until Charlemagne defeated the Saxons in 792. There are several caves here, serving as residences for the half-dozen hermit monks who maintain a small, rough chapel on the ground floor. This chapel has no Divine aura, as there is

no sufficient congregation that gathers to regularly worship here, and no relic consecrated within the altar. The monks mostly ignore the former pagan altar space, high above the valley in a grotto atop the third of five monoliths. This grotto is accessed only by a narrow stone staircase, carved along the raw stone of the sheer face, and the monks occasionally use it for prayer and contemplation; it has a Magic aura of 3, which rises to 5 on the Summer Solstice. These clergy stand no chance against the Muspelli's forces. Magnus, Gunnvara, or even Ingvar is a good choice for this site.

This site has great significance to the Jotnar, and the Muspelli layer their defenses around it to keep it. First, Entranced locals deter most visitors, giving warnings regarding fictitious hauntings. Next, the Muspelli use loyal mercenaries to patrol. Finally, a Jotun Aspect and a large horde of Walking Dead protect the base of the Egesterenstein itself. High in the grotto-chapel, the Muspelli remains in etin-mod, sacrificing monks and other offerings until the summoning ritual is complete.

For storyguides wishing to increase the difficulty of this event, consider adding converted vitkir with skills identical to those presented later. Also, adding Leif Ormsbrodir to the ranks of the mercenaries, ready to fight in etin-mod, is another option for a greater challenge.

SUNDAY, LAETARE SUNDAY

This attack may throw the characters off balance, as it does not involve an existing Irminsul. Instead, it involves a tradition associated with Laetare Sunday. The Divine ceremony commemorates Charlemagne's victory over the Saxons and the end of paganism in the Holy Roman Empire. On the 4th Sunday of Lent, in villages and towns throughout the Saxony region, the residents raise a wooden Irminsul in their town square, and then the young men throw stones at it until it topples. Taking advantage of this ritual, the Muspelli strike after the Irminsul is raised, but before the traditional toppling of the monument. First, they overwhelm the town with their allies and supernatural powers. Then, using the Irminsul as the Arcane Connection to Fimbulwinter and the focus of the ritual, the Muspelli completes the summoning ritual. Laetare Sunday is always three Sundays prior to Easter, but the date varies from year to year.

Right Here, Right Now

Alternatively, the storyguide could make the Egesterenstein the site of the most prominent stronghold for the Muspelli. There is a certain poetic justice to having the pagan forces violently capture their former holy place from the token group of monks occupying it, using the blood of those devout men to reconsecrate their sacrificial stone as a Muspelli performs the magical ritual which brings forth a Magic spirit intent on enveloping the world in the howling cold of winter. The site is formidable and impressive, potentially serving as a very capable redoubt against mundane forces. This brings the masterstroke of the Muspelli plan into the heartland of Hermetic society, and the significance of this act does not escape Ingvar. In this case, replace Magnus or Gunnvara with Ingvar and his sons, while adding any remaining Muspelli to support the area.

Afterward, if successful, this Muspelli delays an extra day to revel in the victory represented here, before continuing to the next Irminsul site. The Aspect is sent into the world to cause havoc, and the mercenaries accompany the Muspelli, but the Walking Dead are ordered to remain and guard the site, and the locals remain Entranced until the effect ends.

If the player magi attack and interrupt this utiseta, then much like the aftermath of an attack on the player covenant, the useful items of note are likely to include the captured Muspelli or their bodies, and their personal effects. If any of the Muspelli died during the attack, their bodies and gandar serve as sources of Insight for magi investigating Trolldomur. Here, particularly, the location may be studied for Insight, as could the altar stone or the sacrificial victims, but this involves keeping the site secure from the surviving monks who want to reoccupy their chapel.

STORY SEED: FOR THE CHILDREN

Player magi discovering the site of the Laetare Sunday Fimbulwinter summoning afterwards find it protected by Helgam of Bonisagus. In this scenario, the Muspelli managed to capture the apprentices she intended to shepherd to safety, and they are held hostage for a year and day as Helgam is forced to defend the site from any Hermetics who arrive intending to destroy the Irminsul. The fate of the apprentices, whether they actually still live, is left as a decision for the storyguide.

This event always provides another Irminsul site, helping the Muspelli complete their plan through an unwitting ally in local tradition. It is not an essential event, but one which can be placed anywhere in the Rhine Tribunal, and so it offers flexibility for saga planning, and establishes a precise date for a battle which allows both the Hermetics and the Muspelli to plan accordingly. In sagas where the storyguide wants Fimbulwinter to begin simultaneously across Mythic Europe, Laetare Sunday provides an established time and day for the Muspelli to coordinate around, synchronizing the summoning at more traditional or ancient Irminsul to conclude at the same time as a battle here.

Those captured at this event provide no additional information for this phase. If thwarted, the Muspelli will attempt this same attack in a different village next year, until killed.

THE HEART OF WINTER

Ingvar Suttungja's redoubt in the Nordic region is not given a specific location, so the storyguide may place it as best fits her saga. Some options include the hills near Gamla Uppsala, where he has gathered relics and the Irminsul of the great Temple, secreted away before its destruction in the late 11th century, or the island of Gotland, or even in the pagan lands of the Balts, where the werewolves run in the forests.

No matter which location you select, he has an Irminsul and is guarded by both his family and allies as he prepares to com-

plete an Aspect summoning. Once the third stage begins, he regularly performs this summoning, so as to bring the Aspect back from the Magic Realm if it has been recently destroyed.

Some local werewolf tribes and hedge wizards are allied with this powerful Muspelli. Ingvar should have a sizable force of Walking Dead, and his home is often cloaked in the veil of Sjonhverfing. A battle against this potent non-Hermetic sorcerer should be a conflict of epic proportions, scaled to truly challenge the player magi. Ingvar fights to the death and refuses to surrender. He believes he has seen the future of his land and of his beliefs, and feels Fimbulwinter is the only way to preserve any of it. He hopes his efforts truly bring about the new beginning he envisions Ragnarok to be.

Defeating Ingvar seriously hampers the Muspelli threat. No other member of the cabal has the force of personality to inspire independent members of their tradition, and he discovered the Aspect summoning ritual. With his death, no new Muspelli join the crusade to bring Fimbulwinter, and only surviving members of his conspiracy remain to fight the Order of Hermes. Their cabal is still significant, but this loss greatly hinders their momentum.

Ingvar provides a wealth of information, as he knows all of the Irminsul sites discovered by the other members of the cabal, and can describe members in human and etin-mod forms. He can detail potential plots in development by the other Muspelli, as well, since he advised them when he taught the summoning ritual.

For magi seeking to decipher or incorporate Muspelli magic into Hermetic Theory, the bodies of any of the Muspelli who died during the attack, their bodies and gandar might serve as sources of Insight. Also, Ingvar's redoubt and his Irminsul could be researched for Insight. If Ingvar possesses relics from the former temple in Gamla Uppsala, Sweden, these are most likely non-Hermetic magic items and sources of Insight.

Second Phase: False Trails

The Muspelli respond to the Hermetics' active engagement with distractions and red herrings. As events progress, Muspelli may create situations to distract from their true goals and to keep the Order of Hermes oc-

cupied while the Aspects rampage, helping create the conditions described in old eddas. An enemy who cannot identify the true strategy of the servants of the Jotnar in a storm of events is an enemy unlikely to prevent Fimbulwinter, and therefore unable to prevent Ragnarok. This is where the hordes of walking dead and intelligence gathered in the first and second stages pay true dividends.

Storyguides seeking a particular Muspelli to bring into conflict with the covenant should consider Gunnvara Jarnvidja or Magnus Norn, with the "Shadow War" concept being a chance to bring Ingvar Suttungja more into play. Magnus is especially appropriate to this section. However, storyguides should still be careful to keep Ingvar from being traced easily. At this point, he should seem like the foe they just can't pin down, even if other Muspelli have mentioned him.

These are distraction plotlines, meant to be started up when the Aspects are being released, to provide additional chaos. These plotlines should continue to run their courses, drawing resources, causing difficulties, and generally causing trouble in the magi's world as the Muspelli continue to enact Aspect summoning utisetas. At this point, the saga should feel like the full-blown war it is.

TELLING TALES

The information player characters can learn by interrogating the Muspelli or their minions in the second half of the stage is similar to the intelligence available in the first half, except now even the thugs and reivers aiding the pagan sorcerers know the Muspelli are seeking out Irminsul, and know the Muspelli perform a ritual at the old monuments. Dead or alive, they can provide human and etin-mod descriptions, and can describe what Irminsul look like. The Muspelli still do what they can to keep things secret.

Muspelli know their Irminsul sites, the summoning ritual, the face and etin-mod of Ingvar, and likely the etin-mod of at least one other Muspelli.

THE PRICE OF IGNORANCE

It is possible the covenant may still wish to pursue their own agendas, either preparing to flee the destruction or simply shelter in place. Adjust their plotlines accordingly with the consequences of any successful Muspelli actions.

THE SNAKE BY THE TAIL

The Order of Hermes and its magi present the single largest and most dangerous threat to the Muspelli; opposing them directly without the proper preparation most certainly results in terrible defeat. However, even the Hermetics have their weak points. Individually, isolated lone magi, or eremites, offer targets a raiding or scouting party can overwhelm, especially if Muspelli learn to time attacks at dawn or dusk. Given the limited social activity of most magi, such opportunistic attacks could remain unnoticed for months. Once discovered, investigations consume resources and attention as quaesitors first determine whether any crime has been committed, then begin seeking culprits. By then, the Muspelli's band is long-gone with their loot.

Redcaps offer another target. Defensively weaker, they often carry lesser enchanted items, large amounts of vis, and some amount of silver, all of which Muspelli want. However, Redcaps likely have Arcane Connections safely stored back at their home covenants or at the domus magna of Harco. This means a curious magus will eventually interrogate their bodies or spirits once their absence is noted. Such investigation leaves the Order of Hermes more suspicious of

traveling groups like a Muspelli party. While this may seem like an unfortunate loss of the magi's resources, the time spent investigating the Redcap's death offers the chance for increased Hermetic awareness of Muspelli plans and membership.

SHADOW WAR

The Muspelli stand a reasonable chance of framing the Raudskinna Compact for their activities, and potentially distracting the Order of Hermes with a secondary conflict, if you choose to include the Compact in your version of Mythic Europe. Such an accomplishment would pit the Muspelli's oldest foe against their greatest threat while leaving the servants of the Jotnar free to complete their goals. But how would they instigate hostilities between the two groups?

The easiest way to begin a war is to make both sides believe the other started events. One way to arrange such a belief requires the Muspelli to capture and Entrance a group of Redcaps or grogs, directing them to attack a Raudskinna community, preferably using enchanted items, but not overwhelming force. Once defeated, a properly "prodded" Raudskinna, inflamed by Entranced members of their own community, responds in kind, sending a retributive warband into Hermetic territory, striking at what they either suspect or know to be weak. This spurs a series of retributive attacks, where the Order likely overpowers the Raudskinna. In desperation, the Raudskinna explore a number of options, from seeking help from the Muspelli, to suing for peace, to making a last stand. This subordinate story arc may unfold in the background, once initiated, observed from a distance by the player characters and prosecuted by other members of the Order of Hermes.

The Muspelli could remain more involved, but as a "fifth column," offering to support either side against the other, while purposefully sabotaging operations. This is a dangerous gamble, because most Muspelli have little to no resistance against Hermetic Mentem magics, and such a role risks premature discovery, with disastrous results. Assisting the Raudskinna is equally dangerous, because in a conflict between the vitkir and the Hermetics, the Order of Hermes will eventually win, leaving the Muspelli to "join or die." However, if the Muspelli can learn about and gain the Parma Magica, the tenor

of the whole conflict changes.

The Raudskinna Compact is detailed in *Rival Magic*, pages 106-109, and rules for vitkir, the main members, are given in *Hedge Magic*, pages 120-140.

REGIONAL TROUBLES

To the common folk, there is little difference between the terrifying Muspelli in their etin-mod, and the Hermetic wizards studying in their covenants. It doesn't matter how badly the local residents misperceive their attackers, falling quickly back to easily remembered suspicions about those strange scholars and their rough guardsmen. By attacking soft targets serving as sources of income and prestige to both nobility and clergy, the Muspelli essentially kick a very angry bear predisposed to suspect the magi.

The Event: Several groups of refugees arrive at the covenant and the castles of local lords after raiders burn and partially destroy their villages. They claim their attackers did not die, and while there are signs of people being killed, the wreckage of each community is devoid of any corpses. A local priest believes the covenant is at fault, and has the ear of both the local noble and the bishop. In truth, a Muspelli is marching through the countryside at night, slaughtering whomever he can, commanding the victims with Valgaldrar, and then hiding the mob of Walking Dead during the day with Sjonhverfing.

If Ignored: If the covenant cannot convince the priest and the lord they are not culpable for the attacks, bringing proof which withstands their accuser's scrutiny, they may face Divinely backed retribution and larger political troubles within the Order. Meanwhile, the Muspelli and a growing horde of Walking Dead continues to terrorize the countryside, and popular opinion against them mounts.

If Captured: Still functioning Walking Dead may serve as an arcane connection back to the Muspelli who created them. The Muspelli knows nothing additional for this phase.

If Thwarted: Capturing either minions or the Muspelli responsible for this event does little to help the covenant's case with the bishop or noble. There is a suspicion the magi have

My Enemy
Is My Friend

There is a possibility the Muspelli could join the Order of Hermes, if they learn of the "Join or Die" clause. If they do so, the situation becomes complex. The covenant must now deal with the Muspelli as peers (unless they wish to become outlaws themselves and act outside the Code of Hermes), bringing proof of their activities before a Quaesitor or Tribunal, while dealing with foes who now know the Parma Magica and might even accuse the covenant of depriving them of their magical power or scrying on them. Even then, the magi need to overcome the Order's political perception of House Ex Miscellanea as a collection of weak hedge wizards, a task made harder by the fact that the Muspelli are, indeed, weaker than Hermetic magi in most ways. This option radically changes the tone of the saga.

created a scapegoat. Ideally, a third-party witness beyond reproach would need to vouch for the guilt of the Muspelli. Allowing the Muspelli to escape means he continues to harass the covenant through other schemes.

The Spoils: The Muspelli has any vis he carries, and any gandr. His body, gandr, and still functioning Walking Dead may serve as sources of Insight into Trolldomur magic. The Muspelli may also have any easily portable loot from sacked towns, such as gold church items.

HERMETIC CORRESPONDENCE

The Event: Several Redcaps and a Pergrinator Magus have disappeared while traveling through the Rhine to Stonehenge. There have been signs of struggles and attacks, and the Praecos, Presiding Quaesitors, and Redcaps of both Tribunals have asked for assistance resolving the issue, perhaps offering leniency on other issues, like interfering with the mundanes, if the covenant can successfully resolve their fates. Several of the bodies are discovered upon searching, with evidence suggesting that vitkir or hedge wizards are responsible.

If Ignored: Failing to investigate means the Muspelli reclaim and use the bodies with Valgaldrar and Sjonhverfing to fake an attack on the Raudskinna Compact, attempting to incite hostilities.

If Successful: Using Mentem or Corpus magics to interrogate the deceased paints another picture of their deaths and provides clues to their Muspelli murderers, perhaps revealing weaknesses or otherwise undiscovered connections.

The Spoils: The dead members of the Order have a few magical items left behind by the Muspelli, who did not know the items were magic or did not care to take them. These items might be used by the covenant or returned to the deceased individuals' next of kin, who reward the covenant for successfully answering the questions surrounding their fates. While these answers are to the satisfaction of those who requested the covenant's assistance, the situation hopefully inspires more questions from the player characters.

The Event: Arriving disheveled and bloody, a hedge wizard ally reports being attacked or hunted by a group of men with rune-marked weaponry. In fact, he has been Entranced, and commanded to lead the cov-

enant into an ambush orchestrated by the Muspelli, but fought by the Raudskinna. The Muspelli has captured Raudskinna allies, and made it appear that the covenant, working through hedge wizard proxies, is responsible. The captives are hidden in another hedge wizard's home and the Raudskinna attack when it seems like the Hermetics are about to free the captives, thinking they mean to harm them.

If Ignored: This encounter escalates hostilities between the Raudskinna and the Order of Hermes. If no one is dispatched to engage the Raudskinna, they kill the hedge wizard and three other lesser hedge wizards in the area.

If Captured: Using magic to interrogate the Entranced victim provides more details regarding one of the Muspelli. Questioning the Raudskinna forces reveals that someone told them about the attack, and where to set the ambush.

If Thwarted: If cooler heads prevail, the attack can be turned into a meeting and an opportunity for either truce or alliance between the Order of Hermes and the Raudskinna.

The Spoils: The Raudskinna have a number of rune-marked weapons and items, all non-Hermetic, as well as about 7 pawns of vis. The hedge wizards have roughly a rook of vis hidden away.

The Event: A Redcap arrives to trade with the covenant, and reports being attacked by men with rune-marked weapons who spoke a Nordic language. They captured him and

Winter's Bite

Fimbulwinter grows harsher after Aspects roam the land for a year or more. Scotland and Scandinavia become outright uninhabitable, with regular levels of Major Exposure for those outdoors (Deprivation checks each hour, Ease Factor 9 or +3 frostbite damage). While those acclimated to winter in places like Norway or Orkney might initially endure the weather, the cold spurs migration from north to south, with the highlanders moving first, and then a second wave of "barbarian" invasions. This makes traveling to prospective Fimbulwinter sites more difficult as refugees clog the roads, ship captains refuse to carry passengers for less than exorbitant rates, and banditry becomes commonplace. The covenant may need to become more vicious and brutal if they hope to complete their task; the question becomes, do they have the resources to match their resolve?

Story Seed: A Lordly Tribute

The growing expanse of Fimbulwinter exhausts most reasonable stores after two years of snow and cold. Recently, nobles have begun confiscating animals and hoarding craftsmen. Edicts declare any poacher may be killed on sight. A roving band of "tax collecting" men-at-arms, led by the local ruler's cousin, spot the covenant's smaller band eating well, and decide to "collect" both the lord's share, and the relatively well-made weapons the group carries. Giving the resources over could weaken the covenant's ability to oppose the Muspelli and any lawless elements. Killing the upstart means making an overt enemy out of the lord, as peasants watch the altercation from nearby concealment. Can the magi handle the situation with enough restraint?

Story Seed: Plowing Through

The covenant's source of food, either a merchant, a group of nearby fields, or maybe the surplus generated by a nearby manor, has been taken by another party, such as a local knight or lord, or even a hungry mob of refugees. The covenant must either secure the previous supply, or acquire a new one, and consider how they handle growing influx of refugees asking the covenant for shelter. Do the area's lords consider it a theft of labor, or do they demand taxes in the form of foodstuffs?

killed his mount, but he escaped while they slept. He doesn't think he was followed, but they have his satchel. The men are Entranced allies of the Raudskinna Compact, commanded to take the satchel to a vitki by a Muspelli.

If Ignored: The Compact's men are killed and the Order of Hermes is framed for the act. The Compact organizes a raiding party to strike out at covenant resource. The Muspelli gain information about any of the magi who wrote letters. Following the men but only watching their deaths unnoticed earns the observer the Haunted Flaw until the Muspelli and their killers are slain. However, the ghosts sometimes appear to point the haunted individual in the direction of nearby culprits. At other times, the ghosts simply torment the individual. Failure to allow them inside an *Aegis of the Hearth* angers them. Destroying any of their number with PeVi or PeMe magics causes them to stop helping the observer, and simply do what they can to make life miserable around the haunted person.

If Captured: If cooler heads prevail, the attack can be turned into a meeting and an opportunity for either truce or alliance between the Order of Hermes and the Raudskinna.

If Thwarted: The Muspelli is willing to try this gambit again, and if the ruse is successful, repeat it with minor variations until either full-blown war erupts between the

Order and the Raudskinna, the two organizations form some type of alliance, or one of the two dupes is completely eliminated from the area.

The Spoils: The Raudskinna have a few rune-marked weapons and items, all non-Hermetic, but none very powerful. The Redcap is willing to provide the covenant with two rooks of vis of their choice for helping ensure the successful delivery of his parcels.

In the Storm and Ending It

As events unfold, the covenant must manage many elements of the situation. Changes in the availability of mundane and supernatural resources demand attention from the player characters. The wizards might investigate the nature of Fimbulwinter in order to learn the identity of their enemy or in an attempt to incorporate a new type of magic into Hermetic theory. Once the player characters discover the Muspelli plot and recognize the threat posed by the Aspects, chances are good they will go on the offensive, seeking out ways to halt the winter's escalation and reverse its effects.

THE COST OF THE COLD

Fimbulwinter inevitably impacts mundane supplies, as the freezing weather both reduces harvests and forces the populace to seek better living conditions. Simple necessities, like tools, laboratory supplies, or livestock, become difficult to acquire as the covenant competes with nearby communities for the raw materials necessary to survive. While not every troupe tracks their logistical matters, stories regarding dwindling stocks and shortages should become a recurring part of the saga after the second Fimbulwinter Aspect is released, helping accentuate the forced migration of the common populace when their land can no longer support them and the desperate competition for remaining resources among those who attempt to shelter in place.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Where is the Divine as Fimbulwinter blossoms into its full, terrible glory? The storyguide has a few options to consider. First, the Host of Heaven may simply arrive in Mythic Europe and bring those with True Faith back to the Kingdom of God, creating a "left behind" situation for the rest of humanity. (This is a bad option if any player characters have True Faith.) Second, there may be a number of subtle Divine interventions where wood burns far longer than normal, or

Story Seed: In the Act

The magi arrive to collect the vis from one of their sites, only to discover a magical wolf servant of Kotkill busily harvesting it (see ArM5, page 193) for the Muspelli. The many-in-one nature of the enemy means there are no corpses to question unless the primary creature is killed, and taking the vis after killing the beast causes it to disintegrate. If the magi capture or keep the creature's corpse, they can interrogate it, but cannot get the vis until they are satisfied with the answers. Bringing the live creature inside the *Aegis* as a prisoner requires giving it a token or involving it in the ritual; either option has complications. And more importantly, what do they do with what they learn from the encounter?

Story Seed: A Fistful of Vis

A Muspelli has been poaching all of the Rego vis in the area in preparation for a Wildfire utiseta against a covenant. The victims of one of these thefts suspect the player characters, and go to challenge them for the rights to their vis sites. Confronting the magi at each vis site, they demand certamen for the right to the existing vis, and certamen for the right to continue collecting the vis. Unable to catch the Muspelli thief looting their sites, they believe the player characters know something, and hope to use access to the vis as a bargaining chip. While no individual magus is challenging the characters to certamen excessively often, the cumulative effect is far more than a minor annoyance.

Story Seed: The Old Grey Mare

Brigands accost a group of covenant folk and steal the livestock being used to complete their chores. The thieves sell the beasts to the local lord, who now has them, and considers them his rightful property. Reclaiming the animals isn't as simple as purchasing them, because the noble now hoards his resources, and feels the livestock are essential to his household's survival. Even by requesting the livestock, the magi might reveal their own community as another resource the ruler feels he has a right to strip for his own comfort. Do they surreptitiously steal the animals back without approaching? Do they acquire new animals from afar? And what will be the fate of the thieves?

a week's worth of grain produces bread for seven weeks, but these should be reserved for those of great piety. Finally, the Divine may treat Fimbulwinter as a test of faith, an opportunity for mankind to live and exemplify the ways of God in the face of great adversity. In any case, the response should not take agency away from the player characters or make their choices meaningless.

...MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

The loss of vis sources generates issues for both the player character magi and other Hermetics. Converting auras to Trolldomur destroys vis sources. Depending on the location of a vis source relative to other Tribunals, foreign magi may cross their borders to poach the covenant's site after theirs has been damaged or taken. Muspelli might also steal vis from unguarded sources, or supernatural creatures might consume the vis to survive. These stories could occur at any point in the saga, but particularly in the second phase of the first stage, as the Muspelli prepare and execute their plans, and then during the second phase of the third stage, as the Muspelli prosecute their war of attrition.

THE SOURCE OF THE EFFECTS

Discovering the origin of Fimbulwinter means hunting down witnesses who may have seen a summoning ritual performed, and then unraveling the mystery of the Muspelli tradition by learning who they are and what they desire. In the course of the investigation, the player characters may find themselves approaching the Raudskinna to learn about the greatest enemy of the vitkir. They might engage local hedge wizards, Seekers, or other Hermetics with reputations as scholars of non-Hermetic traditions, trying to gain information on Muspelli tactics and motivations. Given that the enemy follows a pagan philosophy, necromantic specialists might bind the ghosts of defeated or long-dead Muspelli for extended interrogation. They might decide to study Fimbulwinter and the Muspelli's magical tradition of Trolldomur, in an effort to incorporate it into Hermetic Theory. This last option represents a Hermetic Breakthrough, representing the integration of the utiseta-style casting method as an alternative for ceremonial casting.

CHASING THE CULPRITS

Once the player characters realize the Muspelli are responsible for releasing the Aspects of Fimbulwinter, they may decide to hunt down the pagan sorcerers. Killing all of the living Muspelli who know the Aspect summoning ritual brings the threat to an end.

However, in order to perpetuate Fimbulwinter, the Muspelli only need to transmit the summoning ritual to other Muspelli, a process which takes a season of instruction. If the Hermetics discover the Muspelli are Arcane Connections to the Jotnar, they might decide to exploit the connection in reverse. Once dead, Muspelli are no longer Arcane Connections to their Jotun patron. By hunting down a particular Jotun in the Magic Realm and acquiring an Arcane Connection, it is possible to create an effect capable of affecting all Muspelli associated with the Jotun. This effect could be as subtle as a Rego Mentem charm, causing the Muspelli to become farmers, or a bloody killing spell.

HUNTING ASPECTS

Magi are likely to face Aspects of Fimbulwinter in magical combat, potentially destroying a particular Aspect more than once. The Aspects are a part of the Daimon of Fimbulwinter and also individuals at the same time. Aspects carry grudges between incarnations, remembering who destroyed their previous form, as well as any interactions they may have had with those characters. This task is both potentially simple and challenging, following the wintry trail of an Aspect is easier during the early seasons of the third stage, but once winter is widespread, locating Aspects somewhere in the countryside requires a dedicated hunt or an Arcane Connection.

HUNTING IRMINSUL

By destroying the Irminsul, the Order of Hermes eliminates the Arcane Connection necessary for the Muspelli to summon Aspects of Fimbulwinter. This option is likely to bring the player characters into direct conflict with the Muspelli more often, because the servants of the Jotnar are also looking for these pagan altars. Unfortunately, while it might slow the number of Aspects which can be released into Mythic Europe,

this is not a foolproof course of action. Magi may choose to use the Irminsul as an Arcane Connection to affect the currently summoned Aspect; the Irminsul is considered an indefinite Arcane Connection. New Irminsuls may only be created through rituals like the Laetare Sunday tradition, or by discovering priests of this tradition in some region who know how to do so; none are alive in Mythic Europe in 1220.

INTO THE HEART OF WINTER

Similar to affecting all the Muspelli of a particular Jotun, it is possible the magi may decide to venture into the Magic Realm, seeking out the region of Yggdrasil to strike at the *kosmokrater* they represent, or acquire either the Aspects' True Names or some other Arcane Connection. Then, armed with this link, they might use it to destroy the Aspects across Mythic Europe with a targeted effect. While certainly possible, such a venture is beyond the scope of this book. Magi would face numerous Jotun foes, lindwurms, trolls, possibly even valkyries; the destruction of the very concept of Fimbulwinter leaves the Aesir with no foe to fight, an intolerable consequence. The Daimon of Fimbulwinter, the *kosmokrator* trapped in the Magic Realm, should be considered effectively immortal while there. It cannot be damaged by Perdo Vim effects the way other creatures with Might are vulnerable. A Daimon's connection to the Magic Realm renders it immune to any such attack. Likewise, while the currently summoned Aspects may be destroyed, removing them from Mythic Europe until summoned again, they cannot be eradicated from the Magic Realm.

Hermetic Survival: Winter Has Arrived

For a Hermetic covenant looking to survive Fimbulwinter, several options exist. This section considers sheltering in place, reestablishing the covenant elsewhere, and finally, what must be done to break Fimbulwinter's grasp.

Riding the Storm

To maintain a covenant's current location, the magi need to consider the basic necessities: concealing the site, maintaining defenses in a world growing decidedly more hostile, generating food, and sustaining livestock. In a small mercy, finding water becomes trivial as the snow drifts around them.

The first, and most key task, is concealing the covenant. The *Aegis* and the *Parma* might keep the worst of the effects outside, and placing the boundary someplace visible has its own hazards. First, an area clear of snow and cold draws mundane creatures of all sizes and shapes, seeking someplace warmer. Even if a ward prevents their entry, the concentration of wildlife and the difference in environment brings hunters and opportunists, looking for supplies. Second, it attracts the attention of Muspelli seeking to realign Magic auras into Trolldomur and eliminate Hermetic magi. While they might not immediately be able to breach the covenant's defenses, they can certainly engage in a guerrilla war, as the Muspelli attack the covenant's external mundane and vis resources. With this in mind, covenants should consider hiding their community in some way. Some choices might include going underground or underwater, building within a regio, or even attempting to build something mobile, like a small fleet of ships or a flying structure. Those unable to do so might cloak the site with an *Imaginem* or *Mentem* effect. Failing to conceal the covenant means there should be a story every season regarding the defense of the covenant against attacking forces. At least one in three of these attacks should be from magical forces, either Hermetic magi who have forsaken the Code, a magical creature of some kind that is susceptible to deprivation, or a Muspelli raid.

To stay independent of the world outside, covenants need to maintain livestock and grow food, which requires heat and light in a protected environment. While food could simply be created magically, if this is done without using vis the people eating the food begin to build a debt of Deprivation which takes effect when the spells' durations expire. For instance, characters who ate magical food with a duration of Moon every day would need to



make a Stamina check at the end of the month versus an Ease Factor 12 or lose three Long-Term Fatigue levels. If they did it again, they would need to make a Stamina check versus an Ease Factor of 21 or suffer the loss of another three Long-Term Fatigue levels. Each successive month of magical food increases the Ease Factor by 9 with the loss of three Long-Term Fatigue levels. When the characters become Unconscious, the loss becomes damage as described under Deprivation, ArM5, page 180. Animals bred as food and sustained on magically created food are not as healthy, and anyone living in such an environment suffers a -2 Living Conditions modifier. To avoid this, people and animals either need to be fed food magically created with vis, or naturally grown. Natural food grown with magical assistance is still naturally grown food.

THE HIDDEN WARREN

PeTe 40

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Part

This spell carves out 2,500 linear paces of passageway that is two paces by two paces, for a total of 10,000 cubic paces of stone or mixed stone and dirt destroyed. This space may be adjusted to create doorways, rooms, and stairs with a Finesse roll against an Ease Factor of 12. An Ease Factor of 15 allows for more intricate details like chairs, tables, and shelves. This spell carves through dirt and stone alike, but a structure cut primarily out of dirt requires wooden supports added afterwards. This spell easily creates a space 6 paces underground, with twenty 5-by-5-by-3 pace rooms joined to a 2-by-2-by-60 paces corridor, for approximately 1,775 cubic paces, and allows for 5 such levels, each joined by a 2-by-2 pace stairwell 6 paces deep. The form of the excavation can be modified by the caster, however.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +1 Part, +4 Size, +1 for Stone, +2 for complexity)

The Shroud Cut of Winter's Cloth

CrIm(Me) 45

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Boundary [Ritual]

Similar to *The Shrouded Glen* (ArM5, page 152), this spell enchants the Boundary in which the ritual is cast so that anyone moving through it is not only subtly diverted, but believes the space within the Boundary is filled with the image of the terrain of the caster's choice, usually identical to the area surrounding it. This image affects the senses of sight, touch, and hearing.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +4 Year, +4 Boundary, +1 Mentem Req.)

CHIME OF A SUNKEN SPRING DAY

Crlg 24

Pen +0, 1/day

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Structure

Ring this handbell and setting it against the wall of a structure fills the structure with warmth equivalent a pleasant, balmy, late spring afternoon.

(Effect: 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 Struct, +1 for 2/day use, +3 Environmental Trigger: Sunrise/set)

CHIMES TO MARK THE TRUE TIME

Crlg 25

Pen +0, 1/day

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Structure

Ring this handbell and setting it against the wall of a structure fills it with soft light equivalent to torchlight. A covenant would probably desire two of these items to help maintain a schedule underground, but the second would only need to be level 20, as the light provided would be no greater than

candlelight to avoid excessively interfering with sleep patterns.

(Effect: 3, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 Struct, +0 for 1/day use)

Seeking the Warmth

Some covenants might consider reestablishing a covenant in a more remote and southerly location with slightly muted winters as one alternative. Options include the caves of Cappadocia or the Pyrenees, the highlands of Ethiopia, the Maghreb of North Africa, or the island of Soqotra. Such an exodus requires packing the necessary essentials, acquiring transportation, and then making the long and arduous journey.

Magi probably need to bring their grogs and covenfolk with them when planning relocation to a new site. Anyone at the destination would be untrustworthy at best, and more likely hostile. The new environment of the world would not encourage anyone to welcome newcomers, who would represent an increased strain on available resources. However, the covenant needs to ensure they have translators to speak with the native populations, intelligence regarding the current political situation, and enough raw supplies to survive until local materials can be acquired. The journey will not instantly

secure peace, as the locals resist the arrival of refugees. Covenants consolidating their supplies for the journey need to keep them hidden from opportunists and scavengers.

A covenant pursuing this option is essentially abandoning Europe to the Muspelli. While other covenants may do the same, there are likely to be those who favor attempting to remain behind and stop Fimbulwinter. This may result in a second schism of the Order, as those who flee are considered traitors by those who stay.

A HOUSE ALREADY ABANDONED

Mulm 35

R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Structure

From outside the structure, the targeted structure appears empty and crumbling, and there are no signs of movement inside. Anyone within the structure seems to be nothing more than a scurrying insect, and any furnishings seem to be rubble. The sounds, sights, and smells of anyone inside are masked and hidden.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +3 Moon, +3 Structure, +1 Complexity)

The Return of Spring

Ultimately, the key to sundering the Muspelli stranglehold on the climate is to kill the Muspelli who initiated it. Once Fimbulwinter is complete and Mythic Europe is cloaked in ice and snow, even mun-

Story Seed: Hunger of Desperation

The covenant finds that even in its concealed and masked state, refugees continue to enter their "former" grounds, looking for anything to scavenge. How do they deal with these intruders? Christian ideology would demand they accept them into the covenant and try to help them survive. The truth of the available supplies might dictate that another mouth simply reduces the amount for everyone else, and hastens eventual starvation. At what point do they abandon their fellow man?

Story Seed: The Case for Fight or Flight

The magi gather for an impromptu Tribunal gathering as Fimbulwinter overcomes their region. Spirited debate ensues as factions argue the merits of fighting this new situation versus a calm and orderly exodus. Some claim the Order is finished, unable to foresee or forestall this apocalypse. Regardless of their position and the state of the other covenants, some stay and others go, and each side considers the other fools. The question becomes, "Will it be an amicable end, or a violent one?" Some magi might consider settling scores or looting whatever resources are available before the Order effectively dissolves. Or is it possible that the player characters can forge a unified response, now the consequences of inaction have arrived?

Penetrating Cold

Does Fimbulwinter need to Penetrate? This is determined in the normal way. Magically created media or magically controlled substances must Penetrate, but mundane items that have been moved by magic and then released need not. Slidr (earlier) creates snow through a Creo effect, with Perdo for the cold, so the snow and cold must Penetrate. On the other hand, they have a Penetration of 52, and thus are not stopped by most Aegises or Parmas. Storms moved to the area of the covenant and then left to their own devices do not need to Penetrate, but can equally be controlled by magi.

dane sources know of the Muspelli and their depredations. At that point, the Order of Hermes has little trouble learning who is responsible, but they don't know where to find the culprits. This means the magi must hunt down both the Aspects and the Muspelli and defeat them. With Fimbulwinter complete, this is easier said than done, as the Muspelli roam the land seeking to free Loki. The magi must acquire Arcane Connections to the Muspelli, and either scry their locations or strike at them with spells through those connections. The roles are now reversed; the magi fight an asymmetric conflict, with fewer resources, a hostile natural environment and a more organized Muspelli resis-

tance. Even with magic, Mythic Europe is a large place, and magi require some kind of direction to find the trail of the Muspelli and engage them.

Consider pursuing the "Twilight of the Gods" saga presented in this book as one option for this scenario.

Muspelli Details

The following blocks provide the statistics for some of the Muspelli in both human and etin-mod form, complemented by those found in *Rival Magic* (pages 87 and 88). Remember, Muspelli do not suffer General Flaws in etin-mod. These statistics may require some minor modifications for languages or Area Lore specialties, depending on where you set the saga.

Leif Ormsbrodir: Young Muspelli of Nidhogg

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

Size: +2

Age: 31

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Muspelli; Giant Blood, Greater Immunity (Exposure); Improved Characteristics, Tough, Warrior; Curse of Venus, Mute, Overconfident; Susceptibility to Infernal Power, Weakness (Women), Visions

Personality Traits: Overconfident +3, Contemplative +2

Combat:

Axe & Round Shield: Init +3, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +8

Bludgeon: Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +4

Dodge: Init +2, Attack N/A, Defense +6, Damage N/A

Fist: Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +2

Soak: +8

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: Area Lore: Baltic Sea 2 (Coasts), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 2 (searching), Brawl 4 (Fist), Carouse 1 (power drinking), Concentration 2 (spell concentration), East Norse

5 (storytelling), Finesse 2 (accuracy), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 2 (lying about motives), Hunt 2 (covering tracks), Jotun 2 (deference), Magic Lore 1 (heipt), Organization Lore: Muspelli 4 (initiation), Single Weapon 4 (axe), Penetration 2 (Winter's Breath), Stealth 3 (hiding within forests), Survival 2 (arctic), Swim 2 (underwater)

Supernatural Abilities: Animal Ken 6 (orcas), Shapeshifter 10 (birds), Sjonhverfing 6 (mists), Summon Animals 6 (sharks), Wildfire 5 (pyrotechnic tricks), Winter's Breath 10 (snow);

Equipment: axe, full leather armor, gander of a serpent tooth (+1 to his Power Modifier), round shield

Sample Utiseta Known:

Scion of Jorgmandir. Once per day, Leif can take the form of a lindwurm as detailed on *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 78. (Shapeshifter 27, +5 size, +7 Penetration) This form is resisted by the Parma, as it is an ongoing utiseta.

Encumbrance: 6 (1, this does not impact combat)

Appearance: An extremely tall and broad young man with a quiet, oppressive demeanor emphasized by his enormous build. Leif has dark black hair and deep brown eyes. His tongue is split down the middle with a terrible purple scar, back into his throat. He wears pitted and marked leather armor and a heavy walrus-hide cloak. Two carved walrus tusks are tucked in

his wide belt.

Leif attacks ships traveling across the Baltic and North Sea. Arriving under the cover of a Sjonhverfing mist in the form of a dragon, he savages the crew, often damaging the hull before tearing off the dragon figurehead. He leaves the wounded and dying to the mercies of the cold sea as the vessel founders. His cavern lair has a Magic aura of 3, and is only accessible via a submerged tunnel. Over 30 figureheads stare down at the ritual space where Leif lives, each one a longship sent beneath the waves. Leif has an intrinsic +3 power modifier (+1 for Mute, +1 for having 5 in another of Nidhogg's powers, +1 for possessing a gander of his patron). For his best Abilities, Shapeshifter and Winter's Breath, he can expect casting totals of 33+aura+stress die. If given the opportunity, he stores an utiseta to turn a specific target into a fish in his gander. (*Fool out of Water*; Shapeshifter Ease Factor 24; R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Ind; Target is transformed into a large bass (size -2); (BL 12 + 2 Voice +2 Sun))

LEIF ORMSBRODIR: YOUNG MUSPELLI OF NIDHOGG, ETIN-MOD

Characteristics: Int 0 Per +1 Pre 0, Com -1, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

Size: +3

Age: 31

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Leif Ormsbrodir: Young Muspell of Nidhogg (Cont'd)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift, Muspell, Giant Blood, Greater Immunity (Exposure & Sleep), Greater Magical Defenses, Improved Characteristics, Tough, Warrior, Curse of Venus, Overconfident, Susceptibility to Infernal Power, Weakness (Women), Visions

Qualities: Aquatic, Claws, Fins, Good Jumper, Tireless, Tough Hide

Personality Traits: Overconfident +3, Contemplative +2

Combat:

Axe & Round Shield: Init +3, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +10

Bludgeon: Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +6

Claws: Init +2, Attack +10, Defense +9, Damage +8

Dodge: Init +2, Attack N/A, Defense +6, Damage N/A

Fist: Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +4

Soak: +14

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Baltic Sea 2 (Coasts), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 2 (searching), Brawl 4 (Fist), Carouse 1 (power drinking), Concentration 2 (spell concentration), East Norse 5 (storytelling), Finesse 2 (accuracy), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 2 (lying about motives), Hunt 2 (covering tracks), Jotun 2 (deference), Magic Lore 1 (hept), Organization Lore: Muspell 4 (initiation), Single Weapon 4 (axe), Penetration 2 (Winter's Breath), Stealth 3 (hiding within forests), Survival 2 (arctic), Swim 2 (underwater)

Supernatural Abilities: Animal Ken 6 (orcas), Shapeshifter 10 (birds), Sjonhverfing 6 (mists), Summon Animals 6 (sharks), Wildfire 5 (pyrotechnic

tricks), Winter's Breath 10 (snow);

Equipment: axe, full leather armor, gandr of a serpent's tooth (+1 to his Power Modifier), round shield

Utisetia Held in Gandur:

Scion of Jorgmandir. Leif can take the form of a lindwurm as detailed on *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 78. (Shapeshifter 27, +5 size) This form is resisted by the Parma, as it is an ongoing utisetia.

Encumbrance: 6 (0)

Appearance: In etin-mod, Leif appears to be some form of man-like orca whale, with fins, teeth, claws, standing at a towering 12 feet tall. His thick claws are webbed, and he has fins across his forearms and the crest of his head. His wide mouth is full of small, sharp teeth, and his large eyes are black. Leif's leathery hide is very similar to an orca's coloration. He looks very much like the creature on page 85 of *Rival Magic*.

Magnus Norn: Median Muspell of Urdur

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

Size: 0

Age: 43 (43)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift, Muspell, Mythic Blood of Urdur, Great Intelligence x2, Improved Characteristics x2, Puissant Guile, Puissant Muspell Lore*, Warrior, Well-Traveled, Low Self-Esteem, Pagan, Waster of Vis, Cyclic Magic (negative, Spring), Disfigured (Badly healed leg), Susceptibility to Divine Power, Weakness (Alcohol); *Mythic Blood virtue

Personality Traits: Insecure +6, Skulking +3, Vindictive +2

Combat:

Axe: Init 0, Attack +7, Defense +2, Damage +7

Longbow: Init -3, Attack +7, Defense +2, Damage +9

Dodge: Init -1, Attack N/A, Defense +3,

Damage N/A

Fist: Init -1, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +1

Soak: +8

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: Baltic Sea 3 (Coasts), Awareness 3 (eavesdroppers), Bow 2 (longbow), Brawl 4 (Fist), Charm 4 (first impressions), Concentration 3 (spell concentration), Craft: Brew 4 (Mead), East Norse 5 (conversation), Finesse 4 (lightning), Folk Ken 3 (peasants), Low German 4 (conversation), Guile 4+2 (putting listener at ease), Hunt 2 (covering tracks), Intrigue 3 (manipulating), Jotun 2 (deference), Magic Lore 1 (hept), Organization Lore: Muspell 3+2 (initiation), Penetration 2 (Entrancement), Single Weapon 2 (axe)

Supernatural Abilities: Entrancement 9 (Men), Premonitions 6 (foes), Sjonh-

verfing 10 (mists), Spadomir 6 (deaths), Storm's Eye 12 (lightning), Threads of Fate 10 (battle);

Powers:

Look of Willing Assistance: CrMe 15 (R: Eye, D: Sun, T: Ind; neither speaking nor gesture required): This effect creates a sensation in the target to want to help Magnus with anything he has suggested.

Equipment: axe, partial chain mail, silver sickle gandr

Sample Utisetia Known: (+3 to Power Modifier)

Theft of Thor's Thunder. Magnus can summon a light rain and thunderstorm in the range of his voice, and can then, once a round for four rounds, direct a bolt of lightning at targets he can see. Hitting a Size 0 target requires a Dexterity + Finesse roll against an Ease Factor of 12. Each bolt does +30 damage if it hits. (Storm's Eye 9, +6 Voice, +6 for thunder and lightning.) The lightning is also resisted by Magic Resistance, as it is the product of a magically created storm.

Magnus Norn: Median Muspelli of Urdur (Cont'd)

Encumbrance: 7 (2, this does not impact combat)

Appearance: Magnus is a man of strong build and magnetic looks, but has oily black hair and distinctive, dragging limp. He carries a hand axe in his belt, but maintains a very obsequious attitude. His piercing blue eyes seemingly disassemble and absorb everything around him, and Magnus never stops calculating the value and use of those around him.

Due to The Gift, Magnus was never well liked, even with the ability of his Mythic Blood to invoke a desire to offer assistance, and often defended himself from childhood tormentors. He managed to get himself apprenticed as a brewer and even went on a few pirate raids as a young man, though he never found glory. But in his seventeenth year, an accident climbing for a beehive left Magnus pinned beneath a dead tree, alone and without help. The Muspelli who had been watching him took advantage of this event and saved him, but only after Magnus swore to serve the Jotun.

He was freed and left with the Jotun Urdur's Aspect, forced to heal as the Aspect taught him; his leg never recovered, and he walks with a very visible limp, obviously disfigured. He claimed his gandur afterwards, from an old burial mound, leaving before the restless spirit there could catch him.

