

Arts Magica

# Thrice-Told Tales



by Andersen,  
MacGregor, Romer,  
Ryan & Shirley

# Credits

**AUTHORS:** Christian Roesenjaer Andersen (Servants of God), David MacGregor (Earth and Sky), Christian Jensen Romer (Summer Is Icumen In), Matt Ryan (The Mound), Mark Shirley (The Traitor's Game)

**DEVELOPMENT, EDITING, & PROJECT MANAGEMENT:** David Chart

**ART DIRECTION & LAYOUT ASSISTANCE:** Cam Banks

**LAYOUT:** Joseph Hanna

**PROOFREADING & PUBLISHER:** John Nephew

**COVER ILLUSTRATION:** Christian St. Pierre

**CARTOGRAPHY:** Matt Ryan

**INTERIOR ART:** Brett Barkley, Jason Cole, Jenna Fowler, Jethro Lentle, Christian N. St. Pierre

**ARS MAGICA FIFTH EDITION TRADE DRESS:** J. Scott Reeves

**FIRST ROUND PLAYTESTERS:** Jason Brennan, Justin Brennan, Elisha Campbell, Leon Bullock, Peter Ryan, Chris Barrett, John A Edge, Christian Jensen Romer, Jonathan Elcock, Lloyd Graney, Peter Hiley, Phillip Jenkins, Thomas Nowell, Kevin Sides, Jason Fryer, Matt Dyson, Emily Dyson, Donna Giltrap, Malcolm Harbrow, Aaron Hicks, Richard Love, Helge Rager Furuseth, Martin Granseth, Ola Hulbak, Karl Trygve Kalleberg, André Neergaard, Rasmus Andreasen, Rasmus Strandgaard Sørensen, Martin Lindhardt, Christian Rosenjaer Andersen, Pelle Kofod

**SECOND ROUND PLAYTESTERS:** Alexander Bader, Tanja Bader, Claus Coschurba, Julia Coschurba, Peter Coschurba, Mark Pesendorfer, Marco Serra, Jason Brennan, Justin Brennan, Elisha Campbell, Robert Major, Leon Bullock, Peter Ryan, Chris Barrett, Donna Giltrap, Malcolm Harbrow, Aaron Hicks, Richard Love, Mads Jessen, Rasmus Strandgaard Sørensen, Rasmus Andreasen, Martin Lindhardt, Pelle Kofod, Christian Rosenjaer Andersen

**THIRD ROUND PLAYTESTERS:** Leon Bullock, Peter Ryan, Chris Barrett, Donna Giltrap, Malcolm Harbrow, Aaron Hicks, Richard Love, Helge Rager Furuseth, Håvard Futsæter, Ola Hulbak, Karl Trygve Kalleberg, André Neergaard, Christian Rosenjaer Andersen, Pelle Kofod

**FOURTH ROUND PLAYTESTERS:** Christian Jensen Romer, Lisa Langood,

Phil Jenkins, Thomas Nowell, Peter Hiley, Lloyd Graney, André Neergaard, Helge Rager Furuseth, Karl Trygve Kalleberg, Ola Hulbak, Håvard Futsæter, Pelle Kofod, Jeff Bassett, Paul Grosser, Patrick M. Murphy, Rick Shafer

### AUTHOR BIOS

**Christian Rosenjaer Andersen** is an engineer living in Denmark. This is his fifth contribution to the *Ars Magica* line, but he is unlikely to quit his day job. His part in this book is dedicated to his continually supportive wife, and his rapidly growing son and daughter. There is still time to mold them into being gamers.

**David MacGregor** gratefully dedicates this writing to his ever-patient wife and daughter. Two ladies who have been the cornerstones in the development of the Criamon / Jerbiton Dyskolos Covenant... of Wisconsin. He would also like to thank David Chart for his guidance and patience!

**Christian Jensen Romer** lives in Cheltenham, England with three cats, Marmalade, Hansine & Cuddles. Each year he hosts an *Ars Magica* convention, Grand Tribunal, to which you are cordially invited. Find out more at [www.grandtribunal.org](http://www.grandtribunal.org).

**Matt Ryan** lives in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, several thousand miles and 800 years from the swampy bogs of 13th century Ireland. "The Mound" combines his fondness for ancient Irish mythology with old school role-playing games. He'd like to thank the many playtesters who helped mold "The Mound" from its initial presentation into its final form, and the encouragement of his fellow authors, his son August, and his sweetheart KC.

**Mark Shirley** is a biological modeller who lives in the north of England. Mark first ran the stories (or variants thereof) which are his contribution to this book in 2004. It didn't end as well for those characters as he hopes it ends for yours, since the events therein resulted in repercussions in the saga that still reverberate today (yes, they are still going: 57 game years and fifteen real years at the time of writing!). Mark would like to thank Andrew, Camo, and Roddy for their part in that story.

*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](http://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](http://forum.atlas-games.com).