In the following years, he has honed his powers, believing he is never as capable as when he is in his etin-mod, but still a reasonable manipulator of men. He looks for ways to guide the community, taking charge of men with Entrancement when he needs, offering advice and living apart from the bulk of the populace as the power behind the local lord, and the lord's private apiarist.

Magnus has an intrinsic +3 power modifier (+1 for Low-self esteem, +1 for having 5 in another of Urdur's powers, +1 for possessing a gandur of the patron). For his best Ability, Storm's Eye, he can expect casting totals of 39+aura+stress die. He

prefers to store *Theft of Thor's Thunder* in his gandur, although he might increase the intensity of the storm.

MAGNUS NORN: MEDIAN MUSPELLI OF URDUR, ETIN-MOD

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

Size: +2

Age: 43

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Muspelli; Giant Blood, Greater Magical Defenses, Immunity to Sleep, Mythic Blood; Great Intelligence x2, Improved Characteristics x2, Puissant Guile, Warrior, Well-Traveled; Pagan, Waster of Vis; Cyclic Magic (negative, Spring), Susceptibility to Divine Power; *Mythic Blood virtue

Qualities: Teeth (beak), Claws, Spiny, Tireless, Tough Hide

Personality Traits: Skulking +3, Vindictive +2

Combat:

Axe: Init +1, Attack +7, Defense +3, Damage +9

Beak: Init 0, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +8

Claws: Init 0, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +7

Dodge: Init 0, Attack N/A, Defense +4, Damage N/A

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

Soak: +15 (anyone inflicts damage on Magnus with a bite, claw, or fist, the attacker suffers +5 damage from his spines.)

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-15), -5 (16-23), Incapacitated (24-31), Dead (32+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Baltic Sea 3 (Coasts), Awareness 3 (eavesdroppers), Bow 2 (longbow), Brawl 4 (Fist), Charm 4 (first impressions), Concentration 3 (spell concentration), Craft: Brew 4 (Mead), East Norse 5 (conversation), Finesse 4 (lightning), Folk Ken 3 (peasants), Low German 4 (conversation), Guile 4+2 (putting listener at ease), Hunt

2 (covering tracks), Intrigue 3 (manipulating), Jotun 2 (deference), Magic Lore 1 (heipt), Muspelli Lore 3 +2 (initiation), Penetration 2 (Entrancement), Single Weapon 2 (axe)

Supernatural Abilities: Entrancement 9 (Men), Premonitions 6 (foes), Sjonhverfing 10 (mists), Spadomir 6 (deaths), Storm's Eye 12 (lightning), Threads of Fate 10 (battle);

Powers:

Look of Willing Assistance: CrMe 15 (R: Eye, D: Sun, T: Ind; neither speaking nor gesture required): This effect creates a sensation in the target to want to help Magnus with anything he has suggested.

Equipment: axe, partial chain armor, silver sickle gandur

Utisetia Held in Gandur: (+3 to Power Modifier)

Theft of Thor's Thunder. Magnus can summon a light rain and thunderstorm in the range of his voice, and can then, once a round for four rounds, direct a bolt of lightning at targets he can see. Hitting a Size 0 target requires a Dexterity + Finesse roll against an Ease Factor of 12. Each bolt does +30 damage if it hits. (Storm's Eye 9, +6 Voice, +6 for thunder and lightning.) The lightning is resisted by Magic Resistance, as it is the product of a magically created storm.

Encumbrance: 6 (0)

Appearance: In etin-mod, Magnus appears as a cross between a raven, vulture and man, with winged arms ending in fierce claws, hunched over, but still standing an imposing 10 feet tall with red, blood-shot eyes. His head is bald and corpse grey, his mouth is a raven's beak with a slight hook at the tip. His feathers are glossy black and tattered, but he has many heavy quills protruding all over his body. His feet are heavy grey talons with glossy black claws.

Gandar and Utiseta

Gandar are important to Muspelli, as they give a significant boost to their power. Most important, an utiseta effect can be stored in a gandar for later use, as described on page 91 of *Rival Magic*. This is the only way a Muspelli can cast powerful effects quickly, so most Muspelli make use of it. However, there are two important limits. First, a gandar can only store an effect for one year. If the target ceases to exist before the utiseta is used, it cannot be discharged, and is released uncontrollably, Warping the Muspelli, at the end of the year (*Rival Magic*, page 91). Second, the target of the effect must be specified at the time of casting, not when the utiseta is released. This means that utiseta affecting people are normally stored when the Muspelli intends to seek out that person. Utiseta that target the Muspelli himself, that create something by magic, or that affect an item the Muspelli can carry with him are much more flexible choices.

The Penetration of an utiseta is calculated as shown on page 90 of *Rival Magic*. It differs every time, so you should roll it anew for each encounter. Note that the roll for the Casting Total is made at the end of the utiseta ritual, after the Muspelli has gathered the necessary energy. A failure on this roll means that nothing happens, and the energy gathered is safely dissipated, while a botch causes Warping as if the Muspelli had failed to gather any energy for the utiseta (*Rival Magic*, page 91), in addition to any other effects.

Ingoar Suttungja: Experienced Muspelli of Fire

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

Size: +1

Age: 68 (68)

Decrepitude: 2 (7)

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift, Muspelli; Gentle Gift; Large, Mercenary Captain, Potent Sorcery (Wildfire), Puissant Craft, Tough, Unaffected by the Gift, Unaging; Ambitious, Deaf, Necessary Condition (must be touching the ground); Close Family Ties, Lost Love (dead wife), Hunchbacked, Missing Eye*, Social Handicap (facial scars); *For Initiation of etin-mod Tough Hide quality.

Personality Traits: Ambitious +6, Dedicated +3, Patient +2

Combat:

Dodge: Init -2, Attack N/A, Defense +1, Damage N/A

Fist: Init -2, Attack +6, Defense +5, Damage +1

Longsword: Init 0, Attack +12, Defense +5, Damage +7

Shortbow: Init -3, Attack +8, Defense 0, Damage +7

Soak: +8

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

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

Abilities: Area Lore: Baltic Sea 4 (ports), Awareness 4 (spotting dangers on the sea), Bargain 3 (negotiating), Bow 2 (shortbow), Brawl 3 (fist), Carouse 3 (remaining conscious), Charm 3 (first impressions), Chirurgy 1 (sword wounds), Concentration 4 (spell maintenance), Craft: Steel 5+2 (swords), East Norse 5 (conversation), Finesse 3 (aiming), Folk Ken 3 (monitoring morale), Intrigue 3 (long-term plans), Jotun 2 (deference), Leadership 4 (mercenaries), Low German 4 (conversation), Magic Lore 2 (heipt), Organization Lore: Muspelli 5 (initiation), Penetration 4 (Storm's Eye), Profession: Mercenary 3 (serving abroad), Single Weapon 4 (longsword).

Supernatural Abilities: Shapeshifter 10 (bears), Sjonhverfing 7 (mists), Storm's

Eye 10 (lightning), Valgaldrar 12 (Men), Wildfire 11+2 (foes), Winter's Breath 10 (snow);

Equipment: Longsword gandar, partial chain mail, round shield

Sample Utiseta Known: (+3 to Power Modifier)

Blast of Ymir's Bellows. Ingoar can cause a torch or lantern to burn with white-hot intensity and leap from the source to a target within his voice range. This fire burns those it strikes for +15 damage. He may continue causing this hungry flame to leap between targets until he breaks concentration. (Wildfire 24 R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind; +3 Conc, +3 very unusual movement.)

Encumbrance: 7 (2, this does not impact combat)

Appearance: Ingoar was a tall man, standing a full two hands over his raiding peers before accident and habit made him hungry for more power. Now, he is still a great giant with a deep, deep voice, who stoops to the height of most men, due to his crooked form. When not in his etin-mod, Ingoar looks like a broad, and strong man, despite the sooty stains on his rough clothes, his one, yellowing eye, his hunchbacked body, and his heavily creased face, framed in stringy white hair and a snowy goatee. If his age weighs upon him, Ingoar does not show it, but rather relishes dividing his time between his family, his forge, and the glorious opportunities of the battlefield.

With a Gentle Gift, Ingoar actually had a very normal life. He found a wife, sired three children, learned a craft, and took part in the occasional pirate raid for glory and treasure. Then, upon returning from a trip, heavy with plunder, he found his community sacked in a vengeful counterattack. While two of Ingoar's sons survived, the love of his life, Ingoar's young wife, and third son were killed, and Ingoar was heartbroken. Drawn by the smoke and Premonitions, a lone stranger approached Ingoar.

This man promised him the power for revenge, to burn his foes, to conceal his raiders from the lookouts of the enemy, and to freeze his foes where they slept if he would

Ingvor Suttungja: Experienced Muspelli of Fire (Cont'd)

join as a Muspelli. Leaving his living sons in the capable hands of his surviving mother, he joined the stranger and served the Jotun, deep within the earth. Returning after six years, he arrived to find his mother dying. He tended and buried her and then took back up his forge at the edge of town, now deaf from the hammers within Surtur's caves.

Ingvor's new-found skills allowed him to create vicious surprise attacks with Sjonhverfing or Winter's Breath. He caused flames to leap across the air to choke an enemy in moments. He rampaged through their barricades as a lindworm. So long as the payment arrived on time and he was left to execute the objective, he has been successful for the last 30 years while still seeking out those responsible for his wife's death. Local men flocked to his company of nocturnal raiders, who took the name "Black Dragons."

Over time, he came to feel that he should serve the Jotnar more directly and effectively, and that led him to discover the rituals that could bring about Fimbulwinter. Now, feeling that he might be instrumental in freeing the Jotnar from their long imprisonment, he is more engaged in life that he has been since his wife died.

Ingvor often stores *Blast of Ymir's Bellows* in his gandur. Because the target must be set at the time of casting, he carries a lantern, which he keeps burning from the preparation of the utiseti to its use, and specifies the flame in the lantern as the target. He can bring the flame back to the lantern and use it again if he has stored more than one casting of the utiseti in the gandur. This is risky, however, because if the flame goes out there is no way to discharge the utiseti, and Ingvor faces Warping, and an uncontrolled fire, after a year. Accordingly, Ingvor normally only stores one version of the effect. Ingvor also uses *Scion of Jorgmandir* and *Theft of Thor's Thunder*, as both are well within his capability. Ingvor has an intrinsic +3 power modifier (+1 for Deaf, +1 for

having 5 in another of Surtur's powers, +1 for possessing a gandur of the patron). For his best Ability, Wildfire, he can expect casting totals of 41+aura+stress die.

INGVAR SUTTUNGJA: EXPERIENCED MUSPELLI OF FIRE, ETIN-MOD

Characteristics: Int 0 Per +1 Pre +2, Com -1, Str +4, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik -3

Size: +3

Age: 68

Warping Score: 0

Gleipnir Score: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Muspelli; Gentle Gift, Greater Immunity (Sleep), Greater Magical Defenses; Large, Mercenary Captain, Potent Sorcery (Wildfire), Puissant Craft, Tough, Unaffected by the Gift, Unaging; Ambitious, Necessary Condition (must be touching the ground); Close Family Ties, Lost Love (dead wife)

Qualities: Horns, Tireless, Tough Hide

Personality Traits: Ambitious +6, Dedicated +3, Patient +2

Combat:

Dodge: Init -3, Attack N/A, Defense 0, Damage N/A

Fist: Init -3, Attack +6, Defense 0, Damage +4

Horns: Init -1, Attack +8, Defense +2, Damage +7

Longsword: Init -1, Attack +12, Defense +4, Damage +10

Shortbow: Init -4, Attack +6, Defense 0, Damage +10

Soak: +10

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Area Lore: Baltic Sea 4 (ports), Awareness 4 (spotting dangers on the

sea), Bargain 3 (negotiating), Bow 2 (shortbow), Brawl 3 (fist), Carouse 3 (remaining conscious), Charm 3 (first impressions), Chirurgy 1 (sword wounds), Concentration 4 (spell maintenance), Craft: Steel 5+2 (swords), East Norse 5 (conversation), Finesse 3 (aiming), Folk Ken 3 (monitoring morale), Intrigue 3 (long-term plans), Jotun 2 (deference), Leadership 4 (mercenaries), Low German 4 (conversation), Magic Lore 2 (heipt), Organization Lore: Muspelli 5 (initiation), Penetration 4 (Storm's Eye), Profession: Mercenary 3 (serving abroad), Single Weapon 4 (longsword)

Supernatural Abilities: Shapeshifter 10 (bears), Sjonhverfing 7 (mists), Storm's Eye 10 (lightning), Valgaldrar 12 (Men), Wildfire 11+2 (foes), Winter's Breath 10 (snow);

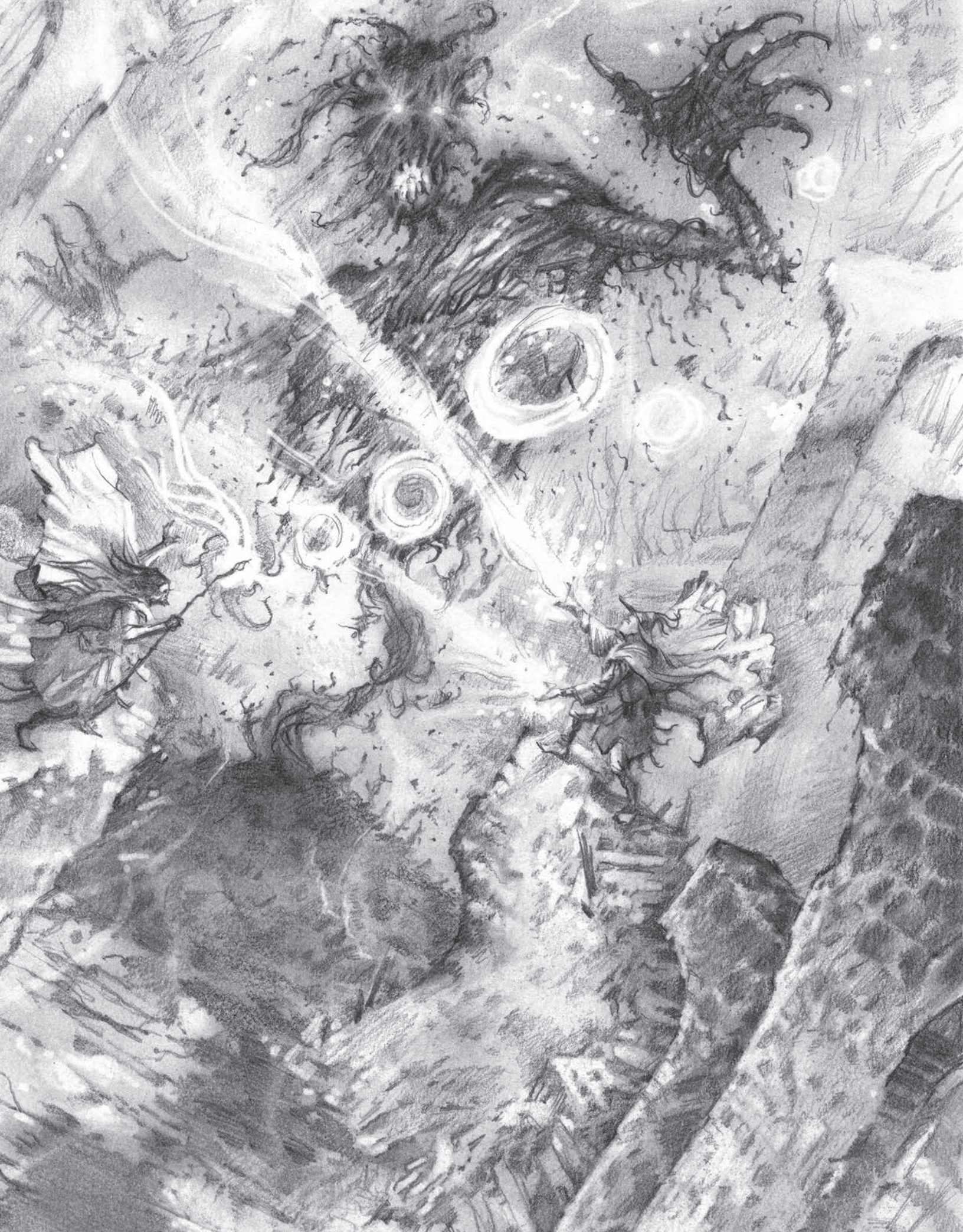
Equipment: Longsword gandur, partial chain mail, round shield

Utiseta Prepared:

Blast of Ymir's Bellows. Ingvor can cause a torch or lantern to burn with white-hot intensity and leap from the source to a target within his voice range. This fire burns those it strikes for +15 damage. He may continue causing this hungry flame to leap between targets until he breaks concentration. (Wildfire 24, +3 Conc, +3 very unusual movement.)

Encumbrance: 0

Appearance: Ingvor appears as an enormous, charcoal-skinned man with smoldering, spiraling ram's horns and eyes glowing like cinders. His hair becomes a shaggy black mane of wiry black strands. He wears an apron of heavy chains, a mail shirt, and never walks without a bared sword. He gleefully leads his men into combat in this form, and they love him for it, thinking they are true heirs of Ragnarok.



Chapter Four

The Great Pestilence

"Civilization both in the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. It swallowed up many of the good things of civilization and wiped them out in the entire inhabited world."

— Tillitus of House Bonisagus, writing from his deathbed in the year 1258

Plagues are a constant threat to mankind, and have periodically scoured Mythic Europe with devastating contagions that kill crops, beasts, and people. From the biblical Ten Plagues of Egypt to the disastrous Plague of Justinian in the 6th century, humanity has suffered through and survived several waves of infectious maladies. The worst is yet to come, however, and in this adventure your players face the Great Pestilence, Mythic Europe's deadliest plague, and possibly its last.

The Great Pestilence is caused by a sentient creature, spawned from a Hermetic lab accident and living deep in the hidden heart of the Magic Realm. Named after the plague it causes, the Great Pestilence creature infects the Magic Realm, targeting one Hermetic Form after another, until all ten Forms are systematically devoured and the Magic Realm destroyed. Intertwined with the fabric of Mythic Europe's reality, this contagion extends from the Magic Realm to the mundane realm, spreading infections severe enough to extinguish all life. Its attacks are numerous: it rots vis through the substance's connection to the Magic Realm, it infects creatures and beings aligned to the Magic Realm with a deathly illness, and it creates invisible clouds of noxious gas that carry disease to areas surrounding Magic auras and regiones. Left unchecked the Great Pestilence destroys Mythic Europe and leaves a lifeless husk at the center of the universe.

Started by Hermetic magi, the Great

Pestilence can be stopped by Hermetic magi, although the necessary actions far exceed those required to create it. Can your magi stop the greatest and worst plague of all time, or will they too fall as the world rots around them?

The Coming Storm

Trouble starts in a village close to the covenant, one that has a long history of happy interactions with the magi and their staff. This is a village or town that the companions and grogs regularly visit, and one whose notables have heard of or even met the magi. The selected village must include a village elder, a sizable population, and a low Dominion aura.

The story's beginning coincides with the local Redcap's visit, so that his account of the upcoming events can be spread to the story's principle storyguide characters. Hopefully at this point in your saga the covenant has a recurring Redcap character who visits regularly, and whose inclusion in a story won't necessarily alarm the player characters. That Redcap is not detailed in this book.

Fangs in the Night

Early in the Autumn season, a breathless messenger comes from the nearby village. He has run through the night and arrives soon after dawn bearing terrible news. The village has been attacked by a large pack of wolves, fierce villains with jet black fur and flashing fangs. The

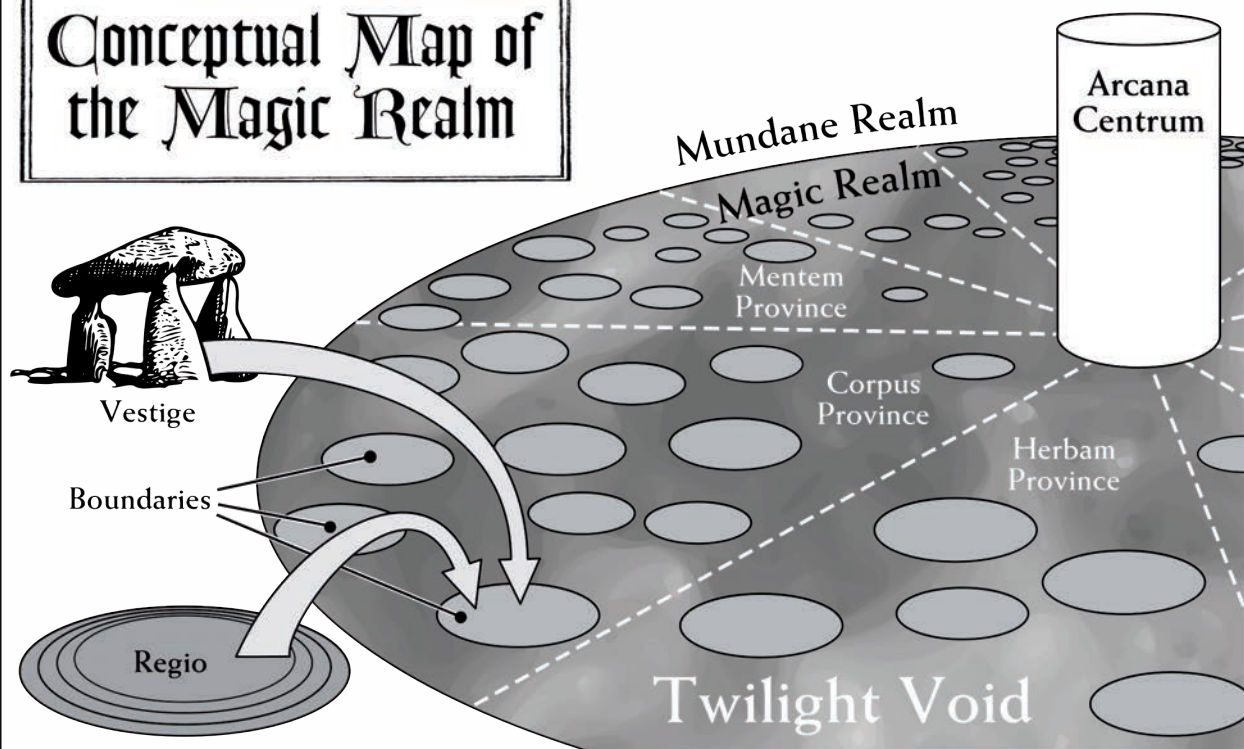
wolves sprang from the nearby wood at sundown and tore down the main street. Several villagers were maimed and a few killed. The messenger asks for any aid the magi can provide. His interest piqued, the Redcap asks to accompany the player characters to the village.

The wolves' predations are obvious. The muddy street has been churned up by the rushing pack, and the wounded have been taken to a large house and await treatment. The dead lie in a corner of the same room awaiting burial, their family members wailing in mourning. Healing the wounded is fairly straightforward. A dozen or so villagers have suffered one or two Light Wounds, and a few have a Medium Wound. Any sort of medical aid is beneficial, from magical curing to the simpler offer of fresh food and clean bandages. The dead need to be buried and the villagers

The Geography of the Magic Realm

The Magic Realm consists of innumerable areas called **boundaries**, each aligned to one of the ten Hermetic Forms. Each boundary is accessed by a **vestige** or a **regio**, or in rare instances both. **Vestiges** are complex illusions that link a specific location in the mundane world to a certain boundary. From every boundary in the Magic Realm, a traveler can enter the **Twilight Void**, a shadow realm made up of ten **provinces**, each aligned to one of the ten Hermetic Forms. The ten provinces converge at the **Arcana Centrum**, the center of the Magic Realm and the hub of all arcane power.

Conceptual Map of the Magic Realm



gladly accept assistance with this sad task.

Any character who spends time in the house may notice that one of the villagers is sick. Allow a roll of Perception + Awareness + a simple die against an Ease Factor of 9. If the roll succeeds the character notices a man whose hands and wrists are covered with a red rash. If asked, the man says he felt fine yesterday, but his hands started to itch and burn this morning. He thinks it is just a reaction from handling the dead. Anyone skilled in Medicine may take a look at the man and attempt to diagnose his illness. He is suffering from Saint Anthony's Fire, a serious disease caused by a minor demon. To correctly identify the illness, the inspector must have a Prognosis Total equal to 12, the severity of the disease. Diagnosing illness is explained in full on pages 57-58 of *Art & Academe*, but the necessary totals are:

PROGNOSIS TOTAL:

Intelligence + Medicine + Diet modifier
+ Medication modifier + Surgery modifier

MODIFIERS TO PROGNOSIS TOTAL:

Diet modifier + Living Condition
(0 in this case)

Medication modifier + Profession:
Apothecary (maximum 3)

Surgery modifier + Chirurgy (maximum 3)

There is no die roll added to the Prognosis Total. Further information about treating disease can be found in the accompanying sidebar, "Dealing with Disease."

Outside the large house, it is easy to follow the wolves' tracks, which run through a nearby field. From there the tracks lead into a copse of trees, and 200 paces further in suddenly disappear under the low hanging branches of an ancient hawthorn tree. Inspecting the woods reveals a ring of hawthorns roughly spaced around a circle 10 paces in diameter. The circle is not empty but filled with large oak and tall elm trees. The hawthorns mark the edge of an Infernal regio with an Infernal aura of 3. Inside the regio the wolves rest, preparing to emerge again at sundown on the next day. If the player characters enter the regio the wolves attack, as do their riders, the Shades of St. Anthony (described later). If the player characters cannot enter the Infernal regio, they have to wait for the pack to emerge on the following day.

If the player characters interview the village elder, either before they follow the tracks or after, he says he has no idea why the wolves attacked. His councilors, the more well-to-do peasants of the village, are equally tight-lipped. They are

hiding an embarrassing secret. A year ago one of the villagers killed his father, and the body lay lost in the local woods for a week, its blood soaking the forest carpet. The murderer was apprehended and hung by the local authorities. The village elder and his men would rather not mention this ugly incident, but it is hard to keep such news quiet. Anyone with the local Area Lore Ability can make an Intelligence + Area Lore + simple die roll against an Ease Factor of 9 to have heard of the murder. The elder and his councilors are not professional liars, and a Perception + Folk Lore + simple die against an Ease Factor of 6 reveals that they are hiding the truth. If pressed, the elder sadly shakes his head and admits that the crime happened in the local woods.

The horrific patricide and the blood that seeped into the earth created an Infernal aura and regio, which was eventually inhabited by a cluster of minor demons and their black wolf steeds. The demons, a variety of Tempters called "Shades of Saint Anthony," exist to spread disease. Their Infernal beast steeds terrorize and kill those in their path. The demons' plan is to chase through the village each night for the next seven nights, the wolves slash-

Précis

The Great Pestilence is a sentient magic creature created in a botched Hermetic laboratory experiment. After its creation, the creature slipped into a Herbam boundary in the Magic Realm, and from there traveled through the Twilight Void to the very center of the Magic Realm, a place called the Arcana Centrum. From its hiding spot the creature attacks one Form at a time. These attacks target every Magic aura and regio aligned to that Form. No Magic aura and regio in the world aligned to the attacked Form escapes this blight.

The Great Pestilence first attacks the Herbam Form. In the first month of infestation the creature rots all Herbam vis. In the second month it infects all Herbam creatures and beings with a lethal disease. In the third month it creates poisonous clouds in every Magic aura and regio.

These clouds carry the *Herbam Rot*, a calamitous effect that destroys plants in the area and the surrounding environs. In the fourth month the Herbam Form ceases to work, having been consumed by the Great Pestilence's rot, and Hermetic magi can no longer cast Herbam Spontaneous or Formulaic spells unless they use vis in the casting. In the same month the Great Pestilence mutates, changing its Form affiliation so that it can target and attack a different Form in the next (fifth) month.

The order of Forms attacked is Herbam, Corpus, Mentem, Vim, Aquam, Auram, Animal, Imaginem, Terram, and finally Ignem. It takes four months to destroy a Form. At that rate, the Great Pestilence destroys all magic in Mythic Europe in 3 years and 4 months (40 months). This gives your players 16 seasons to find a solution.

The magi must survive each phase of infection, overcome the accumulating troubles, and stop the Great Pestilence before it destroys the Magic Realm, and much of creation.

The Great Pestilence hides in the Magic Realm, and while not vital to running this adventure, storyguides will find *Realms of Power: Magic* a useful supplement. This adventure also deals with diseases, which are dealt with in depth in the ArM5 supplement *Art & Academe*.

Shade of Saint Anthony

Order: Tempters

Infernal Might: 5 (Mentem)

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

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Small Frame

Personality Traits: Persistent +6, Merciless +3

Reputation: Fatal Disease 2 (Infernal)

Hierarchy: 2

Combat:

Dodge: Init +3, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

Fist: Init +3, Attack +2, Defense +5, Damage -1

Soak: +0

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

Wound Penalties: -0 (1-4), -1 (5-8), -3 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

Abilities: Brawl 1 (fist), Riding 2 (staying mounted), Stealth 5 (hiding against a black wolf's fur)

Powers:

Coagulation, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus: This power allows the shade to take physical form.

Diseased Possession, 3 points, Init +4,

Mentem: Using a special form of the demonic *Possession* power, the demon can inflict its disease upon a single target.

Obsession, 1 point, Init -5, Vim: The demon can impose a temporary personality trait of Merciless +1 on a person engaged in sinful thoughts or actions.

Necrotic Touch, 1 point, Init -5, Herbam: With a touch the shade can inflict the disease necrosis on an Individual-sized plant, blackening and clogging its root system and immediately killing the plant.

Weakness: Abhorrent Material: holy water.

Vis: One pawn of Mentem vis infesta in the shade's head

Appearance: A black silhouette of a short, hairy human with no discernible features.

A shade typically rides on the back of a black wolf, clinging to its hairy back and hiding in its fur. It is nearly impossible to see. Allow players Perception + Awareness + a stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 15, with success revealing the demon hidden on

the wolf's back.

When the demon spots a likely human target it abandons its physical form for its spiritual form, which costs no Might points, and possesses the human. If the *Diseased Possession* power penetrates the target's Magic Resistance, the target immediately succumbs to the St. Anthony's Fire disease. The shade must continue to possess the victim for the course of the disease, requiring that it temporarily decrease its Might Pool by 3 points. The victim is allowed an immediate Disease Avoidance roll (see later). If the roll fails the disease progresses using the same rules as natural diseases. While possessing a victim, the demon cannot regain Might points. Once the victim dies or the demon is exorcized, it returns to its fellows waiting in the nearby woods.



ing and rending and the demons inflicting the St. Anthony's Fire disease. Demons that don't possess a target will retreat to their regio, accompanied by any riderless wolves, and inflict the disease necrosis on plants along their path. At some point, either by defending the village or by entering the Infernal regio, the player characters encounter the demons.

There are 50 demons and 50 wolves in total; reduce these numbers if your player characters would have a difficult time defeating this evil. When attacked the wolves fight savagely. The shades, having a paltry Attack skill, attempt to possess those they can to make them sick. Once their numbers are halved, the demons and wolves flee, rushing back through the village one final time. The shades leave the wolves and possess the villagers, while the wolves depart to distant areas.

The Plague

During their raids the Shades of St Anthony demons infect the villagers with the disease St Anthony's Fire, which proves a greater calamity than the wolves. Those possessed instantly succumb to the disease. At some point the village elder begs

the magi for help with this problem, and there are a number of ways they can assist. Because the villagers do not die instantly, any type of medicinal aid supports a villager's recovery. Better living conditions, healthier food, and fresh and plentiful water add +1 to the Disease Recovery roll. Physicians and healers can apply their mundane arts to the suffering, and if they have correctly diagnosed the disease (see earlier) they can add their Medicine Ability score to the Disease Recovery roll (see the sidebar "Dealing with Disease").

The village does not itself have any holy means of dealing with the disease. The local priest is poor and simple, barely trained in Latin, and lacks any divine power to intercede. The closest church depends on your saga, and holy aid may or may not reside there. *Realms of Power: the Divine* lists a variety of holy methods that can exorcise the demons, including the holy power of Adjuration (page 48), prayer for a miracle by a character with True Faith (page 60), and asking a saint for divine intervention (page 87). If you do not own that book and still want to provide a divine solution for the sick, consider allowing the player characters access to a relic with Divine Might of 3 or more. Such a relic is powerful enough to instantly banish a demon from its diseased host with a mere touch

Black Wolf

Infernal Might: 5 (Animal)

Characteristics: Cun +2, Per 0, Pre -6, Com 0, Str -1, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Improved Characteristics (x2), Ferocity (when hungry), Long-Winded, Sharp Ears, Compulsion (killing), Corrupted Beast, Infamous, Tainted with Evil

Qualities: Aggressive, Hardy, Keen Sense of Smell, Pack Animal/Pack Leader, Pursuit Predator, Sharp Ears, Thick Fur, Vocal

Personality Traits: Savage +6, Brave +1

Reputations: Bloodthirsty 4 (local)

Combat:

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +0

Soak: +4

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

Unconscious

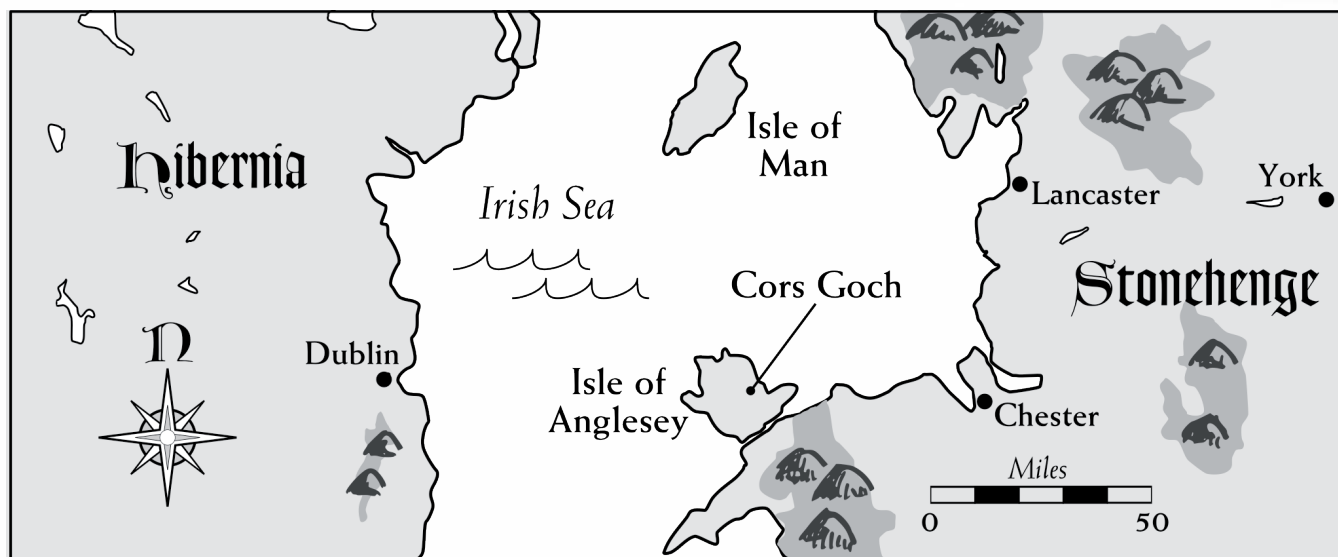
Wound Penalties: -0 (1-5), -1 (6-10), -3 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

Abilities: Athletics 5 (distance running), Awareness 3 (smell), Brawl 5 (teeth), Hunt 4 (track by smell), Survival 3 (winter)

Vis: 1 pawn of Perdo vis in the beast's tongue

Appearance: A savage wolf with shaggy, matted fur. The creature is entirely black except for its baleful red eyes.

A black wolf is not a demon but a corrupted beast. Though it has Might it cannot take spiritual form nor does it have any magical powers. The Quality Pack Leader grants a wolf Leadership 5 (wolves), so that up to six wolves can fight as a trained group.



Dealing with Disease

Since much of this chapter deals with contacting and suffering from various diseases, you need guidelines as to how this mechanically affects characters. Complete rules for dealing with diseases can be found in *Art & Academe*, pages 45–47, from which this short summary is derived.

When a character is exposed to a disease, the player checks whether their character avoids catching it by making a Disease Avoidance Roll. If the roll succeeds, the character has successfully avoided the disease. If the roll fails, the disease takes effect and the character suffers its consequences.

DISEASE AVOIDANCE ROLL:

Stamina + Living Condition Modifier + (Corpus/5) + Wound Penalty + stress die

EASE FACTOR:

Stable Ease Factor of the disease (see later)

Diseases have various **severities**, measured as Mild, Serious, Major, and Critical. Each severity has a wound equivalent: Mild severity equals a Light Wound, Serious severity equals a Medium Wound, Major equals a Heavy Wound, and Critical equals an Incapacitating Wound. Just like a wounded character, a character suffering from a disease receives a penalty to all die rolls equal to the severity of the disease. A Mild

disease imparts a –1 penalty, a Serious disease a –3 penalty, and a Major disease a –5 penalty. A Critical disease prohibits all activity.

Diseases also have an **interval**, the period of time it takes to possibly recover from the malady. At the end of the indicated interval, the player makes a Disease Recovery Roll. A disease has two Ease Factors to measure the Disease Recovery Roll against: a Stable Ease Factor and an Improvement Ease Factor. If the roll fails to beat the Stable Ease Factor, the disease worsens in severity. If the roll makes the Stable Ease Factor but fails the Improvement Ease Factor, the disease continues. If the roll succeeds against the Improvement Ease Factor, the disease lessens in severity by one step.

DISEASE RECOVERY ROLL:

Stamina + Medicine + (Corpus/5) + Wound Penalty + Recovery Modifiers (A&A, page 47) + stress die

A **Crisis** occurs when a character's disease is Critical. At that point, the player must make two Disease Recovery Rolls every day, one at dawn and one at dusk. If the total is 0 or less, the character dies. If a roll equals or exceeds the Stable Ease Factor, the Crisis improves to Major Severity. If the roll does not meet the Stable Ease Factor, the character stays in Crisis, and each subsequent roll is made at a cumulative –1 penalty.

A simpler method exists, described in *ArM5*, page 180, which is useful if the troupe wants to reduce the number of die rolls. The disease is simply another form of debilitation, and those exposed make a Stamina check against an Ease Factor set by the disease, in this case 12. Those who fail suffer effects equivalent to a Light Wound. Though simpler, this method loses much of the nuances (and fun) of dealing with the disease.

ST. ANTHONY'S FIRE

Minor Sanguine Disease, Severity 12
Stable: 6, Improve 18, Interval: Season

An excess of blood caused by a demon of disease, St. Anthony's Fire follows slightly different rules for recovery. There is no Disease Avoidance Roll. If the demon's *disease possession* power penetrates the Magic Resistance of the victim, the victim immediately suffers the effects of the disease. The patient is still allowed a Disease Recovery Roll at the appropriate interval, and if the roll is successful the sickness lessens in severity by one step. If the demon is exorcised or destroyed by magic, the victim instantly recovers.

Symptoms include a red rash, intestinal pain, visions, muscle spasms, and a burning sensation in the limbs. Eventually the feet and hands wither and become useless. The disease worsens each season, eventually killing the victim.

Storm Crows

of the holy artifact. If desired you could construct a side adventure around finding a relic and convincing its owners to let the player characters use it.

Magical aid might be the simplest and quickest solution. If the characters know that the disease is caused by a demon, they can target the sick person with a *Perdo Vim* spell and destroy the fiend. Discovery is the trick. A high enough *Prognosis Total* indicates the disease and its cause. *Intellego Corpus* magic may also prove successful. A simple spell, *Physician's Eye*, grants the magus a *Perception + Medicine* roll against the severity of the disease (12) to successfully diagnose the illness. Characters who discover the specific nature of the symptoms, perhaps by using the spell *Revealed Flaws of Mortal Flesh*, should be given an *Intelligence + Infernal Lore* roll against an *Ease Factor* of 9 to know that a demon is responsible. Once a magus knows a demon is behind the disease, he can target the patients with *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*. A level 5 spell, if it penetrates the demon's *Magic Resistance* of 5, destroys the demon and instantly cures the victim.

The visiting Redcap does not stay with the magi as they deal with the village's plague. He leaves, returning to his ambulatory duties, where he meets the Redcap Józef and the Tytalus maga Hellix. He tells the pair what is happening at the village and the two swiftly depart to follow up on his account.

Within days of the plague outbreak, a Tytalus maga arrives, led by a Slavic Redcap named Józef. Towering Hellix is a filia of Okeabutes, a Tytalus magus from the Hibernia Tribunal who was Marched for diabolism. Shifty-eyed Józef was convicted of stealing vis and is serving his sentence by leading Hellix across Mythic Europe for a year. The scene at the village depends on how quickly your player characters responded to the plague, and how swiftly news and magi travel in your saga. If it makes plausible sense for the pair to arrive while your player characters are healing the villagers, their arrival adds to the dramatic tension. Hellix immediately offers to help. If the sick are dealt with quickly, the maga and Redcap arrive merely to meet and talk with the player character magi, asking about the event and how they dealt with it.

Józef explains that Hellix is crossing the Tribunals looking for incidents of plant diseases. It quickly becomes evident that she is more interested in the necrosis that infects the field than the St Anthony's Fire that infects the villagers. While investigating outbreaks she collects samples of damaged plants, which she plans to diagnose later in her lab. Ultimately she seeks a cure to the various diseases that infect crops and plants. The covenant's magi may suspect the Tytalus of foul play or ill intentions, and her parents' reputation as an Infernalist doesn't help matters. Hellix promises the magi that she means them no harm, and is only interested in the diseased plants, if any still

exist, and in helping the sick villagers.

Józef is full of information, and corroborates the Tytalus' good intentions. He confirms that the maga was trained in the Hibernia Tribunal by Okeabutes, who five years ago was convicted of diabolism. Hellix has long been looking for a cure to diseases that affect crops. After her parents' execution, Hellix left Hibernia and set up a new residence in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Józef, stationed in the Hibernian Tribunal but born and trained in the Transylvania Tribunal, was apprehended stealing vis, which he then used as currency with Ireland's hedge wizards. He admits to his criminal faults, and says that the punishment hasn't proven onerous; Hellix is a descent enough traveling companion and her motives are more generous than many magi he has worked with.

In particular, Hellix looks for anyone who caught and survived an infection, especially if they did so without medical or magical aid. If any of the village members achieved this feat, she would like to inspect him. She is also interested in those who died from disease, and asks to inspect those bodies as well. After a cursory investigation, Hellix asks if the survivor and the corpse can return with her to her sanctum. She also asks if she can take a bushel or two of the grain crops infected with necrosis. However the magi resolve this request, even if they refuse everything, Hellix remains interested in the covenant and the area. She instructs Józef to make regular visits to see if the demonic infestation leads to another episode of necrosis. An eligible and attractive man, Józef may find his

The Tytalus and The Redcap

After her parents' March, Hellix left the Hibernian Tribunal and joined Cad Gadu, the *domus magna* of House Ex Miscellanea, located in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Before leaving she made her desire to walk Mythic Europe known to the magi of Hibernia. When Józef was later convicted of a low crime, his punishment was to help Hellix in her task, and he was assigned to be her guide and guard for a year.

HELLIX OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Born in Kent in south eastern England, she was apprenticed under Okeabutes at *Circulus Ruber*, in the Hibernian Tribunal. Specializing in *Herbam* magic, especially trees, Hellix found the Tribunal well suited to her magical affinity. As much as she loves her magical abilities, she despises her lineage. She thinks House Tytalus's methods are too brutal, too extreme, and vows to never take an apprentice to carry on such a barbarous tradition. She hopes

to find a cure for Mythic Europe's most notorious plant diseases to help erase the stain she feels House Tytalus has imprinted on mundane society.

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

Size: +1

Age: 66 (45)

Warping Score: 5 (11)

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Affinity with *Herbam*, Deft

The Tytalus and The Redcap (Cont'd)

Herbam, Inventive Genius, Improved Characteristics, Large**, Minor Magical Focus (living trees); Puissant Herbam, Self Confident*; Ambitious, Deficient Muto

* Free House Virtue

** Gained through Temporary Twilight

Personality Traits: Ambitious +6, Self-Sufficient +2, Articulate +1

Reputations: Herbam Specialist 4 (Hermetic)

Combat:

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

Soak: +0

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

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

Abilities: Artes Liberales 2 (5) (grammar), Charm 4 (15) (debating), Code of Hermes 2 (debate procedures), Concentration 2 (10) (maintaining spells), English 5 (extreme politeness), Finesse 3 (Herbam), Folk Ken 3 (magi), Guile 4 (lying), Intrigue 3 (15) (debating), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 3 (debating), Magic Lore 2 (regiones), Magic Theory 6 (16) (inventing spells), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (Tribunals), Parma Magica 3 (5) (Herbam), Penetration 4 (Herbam), Profession: Scribe 2 (copying manuscripts),

Arts: Cr 13, In 15, Mu 3, Pe 0, Re 14, An 5, Aq 5, Au 5, Co 10, He 23+3 (8), Ig 2, Im 5, Me 7, Te 4, Vi 7

Twilight Scars: Elongated legs, bark fingernails, berries grow from her hair in spring

Spells Known:

Trap of the Enduring Vine (CrHe 15/+39)

Bridge of Wood (CrHe 20/+39)

Wall of Thorns (CrHe 20/+39)

Wall of Living Wood (CrHe 25/+39)

The Bountiful Feast (CrHe 35/+39)

Intuition of the Forest (InHe 10/+39)

Shriek of the Impending Shafts (InHe 15/+41)

Converse with Plant and Tree (InHe 25/+41)

Transformation of the Thorny Staff (MuHe 10/+17)

Piercing Shaft of Wood (Mu(Re)He 10/+17)

Repel the Wooden Shafts (ReHe 10/+43)

Coils of the Entangling Plant (ReHe 20/+43)

Lord of the Trees (ReHe 25/+43)

Calling the Council of Trees (Re(In)He

45/+41)

Freeing of the Striding Tree (an augmented version of this spell with Duration Year, making it a ritual spell; ReHe 45/+43)

Thoughts within Babble (InMe 25/+22)

Appearance: Hellix is abnormally tall, a result of a Temporary Twilight incident that elongated her legs but did not effect the rest of her body. She wears a long black robe to cover this abnormality, but because she stands almost 7 feet tall it does little to mask her freakish height.

THE REDCAP JÓZEF

Józef is a Slavic Redcap born near Ujazdów Castle (the future site of the city of Warsaw) and trained in the Transylvania Tribunal. Because the Tribunal has an abundance of Redcaps, Józef's superiors assigned him to the Hibernia Tribunal. He became familiar with all the Tribunal's magi, including the Marched Okeabutes. At some point he started stealing vis, which he would then trade to Hibernian hedge wizards for goods and services. Caught and convicted, his punishment is to serve Hellix for a year. The Hibernian Quaesitor hopes that removing Józef from the Tribunal for a year will ensure that the Redcap won't want to come back. It is working.

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

Size: 0

Age: 30 (30)

Decrepitude: 0

Warping Score: 0 (0)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Redcap; Death Prophecy, Ghostly Warder; Second Sight, Well-Traveled*; Curse of Venus, Meddler; Soft-Hearted

* Free Virtue

Personality Traits: Meddler +5, Pacifist +3, Jovial +2

Reputations: Rich Baritone Voice 2 (Hermetic)

Combat:

Dagger: Init -1, Attack +8, Defense +3, Damage +5

Dodge: Init -1, Attack n/a, Defense +2,

Damage n/a

Short Sword: Init 0, Attack +9, Defense +3, Damage +7

Thrown Stone: Init -1, Attack +5, Defense +2, Damage +4

Soak: +1

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

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

Abilities: Area Lore: Lithuania 2 (coastal regions), Area Lore: Hibernia Tribunal 3 (covenants), Area Lore: Poland 2 (forests), Artes Liberales 1 (music), Athletics 2 (running), Awareness 3 (ambushes), Bargain 2 (hedge wizards), Brawl 3 (dagger), Carouse 2 (binge drinking), Charm 4 (superiors), Code of Hermes 2 (Wizards' Wars), Etiquette 2 (Tribunal meetings), Folk Ken 2 (magi), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Leadership 2 (Redcaps), Lithuanian 1 (curses), Music 4 (10) (singing), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (hospitality rights), Polish 5 (rhymes), Second Sight 3 (5) (regio boundaries), Single Weapon 3 (short sword), Stealth 3 (hiding), Survival 2 (forests), Thrown Weapon 2 (stone)

Equipment: Traveling clothes and weapons. Józef owns a cloak that makes him invisible (Pelm base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 changing image; +5 item maintains concentration, +5 for 24 uses per day; total spell effect level 25) and a gold figurine of a horse that can create a live horse (CrAn 15, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 size; +2 for 3 uses per day; total spell effect level 37).

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Appearance: Dark hair spills out under Józef's red cap in long ringlets. His traveling clothes are stained and worn, and luckily concealed beneath his short blue cape.

Józef's death prophesy is that he will die alone. Consequently he rarely is, and does his best to entice others to accompany him on his message deliveries. His busy-body ghost mother doesn't make this an easy task, and his Curse of Venus doesn't always afford him the best company, but he is generally successful in securing companionship.

own reasons to return, depending on the availability of marriageable women at the covenant. His Curse of Venus Flaw may also draw unwanted attention, perhaps from a social superior who demands the Redcap's regular return.

Once the villagers are healed and Hellix is either granted or denied her requests, this initial adventure concludes. Hellix and Józef leave and life returns to normal.

Interlude

"The Coming Storm" can be run in one or two gaming sessions, depending how easily your player characters manage the wolves, demons, and plague. After that initial introduction to disease, let time pass, either through long term events (laboratory work and aging) or by playing another adventure. Ideally several years should pass as the stage is set for events to unfold at locations afar. As your players plot their characters' laboratory activities, or play another unrelated adventure, Hellix accidentally creates the Great Pestilence.

To keep your players marginally involved, Józef turns up occasionally, asking for loans from the covenant's library. After

his year spent with Hellix, Józef asked to transfer to the Stonehenge Tribunal and the request was granted. Use Józef to link the Tylalus maga and her laboratory work to the player characters and their covenant. Hellix is interested in any tractatus about the Arts, except for Muto, Herbam, and Vim. She offers to exchange vis for the loaned material. Józef reports that she continues to investigate plant diseases.

A Good Place for a Lab

After her year spent abroad with Józef, Hellix left Hibernia and resettled in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Rather than live with other magi in an existing covenant,

Plant Diseases in the 13th Century

In Mythic Europe, there are two ways that plants get diseases, a natural way and an unnatural way. The natural way is from an imbalance in the three sources of nutrition, three factors that contribute to a healthy plant. Just as natural human diseases are caused by an imbalance of the four humors (see *Art & Academe*, p. 36), plant diseases are caused by an imbalance of the amount or type of a plant's food, water, or the prevailing weather conditions. Discovered by Aristotle, this basic plant biology was recorded by his successor Theophrastus, and is available in his work, *De causis plantarum* (*On The Causes of Plants*), a tractatus on Philosophiae (natural philosophy), Quality 8.

The exact nature of a plant's food is unknown, although it is known that the food is derived from the soil and transported to the plant through its roots. Water is also absorbed through the roots for nutrition, but the amount of water on a plant's leaves also determines its health. The prevailing weather conditions, predominately the temperature, direction, and strength of the winds hitting the plant, also determine its health. If any of these factors falls askew, or happen during an inappropriate time in the plant's growth cycle, a disease manifests.

The most common plant diseases are **sun scorch**, which blanches the

leaves and fruit of a plant before killing it, **grubs**, various types of caterpillar-like insects that form within the fruit and then devour it as they emerge, **kambros**, a rust-like discoloration of the leaves that prevents a plant from budding fruit, **mold**, a fuzzy black growth that taints fruit and kills the plant, and **necrosis**, or "black root," a disease that blackens a plant's roots and prevents them from delivering food and water. None of these diseases affect humans directly, although the loss of a field or orchard's produce certainly can.

All of these diseases can be transmitted unnaturally as well, Theophrastus making a distinction between the natural transmission of a disease through an imbalance of a plant's nutritional sources, and the unnatural transmission of disease through magical, infernal, or divine agencies. The demons, for example, infect a plant with necrosis through an infernal power.

COMMON PLANT DISEASES

Sun Scorch

Minor Disease, Severity 6
Stable: 6, Improve 10, Interval: Week

Sun scorch can be cured by increasing a plant's water source and, if possible, providing shade. If left unattended for a month sun scorch will kill the plant. Sun scorch is the

most common plant ailment in Mythic Europe and is often the first killer in areas of drought.

Grubs

Major Disease, Severity 12
Stable: 10, Improve 10, Interval: Week
Grubs destroy the field within a month.

Kambros

Minor Disease, Severity 6
Stable n/a, Improve 9, Interval: Week

Kambros prevents a plant from producing fruit, but will not necessarily kill the plant if left unattended. The disease will not worsen, but it is a persistent blight until cured.

Mold

Serious Disease, Severity 9
Stable 6, Improve 15, Interval: Day

Mold is a determined ailment and will destroy an Individual-sized plant in 7 days. Larger plants take longer to die, but are no more resistant to the disease. Multiply the length of time it takes to destroy the plant by 10 for every +1 size increment.

Necrosis

Critical Disease, Severity 15
Stable 12, Improve 18, Interval: Hour

The dreaded "black root" disease will kill a plant in 12 hours, regardless of the plant's Size.

she instead looked for a more private place for her laboratory and sanctum. She found it in Cors Goch, a large wetland on the eastern side of Anglesey, an island off the north coast of Wales. Uninhabited by mortal society, the fen is split in half between two powerful faerie groups. The northern group of faeries is led by Jarl Ketill, a notorious faerie viking raider, and the southern group is led by Prince Rhodri, a faerie copy of a famous local hero. Both faerie groups interact with the people living near them, and rarely interact with each other unless a human penetrates the fens.

Hellix commissioned a fellow magus to magically erect a stone tower in the middle of Cors Goch, built on an island of firm ground with a Magic aura of 5. This aura is surrounded by the nearby Faerie auras of 4, Jarl Ketill's to the north and Prince Rhodri's to the south. Hellix installed a Hermetic laboratory and made it her sanctum. Her actions drew the attention of both faerie groups, who sent representatives to investigate. These welcoming parties took the forms of faerie Viking raiders, on the one hand, and troublesome Welsh faerie knights on the other. When Hellix made it clear that she wasn't interested in interacting with them, they became a problem. Lone faerie vikings and the occasional

Welsh faerie knight investigate the surroundings, and once Jarl Ketill once raided the manor. Hellix defended the house by summoning and stationing animated trees around the property. After Jarl Ketill's defeat Prince Rhodri staged an attack, which was also repulsed.

Visiting and leaving the house entails dodging Cors Goch's faeries and penetrating Hellix's defenses, a task that Józef has become adroit at. Hellix is a nominal member of the covenant Cad Gadu, the domus magna of House Ex Miscellanea. She is the sole Tylalus member – she is the only maga who isn't from House Ex Miscellanea for that matter – claiming her inclusion is through her House's connection to Pralix and that maga's importance in the House's history. No other member of the covenant cares.

Left alone in her sanctum, Hellix investigates plant diseases. She frequently requests samples, and Józef complies to the best of his ability. She also asks to borrow Hermetic texts, and some of these requests should fall on the player characters' ears.

Tending Sick Crops

The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's, but earth hath He given to the children of men.

- Psalm 115:16

Blighted and diseased fields are nothing new to medieval farmers, and the Order of Hermes has created preventative measures to protect a field from sun scorch, grubs, mold and other plant diseases. The spell *The Bountiful Feast* (ArM5, page 135), does just that, and a field protected by that spell is immune to natural diseases. If the disease is caused by unnatural causes, like the necrosis inflicted by the Shades of St. Anthony demons, *The Bountiful Feast* grants no protection.

Not Hellix, but One of the Covenant's Magi

It could be one of your player character magi who accidentally creates the Great Pestilence. If so, this story does not need Hellix or Józef at all. Perhaps the player character is working on a ward against plant disease, or any other Rego Herbam laboratory activity. The magus must experiment and the player must roll either a botch or a 9 on the Extraordinary Results Chart (ArM5, page 109). If he rolls a 9, resulting in "Special or story event," the accident is not directly harmful. Let the season's effort succeed, and near season's end, during an intensely intricate moment of the laboratory process, the temporary vestige opens and siphons off some of the magical energies swirling around the room. The Great Pestilence is created from this energy.

If the player rolled a botch, he must then roll on the Disaster chart. If the roll is 2 or less, the magus has avoided creating a temporary vestige, but if the roll is anything else (3 or higher) the vestige and the Great Pestilence are created. The other results of the roll also transpire. For example, a player who rolls a 5 – 6 explodes his character's lab, and creates a temporary vestige and the Great Pestilence.

New Guidelines: Rego Herbam

General: Ward against magical plant diseases associated with one realm (Divine, Faerie, Infernal, or Magic), with a Might of less than the level of the Spell. (Range Touch, Duration Ring, Target Circle)

Level 5: Ward a plant against mundane plant diseases.

New Guidelines: Creo Herbam

Base 1: Heal a Light Wound to a plant. Cure a Minor plant disease

Base 2: Heal a Medium Wound to a plant. Cure a Serious plant disease

Base 3: Heal a Heavy Wound to a plant. Cure a Major plant disease

Base 4: Heal an Incapacitating Wound to a plant. Cure a Critical plant disease

Base 5: Heal all Wounds to a plant.

Base 10: Heal all damage to a plant, including wounds, disease, and poison.

Just like human diseases, plant diseases come in a variety of severities. The type of severity, Mild, Serious, etc., is the same as the severity of the human disease or animal disease that effects the eater of the diseased plant. Like Creo Corpus healing spells, a healing spell cast other than as a Momentary Duration Ritual actually suspends the healing process so that upon the spell's expiration wounds are as fresh as they were when the spell was cast.

Unlike most Hermetic spells, those that strive to provide fertile crops are not exact. *The Bountiful Feast* "attempts to ensure that all crops that grow within its target will be healthy and fruitful." Hermetic theorists are uncertain why such magics are imprecise, and speculate that it has something to do with the plant's growing cycle and the insidious nature of plant diseases. Rituals spells that nurture crops throughout the growing season are less accurate than those designed to keep plant blight and rot from the fields. A long-lasting Rego Herbam ward works better than a long-lasting Creo Herbam ritual.

Hellix desires a plant cure that surpasses those already available. Having discovered that demons, faeries, and magical creatures can cause plant diseases, she seeks to protect fields from those supernatural maladies. She also seeks a more embracing cure, one that wards vast acres of tillage from both natural and unnatural plant diseases. Her motivation might seem generous — what greater gift than that of a stable food supply — but it is driven by her ambition to outshine the other members of her House. While they squabble and pursue petty differences, thinks Hellix, she will show them and the world the greater benefit of magic.

WARD AGAINST NATURAL IMBALANCES OF NUTRITION

ReHe 55

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Boundary, Ritual

This ritual spell keeps natural plant diseases from a sizable crop field. It does not aid growth, fecundity, or yield, but will keep the plant healthy despite imbalances in its food, water, and effects from atmospheric conditions. It offers no protection from magical diseases emanating from supernatural causes.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +4 Year, +4 Boundary, +1 size)

WARD AGAINST UNNATURAL IMBALANCES OF NUTRITION

General

R: Touch, D: Ring, T: Circle

This ritual spell keeps supernatural magical plant diseases of a particular Realm, those originating from a supernatural source or creature with a Might

score, from a small garden. It does not aid growth, or otherwise invigorate the crop. The selected base level of effect must be greater than the Might of the source of the magical plant disease, or of the disease itself if the disease has a Might score. In addition to the base effect level, the spell needs to penetrate the Magic Resistance of the magical plant disease, or more likely its source.

(Base effect)

Rather than promoting healthy growth or protective wards, another solution is to cure a field already damaged by a plant disease. Much like curing human disease, spells that return a blighted field to health are rituals and require vis. Curing one disease does not prevent another, nor does it guard against repeat infestations of the disease just cured. Yields may be affected, depending on how much damage a disease has done, but if the spell is cast before harvest the crop is hale and untainted.

SHADE THE SCORCHED EARTH

CeHe 20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Boundary, Ritual

This spell heals a crop infested with sun scorch.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary, +1 size)

The Accident

This event likely happens offstage. In her lab at Cors Goch, Hellix experiments while creating Rego Herbam wards, spells that will prevent natural and unnatural diseases from infecting a crop field. Midway through the Winter season she makes a disastrous error that causes an explosion in her lab. Glass and pottery are hurled throughout the room, and Hellix is thrown into a Temporary Twilight that lasts for a year. The force of the blast is so severe that it tears the magical lining of the Magic aura within her lab, creating a temporary vestige that leads to the Herbam province, an area in the Magic Realm aligned to the Herbam Form. The explosion contaminates the large pile of raw vis she was using to augment her experiment. This combination of raw vis and unleashed magical energies creates a sentient creature, a woolly black clump of magical rot that is both intelligent and malicious. During Hel-

What about Magic Resistance?

Every being of the Magic realm has Magic Resistance, based on its Magic Might, and has resistance against the Great Pestilence's attack. However, the Great Pestilence, whose statistical information appears at the end of this chapter, has a very high Penetration on his power that inflicts the Great (Form) Pestilence. None of the Great Pestilence's powers that find and target Magic beings costs Might points, so its total Penetration is its Might (50) + its Penetration (10) = 60. Attacking from the Magic Realm bolsters this total by 10, and residing in the (Form) province adds another +10, for a Penetration total of 80.

lix's Temporary Twilight, the mold creeps toward the maga and slowly climbs her body. Edging its way through the rend in the Magic aura, called a Twilight Tear, the sentient fungus oozes through the vestige and into the Herbam province. The Great Pestilence is born.

Four Months of Contagion

Even if the magi stay in close correspondence with Józef and Hellix, it is nearly impossible to know that the Great Pestilence is coming. But this is Mythic Europe and the impossible often happens. Once spawned and shied off into the Magic Realm, the Great Pestilence needs time to grow and fester. Several warning signs occur during this time, almost as if the Magic Realm is trying to indicate the terrors ahead. Any character with the Virtue: Premonitions or the Flaw: Visions receives an indication of the impending horrors. A vision is vague: a dreamer sees the objects in his bedroom rapidly decompose, a distant figure in black engulfed in olive-colored fungus, or the Tower of Bonisagus at Durenmar tarred in black mold and tumbling to the ground. For characters

with Premonitions, the result of the Perception + Premonitions roll determines the accuracy of the preternatural feeling. A 6 or higher indicates something terrible is coming, a 9 or higher that this terrible thing will cut off the food supply and endanger everyone, a 12 or higher that the world will be consumed by rot, and a 15 or higher that a wizard created the malady that will destroy the world. The wizard's identity remains hidden.

If the magi have kept close ties with Hellix, they may have an inkling of the events to come. Józef tells them that Hellix takes risks, judging from the dark shadows under the maga's eyes and the replacement glassware costs, and deems her to be impetuous. When the Redcap last tried to visit the magus the way was barred; the maga had doubled the number of animated trees guarding her sanctum and the Redcap couldn't get through. Depending on how much time you give the players, the characters might be able to hurry to Cors Goch and investigate Hellix's laboratory. Travel time depends on how far the covenant is from Wales and the magical or mundane means the magi have of visiting the lab. The investigation itself shouldn't take long.

If the players haven't kept in touch with Józef, they are as surprised and confused as the rest of Mythic Europe when the plague strikes.

The Moon of Herbam Rot

The Great Pestilence strikes in the spring, on the first new moon after the vernal equinox (sometime in April), and targets every Magic aura and regio. All Herbam vis becomes diseased, either molding, forming grubs, or showing sun scorch. Raw vis maturing on the vine or in the field develops a blue fuzz, and stored vis displays small black dots that grow in size over the next few days. This goes unnoticed unless the magi regularly take stock of their vis stores and their vis sites. Most covenants collect their vis in one place, often a secure room or a safe corner of the magi's library, and place someone in charge of the collection. Let the overseer's player make a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor

dependent upon how attentive he is to his duties, based on past seasons played in your saga. The average autocrat's Ease Factor is 9, while a lazy autocrat's Ease Factor is 12. Any magus or apprentice who takes vis from the stores has a chance to notice the blight as well; make a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 6.

At this point, the vis still empowers spells and boosts magic, as a simple test reveals. However, it feels riskier to the caster, a subtle but noticeable feeling. The Herbam Form is more unpredictable, and Herbam spell-casting requires a stress die in situations that normally use a simple die. Intellego Vim spells cast on the rotting vis offer no aid, and simply state the obvious, that the item contains vis and possibly how many pawns. The quantity of pawns of vis in the actual item does not diminish. For example, an ear of barley that holds four pawns of vis continues to hold all four pawns, up to the point when all of it ceases to function. At month's end, on the rise of the next new moon, the diseased vis is useless and void of any magical essence. If left unattended or unnoticed, all Herbam vis expires.

The players have a chance to save their magi's vis. Even if their wizards didn't notice the early signs of disease, others do. Two weeks after the new moon, Tribunal Redcaps start spreading the news that one of the area's covenants noticed the rot and is asking for help. When other covenants offer to send Herbam vis, they notice that theirs is also rotting. If Herbam vis is very important to your saga's magi, this word comes in time for the magi to save their stored Herbam vis. If Herbam vis is not so important, word comes too late.

The solution is to move the vis outside a Magic aura. Raw vis must be fully mature for this to work. It must be ready to harvest in early or mid-spring, harvested, and then removed from a Magic aura. Raw Herbam vis that won't be ready by the next new moon can't be saved. If the vis is taken to another Magic aura, the blight continues. It must be outside all Magic auras to retain its potency. Though stinking and discolored by the blight, Herbam vis removed from all Magic auras still works after the month ends. All Herbam vis left inside a Magic aura rots and turns useless when the next new moon rises.

Important: Once a Magic aura or regio that produces Herbam vis has been infected, it no longer produces that vis. This hold true of other auras that produce other types of vis; once that Form of vis becomes diseased, that area no longer produces vis.

The Moon of Herbam Sickness

The Order of Hermes buzzes with the news. As magi ponder the contagion, the next new moon brings another calamitous event. The Great Pestilence targets every magic being, spirit, creature and object belonging to the Magic realm and aligned to the Herbam Form. Herbam-aligned Magic creatures outside a Magic aura or regio not affected. Most are, Herbam creatures being stationary as a rule. On the night of the new moon, and each week thereafter for the next month, Herbam magic creatures in every Magic aura and regio must succeed on a Disease Avoidance roll or suffer the malignant effects of the Great Herbam Pestilence, so named because of the creature causing it and the Form affected.

Sick creatures show obvious signs of infection. Large, black buboes form on the creature, which quickly tax its strength. Trees drop leaves, objects grow warty protuberances along their surface, and spirits become hazy. Most victims die within the week. Those that don't die in the first week gradually worsen until they too expire. Those that survive a dose of exposure must make another Disease Avoidance roll for each week that they stay in a Magic aura.

The solution is to remove the sick individual from any Magic aura, the same solution that saved Herbam vis. While vis automatically stopped worsening, a Magic being still dies if it does not survive the disease. Like diseases in humans, the creature benefits from magical and medical curatives. While it is safe from the Great Pestilence's sickness, it may suffer Acclimation while removed from a Magic aura of appropriate strength. (Acclimation is the slow loss of magical Qualities or Might to a Magic creature that does not reside within a strong enough Magic aura; see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 52.)

Dying from the Great Herbam Pestilence taints a magic creature's body, so that its vis rots and cannot be siphoned off and used. Losing Magic creatures may affect the strength of an area's Magic aura. Creatures that live in an aura for more than a year form a preternatural tether to that area, and add one-fourth of their Might to the area's Magic aura, measured in magnitudes. The death of such creature reduces the aura's strength by 1 point for each year after its demise.

Being magical creatures, familiars are affected by the Great (Form) Pestilence. While there might not be many Herbam-aligned familiars in your saga, this becomes a larger issue as the Great Pestilence advances through the Forms.

THE GREAT (FORM) PESTILENCE

Critical Phlegmatic Disease, Severity 21

Stable: 12, Improve: 18, Interval: Day

Symptoms: Once acquired, the disease advances quickly. Initial signs in humans and animals are fatigue and fever, followed by coughing and sneezing. Within an hour coughing leads to bloody expectoration, and within two hours puss-filled buboes appear on the throat, armpits, and groin. For objects, minerals, and plants, the symptoms are a general encompassing of the surface with a blue-black mold. Firm textures becoming spongy and exude a foul odor. The Disease Penalty is -5.

The Herbam Miasma Moon

The loss of most of Mythic Europe's Herbam vis and Herbam magic beings is tragic, but pales against the deprivations of the next stage of the Great Pestilence's progression. On the rise of the third new moon, the last in the spring season, an invisible cloud forms in every Magic aura and regio, a cloud that destroys all living plant material. This cloud, called a *miasma*, is odorless, invisible, silent, intangible, and has no taste. Named after the Form it is targeting, the Herbam miasma delivers a lethal rot to all living plant material. Every plant within the cloud suffers the effects of the spell-like *Herbam Blight*.

HERBAM BLIGHT

PeHe 30

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell destroys any plant that falls within the confines of the miasma. It affects every plant, from a blade of grass to a towering oak. Visually, plants become blighted and rot within a matter of minutes. As the miasma touches the area, the entire bounded zone withers and dies.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

A miasma is a magical creation, an accidental result of the Great Pestilence's contamination of a Magic aura and regio, and not specifically created by the Great Pestilence creature. A miasma does not have a Might score, or Intelligence, or any other Characteristic. It has one power that operates continually with a Penetration Total of 0. The miasma has the rough circumference of the Magic aura in which it was created, and is about 60 paces tall. This correlates to a cloud of 10 to 100 times the size of a base Auram Individual target. See the insert "Miasma Sizes" to determine how large a particular miasma is and if an incoming spell needs to be adjusted due to the miasma's size.

Every Magic aura and regio produces a Herbam miasma. In the years to come, this same phenomenon will repeat with every new stage of infection. Every four new moons, every Magic aura and magic regio produces a noxious Form-aligned miasma. A miasma has a life span of 1 year.

A miasma does not stay in the aura it was created in, but moves according to the prevailing winds. On the third new moon hundreds, if not thousands of Herbam miasmas are created, which destroy the plants in the immediate area, and are then blown around Mythic Europe. An area will likely be affected by several Herbam miasmas as they circulate across Mythic Europe. Besides the direct damage done, each miasma penalizes Aging rolls by -2. When it is time to make Aging rolls in your saga, often done at the beginning of the Winter season, impose a -2 penalty for every active cycle of Form-type miasmas circulating through Mythic Europe at that time.

Generated near the end of the spring season, when most of an area's cereal crops have been planted and are just showing signs of growth, a Herbam miasma will devastate an area. A stagnant miasma continually targets an area of land with

the *Herbam Blight*, preventing new plants from growing. However, natural winds carry the majority of miasmas across the countryside, ruining many fields. Cattle and herd animals used to grazing on fresh grass need fodder, forcing farmers to use any hay they may still have on hand. Miasmas generated in urban Magic aura lacunas continually ricochet within the city walls, blown about by small winds until a strong enough gale forces it over the city's walls. Most if not all urban dwellers grow small vegetable gardens to supplement their diet, and the roving Herbam miasma ruins these plots.

The Order of Hermes immediately sees the connection between the Herbam miasma, the loss of Herbam vis, and diseased magical beings. On the other hand, mundane society sees the poor harvests as a sign of the Almighty's displeasure. Most cities are prepared to handle a year's crop loss, with stored grains and managed prices that allow the majority of the population to survive. Bellies will not starve the first winter after the Herbam miasma, only grumble at times, but the situation will steadily deteriorate. Farmers begin a desperate race to find new pastures. New grass will grow in areas laid waste, but only on their natural cycle. A pasture wasted in the summer may grow new grass by the autumn, but is just as susceptible to a roving Herbam miasma as it was last year.

MIASMA SIZES

A base Target: Individual for Auram is a single weather phenomena, which includes a cloud. Clouds come in various sizes, however, and spells that affect very large clouds need to be adjusted due to the cloud's size. A miasma is about the size of a cloud, and when resting on the ground occupies approximately the same space as an acre of land. This rough rule is used for convenience. In the 13th century, an acre of land is the amount of land an ox can plow in a day, or a plot of land 22 yards wide and 220 yards long. Adding a magnitude would affect a miasma the size of 10 acres of land (220 yards by 2,200 yards), adding a second would affect 100 acres of land, and a third 1,000 acres.

The miasma is the same size as the Magic aura that spawned it. When dealing with spells that target miasmas, one target: Individual is a miasma the size of

an acre of land. Very small Magic auras, like those lacunas found in cities, can be targeted with Target: Ind. Spells targeting larger miasmas, like those derived from most covenants, need to be increased by two magnitudes to affect the miasma. An aura's strength has nothing to do with the miasma's size.

MIASMAS AND REGIONES

Magic regiones generate miasmas just like Magic auras. Inside a regio, however, winds won't blow the miasma away, nor carry a new miasma into the regio. Regiones are trapped air, in a sense, and do not interact with mundane winds. Even if the regio is a particularly windy regio due to its own magical characteristics, a miasma remains within the bounded area. In regiones, and only in regiones, a new miasma will replace an older one. When The Great Pestilence generates its Corpus miasma later in the year (see later), the Herbam miasma already in the regio is suppressed and replaced.

Regiones aligned to the other realms also exist within their own confined environments. Winds can blow miasmas into Divine, Faerie, and Infernal auras, but not Divine, Faerie, and Infernal regiones. Such places are safe havens, allowing people a refuge from the ravages of the Great Pestilence. Living inside the regio, however, may not be possible. While sustainable regiones might produce food – crops grown in an Infernal regio, cattle stolen from a faerie regio, or wholesome bread and wine found in a Divine regio – interacting with the regio's denizens has consequences.

"WE ARE DOOMED!"

They are not. Discovering miasmas is not as difficult as might be imagined. Medieval medical theory already speculates that plagues are disseminated by a corruption of the atmosphere, and that this "bad air" congeals into pockets of poisonous foulness. Indistinguishable from other types of air, the clump of bad air is blown from area to area by the wind. Any trained physician (anyone who possesses a score in Medicine) who investigates two or more areas devastated by the *Herbam Blight* can speculate that it is caused by a clump of bad air. Success is indicated by

succeeding on an Intelligence + Medicine roll against an Ease Factor of 9.

Second Sight allows characters to see through illusionary concealment, including invisibility. A player character can spot a miasma on a Perception + Second Sight roll against an Ease Factor of 9.

SPOT A MIASMA: PERCEPTION
+ Second Sight + stress die vs. 9

In the covenant, all living plants die as soon as the Herbam miasma generates, and nothing grows as long as the miasma stays. Once it is blown away by winds, new plants can be sown. A covenant's *Aegis of the Hearth* spell doesn't stop the initial miasma from generating, but

it does prevent other miasmas from being blown into the area it protects. Being magical things, and especially due to their lack of penetration, miasmas cannot pass through even the lowest level *Aegis of the Hearth*. Once the initial Herbam miasma is dispersed, destroyed, or somehow dealt with, foreign Herbam miasmas cannot pierce the *Aegis of the Hearth*.

Handling Multiple Miasmas

Miasmas are created every four months, the Form of the miasma the same as the Form the Great Pestilence is putrefying. Several types of Form miasmas soon circulate throughout Mythic Europe. While the covenant is protected by its *Aegis of the Hearth*, the magi's neighbors have no protection. Winds play the largest factor when determining if a miasma enters a locale. Roll on the accompany table to determine if the wind is blowing and its direction.

Simple Die Wind Direction

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | No wind, check for length of time between miasmas (below) |
| 2 | North |
| 3 | Northeast |
| 4 | East |
| 5 | Southeast |
| 6 | South |
| 7 | Southwest |
| 8 | West |
| 9 | Northwest |
| 10 | Becalmed. Roll a simple die to determine how many days before the wind blows |

The length of time between miasmas depends on how many Forms the Great Pestilence has infected. Roll a stress die (no botch) and subtract the number of Forms infected to determine the number of days before the next miasma visits an area.

For example, The Great Pestilence has infected three Forms: Herbam, Corpus, and Mentem. A Corpus miasma currently sits over a local village. The storyguide rolls for the wind direction, gets a 5, and announces that a southeasterly wind blows the miasma away. He next rolls a stress die and gets an 8, minus 3 because 3 Forms are infected, and discovers that 5 days pass before the next miasma arrives.

The speed of the wind doesn't matter, nor does it matter how long an area is in contact with a miasma. Because the miasma's blight instantaneously affects its targets, even a few seconds of contact is lethal. A field of crops, for example, is destroyed whether an Herbam miasma sits on the plot for a week or is blown through it in an hour.

To determine which type of miasma arrives, randomize the available miasmas in accordance with which Forms have been infected.

The Herbam Death Moon

On the fourth new moon since the plague began, formulaic and spontaneous Herbam spells stop working. With a gasp the Order quickly finds that Herbam rituals still work, however, and it takes only a simple investigation to discover that formulaic and spontaneous Herbam spells also work if the caster uses vis when casting, one pawn per magnitude of the spell. Herbam vis, which is likely in short supply, works, as does Technique vis corresponding to the Technique used in the spell. The used vis still supplies the regular +2 bonus to the spell casting total.

From this point on, any lab work that includes the Herbam Form can only be completed by expending vis during the process. Since laboratory work is half investigation, half application, it costs 1 pawn of vis for every two magnitudes (10 levels) of final effect, in addition to the number of pawns of vis the season's activity would normally require. This rule holds true for any type of Form vis that has been targeted by the Great Pestilence's attacks.

The Tribunal Response

At some point during the four-month-long epidemic on the Herbam Form, the Tribunal's magi realize that something major is happening, a calamity of unprecedented proportions with no known origin and no obvious end. The movers and shakers in your saga's Tribunal call for an emergency Tribunal meeting, summoning the magi to meet either in late Spring or early in the Summer season. The exact date isn't important, but you should set it during the third or fourth month of the Herbam blight cycle. Hopefully your player characters are interested in responding on a grander scale than merely saving their covenant and the local environs. How this plays out is unique to every saga and depends on how contentious or cooperative the magi are in your Order of Hermes. Canonically, the Order is a fairly stable,

functioning organization. There are several places where communication, information, and cohesion can break down, and every Tribunal has its bad apples ready to spoil the bin, but as painted in the majority of the *Ars Magica* Fifth Edition books the Order as a whole works.

No matter what your Tribunal is like, make your player characters central to the ensuing political action. If used as intended, this adventure ends (or threatens to end) a long saga, one in which the player characters have risen to positions of distinction and power. If this is not the case, and you are running this for less experienced player characters, you still need to make their participation meaningful to the Tribunal, despite their age, reputations, and past encounters with other Tribunal magi. One way to do this is to give the player character magi important information that the others don't have, like the connection with the Herbam specialist Hellix and her interest in molds, fungi, and other plant diseases.

If the magi have any allies in the Tribunal, those allies are at the meeting, as are the magi's enemies. The majority of those assembled are frightened and display this feeling in a variety of ways. The more honest simply show their fears, asking each other what is to come and what can be done. The majority mask their fear with anger, and brazenly hurl accusations at time-honored enemies. Minority groups are favorite targets, and magi blame local heretics, hedge-wizards, and witches. At this stage this is just braying, and true violence seems unlikely.

The marks of disease on the various items containing raw Herbam vis, many of which are fruits, vegetables, or other plant products, resemble mold, grubs, and other common plant diseases. The player characters are the only magi present who might link the damaged vis to Hellix. Even if other storyguide magi know about Hellix, they do not put this information together. As mentioned, this gives younger player character magi an important foothold in the Tribunal discussion, so you should make sure that they do connect things to Hellix. Some phony Intelligence + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes rolls might be called for. Use this advantage to explain why the Tribunal's senior members are willing to listen to the player characters. Once this has been

The Rate of Infection and a Slower World End

As written, the Great Pestilence takes 4 months to destroy a Form, and 3 years and 4 months to destroy the Magic Realm. This assumes that your saga is suitably advanced and your player character magi many years past apprenticeship. If your magi are realm-trotting adventurers who know several routes to the Magic Realm, political powerhouses in their Tribunal and even in the Order as a whole, and magically capable of dealing with miasmas with spontaneous spells, then the month-by-month contagion should provide the right level of challenge. Please note that this quick rate of infection restricts complex laboratory activities, because the magi won't have the necessary time to invent powerful spells or explore original research.

If your player characters are not as powerful, you should consider slowing down the rate of infection. Rather than four months to destroy a Form, the Great Pestilence needs four seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. This gives the saga ten years before the final Form is destroyed, allowing the player characters the laboratory time to deal with the plagues and the dying world. Remember that while those outside the covenant suffer greatly, inside the covenant the magi are protected by their *Aegis of the Hearth*. Covenants become pockets of survivors, giving the magi time to invent spells, investigate areas, find a route to the Magic Realm, and ultimately defeat the Great Pestilence. A slower infection rate also works well in a low-powered saga, one in which the magi need a month to walk to Duranmar for the emergency Grand Tribunal and cannot instantly transport themselves there with magic.

explained, someone will suggest that the player characters investigate Hellix's lab, and see if they can find her.

If the magi have already visited Hellix's lab, they have discovered her culpability. Hellix has inadvertently fouled the Herbam Art of the Magic Realm, and the consequences are obvious. They may even have rescued Hellix and brought her to the Tribunal. At this point, most of the Tribunal's magi want reparations; they want the loss of their vis compensated for and want some type of "creature price" for slain Herbam creatures. Some hot-heads call for her death. With a blamable culprit, attention shifts from the Great Pestilence, which at this point has only made a cursory invasion of the Forms, to punishing the offender.

If the troupe is interested, they could defend Hellix against the charges laid against her. She suggests the charge be debated and the praeco agrees, provided that Hellix doesn't participate and finds an advocate to defend her. If your players are more interested in prosecuting the Tytalus, switch roles and have a storyguide character defend her. If you do not have the debate rules (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 90), have the debating solicitors make opposed Communication + Code of Hermes stress rolls. Each solicitor has to make three points in the formal argument, and winning the roll equates to winning a point. After the Tribunal decides what to do with Hellix, it needs to address the concerns of the entire Order. If compensation has been demanded, does every Hermetic magus get to make a similar demand? The debate could go on into the night.

Storyguide magi characters may have noticed a Twilight Tear during episodes of Temporary Twilight. As you will read later, a Twilight Tear is a way into the Magic Realm, through one of the Form Boundaries that connect that Realm to the mundane world. Use this device as necessitated by your saga. If the player characters have a way to the Magic Realm then they probably won't need to use a Twilight Tear. If they do not, then provide this information from a storyguide character ally at an opportune moment. Naturally, the player characters themselves have a chance to find a Twilight Tear on their own, and at that point decide to use it or not.

Example Tribunal Responses

How the Tribunals respond to the Great Pestilence depends on your saga, determined by your style of play and your troupe's vision of the Order of Hermes. Six example responses are presented here, one for each of the six Tribunals detailed in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*. Use or revise these as you see fit.

THE RHINE TRIBUNAL

The first and foremost Tribunal of the Order, although not necessarily the most powerful or influential, is already stalled in political debate between those who would retreat and protect the great forests (the Hawthorn and Elder Gilds) and those who would treat with men (the Apple Gild). Several factors complicate a settlement, including the ancient enmities between the Black Forest covenants, the self-centered agendas of the smaller covenants, and the rigidity of the larger. Once Herbam vis rots and Herbam magic creatures perish, the wilderness faction screams for a solution, which unites the Tribunal in a common goal. All perceive it as a direct attack and look for someone to blame. The magi of Dankmar, assuming that most other Rhine magi believe that they are responsible, abandon their covenant and go into hiding. The loudest, most persuasive voices come from Oculus Septentrionalis, a covenant in Lübeck, who declare that the threat must come from the north, from the antagonistic Order of Odin. They propose an attack north, a proposal that is backed by Fengheld, the largest covenant in the Tribunal. Ships are bought and magi head to the coast, their sights set on the distant pagan magicians in Sweden, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

THE NORMANDY TRIBUNAL

Probably the Tribunal where vis is most scarce, the magi of Normandy do not overreact when their limited supply becomes threatened. Some few spar and feud, keeping their disputes within legal boundaries, but most look for a solution. Unfortunately they have nowhere to look, until someone suggests that the dual Primi

of Fudarus might have something to do with it. Both Buliste and Harpax refuse to accommodate any requests to investigate their covenant, and before the second moon sets most of the Norman Flambeau and Tremere declare Wizards War against the Primi and any Tytalus they know. This could easily lead to a second Schism War.

THE THEBES TRIBUNAL

Rich in vis and abundantly blessed with Magic auras, the Thebes Tribunal does not initially treat the threat with the gravity it deserves. None view it as an attack, since there is no clear cut magical enemy for the Tribunal to face. They wonder instead if some ancient being has arisen, some titan long thought buried who now returns. A commission is formed to browse through the Redcap library at the covenant of Alexandria looking for references to the ancient titans and correlating that to the last known location of where any titan might be bound. The logothete Proximos applauds the plan, facilitates the commissioners entry into Alexandria and loads them with volumes of past Redcap messages and notes. Sensing that the situation is more dire than the other Theban magi realize, Proximos hopes to exacerbate the issue by stalling those hoping to find a solution.

THE TRANSYLVANIA TRIBUNAL

Rather than waste time finding the culprit, the Tremere of the Transylvania Tribunal rush into action. If no player character discovers the solution of relocating vis and creatures to save them, the Tremere do. They are also fairly well equipped to deal with such an enterprise, using their system of store houses and their modes of mobility and fast transit. A vexillation forms to deal with the calamity, and once the relocation is underway the vexillation looks for those behind the attack. Their first suspects are the ancient and terrible Infernal dragons that haunt the Carpathian Mountains. Thinking that the Infernal dragons have found some new power to use against the Magic dragons, squads of Tremere look for an Infernal dragon leader, one who they think is spearheading the assault.



THE HIBERNIA TRIBUNAL

The magi of Ireland have the swiftest and most pronounced reaction to *Herbam vis rotting*: they panic. Those who know the history of the island know that plagues have twice wiped out its inhabitants in the ancient past, and this first sign of far-reaching blight sends them spinning. None initially think to save their *vis*, or any magic *Herbam* creatures they may know, and instead look to their own safety. Some leave Ireland, only to find the same calamity abroad. Others lock themselves in their towers and safe houses hoping the plague passes them by. The brave join with the *Coill Trí*, the league of hedge wizards living in Connacht, and search the deeper recesses of the Tribunal looking for the plague's origin. Hibernia has its fair share of *Herbam* specialists, and at some point someone remembers the maga Hellix and her skill in the Art.

THE PROVENÇAL TRIBUNAL

With tensions hanging on the edge of a sword, as they have for the past few years, the Great Pestilence is the final straw that breaks the Tribunal's cohesion. The Blacks and Whites of Tolosa Paratge declare Wizard's War on each other, and the long standing enmity between Aedes Mercurii and Castra Solis flares up as the former launches magical raids against the latter. Even the more pastoral covenants draw up their defenses and close their doors to outsiders. If there is a hope for recovery, it rests with the Coenobium and its far-flung network of Redcaps and Jerbiton magi. Using their connections and access to various river barges, they manage to save most of their *Herbam vis*.

Seeking Hellix

At some point, either before or after the Great Pestilence strikes, the player characters visit Hellix's tower. If this happens before her accident, she is cordial, if

cold, receiving them with all due hospitality. She commands her tree guardians to allow the visitors entry. She has nothing to hide and freely discusses her investigations. If pressed, she lets visitors into her sanctum, show them her piles of *vis*, rotted plants, and laboratory texts. If the player characters are expecting to find any evidence of foul play they are disappointed.

If the player characters arrive after the accident has happened, they find a completely different situation.

INSIDE THE FEN

Józef agrees to lead the player characters to Hellix's sanctum if asked. He is perplexed by the number of animated trees guarding Hellix's lab. Where the maga once found 15 sufficient protection, 30 now stand in a circle around the tower. There is no way to slip through without being subject to attacks from at least two trees. Slow moving, the trees attack any who approach, and follow those rushing past them right up to the tower door. Since the trees are animated by Hellix's magic and are not magical creatures themselves, they are not affected by the *Herbam Blight*.

Inside the tower are the standard rooms and appointments generally found in a Hermetic maga's domicile. Hellix's lab

Animated Tree

Magic Might: None (*Herbam*)

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

Size: +5

Virtues and Flaws: Clumsy

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: No Fatigue

Personality Traits: Tree +3

Combat:

Branch: Init +5, Attack +7, Defense +1, Damage +10

Soak: +15

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-10), -3 (11-20), -5 (21-30), Incapacitated (31-40), Dead (41+)

Abilities: Brawl 3 (branch)

Vis: None

Reprinted from *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 129.

is located on the top floor. The magical botch that upended Hellix's lab also overwhelmed the maga and sent her spinning into Temporary Twilight, which luckily saved her from the brunt of the explosion. Despite her low Warping Score, Hellix is enthralled for a year. If the player characters arrive within the year, she is frozen in her Temporary Twilight. The Order does not have a way to prematurely terminate a wizard's Temporary Twilight, so they may investigate her laboratory, but have to wait to question the maga.

As the magi look around the lab and explore the wreckage, a Perception + Magic Theory roll against an Ease Factor of 9 shows that the experimental botch incorporated the other four Techniques besides Rego. The diseased grain that the Lab Text says was on the workbench is gone, presumably consumed in the explosion. All of her vis is gone as well, some 20 pawns of Herbam, Perdo, Muto, and Vim vis. Investigating the lab with Intellego Vim spells may locate the Twilight Tear (see immediately following). Other combinations of Intellego magic reveal other interesting facts.

- A dark stain on the floor indicates where a powerful Herbam being was spontaneously created (Intellego Herbam).
- The stones that make up the floor can be questioned; they remember the explosion (although having no sense of time don't remember how long ago it happened) and felt something wet and woolly crawling over them (Intellego Terram).
- Every tower eventually has rats. A few of them survived the explosion, saw the Great Pestilence form, then crawl over Hellix and disappear through the shimmering scar (Intellego Animal).
- Hellix has assembled an assortment of summae and tractatus in her sanctum, the majority of them on the Arts of Herbam, Vim, and Rego, as well as a few better known books on Magic Theory. Standing out because it is unlike its neighbors is a thick summa entitled *Codex Fantasia*, written by Institutus of House Criamon. This summa on Magic Lore is Level 4, Quality 7. A crow's feather bookmarks a page, and if opened a phrase is underlined in black ink: "For at the very core sat the Arcana Centrum, the center of all, the beginning and the end, the mouth

that holds the tail in a toothy grip." The book does not explain what the Arcana Centrum is.

THE TWILIGHT TEAR

When Hellix fell into Temporary Twilight, in combination with the massive magical explosion, a temporary vestige was torn in the magical fabric of the lab's aura, a vestige that led to the Herbam province of the Magic Realm. The vestige has since closed, leaving behind a faint magical tear. Those with Second Sight or Magic Sensitivity can make a Perception + Second Sight or Magic Sensitivity + stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 12. If successful the character sees this Tear as a faint shimmering line hanging vertically in the center of the room. Hermetic spells designed to see Magic regio boundaries also indicate the vestige, as does a general purpose Intellego Vim spell that is looking for traces of powerful magic. Only a remnant of the Tear is visible; characters cannot see what is on the other side of the now-closed Tear and thus cannot enter the Herbam province here.

This Twilight Tear is much more than a simple reminder of Hellix's accident. The Great Pestilence's entry into the Magic Realm was so traumatic that it mars every future episode of Hermetic Temporary Twilight. From this point in the saga onward, every time a magus experiences an episode of Temporary Twilight a rent is created that leads to one of the ten provinces in the Magic Realm. The specific province is the one that the Great Pestilence is currently targeting. These temporary rents can be used as entry points into the Form provinces of the Magic Realm (see "Adventure Solutions" later). An observer has a chance to see a Twilight Tear whenever a magus goes into Temporary Twilight.