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	6	What to Do with the Ruins?.....20	
EARTH AND SKY.....	6	INTERIM.....20	
THE MOUND .....	6	STORY II: WATER'S VISTA .....	20
SERVANTS OF GOD .....	6	Currents of Caelus' Octahedron .....	20
SUMMER IS ICUMEN IN .....	6	Within Caelus' Octahedron .....	20
THE TRAITOR'S GAME.....	6	The Mithraeum at the Inlet.....21	
<b>Earth and Sky</b>	7	<i>Plan 1: The Rite of Admission</i> .....	21
Expected Sequence of the Stories.....	7	<i>Plan 2: Stealth Mission</i> .....	21
PRE-HISTORY .....	7	<i>Plan 3: Forcing Compliance</i> .....	21
Dramatis Personae .....	8	<i>Revenant Grades</i> .....	21
The Brotherhood of Zenodorus .....	8	Onward!.....22	
<i>The History of the Cult</i> .....	9	The Itius.....23	
<i>Behold The Presence</i> <i>Of The Symbol</i> .....	9	<i>Above Deck</i> .....24	
<i>Forge The Lord</i> <i>Of The Structure</i> .....	9	<i>Below Deck</i> .....24	
<i>Desperations Of True Reverence</i> .....	9	THE GRASS CROWN .....	24
<i>My Symbol</i> <i>Shall Come Unto Me</i> .....	9	Option: Piloting the Ship .....	24
<i>Beneath Me, Folly Of Thetis!</i> .....	10	The Return.....24	
STORY I: AN ANGRY WOUND .....	10	A Petition.....25	
Expanding Ombres .....	10	Option: A New Home.....25	
The Hook: Destiny Comes Knocking .....	10	INTERIM.....25	
<i>General Knowledge</i> <i>about Ombres</i> .....	11	STORY III: THE EMPEROR RETURNS.....25	
Local Beliefs about Ombres L'assomption.....	12	RETRIEVING THE CROWN.....25	
Ombres L'assomption.....	12	THE RISE OF THE COLOSSUS.....25	
<i>The Perfidious Aura</i> .....	13	The Pit of Nero.....26	
<i>Denizens of</i> <i>Ombres L'assomption</i> .....	13	Inside the Pit of Nero .....	26
<i>Entering the Lands of</i> <i>Ombres L'assomption</i> .....	13	The Colossus .....	27
<i>Retracing Dium's Escape</i> .....	14	The Story's End.....29	
<i>The Ruins of</i> <i>Ombres L'assomption</i> .....	14	<b>The Mound</b> .....30	
<i>A Series of Avaricious Events</i> .....	18	STORY 1: THE MISSING MAGUS .....	30
The Sphere is Collected .....	19	Starting Things Off .....	30
<i>The Sphere of</i> <i>Caelus' Octahedron</i> .....	19	The Location, an Overview .....	31
		Templeport and Domnach Mór (The Big Church).....31	
		En Route to the Mound .....	32
		Inside the Bog .....	32
		The Mound .....	33
		<i>The Hall of Revenants Regio</i> .....	34
		<i>The Chamber of Sacrifices Regio</i> .....	36
		<i>The Obsidian</i> <i>Throne Room Regio</i> .....	37
		<b>Servants of God</b> .....57	
		THE ANTAGONIST .....	57
		The Plan .....	57
		The Catalyst .....	57
		PREPARATION .....	58
		Geography .....	58

# Thrice-Told Tales

<i>The Town</i> .....	58
<i>The City</i> .....	58
<i>The Neighboring Covenant</i> .....	59
Hardship and Blessing .....	59
Divine and Infernal Influence.....	60
Political Climate .....	60
<b>STORY I: A FIRE IN THE TOWN.....</b>	<b>60</b>
Eutropia Arrives .....	61
What is Known .....	61
Aftermath.....	62
Observing the Inhabitants .....	63
<i>Pious and Successful Group</i> .....	64
<i>Sinful and Unsuccessful Group</i> .....	64
<i>The Town Council</i> .....	64
The Town Church .....	65
<i>The Priest</i> .....	65
<i>A Traitor in the Order?</i> .....	66
<b>REPORTING TO THE ARCHDEACON .....</b>	<b>66</b>
The Report.....	67
Petrus the Archdeacon.....	67
Investigation Concluded.....	67
<b>INTERLUDE: SILENCE</b>	
<b>FOLLOWS THUNDER .....</b>	<b>68</b>
The Clue, the	
Bait, and the Trap.....	68
<b>STORY II: THE URBAN CHURCH .....</b>	<b>70</b>
The Crypt and Sanctum .....	71
The Holy Mystics.....	72
Resolution and	
Legal Matters .....	73
Staying in the Shadows .....	74
<b>INTERLUDE: PREPARATION</b>	
<b>FOR TRIBUNAL .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>STORY III: TRIBUNAL .....</b>	<b>76</b>
Running the Tribunal .....	76
Charges Against Fabianus .....	77
<i>Scrying</i> .....	77
<i>Spreading Parma Magica</i> .....	77
<i>Voting</i> .....	77
<i>Wizard's War</i> .....	77
A Petition to Join the Order.....	78
<i>A Holy Societas</i> .....	79
<b>NEW ALLIANCES, NEW TENSION.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>81</b>
Consequences for	
the Player Magi.....	81
The End .....	81
<b>Summer Is Icumen In</b>	<b>82</b>
Locating the Story .....	82
<b>PART ONE: SUMER IS ICUMEN IN .....</b>	<b>82</b>
What Has Gone Before .....	82
Lady Gracia Arrives .....	83
<i>What is known about</i>	
<i>Lady Gracia St. Daune?</i> .....	83