VIEWING A TWILIGHT TEAR:
Perception + Second Sight or Magical
Sensitivity + stress die vs. 12

HELLIX SEEKING THE MAGI

If, for whatever reasons, the player characters do not go looking for Hellix, she heads for them once she recovers from her Temporary Twilight. She takes nothing

from her tower, leaving it as it is, and rushes to the magi. Filled with guilt, she can think of no better ally to help her. Once she finds the magi, she confesses that she was recklessly experimenting with inventing a warding spell and had a large batch of disease-ridden grain nearby. During the accident, the grain seemed to come alive, to form a ghastly clump roughly humanoid in shape, and crawl along the floor. She reports that as she fell comatose into Temporary Twilight, the creature crept toward her and engulfed her foot. Did the thing enter the Twilight Void with her?

The Cycle Continues

This section continues sequentially through the Forms destroyed by the Great Pestilence. The magi do not have to wait to act, and can seek a solution at any point in the following sequence. The Great Pestilence's progression through the Forms is detailed without interruption for clarity, and character actions are considered later.

The Corpus Infection

At the following new moon, sometime in August, patches of disease sprout on all raw and stored Corpus vis located in Magic auras and regiones. Removing the vis from the Magic aura and regio stops the disease's progression and saves it from rotting. If the magi have figured this out from the Herbam infection, they no doubt rush to find a safe place to relocate their Corpus vis. This second infestation shows that the Great Pestilence is not limited to Herbam, and its spread to the Corpus Form indicates that it might continue throughout all ten Forms.

On the new moon in September, Corpus-aligned magic creatures become sick, infected with the Great Corpus Pestilence, a similar disease to that which inflicted Herbam-aligned creatures earlier. The solution is similar as well, remove the Magic creatures from a Magic aura to save them. While magi are associated with the Magic

CORPUS BLIGHT

PeCo 40

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell inflicts the Great Corpus Pestilence on every human target within the miasma. The Great Corpus Pestilence is the same disease that earlier targeted Magic creatures.

(Base 20, +4 Boundary)

Corpus miasmas wreak havoc at covenants. The covenfolk instantly fall sick, and the magi must act fast to save them. Any magical curative works, providing the magi have the vis necessary to make the healing permanent. Physicians and mundane healers can also help, providing they have not succumbed to the disease. People must be removed from the miasma immediately, or the miasma must be pushed off the covenant grounds. Luckily magi, and all others with Magic Resistance, are immune to the *Corpus Blight*.

Arising from small Magic lacunas tucked in every major city in Mythic Europe, urban Corpus miasmas spread the Great Corpus Pestilence like fire in a dry hay barn. Panic erupts, and those not immediately affected flee the city, if they can, or lock themselves in their homes. Because Corpus miasmas can enter homes, blown in on the various city air currents, flight is the better choice. The rich and prosperous

Realm, they do not have a Might Score and are not targeted by the Great Corpus Pestilence. Some few magi have a Might Score, gained through a variety of arcane and obscure ways. In those rare cases, the magus is affected by the Great (Form) Pestilence that corresponds to the Form alignment of his Might Score.

THE GREAT CORPUS PESTILENCE

Critical Phlegmatic Disease, Severity 21

Stable: 12, Improve: 18, Interval: Day

Symptoms: Once acquired the disease progresses quickly. Initial signs are fatigue and fever, followed by coughing and sneezing. Within an hour coughing leads to bloody expectoration, and within two hours puss-filled buboes appear on the throat, armpits, and groin. The Disease Penalty is -5.

As the Autumn season begins, on the new moon in October, Magic auras and regiones produce a Corpus miasma. Like the Herbam miasma, the Corpus miasma carries a lethal blight. Instead of targeting plants, these noxious pockets of poisoned air target people. Each person touched by the Corpus miasma is infected with a dire disease. While it is not instantly fatal, the infected has only a few days to survive.

Marking Time: New Moons and Seasons

There are 12 or 13 new moons a year, depending on how the 28-day cycle of the moon aligns against the annual cycle of 2 solstices and 2 equinoxes. Being exactly accurate when determining in which season a new moon occurs is difficult, especially considering that there is no set date for the Great Pestilence to occur, and we have no way of know in which year you will use it in your saga. Instead we have simplified this complicated pattern to facilitate play.

There are 12 new moons per year for the first two years of the Great Pestilence, 13 new moons in the third year, and 12 new moons in the final year. The Spring season new moons happen sometime in April, May, and June, the Summer new moons happen in July, August, and September, the Autumn new moons

happen in October, November, and December, and the Winter new moons occur in January, February, and March. The third year of the plague has an additional new moon in August, so that the third year's Summer season has 4 new moons instead of 3.

If you desire exact dates rather than our generalizations, the Internet can provide them. Dates of the new moons for the thirteen century can be found at National Aeronautics and Space Administration eclipse website (<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>) and the solstices and equinoxes for the thirteen century can be found online as well (<http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/seasons.html>). Make sure you take account of the difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars.



are most able to flee, and may have summer homes to which they can run, but are just as likely to stay, convinced that their expensive home can keep the disease out. They are mistaken, and a Corpus miasma kills almost all people who remain in the city. An Intelligence + Medicine roll against an Ease Factor of 6 indicates that relocating and outrunning the miasma are the better options. Monasteries, convents, outlying villas, and remote castles are fairly safe, especially if they are not near a Magic aura. Even though a Divine aura won't block a miasma's entrance, people stampede to the closest monasteries, rushing for God's succor in the benevolent arms of the monks.

Focus on the covenant and keep the spotlight on the player characters. As soon as the Corpus miasma blossoms they have their hands full. Removing the miasma is paramount. Immediate magical aid greatly reduces the chance of people dying. Sick doctors can tend sick patients, and magic can aid recovery rolls. Such enchanted poultices do not need to be empowered by vis to be effective.

THE SOOTHING BALM OF TELESOPHURUS

CrCo 20

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

This spell grants a sick person a +15 bonus to Disease Recovery rolls. It must be in effect throughout the entire recovery

period, but can be reapplied every sunrise and sunset to continue its effectiveness. Son of the mythical healer Asclepius, Telesphorus was the Greek god of recuperation.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 Sun)

In November, on the night of the new moon, spontaneous and formulaic Corpus spells cease working unless empowered by vis. If the magi had removed their stores of Corpus vis from Magic auras in the spring, it remains potent. Areas that once produced Corpus vis stop producing it, however, and there is no saving those resources. Magi find their stock piles of Technique vis dwindling, as they substitute Technique vis in the place of the vanishing Form vis.

The Mentem Infection

On the last new moon in the Autumn season, sometime in the month of December, Mentem vis starts to rot. A month later, during January of the Winter Season, Mentem-aligned magic creatures become sick with the Great Mentem Pestilence. Winter is usually the time troupes make Aging rolls for the saga's many characters. Aging rolls are penalized by a cumulative -4, -2 from the famine caused by the Herbam miasmas and -2 due to the plague spread by the Corpus miasmas. If your characters have overcome these calamities, do not penalize their aging rolls.

During the new moon in February, Mentem miasmas form in every Magic aura and regio. These physically undetectable clouds carry the *Mentem Blight*, a malady that reduces humanity to savages. Those that survived the Corpus miasma's *Corpus Blight*, which merely inflicted the Great Corpus Pestilence disease, will find no mundane escape from the *Mentem Blight*.

MENTEM BLIGHT

PeMe 30

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell-like effect reduces the mental capabilities of every person within the miasma, effectively diminishing them to animal-like intelligence. Substitute Cunning for Intelligence to those affected. Characters cannot use any Ability that combines with Intelligence. Without magical assistance, this condition is irreversible.

(Base 10, +1 Boundary)

Magi are unaffected, as are those with any other type of Magic Resistance. Mentem miasmas signal the likely end of human civilization. Those that survived the Great Corpus Pestilence are reduced to savages, groups of men and women with beast-like intelligence who react to the world through anger and fear. Such people are extremely dangerous. Finally, during March, the last new moon in the Winter season brings the end of the Mentem Form, and like Herbam and Corpus spells, Mentem spells can only be cast if the caster uses vis in the casting.

Divine, Infernal, and Faerie Vis

With the supply of vis dwindling, magi might replace Magic vis with vis aligned to other realms. Tainted vis, whether it be Divine, Infernal, or Faerie, will work in Hermetic and most non-Hermetic castings. Extended use and botches are problematic. For each season that a magus regularly uses vis from another realm, he gains a temporary Personality Trait based on the source of the vis. Using Divine vis regularly grants a calming or temperate Personality Trait, Infernal vis grants an obsessive, violent, or sinful Personality Trait, and Faerie vis bestows a Personality Trait based on some narrative role. Once the temporary Personality Trait is gained, each extra use of the tainted vis

adds an experience point to the Personality Trait, in effect enhancing it. There is no limit as to how high the Personality Trait can go. Abstaining from using tainted vis for six months removes the temporary Personality Trait.

Tainted vis adds extra botch dice, 1 per pawn of tainted vis, and influences the botch if one occurs. Botches from Divine vis suppress magic and may drain nearby magic sources of their power. Infernal vis botches are deadly, damaging the caster and his surroundings. Botches from Faerie vis draw the casting into a story, and while the intended effect may still transpire, the subsequent display often draws the attention of the closest faeries.

The Vim Infection

One year since its inception, on the first new moon of the Spring season, the Great Pestilence targets Vim. Sometime during April, Vim vis starts to rot. To make matters worse, extracted Vim vis is inert, flaccid, and without power. From this point onwards magi cannot extract vis from Magic auras (ArM5, page 94). Stored Vim vis can be saved, as the Order has learned, but areas that once produced raw Vim vis stop producing it.

On the new moon in May, magic beings aligned to the Vim form suffer the Great Vim Pestilence, unless they are removed from their Magic aura. Some beings cannot be removed, genii loci

for example, and will likely perish. Such deaths have the potential to permanently reduce the aura's strength. On June's new moon every Magic aura and regio spawns a Vim miasma, an invisible poisonous cloud that carries the *Vim Blight*, a spell-like effect that cancels magical spells and effects. This miasma floats through what is left of mundane society without the survivors batting an eye, since it only targets magical effects. Some enchanted items stop working, but that is the least of mankind's worries.

VIM BLIGHT

PeVi 40

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell-like effect destroys magical effects, both existing spells and enchanted items. It cancels any spell or spell-like effect of level 30 or less. It destroys every power in any magic item whose spell-like total is 30 or less. The *Vim Blight* has a Penetration Total of 0, but most spells and enchanted items do not have Magic Resistance. Some carried items may be protected by the wielder's Parma Magica and are immune from the *Vim Blight* for as long as they are so protected.

(Base 15, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

The Aquam Infection

Things continue to get worse. On August's new moon, in the second month of the Spring season, Aquam vis loses po-

tency and stored Aquam vis succumbs to disease. A month later Aquam beings are struck with the Great Aquam Pestilence, a version of the same major disease. In October, the first month in the Autumn season, the generated Aquam miasma targets bodies of water, polluting and poisoning them with *Aquam Blight*.

AQUAM BLIGHT

PeAq 35

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell-like effect destroys any water that the miasma touches. Water in lakes and seas is replenished from the same larger body of water. Rivers will have portions of them destroyed, but once the miasma moves on new water coming from the river's source refills the river.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

Aquam miasmas make finding potable water harder, but not impossible. Springs and small rivers are permanently destroyed, but larger rivers refill once the miasma passes. The remnants of mundane society, small groups of savages with animal-like intelligence, shift again as the groups chase after fresh water. In November, the last month of the Autumn season, the Aquam Form dies and Aquam spells can only be cast if empowered by vis.

The initial Aquam miasma might destroy the covenant's source of water. If so, a second source of drinkable water floats in the sky above. A rain cloud ready to spill its contents can be wrestled to the ground with Rego Auram spells and its life-giving water wrung from its pillowy body. Rain

clouds lie 2,000 to 3,000 paces above, well within Range: Sight, and can tower 15,000 to 20,000 feet in height. Bringing one down is noticeable for miles around, but considering the consequences of the previous miasmas, it is unlikely the covenant has any living neighbors.

EMBRACING THE DOWNY ARMS OF THE NEPHELAE

ReAu 25

R: Sight, D: Conc, T: Ind

This spell lets the caster control the movements of a cloud. Designed to affect rain clouds, which are especially large and necessitate two additional magnitudes due to size, the caster can direct the cloud in any direction she wishes, including down to the ground. The Nephelae are Greek cloud nymphs.

(Base 3, +3 Sight, +1 Conc, +2 size adjustment)

Once lowered to the ground, the rain cloud seethes with moisture as water droplets dot the cloud's dark gray bottom. With a sizable collection of barrels nearby, a magus can magical force the water from the cloud into his assembled reservoirs. A single rain cloud contains enough potable water to sustain 100 people for a fortnight.

WRINGING FREE THE TEARS OF ZEUS

ReAq 35

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Group

This spell transfers the collected water in

Hedge Wizards, Witches, Elementalists, and Supernatural Abilities

The Great Pestilence targets the Magic Realm, and its ten Forms. If left unimpeded, it rots most of the Magic Realm, but does not entirely consume it. Supernatural Abilities aligned with the Magic realm still work, but are more difficult to use. For every destroyed Form, increase the Ease Factor difficulty of every magical Supernatural Ability by 1. Supernatural Abilities that derive their power from other realms are not affected by this penalty.

Other magical practitioners access their power from the Magic realm, but

do not use the terminology of their Hermetic rivals. Amazonian magic, for example, uses consonants instead of Forms, whereas the Virgilian magic of the Augustan Brotherhood use schools. If your saga includes these esoteric traditions, use your best judgment as to how the rotting Magic Realm affects these practitioners' magic. Relate each consonant, school, what have you, to a corresponding Form, the one that makes the most sense to you. When that Form is destroyed that magical practice loses its power unless the casting is empowered

by appropriate vis. Some traditions cannot use vis in their castings, and when the Form rots their magic powers vanish.

Magical practitioners whose spell abilities are aligned with other realms do not suffer any magical misfortune due to the Great Pestilence's blights. Their Divine, Infernal, and Faerie spells are just as effective and powerful as before. Naturally, they are as susceptible as anyone else to the various miasmas that roam the lands.

a cloud to a distant barrel, jar, or similar holding vessel. The stream of water can be controlled, so that several vessels can be filled. It takes approximately 5 minutes to empty a rain cloud of its watery contents. Because the rain drops are individual, the Target must be Group, increased 10,000 fold (3 magnitudes)

(Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +2 Group, +3 size adjustment)

The Auram Infection

By this time, magi should at least have procedures in place as they wait for the next new moon, and try to develop methods to anticipate which Form the Great Pestilence targets next. A smart covenant might remove all stored vis from its Magic aura, leaving one pawn of each of the remaining Forms not yet blighted to serve as a marker to determine which Form is next affected. Panic strikes when, in the rising new moon of December, a pawn of Auram vis develops a small black spot, which slowly grows throughout the night. By this time the magi may have calculated how to save Auram vis and Auram beings, but many shudder when considering the Auram miasma. Will the very air turn poisonous and unbreathable?

As the Winter season begins in the third year since the Great Pestilence began, troupes should make Aging rolls. Since each type of miasma lasts a year, there are only three types still active: Mentem, Vim, and Aquam miasmas. Impose a -6 penalty to Aging rolls. On the new moon in January, Auram-aligned creatures are struck with the Great Auram Pestilence disease. On the new moon in February, every Magic aura and regio generates an Auram miasma of foul air the same size as the aura. The effected air is foul, not fatal, and weakens a breather rather than kills him. This makes life difficult, but not impossible. The Auram miasma only fouls the air that it occupies, and once it has left an area that location's air is returned to normal.

AURAM BLIGHT

PeAu 20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Boundary

A large-scale version of *Room of Stale Air* (ArM5, page 128), anyone standing in an Aquam miasma has difficulty breathing and suffers a -3 penalty on all rolls involving physical activity. For each round a character exerts himself, the player must succeed at a simple Stamina roll vs. an Ease Factor of 6 or the character loses a Fatigue Level.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

In April, on the first new moon of the Spring season, Auram spells stop working unless empowered by vis during their casting. By this time, without the Herbam miasmas crisscrossing the land, plants have begun to blossom and grow. Without Corpus miasmas spreading *Corpus Blight*, humanity might find a foothold for survival. Many are still as dumb as beasts, however, a condition that lingers well after Mentem miasmas disappear. An interesting side note is that any children born of parents afflicted with the *Mentem Blight* are not under the spell's effects. Parents so afflicted can raise children, who will certainly be feral, but far from stupid.

The Animal Infection

Animals have certainly suffered up to this point, and many domestic and wild beasts have starved from lack of food and perished from the lack of healthy water. In April, under the first new moon of the Spring season, Animal vis rots. A month later magic beings aligned to the Animal Form suffer the Great Animal Pestilence. In May, Animal miasmas develop and inflict *Animal Blight* on every animal they touch.

ANIMAL BLIGHT

PeAn 45

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell-like effect inflicts an Incapacitating Wound on an animal. The beast isn't killed automatically, but it is unlikely to survive without medical help.

(Base 20, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

Since the Great Pestilence began, animals have been a source of nourishment for the surviving human population, especially

dairy animals. Survivors have learned to live off the steady supply of milk, cheese, and butter from their herds of sheep, goats, and cows. One touch of an Animal miasma changes that, as the entire herd collapses to the ground, bleating or mooing in pain.

In July, the first new moon of the Summer season, Animal spells stop working unless empowered by the addition of vis.

The Imaginem Infection

The August of the third year of the Great Pestilence has two new moons, the first early in the month and the second at the end. The first new moon brings the rot of Imaginem vis, and the second heralds the arrival of the Great Imaginem Pestilence to every Magic creature and being aligned to the Imaginem Form. In September, carrying the *Imaginem Blight*, an Imaginem miasma destroys every object's ability to produce visual images. The ability is only suppressed for a moment, but the miasma repeats the suppression constantly for as long as things are within it, so things within a miasma are invisible until the miasma moves on, at which point they reappear. Images entering from outside the miasma are not destroyed, although they still cannot pass through opaque objects, and light is not affected. Thus, someone inside an Imaginem miasma appears to be suspended in a void, and to have lost her body. If she has line of sight to an area outside the miasma, she can see that, but she can see no obstacles that might be inside the miasma. Someone inside a room with no line of sight to a point outside the miasma would seem to be floating in an infinite void.

IMAGINEM BLIGHT

PelM 25

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Boundary

This spell-like effect destroys an object's ability to affect sight, and the object immediately stops producing an image.

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

Escaping an Imaginem miasma is difficult once engulfed. Without sight, the primary sense of direction, a man must stumble around searching for an exit using his other senses. Ironically, magi are not affected due to their Magic Resistance,

and still produce an image. They serve as beacons for those lost within the miasma. Imaginem miasmas are more nuisance than anything else, although those trapped within a large miasma could hurt themselves as they wander blindly. Finally, in October, Imaginem spells cease working unless empowered by vis.

The Terram Infection

Hardships continue when, under the November new moon, Terram vis rots. That December, Magic creatures aligned to the Terram Form suffer the Great Terram Pestilence. In the fourth and final year of the Great Pestilence, under January's new moon, Terram miasmas carry the *Terram Blight* throughout the land, a devilish malady that destroys the upper soil of an area, ruining future plantings, uprooting trees, and potentially toppling buildings. Covering the same area as its aura of origin, a Terram miasma destroys the top 9 feet of dirt, exposing larger rocks and other material exposed. Anything formerly resting on the spot falls into the large, excavated pit left behind.

TERRAM BLIGHT

PeTe 20

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Boundary

This spell-like effect destroys the top-soil and upper dirt of an area, permanently removing the dirt and leaving a pit 9 feet deep. Wooden buildings and small trees collapse on a simple roll against an Ease Factor of 3. Wooden fortifications, small stone buildings, and medium-sized trees fall on a simple roll against an Ease Factor of 6. For stone fortifications, castles and cathedrals, and large trees, the Ease Factor is 9.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

Terram Blight only affects dirt, not stone. If a wind doesn't blow a Terram miasma away from an area immediately, it keeps destroying the dirt it covers and quickly sinks into the ground at the rate of 3 paces per combat round (6 seconds). In a minute it destroys 30 paces of dirt. At some point the miasma hits bedrock and stops descending. How deep the bedrock lies depends on the type of area. Mountainous areas have bedrock closer to the surface, while grassy valleys and fields

have bedrock laying much deeper, and in some swampy areas the bedrock could lie 100 or more paces below the surface. If a wind doesn't move a Terram miasma within seconds after it is spawned, the Terram miasma digs a deep pit in the ground. In this case, structures and trees both collapse into the pit. After two minutes of destroying dirt, the miasma sinks below ground and only comes to rest once it hits bedrock. Even hurricane-strength winds will not move a Terram miasma submerged below ground level.

Aging rolls made this Winter are penalized by a cumulative -10 for 5 active types of miasmas: Vim (active for half the previous year), Aquam, Auram, Animal, and Imaginem. Since the new moon happens after the winter solstice, the Terram miasma is not included in the Aging roll modifier. On February's new moon Terram spells cease functioning.

The Ignem Infection

Ignem is the final Form to suffer, and the end is a cold one. In March Ignem vis rots. In April, days after the start of the Spring season, the Great Ignem Pestilence infects Magic beings aligned to Ignem. In May, Ignem miasmas generate from Magic auras and regiones, carrying the *Ignem Blight* within their cloudy midst.

IGNEM BLIGHT

PeIg 30

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Bound

This spell-like effect covers everything it touches in frost, chilling living thing and killing small plants. Animals and humans take +5 damage.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

Unprotected men and women take +5 damage per round that they are inside an Ignem miasma. Animals are also similarly harmed. Plants are chilled, and some small plants die from the frost. Larger plants like trees can survive. A month later, under June's new moon, the Ignem Form stops working, unless cast spells use vis.

Postmortem: Life after the Great Pestilence

Having consumed all ten Forms, the Great Pestilence starves to death, dying by the new moon in July, the first month of the Summer season. Even with the creature gone Mundane Europe is still a dangerous place. Imaginem and Ignem miasmas drift across the land, and Terram miasmas lie submerged in large, deep pits. The Living Condition penalty is modified by -6 for the next set of Aging rolls in the coming Winter.

Left unchecked, the Great Pestilence ravages Mythic Europe. It does not end life completely, but comes close. Characters may survive the entire panoply of devastation and continue living in a medieval-post-apocalypse, a miniature Ice Age with savage bands of feral humans roaming the landscape. This setting may be appealing to some players, which would emphasize a saga set on weathering the plague rather than stopping it. Players with

Bookkeeping

Unstopped, the Great Pestilence destroys the Magic Realm in 13 seasons. Each of its Form-infestation stages has lingering effects that must be tracked, to accurately record the slowly accumulating stages of the end of the world. You cannot keep track of every aura, regio, and area in Mythic Europe, so only need to track auras in the immediate area of the covenant, primarily those in which the magi have an interest.

For each nearby Magic aura, note the amount of vis produced and the number of resident magic beings. Once the aligned Form's vis has been destroyed, Magic auras that once produced that type of vis won't any more. If a resident creature of Magic Might 20 or greater dies, the aura diminishes by 1 for every 4 magnitudes of the being's Might. Each Magic aura and regio produces a miasma during the third stage of a Form's infection. The immediate area is affected, as is the surrounding countryside when prevailing winds push the miasmas around. Do your best to note how these miasmas affect the covenant's neighbors.

more noble magi, or those seeking to return to the status quo, will press to stop the plagues.

The Grand Tribunal Response

After the Herbam Form is lost, House Bonisagus calls an emergency Grand Tribunal. Redcaps streak through the Tribunals, telling all magi they find that everyone should meet at Durenmar in the Rhine Tribunal on the autumnal equinox, where the problem of the Great Pestilence, as it starts being called, will be discussed. From the summons to the date of the meeting, the magi have almost three months to plan and orchestrate their travel, giving most ample time to get to Durenmar in the Black Forest.

As the magi head to the meeting, traveling after the Herbam Form has ceased working and midway through the Corpus Form contagion, they find Mythic Europe severely changed. The land is ruined and barren. Peasants wander the highways begging for food, and cities keep their gates closed, barely able to feed those within. When the Corpus miasmas arrive, which will happen around the same time the player characters are at Durenmar, the populace sees it as a continued consequence of God's justifiable wrath. Those that don't die outright flee, hoping to find safe havens away from civilization. It is a time of extremes; the roads are either choked full of survivors looking for a new home or empty, scattered only with the dead and the crows feeding upon them.

The player characters find Durenmar greatly affected by a Herbam miasma. The lush grasses and bushes that line the hidden valley are gone, and the towering pines stand barren and blighted. The vine that grows along the face of the Tower of Bonisagus is gone, rotted away, and all of magus Ricardus Caepuus's exotic plants have died. In frustration, the magus destroyed his glass sanctum, which now lies in ruins at the southern end of Durenmar's clearing (see *Guardians of the Forest: The Rhine Tribunal*, chapter 6 for details of Durenmar and its magi.)

The Magi Gather

Assemble any storyguide magi your players have met, along with the most notable magi from the Order of Hermes, including Murion, Prima of House Bonisagus, Phillipus Niger, the Defender of Durenmar, and Darius of Flambeau (*ArM5*, page 34). This is a good opportunity to use characters from any Tribunal book you own. Several Primi from the other Houses should be in attendance; use those who lead the Houses of the player characters' magi. Keep in mind how your player character's Tribunal responded, for that will also affect the Grand Tribunal. If gangs of magi sailed north to hunt down the Order of Odin, for example, they won't have returned in time for the Grand Tribunal.

The emergency session mirrors last season's emergency Tribunal session, with various magi not knowing what to do. If the Order behaved badly at the local Tribunal their fears are magnified at the Grand Tribunal. On the other hand, if the Tribunal's sense of common cause prevailed, then the Order might solidify into a smoothly-running cooperative organization. So much depends on your saga's history that generalizations are almost futile. Nonetheless, here are a few suggestions on how a conflicted and a cooperative Order might respond to the Great Pestilence.

If the magi of the Order of Hermes in your saga are generally in **conflict** with each other:

- The Tremere magi of the Transylvania Tribunal announce that they have prepared a distant mountain top with supplies and water and plan to wait out the contagions. All who swear a new oath of vassalage to House Tremere may join them.
- The seafaring magi of the Rhine and Thebes Tribunals take to the seas, living aboard ships protected by *Aegis of the Hearth* spells and finding their livelihood from the ocean. Some announce their intent while others slip away into the night, hoping to sail off before being noticed.
- The conservative Flambeau of the Normandy and Provençal Tribunals blame the younger members of the House, especially those living at the domus magna of Castra Solis. With the end this close there is no point

in formalities. Several Wizard's Wars spontaneously erupt, with devastating collateral damage.

- The bellicose magi of the Hibernian Tribunal refuse to cooperate and seek safety in their covenants. Those that do emerge launch putative strikes against Connacht, looking for any Coill Trí member they can find. Rather than seek a solution, they seek to fill their final days with glorious violence.

If the Order of Hermes in your saga is more **cooperative**, the picture looks different:

- The magi of Hibernia broker a deal with the island's faeries and relocate the many magi and their covenfolk to faerie regiones. Safe within these pockets of slowed time, the magi explore laboratory solutions to the plague.
- The magi of Thebes and Transylvania bury their ancient hostility and build an underground complex in the Balkan Mountains, the mountain chain that separates the two Tribunals. All are invited to join the venture.
- Having no evidence of an Order of Odin, the seafaring magi of the Rhine build a huge ship and sail west, past the British Isles and Iceland. They pilot a course based on the stories found in the *Saga of the Greenlanders* and *The Saga of Erik the Red*, both written in the early 13th century, hoping to find an area uncontaminated by the Great Pestilence.
- The Normandy magi partner with bishops, offering their magical skills to help protect the Tribunal's holiest sites. Many magi are allowed onto Mont Saint-Michel, where their combined magics keep the island town and monastery safe.
- The Coenobium unites the magi of the Provençal Tribunal, using its access to many areas without Magic auras to preserve vis, and its experience of working scattered across several sites to coordinate research on the problem.

Discussing Solutions

The Grand Tribunal should ultimately find some common course of action, even if some of the magi – including your player characters – don't agree with it and refuse to participate. As domus magna of

House Bonisagus, most of the assembled Durenmar magi want to head to the labs to find a solution, as explored in the next section. This is a more reactive approach, and many laboratory solutions focus on the symptoms of the Great Pestilence rather than combating the creature itself. These solutions heal sick auras, heal sick animals, and prevent future Form contagions. Other laboratory solutions focus on finding and destroying miasmas. Offer these if the players seem stuck, but don't replace your players' plans with any listed here. Chances are that your saga is so developed that your players will find ways to defeat the Great Pestilence that we haven't thought of.

Others suggest a more active approach, and those options are detailed in a later section. These self-proclaimed defenders of the Order want to find the responsible party. If they know about Hellix, they want her, and ask the player characters to travel to her sanctum and bring the maga to Durenmar. If they know about the Great Pestilence creature, they plot attacks into the Magic Realm. Perhaps some ancient archmagus knows about the Arcana Centrum and how the player characters can use it to travel to the Great Pestilence. If the magi do not know about the Great Pestilence, the Order has other enemies to blame. Both the *Hedge Magic Revised Edition* and *Rival Magic* supplements detail several groups of magicians who could be blamed, if those groups exist in your saga. If you own one of those supplements and wish to tell war stories of an open conflict between two groups, this is your chance. This tactic could also be used if you want to remove other, more powerful storyguide magi from the story, leaving center stage for your player characters to discover the true culprit.

Use the Grand Tribunal to guide your players' actions, not to steal the limelight from them. Even if you must use a storyguide character to suggest a solution, under no circumstances let those storyguide characters carry it out. They can guide the way, spark ideas, serve as a sounding board, and even provide assistance, but they cannot save Mythic Europe. That is the player characters' job. If your players are clueless about what is going on, use this second major meeting of magi to get the player characters to look for Hellix.

It may be premature to reveal the Twilight Tears to the player characters at the

emergency meeting. At this point, they have only experienced one cycle of the death of a Form, and the real fun begins after they experience two or three cycles. Once the Twilight Tears are revealed, magi are able to penetrate the Magic Realm and find the Great Pestilence. Until that time, they are forced to deal with the Pestilence's disease effects. If after three of four cycles of diseased Forms the players still haven't found a route to the Magic Realm (if that is their preferred solution), have an elder magus tell the player characters about Twilight Tears. Perhaps it is even Hellix who discovers them, her attempt at redemption for accidentally spawning the Great Pestilence.

October's New Moon: the Corpus Miasma

At some point, either on the way to Durenmar, while there, or on the way home, the player characters encounter a Corpus miasma. It depends on the exact year of your saga if the autumnal equinox happens before or after the first new moon in October. You could calculate that on your own, using the references listed earlier, or you could determine which happens first based on how you want the story to unfold. If the new moon happens before the equinox, the player characters are on their way to the Grand Tribunal emergency meeting and have to deal with the miasma first. If the Corpus miasma happens after the Grand Tribunal, they have to deal with it when they return. How the covenant fared when the Corpus miasma formed would make an interesting story, especially with the magi away, as the companions and grogs will have to see to their own salvation. If the stars are right, the new moon happens while the magi are at Durenmar. The characters see the devastation it brings to the Rhine covenant, and may either help or hustle home to assist their own covenfolk.

Laboratory Solutions

Your player characters may opt to find a laboratory solution to stop the Great Pestilence. Not an uncommon thought, and many magi gathered at the Grand Tribunal press for such actions. A variety of spells can be researched and invented that aid against the Great Pestilence's various effects. Because time is short, resources should be pooled so that the magi best suited to the laboratory have the materials necessary for their research. You do not have to present all of the following ideas at the Grand Tribunal. Feel free to save a few and introduce them later, especially if your players are struggling to find solutions to the Great Pestilence. If your players would rather fund such efforts, or follow other tacks entirely, you could parcel these spells out to the player characters from the researchers' labs. Supply them with those spells that best suit the saga as it unfolds.

Building Protective Barriers

It is readily evident that an *Aegis of the Hearth* stops a miasma, but other, larger communities need different forms of protection. Some magi speculate that they can create a high wall around villages and cities to protect them from incoming miasmas. This can be done, but the wall needs to be very high. A miasma is approximately 60 paces high, and Mythic Europe's tallest walls, those that surround Constantinople, are 20 paces high. Taller structures exist — the Hibernia tribunal has many stone watch towers 30 paces high and St Paul's Cathedral in London rises to 150 paces — but none of these enclose a large area. If a wall is built, a door or other portal must be constructed to allow miasmas generated within to be ejected.

Affecting the Miasmas

Miasmas are invisible to the naked eye, but magi can invent spells that "see" the miasmas, just as Intellego Vim magic can indicate regio boundaries. The Intellego Vim base level is 3. A necessary condition of viewing a miasma, and affecting it with magic in general, is to include a Form-specific requisite. The requisite does not add a magnitude to the spell level because it simply allows the spell to have its effect, rather than adding an effect to the spell.

VIEWING THE HERBAM MIASMA

InVi (He) 20

R: Per, D: Conc, T: Vision

This spell allows the caster to see any Herbam miasmas in the area.

(Base 3, +1 Conc, +4 Vision)

Once a miasma has been seen, it can be avoided or redirected. This can be done simply by creating magical winds, which will push the miasma just as mundane winds do. Specialized spells, however, allow much more accurate control, and do

not require Finesse rolls to make sure the miasma goes where the maga wants.

MOVING THE HERBAM MIASMA

ReAu (He) 25

R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind

This spell allows the caster to move an Herbam miasma according to her wishes. The caster must first sense the miasma before she can move it.

(Base 4, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +2 size)

Like other physical objects, miasmas can be destroyed by Hermetic magi. Such a spell is a Perdo Auram spell, because at its core the miasma is a clump of poisonous gas, and needs a Vim requisite, because of its magical nature, and a Form requisite matching the type of miasma. Neither of these two requisites add magnitudes to the spell. Size is an issue, and the spell will need to be adjusted for larger miasmas. A miasma is a "severe weather phenomenon" for the purposes of calculating the base Perdo Auram level needed to destroy it.

DESTROY THE HERBAM MIASMA

PeAu (He, Vi) 35

R: Voice, D: Mom, T: Ind

This spell destroys an Herbam miasma. (Base 15, +2 Voice, +2 size)

A second laboratory solution is to investigate destroyed vis and dead magic creatures for insights into how the Great Pestilence is affecting every magic aura and regio. This is further detailed later (see *Inventing the Great Barrier*). If your players opt for this solution, their magi can ask for and receive assistance from other magi at the emergency Grand Tribunal.

Changing the Order of Plagues

As written, the Great Pestilence is very likely to destroy civilization, as the player characters would have to move very quickly to stop it before the Corpus and Mentem blights. This serves to emphasize just how apocalyptic the disaster is, but you might prefer to have civilization saved. In that case, it easy enough to change the order of the blights. If the Vim infection occurs earlier, it will push the magi into acting, but have little effect on mundane society. Similarly, the Imaginem and Auram infections have relatively few long-term consequences. The infections have been written to occur in descending order of Hellix's Arts, but that is not an important point. It is important that the first infection be Herbam, to give the characters a clue to Hellix's involvement.

Puzzling Out the Order of Forms Attacked

The Great Pestilence's attacks seem arbitrary, its selected sequence of blighted Forms appears to be random and completely capricious. It is not, entirely, and there is a pattern to the sequence. The Great Pestilence begins with the Form in which Helix was strongest, because it was the one she spent the most time using. Its targeting scheme then follows Hellix's

preferences in the Forms, determined by those spent the most time studying and using. Her Herbam Form stood out as strongest, followed by Corpus. Next strongest was a tie between Mentem and Vim, and the Great Pestilence merely selected on at random. Animal, Aquam, Auram, and Imaginem were all studied the same and the Great Pestilence randomized these four as the next to attack, starting with one and moving through them one by one. Terram was slightly weaker, and Ignem was her weakest Form of the ten and thus the last to be attacked.

A player character can determine a rough order by examining Hellix's laboratory notes and discovering which here her stronger Form Arts. This categorization is based on Arts scores, and while one character cannot look at another's character sheet to determine Art scores, the investigator can determine the maga's stronger Arts after spending a week with her notes and laboratory texts. The observer must succeed with an Intelligence + Magic Theory roll against an Ease Factor of 12. If Hellix is available for such an investigation and actively assists, adjust the Ease Factor of the Intelligence + Magic Theory roll to 6. Success tells the investigator that her strongest Form is Herbam, followed by Corpus, followed by either Mentem or Vim, followed by four equally studied Arts (Animal, Aquam, Auram, and Igaminem), followed by Terram, and finally Ignem. The player character will not get an exact order, but a rough idea of which Form will follow which.

Curing Auras, Regiones, and Magic Beings

Generally speaking, Hermetic magic can heal everything that Hermetic magic can harm, and even though the Great Pestilence isn't Hermetic, it was created by a Hermetic accident. Its inflicted woes are Perdo magics (destroy vis and inflict a major disease), which infect the aura and consequently create a miasma. Healing the land bounded within the aura is possible with Creo magic. Healing the aura is a Creo Vim spell, and needs to include a requisite for the infected Form being healed. The base effect is 20, "heal the debilitating after-effects of a disease," derived from the Creo Corpus guidelines.

SUTURE GAIA'S WOUND

CrVm (He) 45

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Boundary, Ritual

This spell repairs the damage done by the Great Pestilence to the aura and the Herbam Form in a specific area. It does not prevent future impairments from the sentient fungus.

(Base 20, +1 Touch, +4 Boundary)

This spell heals blighted vis as it is rotting during the season in which it is under attack, but does not revive vis already destroyed. This spell would not prevent the Great Pestilence from targeting Herbam beings living in auras in the Summer Season.

Save the Magic Beings

Beings infected with the Great (Form) Pestilence can be cured using Creo magic. Just as Creo Corpus spells cure a diseased human, Creo Herbam spells cure diseased plants, and Creo Animal spells cure sick animals. In addition, spells can be invented that cure a diseased magic being by healing the Form that the diseased being is associated to. For example, an infected dragon associated with the Ignem Form can be healed with Creo Ignem magic as well as Creo Animal magic.

If a magus is inventing a spell that heals the creature through its Form association, the base level of the spell is 25. Like any magical cure, the spell must be a ritual to provide permanent healing.

THE BALM OF ST FRANCIS

CeAn 35

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

This spell heals any animal disease, instantly easing the beast's suffering. St Francis was a legendary healer of animals. This spell works on animals Size +2 or smaller.

(Base 25, +1 Touch, +1 size adjustment)

Discovering the Means of Attack

At the adventure's beginning, the magi don't know how the Great Pestilence is targeting every Magic aura and regio. They may speculate that there is some sort of sympathetic connection that links each aura to the Magic Realm, and they are correct. Hermetic magic, however, cannot affect that link when the saga starts, and magi must invent a means to do so. Inventing spells that affect the Magic Realm requires a **Minor Breakthrough** in Hermetic Magic Theory, and can be accomplished through an integration process similar to incorporating older magic into Hermetic magic (*Ancient Magic*, page 7-9). This can also be done with original research, as described in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* pages 26-30, but is more easily accomplished through integration.

The first step is to gain **Insight Points** by studying diseased vis and Magic creatures slain by the Great (Form) Pestilence. Each rotted pawn of vis provides 1 insight point, as does each magnitude of Might of a dead Magic creature. A season spent

gaining insight produces Lab Texts, which any magus can study. A magus may study one slain creature a season or a number of rotted pawns of vis equal to twice his Magic Theory Ability.

Armed with a number of Insight Points, a magus invents some sort of Intellego Vim spell, of any level of his choosing. If the spell is successfully created, he gains a number of Breakthrough Points equal to the magnitude of the spell. He may also create an enchanted item with an Intellego Vim effect if he would rather not invent a spell. To integrate spells that affect the Magic Realm the researcher needs 30 Breakthrough points, which can be gained individually or accumulated by a group of researchers.

Once integrated, a magus can invent spells that affect the Magic Realm, including an Intellego Vim spell that sees the mystical connection running between every Magic aura and regio and the Magic Realm. They can use this link as an Arcane Connection (Range: Arcane Connection), allowing them to view the link, send spells along it to the far end, and prevent incoming spells from using it. Viewing the distant site before the aura is infected shows a bucolic Form province correlated to the aura's Form alignment, the vis it produces, or Vim if no other Form is evident. Viewing the Magic Realm after the aura has been blighted shows a rotting Form province, covered in fuzzy-blue mold, lousy with grubs, or blanched and dehydrated.

SEEKING THE THREAD OF POWER

InVi 20

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

This spell indicates the arcane connection between two objects, allowing the magus to sense the mystical link that connects the smaller to the larger.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +1 Conc)

Once this Arcane Connection has been discovered, it can be destroyed, to prevent future contagions. Doing so prevents the Great Pestilence from targeting that aura or regio with any effects, permanently blocking the Great Pestilence and saving that particular plot of land. Snipping the arcane connection to the Magic Realm is as easy as destroying any Arcane Connection.

Cutting this magical connection does not destroy an area's Magic aura, although

New Guidelines: Creo Animal

Base 5: Cure a Minor animal disease

Base 10: Cure a Serious animal disease

Base 15: Cure a Major animal disease

Base 20: Cure a Critical animal disease

Base 25: Stop the progress of any disease. Cure any disease countering its effects.

Just like human and plant diseases, animal diseases come in a variety of severities. The type of severity, Minor, Serious, etc., is the same as the severity of the plant disease that infects the plant and affects its eater. Like Creo Corpus healing spells, a healing spell cast other than as a Momentary Duration Ritual actually suspends the healing process so that upon the spell's expiration, wounds are as fresh as they were when the spell was cast.



it often reduces its strength. If the aura arose from a natural tether, likely caused by a beautiful or magnificent natural feature of the area, the Magic aura is undamaged. If the aura arose from a magical source, a preternatural tether, then disconnecting it from the Magic Realm does cancel the aura. Many areas have both natural and preternatural tethers. If you know the strength of both tethers, subtract the strength of the preternatural tether from the Magic aura when the connection to the Magic Realm is cut. If you don't know the exact allocation of natural and preternatural tethers, simply reduce the strength of the aura to half its original strength when the connection is severed.

SNIPPING THE THREAD OF POWER

PeVi 35

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind

This spell destroys the Arcane Connection between two items.

(Base 30, +1 Touch)

Inventing the Great Barrier

To save Forms from blight, a magus might invent a ward to prevent the Great Pestilence from taking hold of a Magic aura. Learned agriculturalists find this logical, following Pliny the Elder's instructions

on Roman soil management and preparing fields with sulfur to prevent mosquitoes. Folk lore is full of preventative measures, and the Order itself uses magical wards daily, the Parma Magica being nothing more than a very effective ward against enemy magic. Why can't a Great Barrier (Latin: *Magna Claustra*) prevent the Great Pestilence (*pestilentia magna*)?

Once the magi have integrated affecting the Magic Realm into their repertoire of Hermetic magic, they can create such a ward. Like any ward, the *Magna Claustra* is a base general spell that needs to be potent enough to prevent a creature from entering and have enough penetration to affect that creature. The Great Pestilence has a Might of 50 and the Form province adds +10 to its Magic Resistance for a total of 60. The successful *Magna Claustra* looks like this:

MAGNA CLAUSTRA

ReVi 95

R: Touch, D: Year, T: Boundary, Ritual

The *Magna Claustra* (Latin: Great Barrier) protects an area from the Great Pestilence, providing the Penetration Total of the spell exceeds 60.

(Base 50, +1 Touch, +4 Year, +4 Boundary)

Adventure Solutions

Few magi will sit idly by as the Great Pestilence runs roughshod across Mythic Europe. While they may hope that the initial Herbam infection is the extent of the issue, they cannot ignore the more serious problem once Corpus becomes infected. Survival becomes paramount, and before the magi can construct a cure for the Great Pestilence, they need to protect their own environs and ensure their daily sustenance. Several suggestions have already been provided, and include:

- Removal of vis and magic beings from Magic auras and regiones
- Leaving Magic auras and regiones to avoid miasmas
- Gathering and storing food, water, and vis
- Protecting a new area with physical structures, *Aegis of the Hearth*, or other magical wards to prevent miasmas
- Retreating to a Divine, Faerie, or Infernal regio that supports long-term habitation

These stopgap measures address the symptoms of the malady, not the cause. Once the magi have secured their home, they can shift their focus to the Great Pestilence. There is a slight chance to avert the rot entirely, which would shift the saga from an "end of the world" story to a "save the maga from herself" story. It is more

likely, however, that play focuses on the player characters' attempts to anticipate and survive each wave of the Great Pestilence's infections, protecting themselves and their allies, and then stopping the various miasmas from ravaging the surrounding countryside.

At some point, either through suggestions announced at the Grand Tribunal or on their own initiative, the player characters may wish to destroy the Great Pestilence creature face-to-face. This type of swashbuckling, high fantasy adventure sees the magi traveling to the Magic Realm and pits them against the sentient creature in rounds of blazing combat.

Ministering to the Sick

Once curatives for auras and Magic creatures have been invented, they need to be applied to those suffering outside the laboratory. Characters undertaking this task travel from site to site, heal the sick, and then moving on. The spells would need to be invented first (see earlier), and then a magus needs a road map, a gazetteer of all known Magic auras in Mythic Europe. Both House Bonisagus, through its Trianoma lineage, and House Mercere keep gazetteers of known Magic auras and regiones. The Bonisagus gazetteer, the *Tabula Geographica Magica*, is safely kept at Durenmar under the watchful eye of Tandaline, the current Tenens Occultorum (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* and *Guardians of the Forest: The Rhine Tribunal* for further explanation). Though this resource is normally shared only with great reluctance, in this situation it is readily offered to any magus willing to travel the dangerous and ravaged countryside to heal the earth. House Mercere is more interested in covenant addresses than Magic sites, but some auras do get mentioned in Redcaps' reports. In most Tribunals this information is kept at local Mercer Houses, but in a few, the Tribunal of Thebes for example, the information is collected, correlated, and stored in the main Mercere administrative center.

Characters undertaking this duty see Mythic Europe at its worst. Depending on how long the curatives take to invent, the world has slid far down its unprecedented decline. Civilized society is likely absent, and the only encounters are invisible miasmas drifting on the wind. This strategy works best in the characters' local environs,

where they can hurry to known, nearby auras and perpetually heal them as they get infected. Perhaps some of the covenant's magi perform this duty while others seek different avenues to stop the Great Pestilence.

Stopping the Accident

It is difficult to anticipate Hellix's accidental creation of the Great Pestilence, although there are clues in her personality that suggest she might try something rash. If they are fast, lucky, or both, the player characters may stave off the calamity entirely. During the initial meeting, an Intelligence + Folk Ken roll against an Ease Factor of 9 indicates that Hellix is prone to taking extreme risks in achieving her goals. Hellix is not the Order's only ambitious maga, so this information is hardly damning. However, her requests for books and resources come with increasing frequency, suggesting that she is feverish in her attempt to end all plant diseases. Józef assents if asked, saying that the maga is almost maniacal in her desire to succeed. Though she hates her House and tries to step away from its ideals, Józef concedes that she is "a typical example of the irresponsibility and short-sighted fervor of House Tytalus."

Portents and ominous visions abound when the Great Pestilence is created (see earlier), giving the magi the chance to magically feel that something dire has happened. If they are somehow connected to Hellix, possible by lending her learning resources, and quick, they may arrive in Wales before the Great Pestilence slips through the temporary Twilight Tear to the Herbam province. If encountered at this stage, the Great Pestilence is in its infancy, with only the power of locomotion and a Magic Resistance of 50. It can be easily captured, contained, and ultimately destroyed.

Invoading the Arcana Centrum

In the more likely scenario, the player characters piece together the various clues from Hellix's lab and discover that a sentient creature lies somewhere in the Magic

Realm and is targeting every Magic aura and regio in Mythic Europe. If they have talked to Hellix, they know about the sentient Magic creature. If they have integrated magic that can affect the Magic Realm into Hermetic magic, they know how the creature is targeting auras and regiones. The final clue is underlined in the book-marked summa on Hellix's laboratory desk: the Arcana Centrum.

The majority of the magi of the Order have never heard the phrase. Most point out that it is not even Latin. Those who have traveled the Magic Realm may have encountered mention of it in their travels. If a character has traveled in the Magic Realm, in particular if he has entered one of the ten Form provinces, he may roll Intelligence + Magic Lore + simple die against an Ease Factor of 18. If successful, the character has heard of but not ventured into the Arcana Centrum. Magic creatures may also know about the Arcana Centrum, on a successful Intelligence + Magic Lore + simple die against an Ease Factor of 15. If the creature lives in the Magic Realm, add that creature's Might in Magnitudes to the die roll. A character could head into the Magic Realm first and ask for directions later.

If the characters wonder about the book's author, Institus of House Criamon, let the player make Reputation rolls. If any succeed with a stress die + 4 (Institus' Hermetic Reputation: Befuddling) against an Ease Factor of 9, then they have heard of the cryptic Criamon. Hailing from the Tribunal of the Greater Alps, Institus was known for his rambling writings that seemed to confuse rather than clarify most subjects. His favorite subject was Magic Lore, and rumors have it that he spent much of his life in the Magic Realm. He was a member of the Cave of Twisting Shadows, the domus magna of the House, but has long since passed into Final Twilight. His library exists, as do his notes, bound together and stored in a room off the great library. Reading the pertinent parts of these notes explains that the Arcana Centrum is a place in the Magic Realm where the ten Form provinces converge at a single point. His notes do not explain the name.

This mystical hub is extremely remote and exceedingly powerful. Seen from above it resembles a large, multicolored pie cut into ten slices. As part of the Magic Realm, the Arcana Centrum adds +10 to

spell casting and magic Supernatural Ability totals. A spell with the same Form cast within the province of that Form receives another +10 bonus. From the exact center rises a tall pillar, a single spike of mixed material up which all Ten Forms run. At the top of this spike as a large plateau and a ball of brilliant white light sitting at its center. Normally within the field of brilliance there is no distinction between floor, walls, or ceiling, and all seems an infinitely expansive white light. The Great Pestilence has marred this with its vast, ugly body of rot and decay (see later).

FINDING THE ARCANE DOORWAY

If the player characters have any of Institus' books – he mentions the Arcana Centrum in more than one – they learn that every boundary in the Magic Realm connects to one of the ten Form provinces, which in turn connects to the Arcana Centrum. Vestiges, avenues of Magic Realm ingress, lead to boundaries, so while they don't connect directly to the center they stand as points of entrance. In his magnum opus, the summa *Catalog of Curiosities* (Magic Lore 6, Quality 7), Institus lists several known vestiges, which link to boundaries in the Magic Realm. You are encouraged to create vestiges that are meaningful to your troupe, perhaps an incidental structure that served in an earlier, unrelated adventure, or some meaningful element you use to tailor your stories. Example vestiges could be:

- The perfect cloud that always lies 12 degrees NE of the full moon leads to an Auram boundary
- The mysterious reflection of a whale that rises at dawn off the island of Crete leads to an Animal boundary
- The foreboding shadow that sat under the character's childhood bed leads to an Imaginem boundary
- The life-sized illusion of a rock hanging suspended in mid-air in a subterranean chamber leads to a Terram boundary

The magi must travel to the mentioned vestige, see the perfect illusionary image, and walk through it to enter the boundary. In the boundary, they must picture a spot in the correlating Form province and walk there. Those who know of the Arcana Centrum can instead walk directly there

by picturing it in their mind. Regardless of whether they head to a province or the mystical core, their journey takes them through the Twilight Void. Institus' prose gives the reader enough familiarity with it so that they can bypass a province and walk directly there from a boundary.

Judge the difficulty with which your player characters gain Institus' books by how they are doing overall, and how your Order of Hermes has fared. Reward cooperation. If the player characters assist other magi, if aid is freely offered and received, if mundane communities have been saved, then the books are easily located and perhaps offered to the covenant's magi. The Oppidium of the Scholomance has a complete set of the Criamon's work and offers it to the characters if they come to Transylvania to get it. If the Order has fractured, the books are hidden somewhere, stuffed in the dusty bookshelves of a covenant locked behind its *Aegis* and unwilling to entertain visitors. Evidence suggests that Crintera has several volumes, but that means penetrating their hidden regio on the island of Rügen and battling the Bjornaer defenders. If the Order has fallen, locate the books in a lost covenant whose lingering horrors still pose a threat. While the mad ghosts of the Cave of Twisting Shadows have been destroyed by the Great Mentem Pestilence, there may be traps and other magical protections safeguarding the books from thieving hands.

Coming at the end of your saga, however, the player characters may already have a way into the Magic Realm. Perhaps the oak tree that once led to the Herbam boundary after Eustace and Vafer's visit reopens that mystical passage ("The Champion's Portion," *Tales of Mythic Europe*). If they encountered the Brass Horseman outside the Marble Palace, they may still be able to find the solid brass statue and slip down the Forgotten Road into an Ignem boundary ("The City of Brass," *Tales of Power*). Those who have explored the great pyramids of Mythic Egypt might return and walk through a stele, an underground doorway that stands as a Mentem vestige and leads to the Field of Reeds in the Magic Realm (*Lands of the Nile*). Don't penalize players whose characters have had long and glorious careers by making Institus' books the only hoop through which they can leap.

If the magi have integrated Magic Realm magic into Hermetic Magic Theory, they may use an Arcane Connection linked to the Arcana Centrum and travel directly there. The only time such an arcane connection is available is when the Great Pestilence is targeting a particular Form, which happens at midnight on the night of the new moon. At that exact moment, and for the next two minutes (20 combat rounds) the magi can target the Great Pestilence with spells. The connection to the distant Boundary and the Great Pestilence lasts only for Duration: Diameter. Using Rego Corpus magic the magi can instantly transport themselves to the Great Pestilence's location. They can also target the Great Pestilence during this interval and try to destroy it, but a smarter alternative is to target the creature with low level spells to determine its Magic Might, for without knowing that it will be difficult to construct a powerful enough ward to block it (see earlier, Inventing the Great Barrier).

Finally, Hellix's fall into Temporary Twilight allowed the Great Pestilence to enter the Magic Realm, and this Twilight Tear can be exploited by others. Anyone can enter the Magic Realm if they do so at the same time as a magus enters Temporary Twilight. As the magus succumbs, regardless if he comprehends the experience or not, a shimmering rift is visible in the area directly next to him. Like a regio boundary, anyone who walks through this rift is transported to the other side, which in this case is one of the Form provinces, the one associated with the Form that created the Temporary Twilight. Unlike regio boundaries, which can be difficult to see without magic, the shimmering rift next to a Temporary Twilight is easily visible. The Twilight Tear lasts a handful of seconds, perhaps two or three combat rounds.

THE PATH TO THE ARCANA CENTRUM

Once a vestige is found, or one of the rare regiones that connects directly to a boundary, the magi can enter the Magic Realm. Like entering a regio, the magi must be able to see through the veil that separates vestige from reality or regio from boundary. The viewer must possess an Ability that lets them see such veils, either Magic Might, Second Sight, or Magic Sensitivity. Like auras and regiones, vestiges and boundaries

have levels, and the more powerful the level the easier it is to travel through.

BOUNDARY AND VESTIGE TRAVEL:

Stress die + Perception + appropriate Ability + Form bonus vs. $((10 - \text{level of boundary or vestige}) \times 3) - \text{Familiarity modifier}$

A travel gets one familiarity modifier from the following table, that which gives the greatest bonus.

Familiarity	Modifier
Enigmatic Wisdom	score
Magic Lore	score
Knows of destination	1
Has seen destination	3
Has visited destination	6
Arcane Connection to destination	15

The time it takes to make the trip depends on how well the traveler succeeded in viewing the destination through the vestige or boundary. Subtract the Ease Factor from the player's Boundary and Vestige Travel roll total to determine their Speed Level, and then compare it to the following chart:

Speed Level	Length of Journey
0	seven plus a stress die (no botch) number of years
3	seven years
6	Year
9	one season
12	Moon
15	day (24 hours)
18	Sun
21	two hours
24	Diameter (2 minutes)
27	one minute
30+	Momentary

Since the Magic Realm is timeless, a traveler does not feel the length of the journey, which more accurately measures how much time in the mundane world passes while the traveler journeys. Depending on when the traveler enters the Magic Realm, and how long his journey takes, the world may look quite different when he returns. From any point in a boundary, a traveler can attempt to slip into the Twilight Void. Those few who regularly slip into the Twilight Void do so to speed up their journey through a boundary, but those who know of the Arcana Centrum can also walk into the Twilight Void to go di-

rectly to the center of the Magic Realm. Use the same Ease Factor as before, $((10 - \text{level of boundary or vestige}) \times 3) - \text{Familiarity bonus}$, to determine how long the journey through the Twilight Void takes.

TWILIGHT VOID TRAVEL:

stress die + Stamina + Concentration + Form bonus

On a successful roll, the traveler enters his destination, either the Form province or the Arcana Centrum.

Because the Magic Realm is timeless, travelers do not gain experience points while adventuring inside the Realm. Instead, raw vis coalesces and collects on their persons, typically one pawn per awarded experience point for the adventure. This only happens if the section of the Magic Realm traveled through is healthy. If the characters are traveling through a boundary aligned to a Form already destroyed by the Great Pestilence, they do not gain vis.

A POISONED REALM

If a Form province has been infected, the disease is evident. The area appears damaged and dulled and its landscape is overrun with rot, sun scorch, and grubs. If it is yet to be infected, it is beautiful, a pristine example of the Form. For example, the unpolluted Terram province sits inside an active volcano, with granite islands floating on a magma lake. The Animal province is the back of some monstrous creature, too huge to determine its exact species, its hair follicles as thick as palm trees and its pink skin scaly and rough from scratching. The Auram Boundary is a dark sky hampered by storm clouds, pierced by flashes of lightening followed by an ear-splitting boom of thunder.

At some point in their journey through the Magic Realm, the characters encounter the effects of the Great Pestilence's contagion. A pair of diseased elementals of the Form boundary or province through which they are traveling spots them and attacks. The example elementals are air elementals, but could be of any type, since each Form provinces sprouts creatures of pure magical matter. Contaminated by the Great Pestilence, the elementals suffer a Heavy Wound each (-5 to die rolls). Enraged from their discomforts, the pair receive the bonuses and penalties of the Berserker Vir-

tue (+2 to Attack and Soak, -2 to Defense, no retreat). If the party is exceptionally strong, increase the number of elementals.

If the Form province is not yet diseased, the air elementals still attack, knowing that something is wrong with the Magic Realm and thinking the intruders might be the cause. Though angry they can be driven off or convinced not to attack. If the player characters can speak with a calmed elemental, all it knows is that something is wrong and most of the Magic Realm residents are disturbed and striking out at any foreign intruders.

After walking through a Form province the player characters eventually come to the pillar that rises to the Arcana Centrum. They climb it to reach the plateau and the center of brilliance. If they are coming through a Twilight Tear or following an Arcane Connection, they arrive atop the pillar at the center of the Arcana Centrum. They are not alone.

THE BEAST WITHIN ITS LAIR

The white brilliance inside the Arcana Centrum is dulled and muted. A great black carpet of rot lays within, giving the otherwise featureless space a hilly, horizontal surface that extends to infinity in all directions. It seems to the characters as if they are walking on mounds of rotten garbage, the landscape comprised of rotted plants, decayed rocks, putrefied corpses, and small pockets of polluted muck. This is the Great Pestilence. Most explorers won't

**New Guideline:
Perdo Vim**

General: Destroy an amount of raw vis equal to the level of the spell.

Leaving the Arcana Centrum is as easy as entering it. The traveler pictures a distant location in a Form province or boundary and walks to that location. The player makes another Twilight Void Travel roll against the same Ease Factor used to enter the Twilight Void from the location that the character entered from. Use the roll's total to calculate the character's Speed Level to see how long the journey back takes.

realize that the rot and refuse they poke at are a lethal part of the creature. The sentient creature immediately realizes that its residence is invaded, but waits to react until it can catch the invaders off guard. Once it thinks the characters have relaxed their guard, it ruthlessly attacks.

Using its most direct attack, the Great Pestilence assumes a physical manifestation and tears the target to pieces. Using its *Monstrous Metamorphosis* power, the creature quickly transmogrifies from a sheet of black moss into a human-shaped torso with arms and head. Red eyes glare from its black face and its fingers end in wicked claws. This malicious upper torso hovers in the air, connected to the rest of its body through a thin fibrous line. Severing this line separates the monstrous manifestation from the larger glob of rot, causing the upper torso to lose shape and disperse, but likely causing no real harm to the Great Pestilence itself, for it can manifest a second monstrous torso with an additional use of its *Monstrous Metamorphosis* power.

The beast itself is too vast to kill with direct spells. The only way to kill it is to destroy its sentient core, its "brain" so to

speak, which is housed within its monstrous shape. When not in that shape, its intelligence is spread throughout its body. But if the Great Pestilence is wounded while in its monstrous shape it simply ends its *Monstrous Metamorphosis* power and disperses its consciousness back to its immense body. Any wounds it suffered are gone and new shapes created by its *Monstrous Metamorphosis* power manifest without the prior wounds. To kill the creature, the player characters have to destroy it in a single round, otherwise it disperses and then re-manifests.

Like its condition in Mythic Europe, the Great Pestilence is persistent. It does not retreat or run away from its attackers, and continues to fight them until they or it perish. If the attack is especially ruthless, the Great Pestilence uses its *Master of (Form)* and *Crafter of (Form)* powers to damage the attackers. The Form of the powers is the Hermetic Form the creature is currently infecting. It uses this strategy until it has spent half of its Might points, and will then re-assume monstrous shape and hope to rend the player characters to bits.

The Aftermath

The Great Pestilence doesn't last forever. It is either destroyed by the player characters or starves to death after consuming all ten Form Provinces of the Magic Realm. Even if your magi defeat the creature, the world may still be ravaged and ruined, depending on how long it took them to kill the monster. If they instead decided to isolate and withstand the plague, they emerge to find a very different world than the one they left. The earth is scarred and pockmarked, and whole forests lie in fields of ash. Human and animal populations have been almost annihilated, and only a fraction of their original number survive. Human communities are remote and isolated, and are either feral tribes of savages or small pockets of humanity hidden away in Mythic Europe's hinterlands. Having lost communication with each other, such clutches of survivors are reluctant to emerge from their secure hibernation. The world is a forlorn and pitiful place.

Yet the world will heal. As soon as the Great Pestilence dies, the ten Hermetic

Air Elemental

Magic Might: 15 (Auram)

Season: Spring

Characteristics: Cun +1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +3, Sta -4, Dex -2, Qik +4

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Thing, Ways of the Storm, Poor Memory, Short Attention Span, Simple Minded.

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Suffocate), Greater Power (Jupiter's Touch), Greater Power (Charge of the Angry Winds), Major Virtue (Shapeshifter), Improved Abilities, Improved Powers (+3 Init to *Jupiter's Touch* Power), Minor Virtue (Keen Vision)

Personality Traits: Storm +3*

Combat:

Jupiter's Touch Power*: Init +5, Attack +5, Defense n/a, Damage +30

* Includes Way of the Storms

Soak:

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

Abilities: Area Lore 3 (high points), Athletics 3 (storm force winds), Awareness 3 (metal objects), Brawl 3 (*Jupiter's Touch* Power), Penetration 2 (*Jupiter's Touch* Power), Shapeshifter 4 (birds)

Powers:

Suffocate, 0 points, Init +2, Auram: The elemental surrounds its opponent and enters its lungs, necessitating a roll to avoid deprivation (ArM5, pages 180-181). Escaping the elemental requires the victim to get away from the elemental; its airy body can be simply walked through, but the elemental usually pursues its victim. Compare Quickness + Athletics stress rolls of the victim and the elemental (using Might/5 for the elemental's Athletics); the highest

wins. Trying to escape requires a Fatigue roll for the strenuous actions (ArM5, page 178)

Jupiter's Touch, 5 point, Init +2, Auram: The touch of the elemental causes a flash of coruscating lightning, causing +30 damage.

Charge of the Angry Winds, 1 point, Init +6, Auram: As the spell of the same name; add the elemental's Strength to all the Ease Factors for acting within the wind. CrAu 15 (base 3, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +1 unnatural): Greater Power (35 levels, -1 Might cost, +4 Init, +15 experience points in Penetration)

Vis: 3 pawns of Auram, in body
Appearance: A roughly human-shaped collection of wind, densely collected so that they are visible to the naked eye

Reprinted from *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 138.

The Great Pestilence

The Great Pestilence's Form depends on the Form it is currently infecting.

Magic Might: 50 (Special)

Characteristics: Int +3, Per +2x, Pre -4, Com -3, Str +17, Sta +5, Dex +2, Qik -5

Size: +6

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Thing, Magical Monster, Affinity with Brawl, Affinity with Penetration, Arable Fields, Regio Network, Great Stamina (x2), Great Strength (x2), Improved Characteristics (x2), Premonitions, Blatant Magical Air, Bound to Magic, Poor Presence

Qualities and Inferiorities: Focus Power (x2), Gigantic (x5), Greater Power (x5), Ritual Power (x2); Gift of Speech, Improved Attack (x3), Improved Initiative (x3), Improved Soak (x3), No Fatigue (Free); Temporarily Might

Personality Traits: Tenacious +3, Determined +2

Combat:

Large Claws: Init +4 Attack +29, Defense +14, Damage +21

Soak: +11

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-11), -3 (12-22), -5 (23-33), Incapacitated (34-44), Dead (45+)

Abilities: Awareness 10 (Arcane Connections), Brawl 15 (claws), Latin 3 (Hermetic usage), Magic Lore 9 (Boundaries), Penetration 10 (*Plague Touch* power), Premonitions 6 (danger to self)

Natural Weapons: Large Claws: Init 0, Atk +5, Def +3, Dam +4.

Powers:

Scent of the Sympathetic, 0 points, Init -7, Vim: With this power the Great Pestilence can detect arcane connections.

(InVi 10, +1 Touch, +1 Dia, 2 mastery points used to reduce Might cost to 0)

Open the Intangible Tunnel, 0 points, Init -12, Vim: As the Hermetic spell (ArM5, page 162), allowing spells of level 40 or less to pass through it.

(ReVi 40, +4 Arc, +1 Dia, 7 mastery points used to reduce Might cost to 0)

Crafter of (Form), Variable points, Init (Qik

- magnitude), Special: The Great Pestilence can duplicate any Creo or Rego non-ritual effect of level 25 or less in the Form that it currently infects. The cost of the power is the magnitude of the effect.

(Cr(Form) or Re(Form))

Master of (Form), Variable points, Init (Qik - magnitude), Special: The Great Pestilence can duplicate any Muto or Perdo non-ritual effect of level 25 or less in the Form that it currently infects. The cost of the power is the magnitude of the effect.

(Mu(Form) or Pe(Form))

Plague Touch, 0 points, Init -9, Corpus: This power creates the Great (Form) Pestilence plague in an individual. This power changes as the Great Pestilence changes, transforming so that the specific type of plague targets the Form the Great Pestilence is infecting, allowing Herbam plagues, Animal plagues, etc.

(PeForm 20, +1 Touch, +1 Moon, 4 mastery points used to reduce Might cost to 0)

Waste the Essence of the Realm, 0 points, Init -7, Vim: This power destroys 10 pawns of raw vis at a time.

(PeVi 10, +1 Touch, 2 mastery points used to reduce Might cost to 0)

Amorphous Ambulations, 2 points, Init -7, Special: This power allows the Great Pestilence to move, slowly sliding its entire bulk from one location to another. The base effect is an average of the Rego effect used to slowly move an Individual target of the Form that that the Great Pestilence currently infects.

(ReForm 3, +1 Conc, +4 Size increase)

Monstrous Metamorphosis, 0 points, Init +2, Special: This power creates a Size +6 human torso, arms, and head, which the Great Pestilence uses in personal combat. The Great Pestilence can speak when it assumes this form. The power only lasts 2 minutes, which is 20 combat rounds. The base effect is an average Muto effect used to change the shape of the Form in question.

(MuForm 3, +1 Dia, +2 Size increase, 1 mastery point used to reduce Might cost to 0, 8 mastery points used to

improve Initiative)

Form Transfiguration, 10 points, -21, Special: This power changes the Great Pestilence from one Form to another. The process takes only a few seconds, but it takes a season for the Great Pestilence to recover the 10 points of Might lost during the transformation. (Special, no Hermetic equivalent, requires two applications of the Greater Magical Quality: Ritual Power)

Vis: 10 pawns of vis of the Form that the Great Pestilence has taken when it is destroyed.

Appearance: A great black swath of putrescence in a shape appropriate to the Form it is infecting, such as dreary fungus and moss (Herbam, Imaginem), piles of dead bodies (Corpus, Animal), black sand (Terram), oily water (Aquam), black cloud (Auram)

Design Notes: The powers *Crafter of (Form)* and *Master of (Forms)* were bought with two applications of the Greater Magical Quality: Focus Power (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 57). The other 6 powers were designed using 5 applications of Greater Power (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 58), which provided 300 spell levels for formulaic spells. The 6 powers total 170 spell levels, leaving 130 spell levels to convert into 26 mastery points.

The Great Pestilence does not have individual powers representing its effects on Mythic Europe as a whole. Those are, rather, part of its nature as a magical disease, and cannot be used in any other way. They are still magical effects of the Pestilence, however, and thus can be blocked by Magic Resistance or warded off, as discussed earlier.

Forms start functioning again normally. Spontaneous and Formulaic spells do not need vis to work. Magi have the full range of their magical capabilities as they work to rebuild the world. Winds blow miasmas around after the Great Pestilence expires, but those disappear after a year. Slowly, within the decade, Magic auras and regiones that were not wiped out during the plague years start producing vis again. Not all return. A Magic aura that was reduced to 0 is extinguished and gone. Surviving Magic animals and beings slowly reproduce, following the original pattern of gestation that created Magic animals and beings in the first place.

Humanity begins its slow climb back to civilization. The incoming generation does not have its parents' addled wits, and any who survive can guide this effort as they see fit. Charismatic religious leaders gather their flocks and re-establish their church-

es. Bellicose chieftains lead armed bands of warriors and carve out new kingdoms, each striving to take what they can and hold onto it. In some ways things might not be so different, but it is likely that art, academics, crafts, and markets have fallen into ruin and will take a long time to recover. Surviving magi may participate in these efforts as they see fit. Some might ignore the Code of Hermes completely and fully interact with mundane society in any way they please. Others might continue to remain aloof, offering indirect assistance or none at all. In many ways, it is a new world, and this newness warrants new ways of interacting with it.

Such interactions, just like interactions with the mundane world before the Great Pestilence, are likely moderated by the Order of Hermes, and will depend on how the Order fared during the calamitous plague years. If the magi were proactive

and worked together, the Order emerges more powerful than before, forged through adversity into a stronger union of magi. If the magi faltered during the plagues, unable to unite and split by factions and self-interest, the Order sits in shambles, isolated pockets of wizards unwilling to assist each other. Most likely the situation is somewhere in between these extremes: the Order is present, but like mundane society needs time to heal and rebuild.

If your saga continues, let your player characters lead the way to mankind's recovery. Just as you made them paramount in the Tribunal meeting and the emergency Grand Tribunal, continue to give them center stage as events unfold. With the Great Pestilence behind them, they forge new paths into an uncharted future. How they shape the world is for them to decide.





The Twilight of the Gods

This chapter describes the breaking of the bonds that imprison the Titans in the Magic Realm, and the subsequent war with the faerie gods. This cosmic battle, the second of its kind in the history of the world, is fated to result in the destruction of Faerie and the supremacy of magic. The architect of this catastrophe is Loki, a Titan who has managed to slip his bonds and walks free in the world after an eon of confinement. He harbors a deep hatred for the faerie gods who slew his family and imprisoned him, and has been planning his revenge for many centuries.

At first glance, a world ruled by magic might seem highly attractive to the Order of Hermes but the powers of Magic are harsh and uncaring and have little regard for humankind. Life under their rule will be a daily struggle against the wild forces of nature, and humans will be confined to islands of refuge within the sound of church bells. Furthermore, Hermetic magic is already at the pinnacle of the *ars magica*, but under the reign of magic other magical traditions will grow to match them in strength, and Hermetic magi will lose their hegemony over the supernatural world.

The First Titanomachy

The history of the supernatural realms is not easy to uncover, and few people even bother to try. Most who do uncover something like the following account, although not all of them accept it. Nevertheless, it is the mainstream consensus among Hermetic magi who have studied the issue, and all mythological figures in this chapter act as if this account is true.

The Word of God created the universe and everything within it. The Magic Realm was a perfect reflection of God's creation, an unchanging and eternal version of the created world. It was the World of Forms, the blueprint of existence. The act of Creation itself caused mighty intelligences to come into being to govern the universe from the Magic Realm; these are known as the *protogonoi*, the "first-born." The *protogonoi* produced subordinates called *kosmokrators*, the active counterparts to the passive *protogonoi*. The *kosmokrators* are those beings that man calls Titans, or Jotnar, or Fomórach, or other names depending on culture.

Time passed. Man was cast out of Eden and encountered faeries for the first time. Whatever their origin, some faeries discovered that man's belief could make them stronger, feeding them vitality and strengthening their glamour. These faeries became gods. Despite this growing power, the Titans still maintained a stranglehold on the governing of the universe. In a cataclysmic battle called the Titanomachy, the faerie gods went to war against the Titans, and won. The Titans were bound in the Magic Realm, no longer able to intervene in the world since they could no longer create Aspects (see Introduction). They still governed the universe but now the faerie gods held the reigns of power. New versions of the myths of the gods were told about the defeat of the wicked Titans by the heroic gods and the *kosmokrators* were bound by chains of belief.

For millenia the faerie gods reigned. The Titans remained imprisoned while the gods suborned their powers with the help of mankind's belief. However, the vitality generated by worship has not proved to be a reliable source of power. The rise of Infernal corruption of pagan faiths siphoned much vitality from the faerie gods, and when God pun-

ished man's resulting wickedness with the flood, the faeries lost even more worshipers. The rise of Divine faith has further weakened the faerie powers and they are a fragment of what they once were. Hardly anyone believes anymore that there are creatures of immense power chained beyond the earth, and the bonds forged out of man's credulity by the faerie gods have been weakening for some time now. Some *kosmokrators* have discovered that they can form Aspects again and walk abroad on the face of the world once more. They cannot do this for long without their captors taking note and shortening their leashes again, but soon the day will come when they can no longer be reined back and a reckoning will be made on the upstart gods.

The Binding of the Jotnar

In the Norse version of the Titanomachy, the Jotnar were killed and their spirits bound into Nifelhel. Later, Loki and his sister Gullveig joined them there, along with their children Fenrir, Nidhogg, and Leiken. In a cosmological sense, Nifelhel is a part of the Magic Realm, one with only a handful of boundaries which permit entrance. The god Thor was responsible for guarding the chief of these on the shores of the mythological river Elivagor, and lesser allies of the faerie gods kept watch over the others. The Jotnar have been able to make minor incursions into the world through these various boundaries, for example when summoned by Muspelli (*Rival Magic*, page 92), but these incursions have been brief and avoided the attention of the faerie gods.

However, as human worship fades, the faerie gods have dwindled in power and

their vigilance has declined. The Muspelli are increasingly more active and yet the gods don't seem to have noticed. Worse for the world, Loki has somehow managed to get free from Nifelhel and has been active once more upon the earth since the Viking Age. He is acting with subtlety, testing the limits of the gods' complacency, but his actions have been largely unchallenged. He has been risking increasingly larger and more overt acts, the chief of which was to remove Thor from Elivagor (see *Where is Thor?* later), but has suffered no serious or coordinated opposition. This has led him to believe that it is time to bring about the Twilight of the Gods. Loki knows that Ragnarok is not the end of the world — that will happen as described in the Book of Revelation. However, he (rightly) believes that it will free the Titans and usher in a new age where magic is preeminent.

The End of This World

According to several interpretations of both pagan mythology and rigorous philosophy, the current world was created through a flood and will end in fire. Indeed, the book of Genesis records that God created the world by raising it from the waters, and the book of Revelations describes the apocalypse of fire. Loki does not seek the end of the world in the Biblical sense: rather he seeks to overthrow the current world order and replace it with one where he and his fellow Titans rule. It's the end of a world, rather than the end of the world.

Ragnarok

A Norse poem called *The Völuspá* details the foreboding signs that presage the end of the world, called Ragnarok. There will be wars, endless winters, monsters in the east, the swallowing of the moon by a wolf, and other signs of the coming doom. For as long as anyone can remember, a malevolent group of magicians have been working toward fulfilling this prophecy and bringing about these signs. Called the

Muspelli, these magicians take orders directly from Loki, the architect of Ragnarok and the prophesied *agent provocateur* of the war that will slay the faerie gods.

The Norse mythological epic describes a creation through flood and an end through fire. The flood drowns the kosmokrators and confines them to the underworld, and the gods raise the world from the waters. The world will end when the kosmokrators break free from their prisons, go to war against the gods and kill them, and then burn the world with fire. This is remarkably similar in outline to the Stoic cycle of kataklysmos and ekpyrosis.

Apokatastasis and the Criamon Enigma

Apokatastasis, in Stoic thought, is the restoration of the world to its original or primordial condition. When the stars and planets return themselves to their original alignment at Creation in the constellation of Cancer, this will spark a conflagration or *ekpyrosis*. From the fire the universe will be recreated and the world will proceed until the counter-recurrence, or *antapokatastasis*, when the stars and planets align again in Capricorn. At this point the world is destroyed in a *kataklysmos*, or mighty flood. This alternating cycle of destruction and rebirth of the cosmos was said to occur under the auspices of the Divine Word. Origen of Alexandria brought the doctrine of apokatastasis to the early Christian church, although it was later repudiated. Noah's Flood was the last kataklysmos and some believe that Origen was correct and there are signs that the apokatastasis is nigh.

This doctrine of recreation and destruction is echoed in the teachings of Empedocles and constitutes the central mystery of House Criamon (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* page 45). Here, the dissolution of the universe into the Chaos is represented by ekpyrosis (fire is the element that divides and separates), and the consolidation of everything into a homogeneous whole is represented by kataklysmos (water is an element that consolidates and congeals). Those few of House Criamon that are servants of strife may prove pivotal in the bringing about of the Twilight of the Gods, an event they believe to be the state of maximal strife, when the prison

doors to the Magic Realm are flung wide and immortal souls can escape the circle of time into the Hypostasis.

Loki

Loki is the principal antagonist in this story. It may be that the player characters never directly confront this powerful being, although that should be possible if the storyguide judges that they are powerful enough to either survive or actually defeat him. However, they will certainly come across his many schemes for bringing about the twilight of the gods and ending the world in a conflagration.

Loki occupies an ambiguous position in Norse mythology. He was once counted among the gods, although he is a Jotun by birth and by deeds. The *Tit-anomachy* is recorded in Norse legend as Odin and his brothers climbing up the World Tree to kill Ymir the primeval giant. They slit his throat and let forth an ocean of blood which drowned all the

Loki's Family

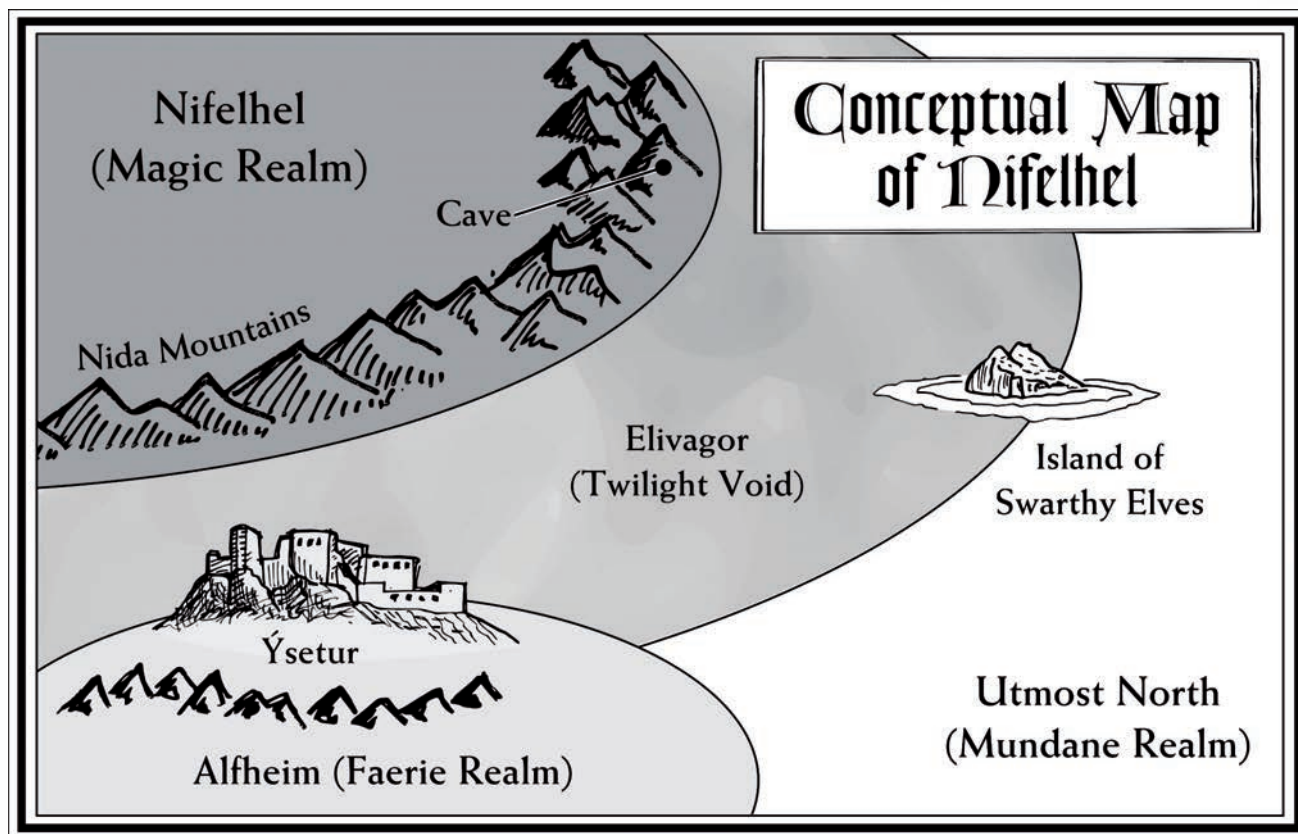
The Jotnar of Norse Mythology are Loki's closest kin. More information about each one can be found in *Rival Magic*, pages 77–81.

Gymir the Jotun of Storms, Aegir the Jotun of the Ocean, and Surtur the Jotun of Fire are three brothers, one of whom (or perhaps all three) is Loki's father.

Gullveig is the Jotun of Witchcraft. She is Loki's sister and the wife of Gymir, Aegir, and Surtur.

Leikin, Nidhogg, and Fenrir are Loki's children by Gullveig. Leikin is the Jotun of Death, personification of decay. Nidhogg is the World Serpent, and Fenrir is the Jotun Wolf.

Urdur the Jotun of Fate is also considered among the Jotnar, although she is not close kin or even an ally. Urdur is the mother of Odin and his brothers; she does not resist the coming of Ragnarok since it was she who foretold it. However, she gives no aid to Loki, who seeks the destruction of her family.



elder Jotnar (that is, the titans); their ghosts were then bound into Nifelhel for all eternity. Only a few escaped, these became the forefathers of the race of giants. Loki and his sister Gullveig also escaped by virtue of being hostages in Asgard at the time of the genocide.

While Loki pretended to friendship with the gods, he was plotting their downfall all along. His tricks and misadventures tested the limits of the god's powers, assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Eventually he tipped his hand and arranged for the slaying of the god Baldur, the son of Odin. Baldur's death prompted Odin to seek out his mother Urdur and demand from her a prophecy on the future of the world. Loki thereby learned what he needed to do to finally avenge the death of his kin upon the gods and release the Jotnar from their imprisonment. His true face revealed at last, Odin ordered Loki bound with his kin, in a cave on an island on a lake in Nifelhel, chained with the entrails of his own son.

Loki is a kosmokrator, a mighty being of the Magic Realm wielding a frightening level of power. He is the personification of strife and rebellion, the primal force that drives things apart. His true self re-

sides within the Magic Realm and is effectively unassailable by any power wielded by mortals. Instead he sends Aspects of himself to be his agents in the mundane world. Loki is not malicious, but he has no regard whatsoever for humans; while his plans may cause a great deal of death and suffering, this is not the purpose of his scheming. His sole concern is to free the protogonoi and kosmokrators from their imprisonment and eliminate the faerie gods in the process. Humans are a petty annoyance in games played at Loki's level. As one of the most powerful spirits of kosmokrator rank, Loki's Magic Might as a Daimon is at least 75.

Loki's Goal

Ultimately, Loki is attempting to make a breach between the Magic Realm and the mundane world. The boundary between worlds was solidified by Might stolen from the protogonoi following the first Titanomachy. Loki knows that a series of symbolic acts can reverse the glamour and make the boundary permeable again. He can then lead his kin into the mundane

world to do battle against the faerie gods.

The symbolic acts he must perform are encoded in prophecy. Loki knows the prophecy — he heard Urdur recite it to Odin — but he doesn't know for sure exactly how to fulfill it. He is also hampered by the vigilance of the faerie gods: every time he manifests an Aspect, he risks being noticed by the watchers among the gods. He must proceed cautiously and try to fulfill each part of the prophecy as completely as possible.

Playing Loki

Loki is an exceptionally intelligent being. His chief Aspect (see Loftur Laufeyjasonur, later) is likely more intelligent than the most intelligent human that has ever lived. This can be a challenging role to manage, since he is (presumably) cleverer than the storyguide enacting his schemes. A solution to this conundrum is to occasionally allow hindsight to mimic foresight. Loki is an obsessive plotter and he has had thousands of years of captivity to plan his actions, and the possible consequences of his actions, over the next

few decades. It should not be possible to outwit him with a simple trick merely because the storyguide didn't think of it. To simulate this, the storyguide is justified in inventing new obstacles for the players on the spur of the moment and playing them as if they had always been there. For example, if one of Loki's agents can easily be defeated by a *Veil of Invisibility*, then it is reasonable to assume that Loki has ensured that one of that agent's comrades has the Second Sight Virtue who might spot a character using this spell. This tool should only be used to fill in easy loopholes in Loki's plots that the storyguide missed, however. If the player characters put a significant amount of effort into concocting a clever plan, it should succeed. Loki could, in theory, have anticipated this plan as well, but he cannot think of everything, and may have assumed that his opponents were not intelligent enough to make it work.

If a pattern is established in the early part of the saga that Loki has several layers of plans and contingency plans, then it is more conceivable that he is able to easily thwart simple actions against him. This should spur the player characters into being more inventive over their own counteractions. It should also emphasize that the characters are no longer in the little leagues; their opponent is a being who has killed gods. When all is done however, remember that Loki is not omniscient. A clever plan should be rewarded with success — the player characters should just have to work a little harder to earn that success.

Aspects of Loki

Already, the chains which bind Loki have begun to slip and he has been able to generate Aspects once more. However, Loki does not have his full strength yet and does not have the freedom of unlimited Aspects like other Daimons (general information on Daimons can be found in the Introduction).

Loki can only have a number of copies of the same Aspect active at any one time equal to the Intelligence Characteristic of that Aspect (with a minimum of one), and he cannot recall them at will once created. Any Aspect Loki creates has all of his knowledge at the point of its creation, but Loki's Aspects are not in constant mental

communication with him and do not share subsequent knowledge with him or with other Aspects like other Daimons. To learn what an Aspect knows, Loki must rely upon Muspelli (who can summon Aspects) as go-betweens. Only if an Aspect is drained of all Might does it return to the fold and integrate its intelligence with the Daimon; if one is physically killed its gathered knowledge dies with it, although Loki knows that the Aspect is gone. As with all Aspects, an Aspect of Loki cannot come within one mile of a place that another Aspect of Loki has been within the last 24 hours.

A further complication for Loki is that, denied his constant mental supervision, his Aspects become more-or-less autonomous and develop their own identities. Made from the stuff of rebellion and strife, the longer they exist the more independent they become. They realize that returning to Loki to share knowledge means the loss of this individual existence. Every Aspect is still dedicated to Loki's plans (an Aspect could no more rebel against its Daimon than an arm could rebel against its body, even for a Daimon of strife) but will do its utmost to make itself invaluable to justify its continued existence — which often means competing with other Aspects. Like all Aspects, their Might pool does not regenerate but consuming vis can replenish Might points (5 points per pawn if the Form matches their Might, 2 points per pawn otherwise; see *Realms of Power: Magic* page 29).

Aspects can easily get out of synchronization with each other. Long-standing Aspects may not recognize the player characters and can be ignorant of successes and failures that have occurred since their creation. Note that it is often not expedient for an Aspect to 'break cover' and disappear for a full day, and clever player characters can ensure that it is difficult to do this without revealing itself (this is particularly true of Bekki-Aspects, see later). The storyguide should keep track of the Might of Aspects that are interacting with player characters, remembering that they may have expended Might points before they meet the characters.

This section details Loki's most common Aspects; there may be more as the storyguide sees fit. Further, these Aspects can be varied each time they are created, changing certain Abilities, or providing access to different powers.

LOFTUR LAUFHEYJASONUR

Loki Loftur ("he who fares aloft" or, more poetically, "skywalker") Laufeyjasonur ("son of Laufey," a matronymic) is the most familiar form of the Jotun, and appears in most of the Norse myths. Loki Loftur's main power is to call upon the prizes of the faerie gods, which he has stolen from them. Each of these mystical tools is a power of Loki Loftur; he is able to summon them to hand and dismiss them at will. Thor's hammer Mjollnir is currently still beyond him, a sign that the gods' power is not fully spent. Each Loftur Aspect is created with an appropriate Native Language Ability.

BEKKI

Bekki is an insidious force who is capable of wreaking as much havoc as Loki's other Aspects even if he lacks their raw power. Bekki inveigles himself into mundane groups, often targeting kings and princes. With judicious use of his Entrancement and skillful deployment of blackmail and intrigue, he wins the ear of the king, then subtly influences him down the course that best suits Loki's schemes.

Bekki deliberately takes a form that is physically unimpressive; many of those he tries to control are warriors and he wants to let them feel superior to him while he whispers into their ears. Rather, Bekki takes the role of the wise counselor and men-

Loftur, An Aspect of Loki

Magic Might: 49 (Corpus)

Season: Winter

Characteristics: Int +7, Per 0, Pre -1, Com +3, Str -1, Sta 0, Dex +2, Qik +2

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 2 (5)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Magical Monster; Essential Virtue; Affinity with Guile, Great Intelligence x2, Light Touch, Improved Characteristics x3, Puissant Stealth; Indiscreet, Meddler, Magical Air*; Fear (thunderstorms), Reckless

*free with Magic Spirit

Loftur, An Aspect of Loki (Cont'd)

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Powers x 7, Improved Intelligence x 2, Major Virtue (Shapeshifter), Ritual Powers x 4, Improved Confidence, Improved Abilities, Improved Powers x 7, Improved Soak; Major Flaw (Restriction: can't use powers he has granted)

Personality Traits: Consummate Liar (Communication) +6*, Sly +6, Boastful +3, Brave 0

*Essential Trait, replaces listed Characteristic whenever Trait applies.

Reputations: Foe of the World 3 (Local)

Combat:

Short sword: Init +3, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +4

Short bow: Init +1, Attack +8, Defense +5, Damage +5

Soak: +4

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 5 (hiding places), Athletics 3 (balancing), Awareness 4 (traps), Bows 3 (mistletoe arrows), Carouse 2 (with giants), Etiquette 5 (among Germans), Charm 6 (women), Faerie Lore 4 (gods), Folk Ken 6 (kings), Guile 10 (lying to gods), Intrigue 4 (court) Leadership 4 (Muspelli), Native Language 5 (local dialect), Single Weapon 5 (short sword), Shapeshifter 4 (fast transformation), Stealth 7+2 (when others are asleep), Teaching 2 (bows), West Norse 5 (Icelandic)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +1, Corpus: See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102 Cr(Re)Co 25 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might, +2 Init)

Loan the Purloined Treasures, 5 points, Init -18, Vim: Loki can grant a mortal the ability to use one of his other Powers by giving the respective treasure to the character. The mortal gains the power as the Greater Power Major Virtue, and if she lacks a Might score, must expend 1 Fatigue level for each 2 points (or fraction) of the power's Might cost. Loki

has a Restriction as a Magic Inferiority, that he cannot use his own power while he has lent it to another character and must physically reclaim the treasure to regain control over it. No Hermetic equivalent. Ritual Power x 2 (-5 Might cost (with 5 mastery points from Improved powers))

Odin's Spear of Victory, 3 points, Init -1, Corpus: Brandishing the spear allows Loki to grant a group of up to 1000 men a +3 bonus to their Single Weapon Ability. This power is the same as Grant Puisseance in (Ability) (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 38) with a Size modifier. MuCo 30 (Base 2, +1 Eye, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +3 Size) Greater Power (30 levels)

Odin's Spear of Triumph, 3 points, Init -2, Corpus: Brandishing the spear allows Loki to grant a group of up to 1000 men a +2 bonus to their Soak Totals. MuCo 45 (Base 10, +1 Eye, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +2 Size) Greater Power (45 levels, -2 Might cost, +1 Init with 2 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Odin's Spear of Rage, 3 points, Init -1, Corpus: Brandishing the spear allows Loki to grant a group of up to 1000 men the ability to ignore Wound and Fatigue penalties. Affected characters still collapse when reaching Unconscious or Incapacitated, at which point they are no longer affected by this power. ReCo 45 (Base 10, +1 Eye, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +2 Size) Greater Power (45 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init with 4 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Thor's Belt, 2 points, Init -3, Corpus: Buckling this belt around the waist increases Loki's Strength by 5 points. MuCo 50 (No Hermetic equivalent) Greater Power (50 levels, -3 Might cost with 3 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Freyja's Cloak, 2 points, Init +5, Corpus: By donning this cloak of gray feathers, Loki is transformed into a falcon. The effect can be ended at any time by removing the cloak. MuCo(An) 30 (Base 20, +2 Sun) Greater Power (30 levels, -1 Might, +6 Init with 5 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Ullur's Bow, 2 points, Init +4, Corpus or Animal: Any creature or person struck with an arrow shot from this bow takes

an Incapacitating Wound. Firing an actual arrow is a purely cosmetic effect; the arrow always appears to hit, unless Magic Resistance applies. PeCo(An) 35 (Base 20, +2 Voice, +1 requisite) Greater Power (35 levels, -2 Might cost, +6 Init with 6 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Idun's Apple, 1-4 points, Init -2, Corpus: When Loki takes a bite of this apple he is healed from all Light Wounds, three bites heals all his Medium Wounds, and five bites heals all his Heavy Wounds. Eating the whole apple cures all Incapacitating Wounds. This power costs him 1, 2, 3, or 4 Might points respectively. If given as a gift, an apple offers six bites in total. CrCo 35 (Base 35) Ritual Power x 2 (35 levels, -3 Might cost, +10 Init with 10 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Ran's Net, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus: When this fishing net is cast over a Group of Individuals, they become hopelessly tangled within it and cannot move at all. Loki must hold onto the net to keep people entrapped; if he lets go they can free themselves within a round. ReCo 30 (Base 5, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +2 Group) Greater Power (30 levels, -2 Might Cost)

Vis: 5 pawns of Mentem vis in tongue, 5 pawns of Corpus vis in hair.

Appearance: A tall lithe man with bright red hair, clean-shaven. His lips are scarred with a series of holes (remnants of when his mouth was once sewed shut); this twists his otherwise handsome face into a disconcerting leer. He wears clothes appropriate to the situation in which he finds himself, typically dark brown leggings and a buff-colored overtunic. Loki is an unusual shapeshifter in that he can change his sex as well as his shape, and he can turn into creatures smaller than the usual limit of -5. He can assume the following forms: mare, salmon, spider, wolverine.

tor; to this end he often acts even weaker than he actually is. Like Loftur, Bekki can summon purloined treasures of the gods, which are treated as powers, but he cannot usually grant use of these powers to others.

THE EMISSARY OF FIRE

The Emissary of Fire is one of Loki's most battle-worthy Aspects. If the player characters come to the notice of Loki and are considered a sufficient threat for him to consider their elimination, the Emissary of Fire will be the agent that does it. Despite being a brute, it shares in the Daimon's cunning and will often lay

groundwork prior to an open assault. It might ravage the character's crop lands, making them expend resources if they want to eat. It has several lesser spirits of fire in service to it, which it can use as scouts, spies, and warriors.

Water does damage to this Aspect as if it was a (wood) fire, including the multipliers for degree of immersion (ArM5, page 181), although the size of the Emissary of Fire makes it difficult to immerse through mundane means and its Aquam Resistance adds to its Soak. A standard Individual of Aquam creates enough water to totally immerse the creature but it must be held in place to count as immersion — simply dumping this amount of water on

it inflicts only base damage.

If fought in combat, the Emissary of Fire usually grapples its foes, relying on its superior strength and its *Burn* power. Since its body is created using a power, it must Penetrate to physically damage those with Magic Resistance, although it can still grapple them effectively. It prefers to fight opponents in a flammable environment, using its powers to set fires which then spread naturally into a non-magical inferno to imperil its foes.

Bekki, an Aspect of Loki

Magic Might: 25 (Corpus)

Season: Winter

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Magical Covenfolk; Essential Virtue; Affinity with Intrigue, Great Intelligence x 2, Famous, Protection, Puissant Intrigue, Social Contacts; Dark Secret (true identity), Meddler; Fear (thunderstorms), Noncombatant, Palsied Hands, Poor Characteristics

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Gentle Air, Greater Powers x 2, Major Virtue (Entrancement); Improved Abilities x 5, Improved Powers, Mentem Resistance, Minor Virtue (Good Teacher), Minor Virtue (Inspirational), Minor Virtue (Piercing Gaze), Personal Powers x 3

Personality Traits: Consummate Liar (Communication) +6*, Sly +6, Ingratiating +3, Smug +2, Brave 0

*Essential Trait, replaces listed Characteristic whenever Trait applies.

Reputations: Royal Counselor 3 (Nobility)

Combat:

Walking Stick (bludgeon): Init -3, Attack +4, Defense 0, Damage -1

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: Awareness 2 (social situations), Bargain 4 (negotiation), Brawl 2 (walking stick), Carouse 2 (with giants), English 5 (Northumbrian), Entrancement 5 (ambitious young noblemen), Etiquette 6 (among Germans), Charm 6 (nobles), French 5 (Norman), Folk Ken 6 (kings), Guile 7 (lying to kings), High German 5 (Franconian), Intrigue 10+2 (court), Latin 4 (Classical), Low German 5 (Saxon), Mentem Resistance 4 (mind reading), Organization Lore: Church 2 (the corrupt), Organization Lore: Nobility 5 (the corruptible), Ride 1 (on roads), Teaching 5 (intrigue), West Norse 5 (Icelandic)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +1, Corpus: See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102 Cr(Re)Co 25 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might, +2 Init)

Aura of Mundane Semblance, 0 points, constant effect, Vim: Prevents the detection of Bekki's Magic Might or of the use of any of his Personal Powers, unless the level of the spell used to examine him exceeds 45. To detect him with Magic Sensitivity would require an Ease Factor of 27 (magnitude of this effect x 3). PeVi 45 (Base effect, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 constant effect) Personal Power x 2 (45 levels, -5 Might cost with 4 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Freyja's Necklace, 1 point, Init -6, Mentem:

When donned, this golden necklace studded with amber can incite powerful passions in an individual. Bekki can decide upon the emotion to invoke and all of the individual's decisions are made in the light of slaking their unnatural emotions until the duration ends. Typical emotions include envy of a political rival, hatred for an enemy state, greed for a particular object, or lust for a certain person. ReMe 30 (Base 10, +1 Eye, +3 Month) Greater Power (30 levels, -2 Might cost)

The Tarnhelm, 1 point, Init -1, Imaginem:

This helmet was stolen from dwarfs loyal to the gods. While wearing it, he is completely undetectable to normal sight, hearing, smell, and even if he brushes up against someone, his touch will not register (although any contact more rigorous than this is noticed as normal). Pelm 15 (Base 5, +1 Conc, +1 changing image) Personal Power (15 levels, -1 Might, +2 Init with 1 mastery point from Improved Powers)

Vis: 5 pawns of Corpus vis, in clothing.

Appearance: Bekki takes the semblance of a man in his sixties, hale but slow and slightly trembling. He wears rich clothes but in muted colors so that he does not stand out. His hair is gray but shows signs of its original auburn color at the temples.

PROMETHEUS

The Greek titan Prometheus bears a great deal of resemblance to Loki. Both are from the second generation of titans. Both were initially friendly with the gods and took no part in the Titanomachy. They both stole from the gods and in punishment were bound onto a rock and tortured by a monstrous creature (a snake in Loki's case, an eagle in Prometheus's). Whether

or not they are simply Aspects of the same Titan or independent beings does not need to be clear, since they have identical goals.

A saga that takes place in the southern part of Mythic Europe can employ Prometheus in Loki's place. He should be treated the same as the Aspect of Loki Lof-tur Laufeyjasonur, although the powers derive from items stolen from the Greek pantheon of gods rather than the Norse: the three powers of Odin's Spear come from

Ares's Sword (Victory), Poseidon's Trident (Triumph), and Dionysios's Staff (Rage); Thor's Belt came from Hephaistos; Freyja's Cloak is Hermes's Sandals; Ullur's Bow instead belongs to Artemis; Idun's Apples takes the form of Demeter's cornucopia; and the power of Ran's Net is attributed to Athena's Shield, mounted with Medusa's head. The equivalent of Bekki is in possession of Hades's Helm (the Tarnhelm) and Aphrodite's Mirror (Freyja's Necklace).

The Emissary of Fire, an Aspect of Loki

Magic Might: 27 (Ignem)

Season: Summer

Characteristics: Int +2, Per 0, Pre -2, Com +1, Str +10, Sta +2, Dex +2, Qik -2

Size: +5

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Magical Champion; Essential Virtue, Puissant Brawl; Gluttonous; Clumsy

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Powers x 2, Focus Power; Aquam Resistance, Improved Abilities, Improved Attack (fiery bludgeon) x 2, Improved Attack (grapple) x 3, Improved Characteristics x 2, Improved Damage (fiery bludgeon) x 2, Improved Defense (fiery bludgeon) x 2, Improved Initiative (grapple), Improved Might x2, Improved Powers, Lesser Powers x 2

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Hungry +3, Intimidating (Presence) +3*

*Essential Trait, replaces listed Characteristic whenever Trait applies.

Reputations: none

Combat:

Fiery Bludgeon: Init -2, Attack +17, Defense +11, Damage +28

Grapple: Init +1, Attack +17, Defense +7, Damage +10

Soak: +2

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-10), -3 (11-20), -5 (21-30), Incapacitated (31-40), Dead (41+)

Abilities: Aquam Resistance 4 (5) (immersion), Athletics 5 (pursuit), Awareness 4 (terrain features), Brawl 6+2 (bludgeon), Concentration 3 (*Feed the Fire* power), Leadership 4 (fire spirits), Native Language 5 (commands)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init -6,

Ignem: See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102. This Aspect's body is made of fire and cannot be harmed with normal weapons; they pass through it and possibly catch fire. Cr(Re)lg 35 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite, +2 Size) Greater Power (35 levels, -4 Might cost)

Burn, 0 points, Init -5, Ignem: Anyone touching or being touched by the Emissary of Fire takes +10 damage (this is cumulative with any Brawl damage). This is the usual melee attack of the Aspect. Any flammable material catches fire on contact; typically, clothes inflict +10 damage per round on their wearer until extinguished. Any metal coming in contact with its body for more than a round heats up, causing the effects of *Heat of the Searing Forge* (ArM5, page 140); this does not include weapons used to strike it in combat. Cr(Re)lg 30 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite, +1 constant effect): Greater Power (30 levels, -3 Might cost with 1 mastery point from Improved Powers)

Crafter of Fire, 1-5 points, Init -7, Ignem: The Emissary of Fire can duplicate any non-Ritual Creo Ignem or Rego Ignem spells up to 25th level at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude. Crlg or Relg 25. Focus Power

Feed the Flames, 2 points, Init -5, Ignem: The Emissary of Fire can increase the size of any conflagration that does +10 damage or less. One use of this power can affect a fire up to ten cubic paces (approximately Size +6) and increase it to a maximum size of one hundred cubic paces (approximately Size +9). The increase in size only lasts as long as it concentrates, and when the effect ends the fire returns to its former size but may now be spread over a wider

area as several smaller fires. Any flammable materials that caught fire when the target was at its larger size remain aflame. The Emissary can affect its own created body with this effect; at Size +9 it stands about 55 feet tall; increasing its Strength by 8 but reducing its Quickness by 4. It cannot combine this power with *Stoke the Fire*. Mulg 20 (Base 2, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +2 size, +1 to affect a fire doing +10 damage) Lesser Power (20 levels, -2 Might cost, +1 Init with 2 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Stoke the Fire, 2 points, Init -4, Ignem: The Emissary of Fire can increase the intensity of any fire doing +10 damage or less, adding +5 to the amount of damage it inflicts. A wood fire (normally +5 damage) will now melt lead and heat iron; a forge fire (normally +10 damage) will now melt iron. This power can affect a fire up to 10 cubic paces (approximately Size +6) and includes the fire that composes the Emissary of Fire's body. It cannot combine this effect with *Feed the Flames*. Mulg 20 (Base 2, +2 Voice, +1 Conc, +1 size, +2 to increase damage to +15) Lesser Power (20 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init with 2 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Vis: 6 pawns of Ignem vis, in hands

Appearance: A twenty foot tall giant made of flames. It has two pits of darkness for eyes and a huge gaping maw occupying the rest of its neckless head.

It is not necessary for this character to buy the Gigantic Magic Quality since its body is created with a power that creates an appropriately-sized target.

Loki's Mortal Agents

Loki marshals a host of magical beings, notably giants, the walking dead, and monstrous wolves. Many of these will be released upon the world as Ragnarok approaches. However, Loki also employs mundane agents when he needs to. He has little regard for normal humans, who are little more than a means to an end. He has more interest in individuals with The Gift, who are already aligned to the power of the Magic Realm.

It is conceivable that a player may have a character from one of the three groups of magi described below. If this is the case, it is better that Loki does not approach the player character, having already calculated the likelihood of that character joining his cause. Over the course of the saga, the character may realize that his comrades are helping the very enemy he is trying to

Gifts of the Gods

Some of Loki's Aspects have the power to loan one of their powers to another being, although this is done with caution as it costs the Aspect 5 points of Might. The loaned power manifests as a mystical item which is wielded to activate the power. While a power is loaned to another, that Aspect loses the use of the power and cannot grant it again, although a different Aspect can still use and grant the same power.

The mystical item is a symbol of the loaned power. Only the recipient can activate its powers and must be in possession of the object to do so; but others can hold or steal the object. The item is an Arcane Connection to the Aspect that created it (not to Loki himself), with a +3 Penetration modifier. If an Aspect is destroyed while a gift is on loan, then it disappears as well. If a faerie god should ever get his hands on any copy of a mystical tool stolen from him, then all Aspects permanently lose the appropriate Power.

Although these gifts are represented by the stolen treasures of the faerie gods, the ability to use them and gift them to others is a function of Loki's powers and thus is aligned to the Magic Realm.

stop. Of course, the player characters may actually decide to help Loki, in which case they can act openly in alignment with the rest of their fellows.

THE MUSPELLI

Loki's chief mortal agents are a group of Norse magicians called the Muspelli. These are Gifted wizards who employ a range of Supernatural Abilities to entrance minds, lay curses, shift shape, create illusions, conjure visions, conjure storms, summon animals, control fate, wake the dead, spread wildfire, and invoke the winter. They are also capable of adopting a monstrous giant-form, in which shape they can intensify their magic to create mighty ritual effects. Muspelli can also summon Aspects of their patron Jotun and from the point that this chapter begins, Loki's Aspects are among those that all Muspelli can summon (using any sacred site available). Full rules for the Muspelli can be found in Chapter Four of *Rival Magic*; if you don't have access to this book, you can still use this chapter. The Muspelli are instrumental in enacting Loki's schemes but they need not take center stage; they can work their magic in the background, leaving the characters to deal with the consequences rather than the cause.

THE LEGION OF ATLAS

A society among Theban magi, the goal of the Legion of Atlas (*The Sundered Eagle: The Theban Tribunal*, page 119) is to end the reign of the faerie gods, and thus they are natural allies of Loki. Kristophoros of House Bonisagus perceives the continued existence of the faerie gods as an affront to the one and true God and he has become the rallying point for magi who share his goal to eliminate them, even if they do not share his reasons. Kristophoros is willing to flout the Order's restrictions upon molesting the fae if it suits his goals. This society is secretly influenced by the cult of the Titanoi within House Tytalus, although the two would never overtly work together while Kristophoros remains in charge.

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF STRIFE

The Path of Strife is a component of the Criamon House Mystery (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 67). They willingly pollute themselves spiritually for the redemption of the rest of the house. In the Empedoclean philosophy of the house, their actions increase strife, bringing the world closer to the ekpyrosis. Loki is perhaps the ultimate expression of strife and he may be able to convince the handful of magi on the Path of Strife to ally with him. He claims that by bringing the world into the ekpyrosis, the cycle of time will be shattered and all the prisons of the world opened. The cosmic mistake that trapped immortal souls for eternity can be undone and the Hypostasis made attainable for all magi. Properly convinced, the Criamon on the Path of Strife are prepared to do anything necessary to help Loki.

Help Saving the World

Player characters are the heroes (or at least the protagonists) of stories in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* but in world-changing story arcs such as this one they might feel that they are doing all the work to save an ungrateful world. That needs not be the case: there are a number of sources of aid to which the characters can turn.

Assistance From the Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes is one of the few institutions in Mythic Europe that reaches from the western shores of Ireland to the Holy Land. It is rivaled only by the Church in terms of scope and influence and the medieval church is rent in Schism between its eastern and western halves.

One of the strengths of the Order is also its weakness: the Order is ruled by committee, a method of governance notorious for its lack of decisive action. Furthermore, the Grand Tribunal meets

only every thirty-three years; in theory an extraordinary session of the Council of Primi could be convened but this would require substantial evidence of a tangible threat to the Order, not just a collection of moldy prophecies and paranoid speculation. Any help that the characters can muster in the early stages is likely to be isolated — one house or one Tribunal convinced sufficiently by the characters' evidence to help them.

If the Order can be motivated into action at the instigation of the player characters, then it is likely that they are given some operational role in the Order's response to Loki's schemes. The characters could find themselves as the chiefs-of-staff to some of the Order's most powerful magi, helping to coordinate its response to Loki. Even if the characters cannot get the Order of Hermes to recognize the threat, they might have better luck with House Tremere. The whole purpose of this House is to be prepared to face a threat that threatens the Order's existence and even if the Grand Tribunal doesn't take them seriously, Prima Poena of Tremere may, and provide the characters with some of the vast resources of her house just in case they are right.

Help From the Gods

The other major source of help that the player characters can obtain is from the faerie gods. They have the strongest motivation of all for stopping Loki's plans: although Ragnarok is inevitable (or so they believe), they wish to delay it for as long as possible. among the Norse gods, Heimdallur and Thor are the most likely to render assistance to the characters.

HEIMDALLUR, WATCHMAN OF THE GODS

Unlike many of his fellow gods, Heimdallur has not abandoned his post. The Watchman of the Gods remains vigilant over the world, missing nothing and forgetting nothing. It will be his responsibility to sound the horn that announces the final battle of the gods and Jotnar. Heimdallur is the chief of the tribe of Norse gods called the Alfar and is the god of light and the day. In his myths, he is cred-

Heimdallur

Faerie Might: 50 (Ignem)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +8, Pre 0, Com -2, Str +2, Sta +6, Dex +3, Qik +2

Size: +1

Confidence Score: 1 (4)

Virtues and Flaws: Focus Power x 2, Ostentatious, Shapeshifter; Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Famous, Highly Cognizant, Humanoid Faerie, Improved Damage, Improved Initiative, Improved Powers, Improved Soak x 3, Large, Lesser Powers x 2, Personal Powers x 4, Positive Folk Tales, Reputation as Confidence, Feud (Loki), Proud, Dutybound, Higher Purpose, Traditional Ward (the blind)

Personality Traits: Watchful +6, Cautious +5, Vain +5, Loyal to the Gods +4

Reputations: God of Light 4 (Local)

Combat:

Long Sword and Round Shield: Init +7, Attack +18, Defense +14, Damage +13

Soak: +22

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

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

Pretenses: Athletics 3 (climbing), Awareness 15 (danger), Concentration 5 (on watch), Faerie Speech 5 (Norse), Folk Ken 3 (motives), Jarl's Leisure* 5 (riding), Karl's Labor* 5 (trade), Leadership 5 (noblemen), Music 5 (horn), Shapeshifter 5 (ram), Single Weapon 10 (long sword), Thrall's Toil* 5 (farming)

*As the god of the social hierarchy, Heimdallur appears competent with a wide range of crafts, professions and leisure pursuits appropriate to the thralls (serfs), karls (freemen), and jarls (noblemen) which he represents.

Powers:

See the Grass Sprout, 0 points, constant power, Imaginem: Heimdallur can see several miles away, day or night; otherwise the same as *Eyes of the Eagle*, ArM5 page 145. InIm 35 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +4 Vision, +1 see in the dark, +1 constant) Personal Power x 2 (35 levels, -4 Might cost with 1 intricacy point from Improved Powers)

Hear the Wool Grow, 0 points, constant pow-

er, Imaginem: When he concentrates, Heimdallur can hear the grass growing, the wool growing on the back of sheep, and everything louder than that. InIm 40 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +4 Vision, +1 constant) Personal Power x 2 (30 levels, -3 Might cost)

Ten Thousand Yard Stare, 0 points, Init -12, Imaginem: Heimdallur can see and hear what is going on at any location to which he has an Arcane Connection. He can perceive anything and everything that occurs within a 100 pace diameter, whether or not this constitutes an actual Boundary. This does not need to be a ritual effect for this god. He can use his enhanced senses through this power, allowing him to extend his hearing and sight to hundreds of miles. There are numerous runestones across Scandinavia made by rune wizards to which Heimdallur has an Arcane Connection. InIm 35 (Base 2, +4 Arc, +1 Conc, +4 Boundary) Lesser Power x 2 (35 levels, -7 Might cost with 4 intricacy points from Improved Powers)

World Illuminator, 1-10 points, Init -8, Ignem: Heimdallur can create any non-ritual effect of 50th level or less involving light, at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of the effect. Focus Power x 2

Vis: 10 pawns of Ignem vis, in teeth

Appearance: A pale skinned warrior with shining white hair and beard despite his youthful mien. He wears a chain hauberk, a gleaming helmet, a white leather belt, and a cloak made from the skin of a mighty snow-bear. His teeth are made from solid gold. When he wields Hofud, his massive sword, in combat it glows with a pure white light. He can take the form of an immense ram with snow-white fleece and golden horns, a pure-white cockerel with a golden comb, a huge russet squirrel with sharp teeth, a crude but honest-looking serf, or a jolly fisherman.

ited with establishing the social hierarchy among mankind and teaching them all crafts and professions. Loki is his especial foe and they are fated to be responsible for one another's deaths at Ragnarok.

Heimdallur's role is to be a watchman and to signal the gods when Ragnarok is upon them. Ultimately he is a passive god with little initiative and who procrastinates over getting actively involved. He knows that once he rouses from passivity he will precipitate Ragnarok (see Three Cockerels Crow, later) and so will not overtly warn gods or men of what he has seen of Loki's actions. His assistance is likely to be a lot more subtle. Once he is aware that the player characters are moving against Loki he may provide covert assistance, ensuring that they do not miss important clues to Loki's plans and directing them like pieces on a game board. Even once they work out who it is that is helping them, he still dares not to intervene directly. A typical intervention from Heimdallur involves him disguising himself as a nobleman, freeman, or peasant and dispensing unasked-for advice, cryptic warnings, or important gifts disguised as mundane items. For example, a mud-splattered 'villein' may seem to know a lot about the local nobility and is able to fill the characters in on all the juicy gossip (feeding them vital information for Brother Against Brother, see later); or a 'nobleman' might be selling off his deceased uncle's belongings and is surprised to find a Hermetic book among them. He brings it to the player characters and sells it for a fair price. A full version of *Muspilli* (see Help from Prophecy, later) is scribed on one of the end pages.

THOR THE THUNDERER

Thor is probably the most powerful of the Norse gods by dint of being the most popular. He was the god of the common man, the peasant, and the soldier, unlike Odin who was the god of kings and jarls or Freyr who was the god of priests. The heathen religion as a whole is still called *Þór blóta* in Christian Scandinavia and his hammer is seen as its symbol. He features in hundreds of folktales still told throughout Scandinavia, England, and northern Germany, and his name is associated with a host of sayings and omens.

Thor's popularity can be attributed to his role in legend as the guardian of

Midgard and foe of the giants, trolls, and all baleful wights. If any one of the gods should manifest to fight Loki, it should be Thor and yet he is nowhere to be seen, even with giants walking the land. The answer is that Loki foresaw this very problem and made Thor his target long before he began to set anything else in motion. Loki manipulated the Church into vigorously repressing his worship. He provided subtle support for anti-pagan monarchs such as Saint Olaf of Norway. He spread folktales where Thor was cast as a buffoon and suppressed the old tales which presented him as a hero. This wrought changes to the faerie god's glamour; subtle changes but enough to give Loki an edge. Once he was done Loki was able to ensnare Thor easily. Much to his chagrin, Loki was still unable to take Thor's hammer Mjollnir from him, and it continued to mystically guard the prison of the Jotnar much as Thor had always done (metaphysically, Mjollnir is the recipient of as much vitality as Thor and is a powerful faerie in its own right while separated from him). However, Loki did the next best thing by stealing Thor's belt of strength. Without it, the faerie god was no longer able to lift Mjollnir and he was effectively neutralized. Robbed of his weapon and made stupid by negative folktales, Thor has been reduced to an incognizant wreck. He no longer remembers that he was once the mighty Asa-Thor the Thunderer.

THE GOD AT THE FORD

When the player characters first encounter Thor, he is laboring in a town. This town could be anywhere in Mythic Europe, but northern Europe is more plausible. He has taken the shape of a tall red-bearded peasant, the local halfwit. He ekes out a living ferrying people across the river into town; there are no firm moorings for a ferry-rope and often a long queue to cross by the bridge, so 'Hlorridi' (as he is called) carries people across the river. He is both tall and strong, and happy to wade waist-deep into the river carrying people on his shoulders or goods on his head. For larger loads he dons a yoke and pulls two boats. He lives in a hovel on the river bank, so small that his feet stick out from one end. He wraps his massive body around a shaft sticking out of the middle of the dirt floor;

Story Seeds: Thor the Thunderer

Identifying and restoring the thunder god to his former power could be the focus of a series of stories.

THE BELL AND THE BRIDGE

The characters are traveling to or through the town where Hlorridi dwells. The characters may choose to wait for the bridge or be carried across the ford. The bridge is choked because of the delivery of a new church bell. However, the bridge collapses under the weight of the massive bell and townsfolk are in immediate peril. Hlorridi wades over to help out; he can even shore up the failing bridge by supporting its arch, allowing people to get off safely; player characters may similarly help out. The question remains as to why a hitherto sturdy bridge suddenly failed. Perhaps something or someone doesn't want the bell to be delivered — this would weaken the Dominion, which only extends as far as the sound of church bells.

Placing Hlorridi close to the covenant is an excellent way to get the characters into the whole saga and bring the player characters to the attention of Loki. He may choose to involve them in his later schemes as a distraction to stop them restoring Thor to his former glory, or in revenge for doing just that.

THE BELT OF STRENGTH

Heimdallur tells the characters he has found Thor's belt of strength. He has seen it around the neck of a monstrous wolf that is chewing on a root of the World Tree. Worn as a collar, the belt magnifies the creature's strength and it is in danger of breaking through the root. This may be a trap: Loki knows that the characters need the belt of strength and hopes to eliminate them.

actually the handle of his hammer, which he cannot lift. He has a rusty pair of gauntlets he keeps in the thatch.

When the characters encounter Hlorridi, they may know exactly who he is. It is possible that Heimdallur has clued them in to his true identity, asking them to restore the god to his former power. Alternatively, the player characters may have no idea to his identity; they may encounter him as a piece of local color and only much later work out who he might be. In order to restore Thor, Hlorridi must be reunited with his belt of strength. He then dons his gauntlets and pulls Mjollnir out of the packed dirt of the hovel's floor. His memories are restored and his powers with them. Unfortunately, Loki has stolen Thor's belt of strength and getting it back may be very difficult. The characters' best prospect is to wait for Loki to give it to a mortal servant (perhaps creating the situation where this might be necessary) and then steal it. Restoring the Belt of Strength to Thor removes the power to summon it from all Loftur Aspects.

THE HAMMER GOD

Once restored, Thor will be grateful to the player characters. He feels that he has neglected his duties for too long and must hie to Nifelhel (part of the Magic Realm) and strengthen the bonds holding the Jotnar. However, he promises to come to them if they have great need; to summon him they should strike the ground three times with an iron hammer, saying "Thrice I smite with holy crock; with this mell I thrice do knock; one for god, one for Wod, and one for Lok" and he will come (this is a charm still used in the north of England for luck; the god mentioned first is Thor, then Odin, and the final — and hardest — hammer blow is for Loki). He warns them that when they summon him then the borders of Nifelhel will remain unguarded, so they should only do so in dire need.

The restoration of Thor is a blow to Loki's plans. Unlike Heimdallur, Thor is capable of motivating the other gods into action. With Elivagor guarded once more and the other boundaries of Nifelhel similarly strengthened, it becomes more difficult for the other Jotnar to act on the world. Worse still, the gods are now aware that Loki is up to his tricks and are extra vigilant, just when Loki's plans are becom-

ing more blatant. Loki can only rely on whatever Aspects of the other Jotnar are currently in the world and once they are gone they cannot return. This also means that no more Muspelli can have their Gift Opened (see *Rival Magic*, page 93). Loki himself remains free from Nifelhel, however, and has no additional restrictions on his own Aspects.

SKIDBLADNIR

If the player characters are going to stand a chance in stopping Ragnarok, then they are going to be involved in a lot of travel. Once the characters have come to the notice of the gods, no matter how covertly, they arrange to assist them in this and ensure that they come into possession of Skidbladnir.

Skidbladnir is a magical ship belonging to the god Freyr, and the *Poetic Edda* calls it 'the best of ships'. As soon as its sail is hoisted, this ship finds good wind and it knows all ports. It is made of so many parts that it may be disassembled and packed away in a pouch. Skidbladnir was made by the Sons of Mimir, the dwarfs (see the Seven Sleepers, later). Like many of the dwarfs' creations, Skidbladnir is not merely an enchantment; it is a Magic Thing. Skidbladnir has superior knowledge of all seven seas and is able to pilot and navigate itself, even without a crew. Most significantly, Skidbladnir can access a network of Magic regiones that connect numerous aquatic locations, allowing it to move vast distances in a remarkably short time.

Every time that Skidbladnir reassembles itself, it can take a different configuration to match ships of its current waters. Unfortunately, due to a slight flaw in its construction it tends to take the form of ships that are notorious for piracy and brigandage (represented by the Mistaken Identity Flaw) and characters aboard may find themselves dealing with irate local navies.

ACQUIRING THE WONDROUS SHIP

There are a number of ways in which the characters could come into possession of Skidbladnir. The decision to give them the ship stems from the observation that they have an active interest in stopping

Loki. This might be because they have stumbled onto his schemes or because they have become the victim of one of them, but the gift of Skidbladnir is made after they realize that the stakes are high.

Freyr is lord of the elves and he arranges for a faerie to reward the characters with the ship. This may be totally disproportionate to the service the characters provide. For example: a brownie hands over one of the treasures of the gods in return for slaying a particularly large rat. The characters may be suspicious but there is no ulterior motive or trap here — other than the fact the gods want them to stop the end of the world.

The gods subtly steer the characters toward Skidbladnir's current location. For example: a local lord, secretly a worshiper of Odin asks the characters to catch a sorcerer who has entranced his daughter. The sorcerer is an agent or Aspect of Loki who has stolen Skidbladnir. When they defeat him, the ship enters their hands as spoils. The characters only find out much later in the saga that the gods ensured that they came into possession of it.

If the characters have some other connection to the Norse gods, then the gods might be overt in their help. The characters are told where Skidbladnir can be found, either by an emissary of the gods, or else directly by Heimdallur or another.

Help From Prophecy

The characters should be given the opportunity to get their hands on a complete or partial copy of one or more of the sources of prophecy described in the next section. It might lie mouldering in a book won as spoils, it could be recited by a mad man, or be written on the walls of a villain's hideout. *Völuspá* is easily available in translation and can be provided to the players as a handout. The storyguide can freely alter the words or add new verses to fit her intended saga. Characters should be encouraged to seek out other sources of the prophecy: no version is unambiguous, nor are any complete.

From these sources, characters should learn that Ragnarok is heralded by a num-

Skidbladnir

Magic Might: 21 (Herbam)

Season: Autumn

Characteristics: Cun 0, Per +1, Pre 0,
Com 0, Str +12, Sta +3, Dex +1,
Qik -7

Size: +6

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Thing; Magical Friend; Essential Virtue; Great Bearer*, Sea Regio Network, Well-Traveled, Wilderness Sense; Mistaken Identity, Overconfident, Temporary Might**

*Heroic Virtue, see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 105

**Free with the Magic Thing Virtue

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Powers; Aquam Resistance, Improved Abilities x 4, Improved Might, Improved Powers, Improved Soak x 5, Minor Virtue (Essential Virtue), Minor Virtue (Second Sight), Personal Powers x 3

Personality Traits: Instinctual Knowledge of the Sea (Cunning) +6*, Dead Reckoning (Perception) +3*, Ship +6*

*Essential Trait, replaces listed Characteristic (where present) whenever Trait applies.

Reputations: The Best of Boats 2 (Local)

Combat:

Bludgeon: Init -6, Attack +3, Defense -6, Damage +14

Soak: +18

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-11), -3 (12-22), -5 (23-33), Incapacitated (34-44), Dead (45+)

Abilities: Aquam Resistance 6 (krakens), Area Lore: Arabian Sea 5 (avoiding pirates), Area Lore: Atlantic Sea 7 (Bay of Biscay), Area Lore: Black Sea 3 (shallow waters), Area Lore: Caspian Sea 3 (islands), Area Lore: Indian Sea 3 (avoiding pirates), Area Lore: Magic Realm 4 (magical seas), Area Lore: Mediterranean Sea 5 (Western sea), Area Lore: North Sea 7 (5) (Scandinavian harbors), Profession: Navigator 5 (plotting courses), Profession: Pilot 3 (outrunning pursuit), Second Sight 5 (boundary travel), Wilderness Sense 5 (dead reckoning)

Powers:

Fair Winds, 0 points, constant effect, Vim:

Skidbladnir can see through Magical regio boundaries and therefore divine the path to the next level. InVi 30 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +4 Vision, +1 constant) Personal Power x 2 (30 levels, -3 Might cost)

Cunningly Crafted, 0 points, Init -12, Herbam: Skidbladnir can adjust its size to accommodate up to 1000 passengers (Size +9), or else shrink down to a hundredth of a cubic foot (Size -7). When at its smallest size, Skidbladnir can be disassembled and packed into a pouch for easy transport. MuHe 45 (Base 4, +1 Conc, +3 Structure, +1 allow growing and shrinking, +3 to allow drastic change in size, +1 constant) Greater Power (45 levels, -5 Might cost with 4 mastery points from Improved Powers)

Changeable Sails, 0 points, Init -7, Herbam: Skidbladnir can take the shape of any ship. This transformation affects all of its components, including ropes, sails, and masts. MuHe 15 (Base 3, +1 Conc, +3 Structure) Personal Power (15 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init with 1 mastery point from Improved Powers)

Vis: 4 pawns, in deck boards.

Appearance: Skidbladnir can take the shape of any boat or ship, from an immense Byzantine trireme right down to a fishing smack. Most commonly, it takes the form of a viking longboat with a sail striped in red and white.

You might wish to use the rules for Damaging Objects on page 77 of *City & Guild* rather than using Soak and Wound Penalties. In this case, Skidbladnir has fifteen damage levels and when an event could damage it, make a stress roll + 5 (Wondrous item) + 15 (bonus from Improved Soak Magic Qualities). If the result is equal to or greater than the Ease Factor of 15, the ship avoids losing a damage level. Damage levels do not impose penalties, they simply indicate how much punishment an object can take until it is broken beyond use. Damage levels can be restored by a competent shipwright, although if the ship is completely broken it may not still be a Magic Thing once repaired.

ber of signs and that Loki is trying to bring these about. They should also get the idea that in fulfilling some of these plans Loki must wreak changes on Mythic Europe as a whole, and that if he succeeds on a grand scale in some of the signs, he can afford partial or minor successes in others yet still succeed in precipitating the Twilight of the Gods.

PROPHECIES OF THE END TIMES

Many of the sources of lore offered in this section are real texts: poems, stories, and philosophical expostulations. The text of these books can be altered by the storyguide to add material of relevance to the saga. There may also be entirely fictional sources of prophecy, such as the sayings of Immanola the former prima Ex Miscellanea, or the Travels of Fedoso.

In addition to the experience points they offer, these books also act as sources of lore. They may be used for research, a

Prophetic Utterances

To aid the players, the storyguide could compile a collection of individual predictions from all the sources that the characters locate, either in summary form or in the allegorical words used by the prophet. Such a playing aid can be a source of help (and frustration!) to the players, but ultimately should give them the edge over their opponents. You need a good number of individual prophecies, some true, some irrelevant, and some false. One method of achieving this is to recruit some friends: either beta storyguides or people who will not be regular players in the saga. While the storyguide concentrates on the true prophecies around which she will plan her stories, her conspirators can come up with false utterances, or true prophecies that do not relate to Ragnarok. Jumble all these together and give them to the players as a handout. For the true prophecies, include some repetition from different sources but do not feel compelled to be too obvious — if some are only understood in hindsight that is good too. False prophecies may be used as distractions by Loki to cover a particularly sensitive part of his operation.

DE PRINCIPIIS

character who lacks the Ability contained within a book but who can read the language in which it is written may make a roll to find a specific fact, whereas under normal circumstances he could not roll if he lacks the Ability. It takes about an hour to find the information. For every different book he has on the same subject, he adds +1 to the roll but requires an additional hour of research time.

GYLFAGINNING

"The Deluding of Gylfi" by Snorri Sturluson. Language: West Norse (Icelandic). Summa on Organization Lore: Norse Paganism, Level 5 Quality 10.

Written in 1218 by a famous Icelandic lawspeaker, this work is not always accurate and riddled with Christian prejudice but is a good overview nevertheless.

VÖLUSPÁ

"The Seeress's Prophecy" by anonymous. Language: West Norse (Old Norse). Summa on Organization Lore: Norse Paganism, Level 7 Quality 7

Völuspá purports to be the prophecy of Urdur the Jotun of Fate, recited to her son Odin, and is the primary source for Ragnarok. It is filled with complex poetic allusions and metaphor and the Quality drops to 4 for characters who do not already possess the Organization Lore: Norse Paganism Ability from another source. Complete copies of *Völuspá* are currently rare, since it was collated some time in the thirteenth century. However, as an oral tradition *Völuspá* is available intact, although characters may have to search for those who know it.

MUSPILLI

by anonymous. Language: Old High German. Tractatus in Faerie Lore, Quality 6

Written about 870 by an unknown author, this poem is a thinly Christianized account of Ragnarok, describing the battle between Elijah (Thor) and the Antichrist (Surtur), the champions of God (Odin) and the Devil (Loki). It is a somewhat obscure poem, written in whole as a marginalia in another book. The faerie gods may need to play a hand in getting this to the characters.

TITANOMACHIA

"The War of the Titans" by Eumelos of Corinth. Language: Classical Greek (Doric). Two summae, one on Magic Lore and one on Faerie Lore, Level 5 Quality 10.

A description of the Greek version of the creation of the world and the titans, and their subsequent war with their progeny. There is a legendary third poem which contains prophecy of the second titanomachy; if this is found then the Level of the summa on Magic Lore raises to 7. Unfortunately all three poems were lost in antiquity; while fragments of the first two exist as quotes in other works, nothing of the third remains at all. Characters may need to resort to necromancy in order to retrieve this knowledge.

Story Seeds: Finding Prophecies

Before the player characters can read the prophecies, they must find them.

RESCUE ME

Snorri Sturluson, author of *Gylfaginning* and other compilations of Norse mythology visits Norway in 1218–1220 and 1237–1239. He is perhaps the most knowledgeable Christian on the subject of Norse paganism and an authority on Ragnarok and the characters would do well to visit him. He has also been kidnapped by trolls...

GLOSSOLALIA

As the player characters return from an encounter with Loki or his minions, they hear a man ranting on the street. They may have encountered him before and dismissed his ramblings as nonsense words thrown together that sound like sentences. However, sharp-eared characters pick out a sentence that is highly pertinent to the event in which they have just taken part. Who is this man and why is he like this?

THE AUCTION

The characters locate a book of prophecy and agree a price with the seller.

When they go to collect it however, the price has changed. He's had interest from other buyers and now intends to auction the book. Every prospective buyer can enter a secret bid once a day for three days; the day's highest bid is announced at dusk each day. The winner will be the highest overall bid on the third day. The characters might investigate the other bidders and discover potential allies who are also interested in stopping the End of the World. However, they also discover that an Aspect of Loki is one of the other bidders.

BABBLE OF THE WRITTEN WORD

Through great effort the characters manage to locate a native speaker of an ancient language in which a prophecy is written. She is a charcoal-burner from a secretive and primitive people, and she speaks no other language, having lost the ability to communicate with her family when her husband died. The spell *Thoughts Within Babble* allows communication with her; if she can be taught to read she can recite the prophecy out loud, divulging its secrets. Unfortunately, this woman has a supernatural enemy — the ghost of her murdered husband, a vengeful werewolf, or the forgotten god of the tribe. This enemy means to end her life and the life of anyone spending time with her.

LORE ON THE TITANS

In addition to doomsday prophecies, characters are likely to come upon information about the Titans and theories about the antediluvian world. The best sources for this information are the theurgical works of the great Neoplatonists such as Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus, and their various works are *summae* and *tractatus* in Magic Lore. Central to Neoplatonic theurgy is the concept of the Golden Chain of Universal Sympathy. There exists, so is claimed, a hierarchy descending from the Demiurge (i.e. God) to the *protogonoi*, *kosmokrators*, *theoi*, *daimons*, and finally to the airy spirits. Before the First Titanomachy, magic was performed by using incantation, sigils and mystical signs, and the properties of certain herbs, stones, and so forth to set in motion a chain of sympathies running up this hierarchy to the spirit the magician was trying to evoke. The spirit would then enact the magic desired. The paraphernalia of the theurgical ritual were termed "*synthemata*." The faerie gods bypassed this system by cutting out the middle men and imprisoning the Titans. Henceforth nothing stood between mankind and the magic they sought and everyone with The Gift became his own god.

Finding this information indicates to the player characters that a second Titanomachy may not usher in a new golden age of magic. Instead, use of magic is likely to be regulated more tightly by the freed Titans and only those who know the *synthemata* permitted to use it.

Letting the World Burn

The prophecies are pretty clear that the Second Titanomachy would not be good for the sublunar world. The Norse prophecies talk about the destruction of the world by fire. Origen, in common with his Empedoclean and Stoic forebears speaks of the state of pure strife, where every atom is disconnected from every other, where Form is immaterial and Matter formless. Some of the prophecies state that select humans might survive the process, but do not describe how the selection process will take place. Characters electing not to take part in stopping Loki are potentially resigning themselves to destruction. Nev-

ertheless, all the prophecies include the hope of a new world under the control of magic, populated by those who survived the apocalypse.

The idea of the post-apocalypse world may sound attractive to some characters. They might presume that individuals aligned to the Magic Realm — like all Hermetic magi — could enter a golden age of magic. Impious characters may believe that the Titanomachy may even overturn the Dominion of God and place the Magic Realm in ascendance. Nevertheless, among the prophecies associated with this event are warnings that the world might not be so nice with the Titans in control, regulating every aspect of the world including magic.

Some House philosophies align with Loki's goals to a greater or lesser extent. House Bjornaer, particularly the Rhine Bjornaer magi, might welcome the extermination of the fae and the return to the pristine state of the world. Some Tytalan magi are already aligned with the Titans and could number among Loki's forces, unwittingly or knowingly. Criamon might interpret the Titanomachy as their ultimate goal — the breaking of the cycle of time and the establishment of the Magic Realm as the Hypostasis. Other Houses might be horrified once Loki's plans are revealed — House Merinita for example. Regardless of House philosophies, every character is unique and may have her own drives and reasons for seeking the destruction of the world as we know it.

It is possible therefore that the characters might decide to help Loki to hasten the world's end. If this is the story that the players want, then it is the storyguide's duty to satisfy them. Instead of opposing Loki, they could become his allies; the Jotun would certainly welcome powerful and influential magi into his ranks if it means he has a better chance of success. However, the player characters are bound to be opposed by other magi, who do not agree that the end of the world would be beneficial to mankind. In effect, these storyguide characters take the role that the player characters would have in the default version of this chapter and it is the job of the player characters to oppose them and preserve the fulfillment of prophecy.

The storyguide should not allow the player characters to be bystanders in the upcoming conflict. There is no place for spectators at the ending of the world. If

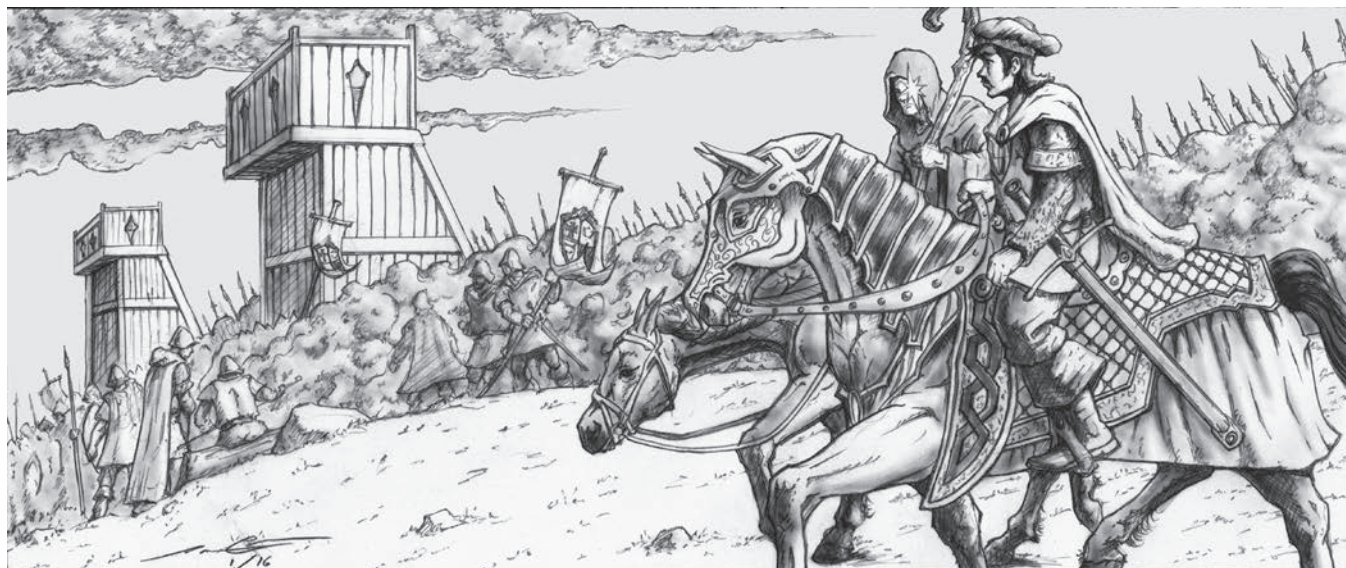
they elect to stand aside and allow things to happen then the storyguide should bring the action close to home so that it directly affects the resources or allies of the covenant. Alternatively, they might learn (rightly or wrongly) of the conditions of the world following the Titanomachy. No one knows in truth what it will be like, so predictions can be as dire (or utopian) as needed to spur the characters into action.

Five Acts to Destroy the World

The various prophecies used by Loki detail the events that must occur before the restraints placed on the Magic Realm can be broken and the Titans freed. The 'prophecies' are directions, like an Initiation Script. Each event mentioned describes the undoing of one of the constraints that Faerie placed on Magic after the first Titanomachy. Each of the key parts must align, in literal or symbolic form, in order for Loki's planning to bear fruit and initiate the Second Titanomachy. These are not true foretelling, which only comes from God. If Loki does nothing then Ragnarok will not occur and the Titans will remain bound. The order of the events is not important, although they are presented here in the order that they will probably occur.

To succeed in bringing about the Twilight of the Gods, Loki has to fulfill a certain number of signs. Five of these are detailed in the following sections: Brother Against Brother, Giants in the East, Monsters in the Ironwood, Swallowing the Moon, and Three Cockerels Crow. Each of these sections gives the outlines of Loki's major plan to bring this event about. The storyguide needs to flesh out each of these outlines to best suit his own saga.

Loki has already succeeded with one prophecy (Gods' Halls are Reddened with Blood), and has several others he can pursue. The symbolism of the prophecy must be fulfilled, but he does not need to succeed with every one of the plans detailed later, although he does need to pay lip-ser-



vice to all of them. Disrupting one of his plans does therefore not completely derail his efforts and the ever-cunning Loki has schemes, counter-schemes, fall-back positions, and back-up plans, meaning that it is likely that he can achieve at least some success on each event in the prophecy. Loki might still be able to get Ragnarok started with a large number of minor successes rather than a few major successes.

Signs of the End

The prophecies describe more than five signs of the world's end. Other signs include the disappearance of the stars, the shaking of the earth so violently that mountains fall, inundation of the land by the sea, a winter without end, and the destruction of pagan temples. Loki has chosen the five signs with which he believes he has the best chance of succeeding and has set a Loftur-Aspect over each one. Were he have to begin again with some of the other signs, it would take him many more centuries of planning.

WINTER WITHOUT END

One of the signs not dealt with in this chapter is a mighty winter, with snow coming from all directions and no summers in between. This *Fimbulvetr* is given extensive treatment in its own chapter of this book as an apocalypse in and of itself rather than

a part of Loki's plans. If you wish to integrate this event into Loki's plans, then you can draw inspiration from that chapter.

SERPENTS IN THE WEST

In the Norse version of the prophecy, the mighty Midgard Serpent slips free from its bonds and whips the western sea into such a frenzy that it floods. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, western Europe (particularly Gascony, Aquitaine, Friesland, and Saxony) and northern Iberia were subjected to devastating floods. This can be employed as backdrop as a further sign of the End Times or fleshed out into another event the characters can try to stop. The characters might have friends located in the affected region and get involved in the rescue effort. The agents of this catastrophe could be Muspell or they could be elementalists able to summon water monsters and elementals to do their bidding.

GODS' HALLS REDDENED WITH BLOOD

This part of the prophecy refers to the despoiling of the temples to the pagan gods who bound the titans. It was achieved by agencies other than Loki — most significantly, the Church — although it is certain that Loki lent his assistance to the effort. This was an essential first step that weakened the faerie gods, making them

less likely to notice his schemes and less powerful to oppose him even if they did. This counts as a success for Loki.

Brother Fights With Brother

One of the first indicators of Ragnarok is an increase in chaos and warfare. *Völuspá* couples this with of a loosening of morals, when witchcraft is common and incest rife. Greek seers saw this breaking down of the social order as an increase in the divisive power of Strife as the cycle of the world descends into chaos. Loki achieves an unqualified success if he manages to provoke war between two nations, or sufficiently destabilizes a significant portion of Mythic Europe.

The action in this story focuses around two noblemen, here named Duke Arnault and Duke Bertram, although they should be substituted for Greater Landed Nobles close to the characters' covenant. These men should be close friends — maybe even brothers — to begin with, and have many powerful friends. Each is advised by a different version of Loki's Bekki Aspect, although these Aspects have different appearances and names. Duke Bertram, under his Bekki's influence, develops an inappropriate interest in a woman, here called Lady Caristiona. Bertram may be



already married but Caristiona is doubly inappropriate as she is a relative, either of himself, his wife, or his brother's wife. A relationship with any of these individuals would be considered incestuous by the Church, and a great sin. Bekki has used the power of *Freyja's Necklace* to provoke this reaction in Bertram. Arnault visits his friend once rumors of the affair reach him but, enthralled by Bekki's power, Bertram is not able to see sense. He mistakes concern for envy and convinces himself that Arnault is lusting after Caristiona. This is where the characters come in.

A CHANCE MEETING

The characters are on the road on an unrelated matter, when they encounter a carriage stuck fast in a ford. The carriage is occupied by Lady Caristiona; she is sodden from the leaking carriage and asks the characters to bring her to shelter. They know that Duke Bertram lives nearby and are the architects of their first meeting. Bertram's Bekki is also here and the characters witness his pleasure at their meeting.

THE PRINCESS IN THE TOWER

Duke Arnault comes to the covenant with troubling news. Someone has bewitched his friend Duke Bertram, who has become infatuated with Lady Caristiona. He has imprisoned her in a tower and Arnault wants help freeing her and dispel-

ling whatever enchantment has affected his friend before the scandal ruins them both. Even if he hasn't dealt with them before, Arnault knows that the characters are magi, and as magic is clearly at work here they need to fix it. The characters free Caristiona and become aware that Bekki might be involved.

Particularly astute characters may be able to unravel the plot and stop it at this stage. If they do, Loki has failed in his attempt, as no discord has arisen.

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Suspicious of Bertram's Bekki, the characters are moved to investigate him. They witness him passing messages to Arnault's Bekki, which is highly suspicious, although the two never meet (in fact, they are never within a mile of one another). Also party to the plot is a red-headed man who can take the form of a falcon: this is Loftur, checking in on the progress of his plan.

Meanwhile, relations have deteriorated between Arnault and Bertram. The two Bekkis have stoked the fires of envy and outrage and if he can, a Bekki makes the characters' covenant a target of Bertram since they were instrumental in taking Caristiona from him.

This is the stage at which the player characters are most likely to stop the plot. Loki can claim a minor success, as relations between Arnault and Bertram will never fully recover.

THE COUNSELOR OF EVIL

As the conflict between Arnault and Bertram escalates, more nobles are brought into the conflict as old rivalries and jealousies find an outlet, all ably assisted by more Bekkis. The conflict has developed into a full-blown feud and when powerful nobles fight, their vassals follow. Mythic Europe being what it is, both Arnault and Bertram have relatives in many separate countries and, fueled by the manipulations of the Bekkis, there is soon civil strife throughout the region. Few remember (or were even aware in the first place) that this began as a fight over a woman.

Bertram's Bekki ensures that the player characters come into possession of information that says Bertram is about to attack Arnault. This leaves them in the quandary of whether to tell Arnault. There is already a Quaesitor sniffing about due to all the accusations of witchcraft; do they dare meddle with the affairs of mundanes again?

Eventually, the characters have a showdown with Bertram's (or Arnault's) Bekki. They may be surprised to discover just how magical he is. Bekki's boastful nature won't allow him to complete this affair without letting the characters know what dupes they have been. He'll gloat like a caricatured villain, dropping references to Ragnarok. He may try to escape using the *Tarnhelm*, in which case he heads east (see the next story). Once he is killed or escapes, characters may find partial copies of some of the apocalyptic prophecies among his belongings, particularly those relating

to this sign. By now, the war is too big to stop even if proof of magical influence is brought to the principles involved.

At this point, Loki has succeeded in this element, and all the characters can do is try to limit the collateral damage.

Other Plans: Brother Against Brother

Loki has not been relying solely on fomenting trouble between Arnault and Bertram. His agents have also been subtly working to weaken other alliances by delaying tributes, spoiling dynastic marriages, and altering diplomatic messages. These efforts have been concentrated mostly in the eastern part of Mythic Europe, as he wants these nations to be disunited when the Giants in the East rise. He achieves some success, but the plot with Arnault and Bertram is decisive overall.

Giants in the East

Prophecies of the coming Titanomachy predict the invasion by a horde of giants from the east. Just outside of Mythic Europe, on the steppes of Asia, live a vast nation of people descended from Gog and Magog, giants of Biblical times. There are many tribes but they include some known to Mythic Europeans as former invaders, including the Scythians, the Bulgars, the Goths, the Huns, the Khazars, the Cumans and Pechenegs, and the Ghuzz. Alexander the Great locked these barbarians away, behind the Gate of Alexander in the Caucasus Mountains of Georgia and behind the Great Wall of Gurgan to the east of the Caspian Sea (see *The Cradle and the Crescent*, page 153), but in the centuries since their population has expanded into the lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas, and they now look upon the pastures of Mythic Europe with envious eyes.

There is one tribe of Gog and Magog not yet encountered by Mythic Europeans. They have already invaded Persia and seem limitless in number. At the moment

they seem content slaughtering infidels and at first they were believed to be the armies of Prester John, coming from the east to save the Holy Land from the Saracen threat. However, those few Mythic Europeans who have witnessed the savagery of these vast armies bring back tales of horror. They have begun to be called the 'Magogoli' and it is believed that their coming might herald Armageddon.

Loki can be accounted to have succeeded in achieving this goal if the Magogoli invade and occupy a portion of Mythic Europe and pose a significant threat to other nations.

The Magogoli

These Magic Kin are a Mythic variant of the Mongols. A contemporary account of the Magogoli describes them with narrow and piercing eyes and heads set on their bodies as if they have no necks. Their noses extend from cheekbone to cheekbone and are profuse with hair that reaches as far as the lips. Their mustaches are of extravagant length but their beards scant. Their skin is rough-grained like shagreen and patched in black and white. Magogoli are profuse with lice and have a smell that is offensive to Western noses.

A common trooper is a grog character, although he also has the Giant Blood Virtue on top of his normal allotment. He is a human descendent of the Magic Humans who make up the generals and shamans of Magogoli society. For simplicity, give him the statistics of the Specialist template (ArM5 page 21), or the Mongol trooper (*The Cradle and the Crescent* page 180), with the following adjustments:

Virtues and Flaws: Add the Giant Blood Virtue.

Characteristics: Increase Strength and Stamina by 1 (from Giant Blood)

Size: +2 (from Giant Blood)

A Magogoli *orlock* (general) is a companion-level character and a Magic Human. Give him the statistics of the Knight template (ArM5 page 23) or the Mongol general (*The Cradle and the Crescent* page 180) with the following adjustments:

Magic Might: 10 (Corpus)

Virtues and Flaws: Add the free Magic Human Virtue.

Magic Qualities & Inferiorities: Gigantic, Greater Power (*Son of the Eagle*, see later); Minor Virtue (Large), Minor Virtue (Puissant Leadership), Minor Virtue (Self Confident), Minor Virtue (Tough)

Characteristics: Increase Strength by 4 and reduce Quickness by 2 (from Gigantic)

Size: +3 (from Gigantic and Large)

The Magogoli are also accompanied by *böge* or spirit summoners. A *böge* is a magus-level character and a Magic Human. Use the statistics for the Summoner (*Realms of Power: the Infernal* page 119) or the Mongol Spirit Shaman (*The Cradle and the Crescent* page 181) with the following adjustments:

Magic Might: 20 (Corpus), or more for powerful *böge*

Virtues and Flaws: Add the free Magic Human Virtue

Magic Qualities & Inferiorities: Gifted, Gigantic, Greater Power (*Son of the Eagle*, see below), Major Virtue (Ghostly Warder), Major Virtue (Greater Immunity to Mind Control and Possession), Major Virtue (Nightwalker); Minor Virtue (Inoffensive to Spirits), Minor Virtue (Temporal Influence)

Characteristics: Increase Strength by 4 and reduce Quickness by 2 (from Gigantic)

Size: +2 (from Gigantic)

If you do not have access to either *Realms of Power: the Infernal* or *The Cradle and the Crescent*, assume that a *böge* can summon a Magic, Faerie, or Infernal spirit of Might 30 or less and bargain with it to do his bidding. The Nightwalker Virtue (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 9) allows the

Son of the Eagle

0 points, constant effect, Imaginem
Magogoli can see distant things clearly, making out the details of objects that are miles distant as if they were only a foot away. This is a constant version of *Eyes of the Eagle* (ArM5, page 145).

InIm 30 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +4 Vision, +1 constant effect) Greater Power (30 levels, -3 Might cost)



böge to leave its body as a spirit. When in this form it has no Magic Might and so cannot be affected by spells targeting a creature's Might (including wards and *The Aegis of the Hearth*).

Magogoli breed enormous horses the size of elephants which they ride into battle. They also rear immense wolf-like dogs, renowned for their savagery, which accompany them in war. Breeding these creatures is left to a secretive society of female *böge* called *idugan*, who have extraordinary control over these monstrous beasts. The war-dogs of the Magogoli are Size +2 and have the game statistics of bears (to be found in *The Book of Mundane Beasts*, available free from the Atlas Games website), except that they can fight as a trained group under the control of a Magogoli witch, who uses Animal Handling rather than Leadership.

For more information about the Mythic Mongols, see *The Cradle and the Crescent*, pages 179–184.

The Invasion of Mythic Europe

The first story could have ended with Bekki fleeing eastwards, pursued by the player characters. Bekki's destination is beyond the limits of Mythic Europe and into Mythic Asia, where a horde of giants waits to invade. Alternatively, characters can be alerted to the presence of the giants with the rest of the Order, when they begin to

lay waste to Europe. Either way, if a Bekki Aspect has been allowed to report in Loki is aware of the characters' involvement and wants to know more about them.

A SPIRITUAL INTERLOPER

The magi first become aware they are being spied upon when someone works late into the night and find herself unable to rouse any covenfolk from sleep. This is due to the presence of a Nightwalking *böge* who is checking out the characters on behalf of Odi Aab (the Magogoli name for Loki's Emissary of Fire Aspect). Nightwalkers have no Might score and so are not stopped by the *Aegis of the Hearth*, but the drowsiness their presence causes has no Penetration so cannot affect any character with Magic Resistance. Anyone with Second Sight or appropriate spells can see the spirit and may be confused by its monstrous appearance. They may concoct methods to trap or follow their visitor; attempts to communicate send it flying east however.

When the Order learns of the Magogoli hordes, their description matches their nocturnal spy. This, coupled with the prophecies found among Bekki's belongings, should be enough to clue the characters into the bigger picture.

THE EASTERN BASTION

House Tremere maintains a network of fortresses specifically to watch for threats to the Transylvanian Tribunal or the Order as a whole (see *Against the Dark: The Transylvanian Tribunal*, Chapter 7 for more details). At the first sign of the Magogoli horde, the Tribunal is mobilized and the Order warned.

Of course, Loki is aware of the strengths of House Tremere and the limits of the Code of Hermes and he has planned for this day. Fighting the Magogoli magically is a challenge. The foot-soldiers are outside the range of a base Individual of Corpus, which also reduces the effectiveness of Target: Group spells fivefold. When the characters arrive in Coeris, they find most of the magi on the field of battle, leaving a familiar face in charge of the home defense — somehow Loki has inveigled a Bekki Aspect into the military leadership of House Tremere.

The targets of Magogoli attacks are towns and cities, and they avoid areas with covenants or Hermetic outposts to avoid giving the Order an excuse to meddle with mundane affairs. Magogoli battle tactics are the same as those of Mongols. They rely heavily on scouts and spies, who have been covertly in Mythic Europe for a decade or more making maps of the roads, assessing the military strength of each nation and the degree to which they are allied. Some of these alliances may well have been eroded. They are expert besiegers and divert rivers and cut off sup-

plies. They drive captured civilians into cities to stretch meager resources further and heighten fear, and infect these unfortunates with contagion to further weaken the city. They accept surrender and tribute from cities they capture, but if refused are implacable and devastating in their total destruction of the enemy. In open warfare they are equally terrifying, using feigned retreats and flanking to encircle their opponents before crushing them. A favored tactic is using captured forces as human shields, throwing them against mounted cavalry charges to demoralize their opponents.

KILL THE KHAN

As the invasion proceeds, it might seem that the only way to prevent this menace is to go straight for the head. The Order might hope that assassination of the Magogoli's supreme commander might stall the invaders long enough to mount a reasonable defense. House Tremere is looking for volunteers for this mission into enemy territory, offering rich rewards to those daring enough to attempt it. The characters may feel enough personal investment in the story to volunteer.

Other Plans: Giants in the East

The Magogoli aren't Loki's only giants. Lurking in the Ironwood (see later) are a band of frost giants who are loyal to Loki, and he has sent embassies to all manner of other magical giants. Ireland has its Fomórách, the Pyrenees has its Jentilak, and the Theban Tribunal has its Gigantes (see the respective Tribunal books for more details), and there are other groups in isolated mountainous areas. The sheer size of these giants means that they can achieve similar levels of destruction to a ravaging horde of Magogoli should they be set loose on Mythic Europe.

The Monsters in the Ironwood

The Ironwood (*Jarnvidur* in Norse) is a potent regio used as a staging post for the Twilight of the Gods. According to prophecy, the Ironwood is populated by fearsome witches who whelp horrid wolf-like monsters that will oppose the forces of the faerie gods at Ragnarok. Loki fulfills this part of the prophecy of Ragnarok if the Ironwood becomes established in Mythic Europe and remains unopposed due to su-

perstitious dread of its inhabitants.

The Ironwood has a single level with a Magic aura of 9. This aura is aligned to trolldomur (*Rival Magic* page 92), which means that only those using giant-derived magic can benefit from the aura modifier. The Ironwood itself is a vast forest filled with gray-barked trees. The leaves of these trees are sword-blades and spear-tips, and when the wind blows there is an awful clamoring as the metal clashes together. The undergrowth is filled with wire-like briars tipped with iron thorns that tear at the flesh and grasp at clothing. Simply moving through the forest can rip a man to shreds. There may be entrances to the

Ironwood Wolf

Magic Might: 18 (Animal)

Season: Summer

Characteristics: Cun +2, Per 0, Pre 0, Com -5, Str +7, Sta +4, Dex +2, Qik 0

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Animal; Magical Monster; Berserk, Improved Characteristics x 3, Magical Blood, Tough; Wrathful; Nocturnal

Mundane Qualities: Aggressive, Extra Natural Weapons (Claws), Fast Runner, Grapple, Hardy, Imposing Appearance, Keen Sense of Smell, Large Teeth, Pursuit Predator, Tough Hide

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Powers, Major Virtue (Greater Immunity to Iron); Improved Attack (Teeth) x 2, Improved Damage (Teeth) x 2, Improved Initiative (Grapple), Improved Might x 3, Improved Soak, Minor Virtue (Lesser Immunity to Silver)

Personality Traits: Terrifyingly Ferocious +6, Cruel +3, Wolf* +3, Brave +2

*Essential Trait

Combat:

Claws*: Init -1, Attack +9, Defense +8, Damage +9

Teeth*: Init 0, Attack +16, Defense +7, Damage +16

Grapple*: Init +3, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage n/a

Soak*: +12

*when berserk, +2 Attack, +2 Soak, -2 Defense

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5

(15-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

Abilities: Athletics 3 (pursuit), Awareness 3 (prey), Brawl 5 (teeth), Folk Ken 2 (motives), Hunt 4 (human), Leadership 3 (Ironwood wolves), Survival 5 (winter), Swim 3 (upstream)

Powers:

Relentless Search, 0 points, Init -2, Corpus: If in possession of an Arcane Connection, an Ironwood wolf always knows the direction to his prey. The scent of his prey is an Arcane Connection lasting Hours. InCo 15 (Base 3, +4 Arc) Greater Power (15 levels, -2 Might cost)

Terrifying Howl, 1 point, Init -2, Mentem: The sound of the creature's howl creates an overwhelming fear in its chosen victim. This might cause them to bolt or cower, depending upon their nature. These wolves prefer to hunt down terrified prey. CrMe 20 (Base 4, +2 Voice, +2 Sun) Greater Power (20 levels, -1 Might cost)

Vis: 4 pawns of Animal, in teeth.

Appearance: A bulky wolf standing five feet at the shoulder and ten feet nose to tail; it has a dark mangy pelt and bloodied jaws. Its human ancestry is evident in its face (which is curiously man-like) and in its uncommon intelligence. Typically, one pins a foe with a grapple while its pack-mates rip the victim apart. Their immunity to iron renders them unaffected by the hostile flora of the Ironwood.

Ironwood in multiple locations across Mythic Europe — any dense forest haunted by wolves has appropriate symbolism.

Several groups of beings call the Ironwood home. The *Jarnvidjur* are Muspelli dedicated to Gullveig. They are the mothers of the monstrous Ironwood wolves, and each dwells singly surrounded only by her offspring. They occasionally ride their children using reins made from live venomous snakes. There is also a small group of *brimbursar* (frost giants) in the Ironwood led by Eggther (see later). Finally, there are several small settlements of Hundings in the Ironwood. The Hundings were originally a human tribe but are now heavily warped by the Magic aura of the Ironwood. Each Hunding has a Magical Blood Virtue that gives them lupine features; some have the Monstrous Appearance Flaw, which grants them the head of a wolf. Lycanthrope is a very common

Flaw among the Hundings. The *Jarnvidjur* abduct Hunding men using Entrancement; they may also kidnap Skinchangers and Lycanthropes from the mundane world. These unfortunates become the fathers of the Muspelli's monstrous wolf-children.

The Herdsman of Monsters

Loki's chief lieutenant for this task is Eggther, a frost giant. Eggther is referred to by name in some prophecies (where his harp-playing and his cheerful nature is mentioned) and alluded to in others (as a herdsman of monsters); the 'sheep' that he tends are the Ironwood wolves and winter winds. He trains monstrous animals, wind-creatures and cloud-spirits using his Mas-

ter of (Form) Creatures Virtues, and if the characters seek to face him they must also be prepared to face all manner of monsters. Eggther is also the guardian of a magical sword called the Gambanteinn (his name means "sword-watcher") which Loki will need later; in the meantime this makes him a dangerous warrior.

The Ironwood Comes to Pomerania

Intelligence received by the characters from their allies is that Eggther is abroad in the Pomeranian Forest (*Guardians of the Forests*, page 99), home to a malign *genius loci*. Eggther wants to bring the Ironwood into the Pomeranian Forest but needs the assistance of its ruler, the Holm Oak. The

Eggther, A Frost Giant

Magic Might: 33 (Auram)

Season: Summer

Characteristics: Int -2, Per 0, Pre +2, Com -2, Str +14, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik -4

Size: +6

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human; Magical Monster; Arcane Lore, Berserk, Master of Animal Creatures, Master of Auram Creatures, Piercing Gaze, Reserves of Strength, Voice of the Winter, Warrior; Envious (major), Monstrous Appearance*; Baneful Circumstances (mild weather), Cheerful.

*free with Magic Human

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Focus Power, Gigantic (x5), Greater Powers, Major Virtue (Shapeshifter); Auram Resistance, Improved Abilities, Improved Powers, Improved Soak (x3), Minor Virtue (Lesser Immunity to exposure), Personal Power

Personality Traits: Envious +6, Angry +3, Cruel Sense of Humor +2

Combat:

Gambanteinn*: Init +9 Attack +20**, Defense +16**, Damage +23

Pole axe: Init -3 Attack +12**, Defense +4**, Damage +31

Javelin: Init -4, Attack +5, Defense -2, Damage +19

Kick: Init -5, Attack +4**, Defense -2*, Damage +17

Soak: +14 (+16 when berserk)

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-11), -3 (12-22), -5 (23-33), Incapacitated (34-44), Dead (45+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 4 (wolves), Auram Resistance 4 (lightning), Brawl 3 (kick), Concentration 3 (controlling storms), Great Weapon 5 (pole axe), Leadership 4 (training), Magic Lore 4 (Norse giants), Music 3 (harp), Penetration 3 (hail), Shapeshifter 1 (wolf form), Single Weapon 4 (Gambanteinn), Survival 4 (cold climates), Thrown Weapon 1 (javelin), West Norse 5 (incantations)

Powers:

Master of Fierce Winds, 1-5 points, Init -7, Auram: Eggther can spontaneously conjure Rego Auram effects of fifth magnitude or less that create violent winds or hail. One of his favorite effects is *Charge of the Angry Winds* (ArM5, page 125). (Focus Power), Improved Powers (+2 Init)

Gathering of the Stormy Might, 2 points, Init -8, Auram: As the spell on page 129 of ArM5. ReAu 40 (Base 5, +3 Sight, +2 Group, +2 Size): Greater Power (40 levels, -2 Might cost)

True Sight of the Air, 0 points, Init constant effect, Auram: As the spell on page 127 of ArM5. This ability is continuously active. InAu 20 (Base 1, +2 Sun, +4 Vision, +1 continuous effect): Personal Power (20 levels, -1 Might cost), Improved Powers (-1 Might cost, 10 xp Penetration)

Equipment: lap harp, partial chainmail armor, the Gambanteinn. His Combat Totals reflect that he is wielding a sword of excellent quality but do not account for its powers.

Encumbrance: 0 (0)

Vis: seven pawns of Auram, in his frozen heart.

Appearance: Eggther stands 27 feet tall; most humans do not reach his knees. He has long pale hair streaked with white; this and his similarly colored beard are braided into neat plaits. He wears a chain haubergeon and cuir-boulli leg and arm protection. Details of the Gambanteinn are found later in this chapter.

* see later for details of the Gambanteinn, which mostly works with Eggther

** Add +2 to Attack and -2 to Defense when Eggther is berserk

spirit wants freedom from the Divine trap that confines it to the grove of Romowe. Each has something to offer the other and an alliance seems likely; especially since the spirit approves wholly of Loki's plan to free the Titans.

QUENCHING THE HOLY FIRE

A holy fire was lit under the boughs of the Holm Oak by Saint Aadelbert of Prague and has been fed ever since by a band of foresters devoted to the saint. While the fire burns, the great *genius loci* is imprisoned in the tree and can exert only subtle control over the Pomeranian Forest. By the time the characters arrive in the region, four of the five foresters have been killed and Ironwood wolves hunt the survivor. Eggther has brought winter to bear against the fire they tended, and under his assault even the divinely-lit pyre has failed.

The last remaining forester has escaped with a flame from the holy fire. As long as he feeds it with wood taken from the oak tree in which the spirit is trapped, the saint's prison remains firm. Against such an eventuality, the foresters have several caches of wood hidden in the local area but they are now running low and it is getting harder for the man to move about the forest as the Ironwood encroaches. The characters must find him before the wolves do.

Should the flame fail, then Romowe's spirit is free. In accordance with its bargain with Eggther, the Ironwood becomes coterminous with the borders of the Pomeranian Forest and its inhabitants are free to come and go as they please. The forest's vegetation turns to gray iron and the *Jarnvidjur* and *Hundings* spill out to harry neighboring lands. The spirit possesses the leader of a coven of Pomeranian werewolves and commences a campaign to dominate the local area. Eggther serves as its warleader and Loki's ambassador.

The characters can foil the plot by keeping the forester alive and the flame burning. Eggther does not give up in his attempts, however, so this means that they must face the giant. If the characters manage to defeat Eggther, they win possession of the Gambanteinn. As a self-aware (and ultimately selfish) item, it ensures that the characters notice it and want to possess it. While this is not ideal for Loki, he takes no immediate steps to retrieve the sword, trusting that he can get it when he needs it.

Gambanteinn, the Wand of Woe

The Gambanteinn, or "Wand of Woe," is a sword forged in the dawn of time. It was made by the elf-smith Volundur, won by the gods and traded to the giants in return for Freyr's perfidious giant-bride Gerdur. In an old version of a popular myth it was the sword used by Hodur to kill his brother Baldur at the instigation of Loki (rather than a mistletoe arrow). The sword ended up in the hands of Fjalar, brother of Gerdur, who entrusted it to his servant Eggther. When the time is right, Fjalar will deliver the Gambanteinn to his father Surtur. In the hands of the Jotun of Fire it becomes the Surtlogi, a fiery brand that will burn the whole world.

The Gambanteinn is a Magic Thing. The characters might be able to win the Gambanteinn and use it against their enemies, making them exceptionally dangerous to Loki's plans. However, it has a mind of its own and is cruel and hateful, delighting in bloodshed. It cannot speak without magical aid but its intense emotions can occasionally be felt radiating from it. If it befriends a character (only really possible if they share a personality) or else is dominated by one, then it might teach him how to wield it more effectively. This does not require the character to be able to speak with the sword or even realize that it is teaching him; it is enough to merely train with the sword for a season to gain experience points from Teaching in Great Weapon (Source Quality 14).

GAMBANTEINN

Magic Might: 10 (Terram)

Season: Summer

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

Size: -4

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Thing; Magical Friend; Shapeshifter; Puissant Great Weapon, Strong-Willed, Hatred, Temporary Might*; Small Frame

*Free with Magic Thing

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:



Gambanteinn, the Wand of Woe (Cont'd)

Greater Powers; Improved Attack x 2, Improved Damage, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative x 2, Improved Soak x 2; Limited Movement

Personality Traits: Hateful +6, Rebellious +3, Selfish +3

Reputations: Foe of Man 1 (Local)

Combat:

*Great sword**: Init +9, Attack +20, Defense +16, Damage +16

*see *Guided Strike* Power, below

Soak: +8

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5+)

Abilities: Awareness 2 (foes), Great Weapon 6+2 (great sword), Faerie Lore 4 (smiths), Magic Lore 5 (smiths), Penetration 4 (*The Woeful Bite*), Shapeshifter 3 (giant-sized), Teaching 4 (martial Abilities)

Powers:

Guided Strike: If wielded in combat, the Gambanteinn can guide its own blows. This is not a power, but the result of the sword being aware and capable of limited movement. If its wielder has no Great Weapon Ability then use the statistics above but with a -3 penalty to Attack and Defense Totals to account for the lack of coordination between wielder and weapon. If the bearer has the Great Weapon Ability and is acting in accordance with the sword, then use the highest of the wielder's Combat Totals and the sword's. However, the sword is willful and may resist the wielder, desiring to continue fighting when the wielder stops, or to attack a different foe. If this occurs, then make a Strength stress roll for the wielder and the sword. If the wielder's roll is higher then he uses the weapon with his own Combat Totals. If the sword's roll is higher then it attacks using the statistics above. The sword cannot attack at all unless someone is holding it; a character can resist the sword's actions by simply letting go, although this leaves him disarmed.

The Woeful Bite, 0 points, Init -1, Corpus: If this power Penetrates, any wound inflicted by the Gambanteinn festers and death is inevitable without magical

intervention. Affected characters always fail Wound Recovery rolls for the wounds inflicted by this sword, so even a Light Wound eventually worsens to a fatal one. Wound Recovery rolls that include any magical aid are not affected by this power. This power uses the guidelines for inflicting a major disease. PeCo 25 (Base 20, +1 Touch) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost, 10 xp into Penetration)

Vis: 2 pawns of Terram, in blade

Appearance: A sword of superb manufacture. Designed in the Viking style, it has a guard without quillons, a grip wrapped in red-dyed shagreen, and a cocked-hat pommel. Its blade is three finger-widths and has parallel sides and a rounded tip. The 50 inch blade has a single deep fuller running its entire length. The metal has a gold and brass pattern imbedded within it that resembles flames, and always feels warm to the touch.

The Gambanteinn is a typical Viking sword but sized for a larger-than-normal warrior; in the hands of a human it should be treated as a great sword and must be wielded with both hands unless it changes size (see later). Due to the excellent quality of its manufacture, the Gambanteinn has +2 Initiative and +2 Damage bonuses above and beyond those of a standard great sword; these are figured into the totals above and should be included in the Combat Totals of any character wielding the sword. Unless under an active spell, the Gambanteinn's blows do not need to Penetrate any more than the claws of a magical wolf need to penetrate.

The Shapeshifter Virtue allows the sword to become different weapons rather than adopting different animal forms. In theory the Gambanteinn could become any weapon but the shapes currently known to it are all different-sized swords: a short sword with a 25 inch blade; a long sword with a 40 inch blade; and a 16 foot-long sword suitable for a giant. Like the Shapeshifter Virtue, the sword has no continuing magic beyond the point of actual transformation and therefore is not stopped by Magic Resistance when at a different size.

You might instead wish to use the rules for Damaging Objects on page 77 of *City & Guild* rather than using Soak and Wound Penalties. In this case, the Gambanteinn has five damage levels and adds +11 to any Stress check. See Skidbladnir (earlier) for more details.

UNMAKING THE GAMBANTEINN

As a god-forged weapon, destroying the Wand of Woe is no simple task. The importance of the Gambanteinn in fulfilling the prophecy of Ragnarok has left an impression of it on the Magic Realm and this impression must be erased properly (something which Perdo magic does not achieve) to prevent its symbolic function from being transferred to another weapon. Those most likely to know how to unmake the sword are the Sons of Mimir (see *The Seven Sleepers*, later), but by the time they are awake the characters will have had to survive at least one attempt from Fjalar to regain the weapon. The dvergar can tell them that the Gambanteinn can be undone by immersing it in the Elivagor, the icy stream of venom and hate in which it was forged. To reach the Elivagor, the characters must travel to the far north of Alfheim in the Faerie Realm to a stronghold called Ýsetur. From this fortress, the boundary with Nifelhel was once watched for encroachment by the Jotnar. Now, Ýsetur lies abandoned by its master and its elf warband has fled. The strand is haunted by monstrous wyrms, spawn of Nidhogg who have crawled from Elivagor's tumultuous currents. The Elivagor itself is the gulf of the Twilight Void that serves as an Aquam and an Ignem Boundary to Nifelhel — the prison of the Titans in the Magic Realm. If Thor has been restored, then Ýsetur and its beach will be less dangerous.

Alone, unmaking the Gambanteinn cannot prevent Ragnarok. The Gambanteinn is a powerful symbol in the prophecy but not irreplaceable. Its destruction would be a major setback to Loki however, and in combination with other failures might cause a fatal disruption in his plan to destroy the gods.



HELP AGAINST THE IRONWOOD

The traditional enemies of the Hundings were a tribe called the Wulfings or Ylfings, who later became the Welf dukes of Swabia, Bavaria, and Saxony, and even an Emperor, Otto IV, who abdicated in 1215. The Welfs are still known as famous wolf-hunters and may even have connections to a secret society of werewolf slayers.

The relics of Saint Aadelbert of Prague are anathema to the Romowe spirit and may be used to drive it back into its age-old prison. However, two complete sets of his remains are to be found, one in Prague and the other in Gneizno, and it is not clear which are the authentic ones.

Other Plans: Monsters in the Ironwood

Loki's second-line plan for this part of the prophecy is to unite the various shapeshifter cults across Mythic Europe. In addition to the Pomeranian witch-cult there are the Wolf Brotherhoods of the Transylvanian Tribunal (*Against the Dark* page 122), any number of Folk Witch covens (including the Sorginak of Provençal), and possibly other groups. For example, the people of Osraige in Ireland are famous for husband and wife pairings of werewolves (where they are called *faoladh* or *conroicht*); and Pavia in Italy has regular outbreaks of werewolf activity.

These societies orchestrate public attacks on significant public figures (dukes and kings, bishops and archbishops), creating a culture of fear of wolves across Mythic Europe accompanied by the paranoia that comes from not knowing who might be a member of one of these secret cults.

Swallowing the Moon

This part of the prophecy demands that the moon be swallowed by a hound or a wolf. In Norse mythology, this creature was an Aspect of Fenrir called Hati, who ran before the sun and chased the moon. Eumelos references Kerberos the Hound of Hades in his *Titanomachy*, worshiped along with other deities of the underworld by the Witches of Thessaly. In ancient times, this group performed a ritual called "Drawing Down the Moon" (see *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 141) as part of their chthonic worship, and Loki seeks to reestablish this tradition.

Moon-Eaters

For several decades, an Aspect of Fenrir in the guise of three-headed Kerebos has been training Witches of Thessaly in Muspelli magic. Similarly, Norse Muspelli

have been trained by the same Jotun. Both groups have each been preparing for the casting of an *utisetá* ritual (see insert) designed to swallow up the moon and deny

The Snatcher of the Moon

Sjonhverfing Ease Factor 48

R: Sight, D: Decade, T: Boundary

This *utisetá* creates the image of a mighty wolf that seems to swallow the moon; from this day onwards, the moon is not seen for ten years. The illusion only holds when within the same geographical region as the Muspelli when the ritual was cast; if characters travel out of the region the moon reappears.

(Base 12, +9 Sight, +15 Decade, +12 Boundary)

To complete this *utisetá*, a Muspelli with a good score in Sjonhverfing (7) would need Power Modifiers of x5 or x6. This would probably mean that they will be located on islands on lakes (sites symbolic to Fenrir) all over Mythic Europe, performing rites of self-mutilation and sacrifices of creatures with Faerie Might. These rituals would take an average of seven hours to complete. For more information on the Muspelli and their *utisetá* rituals, see *Rival Magic*, Chapter 4. While Muspelli cannot combine their powers, in this case they are simply creating multiple illusions from many different vantage points.

its light to the world's denizens.

Likewise, Loki's servitors within the Order of Hermes have been distributing versions of *The Wizard's Eclipse* (ArM5 page 142) as either Lab Texts or Casting Tablets and stockpiling vis for its use. These versions are of Duration: Year (and thus Perdo Ignem 50) and so are left to powerful solitary magi or groups of conspirators casting in communion. At Loki's signal they station themselves in cities and populated valleys across Mythic Europe and, coordinated with the Muspelli's efforts (although probably unaware of them), prepare to cast the nighttime sky of Mythic Europe into darkness.

Characters with suitable contacts should hear about these preparations, but not in any detail. If they investigate, they may be able to block the plan early on, ensuring that Loki fails in this respect.

Guardians of the Moon

Over successive months the moon ceases to rise in regions across Mythic Europe. This effect begins at the fringes of Mythic Europe—in Scotland, Ireland, Scandinavia, the Balkans, Greece, southern Italy and Spain—but month after month creeps inwards. The moon always disappears when it is full and is henceforth not seen again. Depending upon where the player characters are based, they may experience this for themselves or else hear rumors from outlying provinces. Reports

Lunar Eclipses

Total lunar eclipses occur in October 1222, February 1226, September 1233, January 1237, December 1247, July 1255, May 1258 (southern Mythic Europe), August 1262 (western Mythic Europe only), December 1265 (on Christmas Day), November 1276, March 1280, October 1287, and February 1291. Each eclipse lasts about 100 minutes. Of course, a storyguide need not feel constrained by these dates if inconvenient, and can add or move an eclipse as needed.

soon come in from all directions: the moon is being gradually extinguished. The pattern becomes clear to anyone paying attention to the locations of the reports: the area lit by the moon is becoming successively smaller and smaller and in a handful of months will be extinguished altogether. The characters can even determine the last city to receive the light of the full moon will be Frankfurt (*Guardians of the Forests* page 89). Astrologers will be aware that a lunar eclipse is due on the day that the moon will be extinguished in Frankfurt; otherwise an Intelligence + Artes Liberales roll of Ease Factor 9 allows a character to calculate the significance of the place and date. The exact location of the last full moon and even the pattern of extinguishing can be changed to suit the individual saga. For example, a storyguide might prefer the pattern to go from east to west and have Tuam in Connacht as the last place affected.

INVESTIGATING IN THE DARK

Characters may wish to investigate places already affected by the unnatural darkness. They hear stories of a massive wolf in the sky catching the moon and swallowing it in three bites. On lake islands they may find evidence of Muspelli rituals in the form of warped auras and sacrificial remains, or elsewhere of Hermetic rituals in the form of abandoned ritual spaces adorned with Hermetic symbols. A few days after each ritual, a falcon can be seen flying in the affected area; this is Loftur in his shapechanged form, checking on the progress of his plan.

PRESERVING THE LIGHT

If the characters are clever, quick, and lucky, they determine the location of the next ritual and get there in time to stop it taking place. The individuals performing these rituals are powerful sorcerers in their own right and it should be no small task to prevent them; they should be supported with whatever resources seem reasonable. If the Ironwood has successfully encroached on the mortal realm, then the assistance of Ironwood wolves is highly appropriate.

Success in preventing a ritual means that the moon continues to shine over this

region. It remains a beacon surrounded by the darkness of the surrounding area, but ultimately, on its own, will not be enough. Only if a significant-sized hole in the blanket of darkness will prevent the final ritual from making the effects permanent. Needless to say, Loftur takes an interest in such holes and take steps to patch them.

Before the final ritual, the effects in each region are continuing magical effects, which means that the player characters could use Perdo Vim to dispel them. Again, Loftur takes steps to patch such holes. However, if the characters create enough holes, Loftur may not be able to patch them in time for the final ritual, again meaning that he fails in this aspect.

DRAWING DOWN THE MOON

The very last ritual in Frankfurt on the eclipse is the most important, since it symbolizes the extinguishing of the moon and mystically 'locks' the other effects and makes reality from illusion. If successful, moonlight is truly extinguished from Mythic Europe, at least until Ragnarok, and the darkness is no longer dependent on the spells cast by Loki's mortal agents.

During the culminating ritual, a theurgist (possibly the leader of the Magogoli böges) summons an Aspect of the Daimon of the Moon, now greatly weakened since each of the eclipse rituals drained a fraction of its Might score. This Aspect, taking the form of a glowing woman, is given to a monstrous wolf brought into the city just for this occasion, who consumes her utterly. This wolf could be a willing participant, perhaps a captain among the Ironwood wolves, or it could be a dupe, captured from the wild and starved or compelled to make it vicious. The wolf could even be a magus's familiar, or a member of the Wolf's Court (*Mythic Locations* Chapter 11). Loftur is here as well, to ensure the plan goes off without a hitch.

The player characters can disrupt this ritual, but this still counts a partial success for Loki.

A WORLD ADRIPT WITHOUT A MOON

If Loki is successful in this endeavor, there is widespread fear and confusion that leads to rioting. The moon is an important

indicator of timing of agricultural and religious events. Easter's date is determined by the phase of the moon; without a moon can there really be Easter? Most peasants attend to confessing their sins once a year in Lent, but with no Easter, there is no Lent. A clergyman rips off his vestments in the town square and begins to beat himself with a knotted whip, shouting passages from the Apocalypse of St John. A riot is imminent; the slightest spark (such as a person with The Gift) could set it off. This part of the story could be influenced or capitalized on by a diabolically-inspired cult (*Antagonists*, Chapter 8). Unlike the disaster detailed in an earlier chapter, the moon is still there, but its light is swallowed by the Magic Realm before reaching earth. At the option of the storyguide this may still have a mystical effect on Moon duration spells and other moon-based phenomena, in which case inspiration can be drawn from "The End of Time."

Other Plans: Swallowing the Moon

If his main plan fails, Loki's main back-up is reliant on the player characters having restored Thor to his full glory, and if they haven't achieved this yet, Loki gives them a helping hand. This has to happen anyway, because Thor must be present at Ragnarok, but Loki would have preferred to have deferred this as long as possible. Knowing his foster brother as he does, Loki can predict that Thor has promised a boon of help to his rescuers. If he can trick the player characters into invoking Thor's boon and summon him and Mjollnir with him, the prison of the Jotnar will be truly unguarded for the first time in millenia and Loki can call across an Aspect of Fenrir called Hati to consume the moon. To do this, Loki must create a dire situation for the player characters, perhaps turning loose several of his most powerful allies against their covenant directly in a miniature rehearsal for Ragnarok.

On the other hand, if Loki is sure that his other plans have gone well and prophecy is satisfied, then he may simply wait for a lunar eclipse and allow this to symbolically complete this part of the prophecy.

Three Cockerels Crow

All available prophecies state that the crowing of three cockerels is the beginning of the End. Once the three roosters crow — one in the underworld, one in heaven, and one on earth — the armies of the faerie gods and the titans are summoned and battle will ensue. If prophecy has been fulfilled, then this battle is Ragnarok, which the gods are doomed to lose. If Loki has failed, then this battle marks his defeat and re-imprisoning in the underworld.

This event is the culmination of all Loki's plans; Ragnarok cannot start until all three of the 'cockerels' sound their call to arms. Loki only fails in this event if all three cockerels are killed and the Gambanteinn (see earlier) is destroyed. Failing to meet all these conditions merely delays the end, and if Loki thinks he has prophecy on his side he continues to try to complete this event until he succeeds or until success is impossible.

The Red Cockerel

The rooster that crows in the Nifelhel is a guise of Fjalar Suttungur, the son of Surtur the Black. Fjalar is a fire giant and before he heads for the Magic Realm he collects the Gambanteinn from his servant Eggther. He then heads for the Magic Realm, where he intends to summon the army of the pagan dead as well as deliver the magical sword to his father in Nifelhel.

For Fjalar's statistics, use those of the Emissary of Fire (see Aspects of Loki), but he is a Magic Human rather than a Magic Spirit. Increase his Magic Might to 41 and add the following Magic Qualities: Gigantic x2, Major Virtue (Immunity to Fire*); Increased Might; and Minor Virtue (Skinchanger) with the shape of a red rooster. His Size is +7 (making him over 35 feet tall), he receives a +4 to Strength and Damage and a -2 to Quickness and all Initiative totals.

*Unlike the Emissary of Fire, Fjalar is a Magic Human who would be susceptible to fire without this Virtue.

FJALAR RETRIEVES THE SWORD

If the player characters are in possession of the Gambanteinn, then Heimdalur tells them to expect a visit from Fjalar Suttungur very soon, and they should be prepared to die at his hands if they oppose him. The characters could simply hand over the sword to him, in which case Fjalar demands wergild (death-payment) for the murder of his servant Eggther but does not seek any vengeance beyond that. Wergild is a Norse tradition where the perpetrator of a slaying pays the family of the deceased his worth. Fjalar sets the worth of Eggther at a hundred marks of silver (800 ounces, or 50 Mythic Pounds). The characters may be able to negotiate for less, or for a time frame over which to pay, but if they cannot or will not agree to the wergild then Fjalar seeks to destroy them instead. If the characters fight Fjalar using the Gambanteinn, the sword resists them for the entire battle. Alternatively, if they concede the sword to the fire giant then they can follow him into the underworld and have a second chance to stop him.

If characters survive and keep the Gambanteinn out of Fjalar's hands, then they may wish to attempt to destroy the sword. Fjalar will not stop trying to obtain the sword, but next time he comes to claim it he will have a horde of the walking dead with him.

SILENCING THE RED COCKEREL

If the characters do not have the Gambanteinn, then Fjalar will not come to them first but head straight for the Magic Realm. Nifelhel is an insula within the Magic Realm that is peopled by the spirits of the pagan dead who died an ignoble death: men who were executed, died in the torment of disease, committed suicide, or bore some terrible moral crime when they died. The Jotnar are also in Nifelhel, or more accurately in the Twilight Void that adjoins it.

Skidbladnir knows the way to Nifelhel. They must travel to the utmost north, until they reach a sea onto which the sun and stars do not shine. Eventually, a light will be seen in the distance; this leads to a fire being kindled on the beach of a rocky island by two faeries of uncommon size. The guardians, swarthy elves who have dead giants and the ignoble dead as

Story Seeds: Days of the Dead

Once Fjalar crows in the underworld, all manner of the dead return to earth. There are plenty of opportunities for the characters to be beset by the shambling dead.

GHOST LEGIONS OF HOUSE TREMERE

House Tremere have been recruiting armies of pagan ghosts as part of their battle-readiness (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, Chapter 4). When the first cockerel crows, these ghosts could break free of their Hermetic shackles, reanimate their corpses, or possess the living. This mass return of the dead could be the distraction Loki needs for one of his other plans (such as advancing the invasion of the east by the Magogoli).

GIVERS OF ETERNAL REST

The Donatores (a tradition within Ex Miscellanea, *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 115) have been expecting the mass return of the dead for several decades. They have a God-given mission to lay the dead to rest and have been feverishly training for this day. A cadre of these magi come to the covenant to seek their help in destroying the undead menace terrorizing the local populace. While technically magi, these three have no Hermetic training, but are skilled Banishers. They have noticed that while the dead have risen all over the region, the walking corpses that they have encountered account for a mere fraction of the total number of disturbed graves they have seen. The rest of the walking dead are amassing somewhere and the Donatores need help to find where and why. Who is the shadowy figure who commands the army of the dead? The peasants whisper it is Death himself.

neighbors, try to dissuade the characters from continuing. They can confirm that Fjalar has been this way. The beach is an Aquam Boundary to the Magic Realm of level 5 and the sea ahead is the Twilight Void. For details on Boundary Travel see *Realms of Power: Magic* page 23; Skidbladnir has a total of stress die +7, and the Ease Factor is 15, -15 for the ship's Area Lore of the seas of the Magic Realm. This route to Nifelhel is the same one taken by Thorkill in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (a Latin history of the Danish people). Note that Skidbladnir and the characters may even reach Nifelhel before Fjalar due to the vagaries of time in the Twilight Void.

Nifelhel is an insula with a Corpus Boundary of Level 8. It is a mountainous broken land, covered in treacherous ice. The mountains are riddled with caves inhabited by the pagan dead and the spirits of slain monsters (especially giants), as well as hazards such as corpse-eating serpents, rivers of swords, and other horrors. All tunnels eventually lead to a vast cavern where Loki once lay bound with the entrails of a wolf, a serpent dripping venom on his face (each an Aspect of one of his sons). The stone table on which he once laid is now occupied by a horn. The cavern is filled with the supine bodies of the sleeping dead, each the spirit of a pagan who died an ignoble death. If the characters do not intervene, when Fjalar arrives here, he will lay down the Gambanteinn (if he has it) and take up the horn and with one blast, wake the sleeping dead. These spirits stream from the cavern, finding their way to the mundane world.

As the characters return from the Magic Realm on Skidbladnir, regardless of whether they were victorious or not, they may witness a mighty bird spreading its pinions above them, leaving the Magic Realm at the same time. This is Vidofnir, a black cockerel fated by prophecy to be the third to crow (see later).

THE DEAD RETURN

If woken by Fjalar, the dead of Nifelhel are free to return to earth. The Norse dead do not return as ghosts, instead they occupy their own corpses and animate them. Some of the returned dead are exceptionally strong and may have the power to spread disease, shapeshift, or control the weather.

Pagan dead from other religions follow suit; similar animated corpses issue from Etruscan cemeteries in Italy, Bulgar grave mounds in the Balkans, or Gaulish and Gothic burial sites in central Mythic Europe. Other pagan dead may haunt the living as ghosts (*Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 115–118). The Christian dead, in common with all buried under the auspices of a Divine religion, do not return.

The White Cockerel

Once Fjalar has crowed in the Magic Realm, the white cockerel departs for heaven — that is, Asgard in the Faerie Realm. The white cockerel is Heimdallur, who blows his mighty horn to summon the army of the gods. While this makes Heimdallur complicit in the schemes of his enemy Loki, the White God has no choice. It is part of his story to sound the call to arms and nothing short of his death will stop him. Heimdallur will have the courtesy to inform the player characters before he ascends the Rainbow Bridge to Asgard. If the characters kill Heimdallur they can delay Ragnarok, but it might be unconscionable to kill a trusted ally (and possibly friend).

Once Heimdallur's horn has been sounded, the faerie gods acknowledge that the Twilight of the Gods is inevitable and stop trying to thwart Loki. Sympathetic gods like Heimdallur might still help the characters if they can be convinced that it will make it more likely that the gods will win, but they do so with a resigned air having already accepted their fate.

THE ARMY OF THE FAERIE GODS

At the sound of Heimdallur's horn, the army of the gods is mustered. The *einberjar* are the spirits of those pagan Norsemen who died a warrior's death. They have been feasting and sleeping in the Valhall since the time of their death. Eight hundred issue from each of the Valhall's 540 doors and the 432,000 warriors begin their preparations to fight their final battle. Each of the *einberi* is a faerie warrior, clothed in glamour that results from the stories told about a deceased man by his shield-comrades, his family, and even his enemies. If the statistics of an *einberi* is needed, use the Berserker or Grizzled Veteran Template (ArM5 page 21) but also give him a Faerie Might of 5 (Corpus).

A side effect of waking the *einberjar* is that

Warping for Muspelli becomes a lot harsher. From hereon in, whenever a Muspelli is required to make a Heipt Roll (i.e. takes 2 or more Warping Points at once, *Rival Magic* page 85) she is assumed to automatically fail and is visited by a Trained Group of *einherjar* with a number of members equal to her Warping Score. *The Enigma's Gift* (ArM5 page 157) is now a powerful spell for magi to use against Muspelli.

The Black Cockerel

Vidofnir — who the characters may have witnessed leaving the Magic Realm earlier — is the third rooster to crow. In this case, Vidofnir actually is a rooster, albeit a giant one endowed with magical powers. He travels across Mythic Europe, and his arrival is witnessed by many. He seeks out a high vantage point close to a

burial site such as a cathedral steeple and waits until dawn. He then lets out three mighty cries, splitting open graves and sepulchers and raising the dead. Afterward he flies to another city and repeats his actions. The dead roam the streets until the power that animates them falters at sunset.

When Vidofnir arrives in a city close to the player characters, they have the opportunity to stop him. There is no malice in his actions; he is simply obeying the iron chains of prophecy as a servant of Urdur, the Jotun of Fate. However, the prophecy says he will awaken the Seven Sleepers, who Heimdallur can tell them will be the salvation of mankind should Ragnarok go ahead. The player characters are left with a dilemma: killing Vidofnir could prevent Ragnarok but allowing him to live could mean that more people survive the Twilight of the Gods unscathed. How confident are they that they have thwarted Loki sufficiently?

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS

If Vidofnir is permitted to crow throughout Mythic Europe, stories begin to be told across Christendom of the appearance of the Seven Sleepers. They appear at several sites associated with them, including Mount Pion at Ephesus and the Church of St Victor of Gaul in Marseilles where the tombs of the Seven Sleepers have been venerated as relics for centuries. There are similar appearances at pagan, Jewish, and Muslim holy sites. The Sleepers bring the same message to all: they announce that the End of Times is upon the world but they have been sent by God (or the gods, depending on the audience) to protect the faithful. When heaven and earth war with one another, everyone should shelter on holy ground (Divine or Magic auras), where they will be kept safe until the peril is over. The Seven Sleepers that appear to Christians are saints with a

Vidofnir

Magic Might: 20 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int -2, Per +2, Pre +2, Com +3, Str +6, Sta +1, Dex +2, Qik 0

Size: +3

Season: Summer

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Animal; Magical Champion; Essential Virtue (Powerful Voice); Improved Characteristics x 4; Oath of Fealty (to Urdur), Proud; Overconfident (minor), Restricted Power (*Ear-Shattering Cry*, only during the day), Restricted Power (*Earth-Shattering Cry*, only during the day)

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Gigantic, Greater Powers x 4; Improved Might x 3, Improved Soak, Minor Virtue (Puissant Music)

Personality Traits: Powerful Voice (Communication) +6*, Cockerel* +3, Proud +3, Imperturbable +2

*Essential Trait, replaces listed Characteristic (where present) whenever Trait applies.

Combat:

Spurs: Init -1, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +8

Beak: Init 0, Attack +9, Defense +5, Damage +8

Soak: +5

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-8), -3 (9-16), -5 (17-24), Incapacitated (25-32), Dead (33+)

Abilities: Athletics 2 (balancing), Awareness 6 (dawn and dusk), Brawl 4 (spurs), Music 7+2 (crowing), Penetration 4 (Corpus effects)

Powers:

Ear-Shattering Cry, 0 points, Init +1, Corpus: An individual in direct line of Vidofnir's crowing has his hearing destroyed. This damage heals as a Heavy Wound, and inflicts the effects of the Deaf Flaw until it heals to a Light Wound, at which point it becomes equivalent to Poor Hearing until totally healed. A deaf magus suffers the -15 penalty to spellcasting for using no words (but no penalty to Voice Range) until he adjusts to his new condition (which takes about a day). PeCo 30 (Base 20, +2 Voice) Greater Power (30 levels, -3 Might cost, +4 Init)

Earth-Shattering Cry, 0 points, Init -3, Teram: Vidofnir's cry is so loud that it can shatter stone and weaker material. This effect can burst open doors and break open graves. PeTe(He) 25 (Base 3, +2 Voice, +2 Group, +1 affect stone, +1 requisite) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost)

Rouse the Dead, 3 points, Init -5, Corpus: Vidofnir's crow is loud enough to literally wake the dead. Any human corpse in the vicinity is animated, although the cockerel rarely directs them to do anything other than stumble about. ReCo 45 (Base 10, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +2 Group, +1 size) Greater Power (45 levels, -2 Might cost)

Stunning Cry, 0 points, Init 0, Mentem: Everyone hearing Vidofnir crow is stunned by the sheer volume. This leaves them confused as if affected by *Confusion of the Numbed Will* (ArM5, page 151). This power activates simultaneously with any of his other three powers. ReMe 20 (Base 4, +1 Diam, +3 Sound) Greater Power (20 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init)

Vis: 4 pawns of Imagination, in tongue

Appearance: An immense cockerel, ten feet tall from toes to comb and with a twenty foot wingspan. His feathers are a glossy black with sooty-red highlights; his comb, wattles, and eyes are fiery red. His powerful voice mean that R: Voice and T: Sound effects extend as far as 300 paces.

Divine Might of 25; magical versions have similar levels of power.

There are many versions of the legend of the Seven Sleepers. The Norse version tells of the seven sons of Mimir, who helped him craft the world from Ymir's corpse. These seven are sometimes called the *dvergjar*, or dwarfs, but there is nothing diminutive about them in the original stories. Once creation was done, the sons of Mimir went to sleep, fated to awaken at Ragnarok and protect mankind from extinction in the events that follow. Both Welsh and Irish legends tell of champions of men, cast into sleep in preparation for the day that they are needed again.

The story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus is one of the most popular medieval Christian legends. Seven noble youths, fleeing the persecutions of Christians instituted by emperor Decius (249–251), took refuge in a cave near Ephesus. Praying for guidance, they sank into a deep sleep, waking hundreds of years later when belief in God and the eventual resurrection of the faithful was waning. Their appearance re-

newed faith in the eventual resurrection of the dead. The seven returned to their cave, where they will sleep until Judgment Day. On that day they will return to protect the faithful from the Antichrist. The version in the Qur'an is very similar, except for the addition of a dog called Katmir.

Other versions can be found among the Greek, Slavic, German, Syrian, and Jewish folk tales. The names of the Seven Sleepers are variously given as:

- **Norse:** Dvalinn (or Sindri), Dáinn (or Brokk), Alfrigg, Berling, Gerrer, Dúneyr, Durathrór
- **Christian:** Maximianus, Malchus, Martinianus, Dionysos, Ioannes, Serapion, Constantinus
- **Greek:** Achillides, Diomedes, Diogenos, Probatos, Stephanos, Sambatos, Kyriakos
- **Irish:** Fionn mac Cumhaill, Goll mac Morna, Conán mac Morna, Caílte mac Rónain, Diarmuid Ua Duibhne, Lugaid Stronghand, Liath Luachra
- **Muslim:** Mixelmina, Tamlikha, Martool, Daryun, Ninom, Sarin, Qasentina
- **Welsh:** Arthur, Cai, Bedwyr, Gwalchmei, Gwrhwr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd, Menw son of Tairgwaeedd, Cynddyllig Gyfarwydd

The Second Titanomachy

As soon as the third cockerel crows, the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Some supernal assessor takes stock of Loki's actions and judges whether he has done enough to bring about the Titanomachy. Much of what happens next occurs at a level incomprehensible to mankind; the powers of the world go to war against one another and mankind must shelter while the battle rages.

Loki Fails

Through the actions of the player characters (among others), Loki's decades of planning could fail. When the cockerels crow, the world seems to pause for a long breath, as if taking stock. Birds are silenced, men pause, the heavens seem to stop turning. Then everything resumes as before. The world carries on unchanged. Loki's scream of rage echoes across the world; it can be heard in all four corners of the earth. He has just a short time before his faerie jailers find him and haul him back to his prison in Nifelhel and he uses those moments to enact his revenge on those who thwarted him. If the player characters were instrumental in the failure of Ragnarok, then they become his target; otherwise Loki's wrath may be spent on Durenmar (as the seat of the Order), Rome (as the home of the Church), or any other foe that vigorously opposed him.

The player characters deserve a showdown; their moment of victory should not be marked with a failure of something to happen. If this attack is by an Aspect of Loki, it is the most powerful he can manage, one with a combination of powers of Loftur Laufeyjasonur and the Emissary of Fire. They just need to fight him for as long as it takes the faerie gods to arrive and drag Loki back to the Magic Realm in chains. Even if Loki does not concentrate his wrath on the player characters, he still directs one of his allies at them — a mighty giant like Fjalar or Eggther, or a powerful Muspellil that they may have faced before. This should be a suitably climactic battle.

A long period of clearing up follows.

HERMETIC SLEEPERS

At the option of the storyguide, the Order of Hermes could have its own Seven Sleepers. Of the fourteen individuals present at the Founding of the Order (twelve founders plus Trianoma and Pralix), only six deaths are confirmed in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* —Flambeau, Guernicus, Jerbiton, Mercere, Tremere, and Trianoma. This leaves eight candidates from which you can assemble a Hermetic septet. When the seven worthies step forth from the Twilight Void and present themselves at Tribunal (a Grand Tribunal would be fitting) with a message of impending doom, the Order cannot deny the coming apocalypse. However, the return of the Founders is bound to throw the Order into confusion. Their message delivered, the Founders may disagree with the current structure of their respective Houses. Those Houses without a Returned Founder might be disadvantaged by having no representation among the cabal of seven. Maybe those who deny the identity of the Hermetic Sleepers are right— but if so, who are they and what is their goal?

Other Plans: Three Cockerels Crow

Of all Loki's plans, this one lacks alternatives. This is the precipitating event that either starts Ragnarok or else reveals that all Loki's efforts have been for naught. As long as at least one of Fjalar, Heimdallur, and Vidofnir is still alive, Loki can substitute other beings for the original 'cockerels' and such substitution is amenable to the prophecy as long as the Jotun has met with significant success in its other clauses. Unmaking the Gambanteinn (see earlier) is a much greater setback and might cause Loki to abandon his plans for a century or two while he regroups his efforts.

Depending upon Loki's successes, the dead may still walk the earth, the Magogoli could still threaten Mythic Europe, and so on. Whether the characters involve themselves in this or take a well-deserved rest is a matter for the individual saga, but the storyguide should not be stingy with rewarding them for saving the world.

Loki Succeeds

The seal of the world breaks and the Magic Realm begins to bleed into the mundane world. The sympathetic magic of this event is so great that all bindings fail, all knots untie, and all locks open. This effect lasts for the duration of the main conflict — about three months. Loki sets sail on an immense ship embarking from the Magic Realm; the ship is packed with the souls of the pagan dead. Meanwhile, giants and monsters emerge from the east; the Midgard Serpent rears its head in the west; and the fire giants and *jinn* amass in the south. The gods fall one by one; the armies of dead heroes are not enough to defeat the forces of Magic. The aurora borealis burns in the sky throughout the battle and vortices of colored fire descend to burn away Faerie auras as their guardians are defeated. Loki himself is killed by Heimdallur, but it was a sacrifice for which he was always prepared.

Humans miss most of the battle, of course. If they have heeded the advice of the Seven Sleepers, they are sheltering in their holy places. All Divine and Magic auras prove refuges against the war of the powers; sheltering within a church itself is not actually necessary as long as one remains within the sound of Church bells (that is, within the Dominion), although rare incursions into the Dominion by fleeing faeries or their magical pursuers make trips outside of sacred places occasionally perilous. Those who venture beyond these refuges risk getting caught up in the warp of wild magic. Those forced by necessity or foolhardiness to brave unprotected areas while the gods are at war are never seen again, or return with laden with Warping, or perhaps even The Gift.

A New Dawn

The Twilight of the Gods rages for a season, although it takes several years for all the skirmishes to die down. During this time all the powerful faeries are hunted down and slain, or else flung into the Faerie Realm and imprisoned there for "eternity." Magic floods into the world from the breach in the Magic Realm, before it closes again.

The Magic Realm

The denizens of the Magic Realm are the major beneficiaries of the second Titanomachy. The Titans reclaim their rightful place as the governors of God's universe and their power is felt directly on the earth without the faerie gods siphoning off much of it to support their glamour.

WILD MAGIC

The world is a very different place following the Titanomachy. There is more untamed magic in the sublunar world than there once was and this has several consequences. Since magic becomes much more immediate to the general populace, Magic Lore becomes a General Ability rather than an Arcane Ability, although it cannot be used untrained. Thanks to the abundance of wild magic, Acclimation no longer bothers creatures from the Magic Realm.

Magic auras become more common. All Magic auras of level 9 or less increase by one point. Areas of wilderness outside of the trappings of human habitation gain a Magic aura of at least 1 and areas of pristine wilderness often have a higher aura than this. These auras attract (or are perhaps the cause of) an abundance of magical creatures, mostly with minor powers or Beasts of Virtue. Passage into Magic regiones and the Magic Realm is easier than it once was: reduce all Ease Factors for Regio Sight rolls for Magic regiones (ArM5 page 189) and travel through Boundaries and Vestiges (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 25) by 6.

Creatures and man-made objects and structures that do not reside within a supernatural aura, or else hide within a Faerie aura, are warped by the tumultu-

ous outpouring of magical energy during the Titanomachy. The most common effect of this warping is the gaining of the (Form) Monstrosity Flaw (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 48), but any other effect of warping is possible, including gaining the Transformed (Being) Virtue and acquiring a Magic Might. About one in five of all animals and humans exposed are affected in some way. Many magical creatures are created during the Titanomachy, usually through the amalgam of different animal parts into one body. House Criamon sees this as vindication of the Enigma, claiming that the current state was preceded by one of free-floating organs which then combined — sometimes wrongly — to create living beings as Order became dominant over Strife.

About one in two inanimate objects exposed to the wild magic is warped by it. Such objects become less like a sign of human artifice and more like a magical thing. A bridge may be intangible except by the light of the moon; a castle might have turned from stone into living wood; a plowshare might move on its own; and so on. Affected objects typically gain a single enchantment but certain items become Magic Things instead. The latter acquire a Might Score appropriate to the item's size and magical powers, and gain a measure of self-awareness.

Vis also becomes more common. Most vis sources see a modest increase in the amount of vis they yield and more vis sources spring up. A greater proportion of this vis is Spell-Like or Lesser Enchantment Vis (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 120).

Hedge traditions blossom with the influx of wild magic, at least once the problems of the Golden Chain have been overcome (see later). The Gift becomes approximately twice as common as it once was. Further, all Gifted wizards with Difficult Arts or Supernatural Abilities may now increase them as normal Arts. The powers of unGifted magicians remain unaltered but the Initiation of Mysteries becomes easier for the unGifted: an unGifted initiate is no longer required to take an Ordeal Flaw as part of the Initiation process and are also able to self-initiate Virtues. Finally, some people find their rituals and superstitions suddenly gain real (if meager) power, developing the Folk Magic Virtue (see Insert). With more people having Magic Lore, Enrichment of Things of Virtue (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 124) becomes more common.

THE GOLDEN CHAIN

Use of magic is now directly regulated by the Titans. They are the conduits through which magic flows from the Magic Realm; they pass it to their subordinates, who parcel it out to their subordinates, and so on down the great chain of being. Only characters connected to this 'Golden Chain' can sequester the power necessary to fuel their spells. The Golden Chain has a strict hierarchy, with Daimons at the top arranged in order of Might, followed by other beings and objects with a Magic Might score arranged in order of Might. Next are humans with The Gift, followed by beings and objects with intrinsic magical powers but no Might score (including vis and places with Magic auras), followed by beings and objects with acquired magical powers (including unGifted humans).

Immediately following the Titanomachy most magicians aligned to the Magic Realm find they cannot cast spells, use Supernatural Abilities or make enchantments. This affects everyone from the local wise woman with Second Sight right the way up to Hermetic archmagi. The only exceptions are those who receive their powers from spirits, such as spirit votaries, theurgists (including Hermetic theurgists), and learned magicians who Entreat the Magic Powers (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 87). Characters with a Magic Might score are also unaffected. All these types of magicians are tapped into the Golden Chain and other wizards need to follow suit to restore their powers.

To restore one's former power characters must find a way to connect to the Golden Chain, specifically a being or creature higher up the chain than themselves.

UnGifted characters are at the bottom of the chain, so they can restore what minor magics they possess quite simply, for example by being in a Magic aura, carrying a pawn of vis, or touching a being with a Magic Might. Characters with The Gift are higher up on the Golden Chain than such things, and must instead connect via a pact to a being with a Magic Might. The entity chosen must be intelligent to pass on the magic they receive from the Chain, and it must be powerful enough to supply sufficient magic to the Gifted character.

These pacts can be formed *ad hoc* via theurgy or Entreating the Magic Powers, which is why such magics still work. A more permanent solution can be found through a formal relationship with a Magic being or Daimon. The character's Casting Totals and Lab Totals cannot be higher than the Might of the creature with which one has made a pact, so most magi will want to enter relationships with powerful Daimons and similar creatures. There is no generic method by which this can be achieved; each maga must contact and bargain with the chosen entity, probably one that matches her interests or magic. This can be treated as a form of Initiation (*The Mysteries Revised Edition*, Chapter 2): the maga may need to undergo quests, sacrifices, and ordeals in order to attract the attention of the patron and persuade it to enter into a compact. This process is likely to leave an indelible mark of the patron's power on the maga, represented by a Hermetic Flaw such as Restriction, Necessary Condition, or Study Requirement appropriate to the being involved, or else a Story Flaw representing the duties or responsibilities imposed by the patron. If you are using *The Mysteries Revised Edition* to guide this process, then the Target Ease Factor for the Initiation should be equal to two-thirds of the patron's Might. Once the pact is forged, the character discovers that her magic works with the simple inclusion of her patron's name in spellcasting and enchantment.

The requirement to connect with the Golden Chain is only applicable for powers aligned to the Magic Realm. Practitioners of Divine powers are unaffected and those who use Infernal powers are only limited with respect to their inability to use Goetic bindings and ablations on Magic creatures (see later). Faerie wizards can no longer practice magic at all (see The Faerie Realm, later). A maga can

New Virtue: Folk Magic

Minor, Supernatural

You are capable of performing very minor acts of magic through your knowledge of scraps of occult lore. Choose one (Realm) Lore which is the key Ability for this magic; you may learn this Ability at character creation even if you are normally unable to take Arcane Abilities. The choice of (Realm) Lore also determines which supernatural Realm your magic is aligned to for the purposes of aura modifiers. You can only create spells in one narrow area, which must be one of the following five options:

Abjuration: Creates a ward against animals or supernatural creature. Uses the Rego Animal and Rego Vim guidelines.

Craft Magic: Duplicates mundane craft in an instant without need of tools, but does require raw materials. Uses the Rego Animal, Rego Herbam, or Rego Terram guidelines for one type of craft (see *Covenants* page 49 for more on Rego craft magic).

Divination: Acquire magical senses which detect health, wealth, and mental state. Uses the Intellego Corpus, Intellego Mentem, and Intellego Terram guidelines.

Healing: Grants a Recovery bonus for either wounds or diseases, and aids the

birthing of children and livestock. Uses the Creo Corpus or Creo Animal guidelines. Infernal Lore cannot be used to produce this type of effect.

Evil Eye: Causes minor acts of mischief such as pain, blight of crops, hair loss, sneezing, and so forth. Uses the Perdo Corpus, Perdo Animal, or Perdo Herbam guidelines. Divine Lore cannot be used to produce this type of effect.

To cast a spell you must expend a fatigue level, whether the spell succeeds or fails. You must also spend at least 15 minutes preparing the spell, during which time you need unbroken concentration and access to your "magical" materials (while necessary, these materials offer no benefit to the casting). The spell is designed exactly like a Hermetic spell. Your Casting Total is equal to (Stamina + (Realm) Lore + Aura modifier + stress die) / 2. Penetration is calculated in the normal fashion: Casting Total – Spell Level + Penetration modifiers. You may pick this Virtue more than once, to acquire expertise in a different category of spells. Each time you choose this Virtue, you can align it to the same Realm as before or pick a different one, although a character cannot have access to both the Divine and Infernal Realms.

avoid making a pact by realigning their magic to a new Realm: a powerful demon is capable of replacing The Gift with The False Gift (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 124) in exchange for his soul. Alternatively, a magus could instead Initiate Holy Magic (*Realms of Power: the Divine*, page 66), a difficult but virtuous path.

ALL BONDS BREAK

When Loki set sail from the Magic Realm, he began a series of events that set the Titans free, and this echoes down the Golden Chain. All bonds constraining magical creatures are instantly broken and all wards against magical creatures fail. Ongoing spells and enchantments of this type cease to work and new castings prove impotent against creatures from the Magic Realm. This is a permanent effect of the Titanomachy that affects supernatural powers aligned to any Realm except the Divine and applies to targets belonging to the Magic Realm.

Subsequently, all summonings, wards, and banishments no longer work against Magic creatures that are higher up the Golden Chain than the originator of the effect. A Daimon can still summon a magical spirit, and a creature with a Magic Might of 20 can affect a creature with a Magic Might of 5, but even once he has restored his ability to cast spells a magus still cannot use Perdo magic to destroy the

Might of a Magic creature, or Rego spells to ward against it. Humans can use theurgy to contact (but not summon) Daimons who may then provide such effects on lesser beings. Spells that target the creature and not its Might are still effective — a magical creature can be captured in a magically-conjured cage, or burned by a *Ball of Abyssal Flame* — but even these spells tend to erode over time if they restrain or compel.

For example, a Magic wolf might be able to break an enchanted rope that an Infernal wolf of the same strength cannot.

Most damaging to the Order of Hermes is the universal failure of the *Aegis of the Hearth* to affect any creature with a Magic Might, but nearly as devastating is the breaking of all familiar bonds to creatures with a Magic Might. If a creature gained Intelligence through the familiar

Impacts on Non-Hermetic Magicians

Learned Magicians who Entreat the Magic Powers are already connected to the Golden Chain, as are Theurgical Elementalists, Muspelli (who derive their power direct from the titans) and Soqotran sorcerers (all of whom have Magical allies, except for the Myrrh tribe, who need to find new patrons). Other wizards have to find a patron in the same way as Hermetic magi.

Rune magicians might seek out the Jotun Mimir and his sister Urdur, who taught Odin the runes in the first place. Folk witches might approach Titans such as Hecate or Gullveig, and Gruagachan can approach their eponymous god, who may have also been a Titan. Amazon sorceresses might approach the ghost of Viea and be infected by her madness. The

mostly Christian Virgilian wizards are in the same position as magi and might find a pact distasteful or idolatrous. This might spell the end of the new tradition, or else someone might quest for the Daimon of Virgil himself.

Most severely affected are goetic sorcerers and sahirns, who can no longer summon or compel Magic spirits due to the breaking of bonds and find that most Faerie spirits have been destroyed. The impact on the Order of Solomon could be devastating (see *The Cradle and the Crescent*, Chapter 3 for the reliance of sahirns on bound spirits). These individuals might resort to dealing with Infernal spirits, or else make a pact with a powerful Magic spirit such as a *genius loci* with many subordinate spirits it can lend to sorcerers.

Pacts with Daimon Magi

Through various esoteric Mysteries, Hermetic magi are capable of becoming Daimons (see *The Mysteries Revised Edition* for details). Furthermore, magi who entered Final Twilight may have earned themselves a place in the Golden Chain. As magi search for means to restore their magic, they may discover that they can make pacts with ancient magi. If the Seven Hermetic Sleepers were employed earlier in the saga, then these could offer this service for their followers. This process might result in the formation of new Houses as Mystery cults or societates form around powerful Daimonic magi.

Story Seeds

The transformation of the natural order gives rise to many possible stories.

THE TOOL BECOMES THE MASTER

A powerful magus seriously endangers the Order though blatant and violent use of magic on mundanes. The characters are witnesses to some of these acts and forced to do something before matters get out of hand. In truth this is not the magus in question; instead, his talisman has become a Magic Thing and the magus is dead, in Twilight, or otherwise incapacitated by this traumatic event. Due to its connection to the magus, the talisman believes that it is him, although it has a warped view of the world. The talisman is able to access

any of its enchantments as powers, and may develop more based on its creator's signature spells. It can also create either an illusory or artificial body, but has not yet developed speech.

USHANT'S WOE

The covenant of Fudarus has three powerful spirits bound to its service. These are released when the bonds holding them are destroyed and the spirits of storm, mist, and concealment embark on a rampage across Brittany. Woe betide any covenants or vis sources in their way. The damage they do to Fudarus before they leave may solve House Tytalus's primus crisis by killing one candidate, or start a new one by killing both.

bond it retains that Characteristic, but it loses all Bond Scores and any effects empowered into the bond. With the familial bond gone, familiar and magus no longer share the True Friend Virtue. This is likely to be a tragic event in the life of both the magus and the familiar and many will part ways following this event, unable to cope with the massive hole left in their lives.

The Faerie Realm

Faerie power has dramatically reduced since the Titanomachy. Faeries can no longer draw power from human imaginations and emotions. The gates into Faerie itself have closed, divorcing the fae from the stories that sustain them. Tales abound that the false gods are dead and new stories about their rebirth, resurrection, or rescue are ineffectual at restoring the gods.

DECIDE

Many, if not most, of the powerful faeries were killed in the Titanomachy itself, or hunted down subsequently. All of the major pantheons have been slaughtered, or were inside Faerie when the gates to the realm closed. As a consequence, the most powerful faeries still abroad in the world have a Faerie Might around 20, although this could be higher in certain auspicious places or times.

Those humans who still served as priests to the pagan gods felt their connection to their gods severed as they were put to the sword and gods-given powers such as faerie wizardry and rites using faerie Methods and Powers no longer yield any results. In addition, all magic relying on charms — including the Folk Mysteries of House Merinita (*Houses of Hermes*:

Mystery Cults, pages 96–99) and charmed Virtues (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 104–105) — can no longer call upon the power of stories and cease to work.

NO FAERIE AURAS

Mirroring the increase in Magic auras (see earlier), there is a matching decline in the prevalence of Faerie auras. Most are destroyed during the Titanomachy itself by the shifting multicolored flames of the aurora borealis. All Faerie auras of level 1 or 2 vanish entirely. Those of level 3 to 5 become Magic auras of level 1. Those of level 6 to 8 become Magic auras of level 2 and those of 9 or more become Magic auras of level 3. A magical guardian is installed by the Titans into any former Faerie aura of level 9 or 10; these are places where glamour was formerly very strong and the Titans seek to prevent them from becoming rallying points for the faerie survivors.

All faerie regiones collapse, leaving behind a Magic aura with a level determined by the level of the highest former Faerie aura on the site. The Faerie Realm cannot be reached; the former Threshold has become an impenetrable wall. Any powerful faeries who survived the Titanomachy are imprisoned in Faerie, unmolested but starved of vitality.

Covenants in Faerie auras or regiones are left intact by this event, although they might be scarred by the aureoreal flames if they were heavily Warped or otherwise infused with the power of Faerie.

VITALITY IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

Those faeries that remain are forced to form a bond with humanity to gain protection against wild magic. Unlike before, vitality is a precious commodity that can no longer be harvested from casual adherence to folk rituals or legends whispered at the dead of night. Instead, a faerie requires a formal exchange; they must receive the products of human craft or else a sacrifice of time or life's blood. This can no longer be stolen or involuntarily provided, it must be knowingly donated by a human or a community of humans. The gift must be repeated at least once a year to sustain the faerie. In order to earn the gift that they need, the faerie must usually agree to perform some task on behalf of the humans it serves. This is rarely mutually beneficial: the faerie is usually the servant of the humans, using its glamour for the good of the community. Some faeries are able to pose a physical threat and demand a yearly tribute but the humans will eventually discover that they can just withhold the tribute and cause the faerie harm. Sometimes, rarely, these relationships between faeries and humans approach something akin to friendship, with the benefits to either side being nearly equal.

Faeries incapable of forging or sustaining a formal bond with humans cannot maintain their glamour and lose one point of Might every year. They also lose a point of Virtue, which they can forestall by accepting a Flaw. Virtues affecting their physical form are the last to go, and many accept the Flaw of Intangible Flesh in a last ditch effort to maintain their existence. The faerie literally fades from this world. Faeries will probably die out with the current generation of humans.

Realm Interaction Table

The Realm Interaction Table has changed with the weakening of the Faerie Realm's influence on the world and the burgeoning power of the Magic Realm.

	Magic Power	Divine Power	Faerie Power	Infernal Power
Magic Aura	+ aura	no effect	– aura	– aura
Divine Aura	– (2 x aura)	+ aura	– (4 x aura)	– (5 x aura)
Infernal Aura	– aura	no effect	– (2 x aura)	+ aura

The Divine and Infernal Realms

The Dominion has remained unaffected by the Titanomachy; similarly divine places are untouched. God still reigns supreme over Creation; there's just been a change in middle management. Unfortunately, the Devil and his works were likewise unaffected by the war; there was little additional opportunity for the corruption of mortal souls.

Society After Ragnarok

The Poetic Edda refers to the post-apocalyptic world as Gimlé, a world of prosperity free from the dictates of fate and unbound by prophecy. While this state might be true for creatures of magic, for those unaligned to the Magic Realm Gimlé is a more perilous world than that which preceded Ragnarok.

Those who followed the advice of the Seven Sleepers and retreated to churches, mosques, and synagogues during the Titanomachy survive the tumultuous battle. Following the cessation of the fighting, humankind emerges blinking from its refuges into a changed world. Although cities still stand and crops still grow and the heavenly spheres still turn, life will never be the same again. The Dominion remains a safe haven, for few Magic creatures care to intrude upon areas claimed by God.

Beyond the sound of the Church bells, the world has changed. During the Titanomachy, there was a gradual reversion of the world to its pristine state, evidenced by the warping of unprotected structures. Whole castles may have disappeared; bridges now demand payment; and roads resent people treading upon them. Magic auras now dominate in the wildernesses between towns and they are filled with all manner of dangerous beasts and spirits.

Travel outside the safety of the Dominion becomes the business of the desperate, the determined, and the foolish. A new cadre of merchant-adventurers emerges from the confusion. These trade between towns, carrying messages and occasional travelers. They employ their own merce-

naries, who usually include a magician, to keep the wagons safe. Employing the merchant-adventurers is a costly business, but guilds and companies form among tradesmen who share the cost between them.

THE ORDER OF HERMES

The Order of Hermes is initially thrown into confusion by the Titanomachy, bereft of its capacity to work magic. Many crisis Tribunals are held and solutions gradually emerge (see earlier); until then, magi are forced to rely on preexisting enchantments, Spell-Like and Lesser Enchantment Vis, Enrichment of Objects of Virtue, and other working magic. Once the problems of the Golden Chain have been ameliorated or solved, the Order can look outwards again. None of the improvements to the way in which magic is acquired makes a big difference to the Order of Hermes, since all that has happened is that other magicians now enjoy some of the benefits that only magi had before. Some magical traditions, particularly those who quickly solved the problem of the Golden Chain, may have grown fast and gathered power thanks to the influx of wild magic. Groups like the Folk Witches may even rise to challenge the Order — through sheer numbers if not raw power.

Despite the growth in power of hedge wizards, the Order remains supreme over these upstarts, in the short term at least. Hermetic magic is still the most comprehensive magical system in Mythic Europe and magi are the only tradition that possess universal Magic Resistance and protection from The Gift. The latter is perhaps the strongest asset the Order has; while the other traditions will grow in power, they can never be the political entity that the Order is without some means of avoiding the social penalty of each other's Gift.

A major change is wrought in the Order by the increase in the prevalence of The Gift. Magi now have little trouble locating apprentices and can afford to be more choosy about which ones they take. The Order finds itself with an excess of Gifted children who cannot be

trained in Hermetic magic due to lack of available masters. Rather than lose them to hedge traditions it is proposed to the Grand Tribunal that the Order of Hermes joins forces with the Learned Magicians (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 5). Under the proposal, this hedge tradition incorporates as a trade guild providing magical services for mundanes. The Order shares its resources, including Gifted apprentices, and the Learned Magicians make their unGifted members available as companions and lab assistants to the Order. This arrangement is mutually beneficial for both parties.

House Merinita undergoes a profound change following the Titanomachy. With the slaughter of fae and the closing of Arcadia's gates, Faerie Magic becomes inoperative and all but the nature mysteries of the house are lost. The primus killed himself and many Merinita followed suit, unable to adapt to a world lacking glamour. Covenants residing in former Faerie auras are wrecked with warping; one even transformed into a dragon and flew away! Those Merinita magi who survive desperately look for ways to preserve the fae but most believe that like the fae, the days of House Merinita are numbered.

House Criamon seem somewhat disappointed that the world didn't actually end. They were expecting the Titanomachy to break the cycle of time and that magi would be free from the shackles of fate. After years of discussion, the House concludes that time did indeed end at the moment that the Titans, the personifications of time, broke free. The world existed timeless in a state of pure Chaos and then time restarted and love brought order to the Chaos. The Criamon were insufficiently pure to maintain their existence during the time of the Chaos and missed their opportunity to escape time. They are phlegmatic about their failure. They have adjusted their eschatology, reorganized their baffling mysteries and are preparing for the *kataklysmos* due in several thousand years. Or, perhaps, they decide to make their own attempt to bring about the end of time.

Chapter Six

Teste David



This book marks the end of Mythic Europe as we know it. It is the last book in the *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* line that I will produce as Line Editor. I have done everything I wanted to do with *Ars Magica*, and it is time for me to move on, to let people with new ideas guide the game and its world into the future.

I first encountered *Ars Magica* through the review of the first edition in *Dragon* magazine. As I lived in the UK, and small-press RPGs were not readily available there in the late 1980s, the first edition I was able to read was the second edition, and I loved it. This was still before most people had the internet, so in 1991, I sent an actual, physical query letter to White Wolf. Mark Rein•Hagen replied, enthusiastically, and the first thing I wrote professionally was "The Sorceress' Tower," for *Ars Magica*, published in *White Wolf Magazine* in 1993.

I contributed to the third edition *Wizard's Grimoire*, and by pure chance I was online when Wade Racine announced to the Berkeley *Ars Magica* mailing list that *Wizards of the Coast* were canceling *Ars Magica*. As a result, I quickly got caught up in the fan efforts to do something to save the game, including starting a mailing list that we called the Secret Masters of *Ars Magica*. That got me an email from the *real* Secret Masters of *Ars Magica*, inviting me to join their list, and I became deeply involved in fourth edition.

When, in 2001, John Nephew asked me if I was interested in becoming Line Editor, I said yes. I started at the beginning of 2002, so I have been Line

Editor for 14 years, and produced almost 50 books for the game, including over 40 for fifth edition.

I came to the job determined to make the game as good as it could be: rules that supported an *Ars Magica* style of play, accurate history, and historically inspired myth, all presented so as to be immediately useful in a game. After years of writing for the line, I already knew that it wouldn't be easy, but, of course, it was even harder than I had anticipated. To achieve it, I needed to recruit knowledgeable authors and keen playtesters. The quality of fifth edition is largely due to their contributions.

The authors had to read large amounts of medieval history, distill it down into a useful draft, design and apply complex game mechanics, revise the draft in line with my comments, revise the draft in line with playtest comments again, and in some cases repeat even more times; a few books had four rounds of playtesting. That is a lot of work for a very small amount of money, so I am profoundly grateful for the endurance, enthusiasm, and erudition of the people who have written for me over the years.

Playtesters had a slightly easier role, but, on the other hand, they didn't get paid at all. Their dedication and diligence were also essential to the quality of the final books. The only way to catch all problems is to have a lot of people look at the draft, and the playtesters did that for us, over many years. Sometimes they had to read revised drafts that still contained things they had criticized, because we

did not do everything they asked, but their input was essential, and I would like to thank them for all their work.

In recent years, I have felt that my main role was to keep the production system running, so that the authors and playtesters could work their magic and produce the books. In the same way, I want to thank Atlas for not micro-managing me, and for making sure that art, layout, printing, warehousing, and distribution all happened without requiring me to do anything. Sometimes, they went above and beyond, as when they printed a very short run of *Apprentices* with the dedication to the authors' (and my) children, which had been omitted from the main printing. It has been a pleasure working for them.

Looking back over *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*, I am very pleased with what we have produced. I think it is a very good role-playing game, with a rich background and effective mechanics. It is not to everyone's taste, but it is what I had hoped to produce. Is it perfect? Of course not. However, I am not sure that we could actually make it better; there are limits to what human beings can achieve.

That is why I am retiring. We have created a game line that I think is about as good as we could make it, and it fulfills my vision for *Ars Magica*. Its future lies with people who have a different vision, and can bring things to the game that I would not even imagine.

David Chart

Ars Magica Line Editor, 2002–2015