Lady Gracia's Story .....	84
<i>Eloise, The Maidservant</i> .....	86
Finding the Comte .....	86
Travelling to Montcuq .....	86
<i>The Gates of Montcuq</i> .....	87
<i>The Church</i> .....	87
<i>The Market Building</i> .....	88
<i>The Castle</i> .....	88
Meeting Little Valentin.....	89
Talking to the Citizens .....	89
Finding Sir Vital.....	90
Finding Galafre .....	90
What If The	
Comte Returns Early? .....	90
Resolving the Story.....	91
Galafre .....	91
<b>PART TWO: LHUIDE SING CUCCU! .....</b>	<b>91</b>
A Redcap Arrives .....	92
<i>Questioning Jacobella</i> .....	93
Arriving in Montcuq .....	93
The Haunted Castle .....	94
The Bishop's Response .....	94
Resolving the Problem.....	95
<b>PART THREE: GROWETH SED .....</b>	<b>96</b>
What Has Transpired.....	97
Involving the Magi .....	97
Arriving at Lolmie .....	97
<i>Talking to Valentin's Troops</i> .....	99
Finding Gracia .....	100
What Follows Lolmie .....	100
The Meeting in the Forest .....	101
<i>The First Day</i> .....	101
<i>The Second Day: The Hunt</i> .....	102
Resolving the Story .....	103
<b>The Traitor's Game</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>107</b>
The Death of Damhan-Allaidh.....	107
Galera.....	107
<b>PREQUEL: INTRODUCING RUFUS .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>STORY ONE:</b>	
<b>A TALE OF TWO REDCAPS.....</b>	<b>110</b>
Rufus's Vision .....	110
Galera's Arrival .....	111
<i>Uncovering Galera's Plan</i> .....	111
On The Redcap's Trail .....	112
<i>Searching the Room</i> .....	112
<i>Encounters on the Road</i> .....	112
Caught (Kid-)Napping .....	113
<i>Cob's Band</i> .....	113
<i>The Trail to the Lair</i> .....	114
A Grisly Fate .....	114
<i>A Web-Shrouded Ruin</i> .....	114
<i>Beneath the Ruin</i> .....	115
<i>A Redcap's Ghost</i> .....	116
Lady Galera's Gambit.....	117
<i>The Traitor's Fate</i> .....	117
<b>INTERVAL ONE.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Research .....	118
<i>Giaro's Claw</i> .....	118
<i>Damhan-Allaidh</i> .....	118
Actions of the Antagonists.....	118
<i>The Fate of Giaro's Claw</i> .....	118
<i>The Fate of Galera</i> .....	118
<b>STORY TWO: THE TANGLED WEB.....</b>	<b>119</b>
The Swarm .....	119
<i>Option One:</i>	
<i>Averting the Plague</i> .....	121
<i>Option Two: Village of the Dead</i> .....	121
Caught Red-Handed.....	122
<i>A Battle in the Village</i> .....	122
Lord Abel's Castle .....	122
<i>Galera Under Lock and Key</i> .....	122
<i>Formal Inquiries</i> .....	123
Galera's End .....	124
<i>At the Castle</i> .....	124
<i>At the Hideout</i> .....	125
<i>Surrender</i> .....	126
<b>INTERVAL TWO .....</b>	<b>126</b>
Simon Runs Away .....	126
The Dark Passenger .....	127
<b>STORY THREE: THE CAPTURED FLY .....</b>	<b>127</b>
A Stalking Killer .....	127
<i>Reunion with Simon</i> .....	128
Return to the Ruined Fort .....	128
<i>Galera's Hidey-Hole</i> .....	130
At the Stones .....	131
<i>Inside the Tumulus</i> .....	131
<i>The Ritual Begins</i> .....	131
On the Horns of Dilemma .....	132
<i>The Characters Fail</i> .....	133
<i>The Characters Kill Simon</i> .....	133
<i>The Characters</i>	
<i>Kill Damhan-Allaidh</i> .....	133
<b>Appendix: The Spider War</b>	<b>134</b>
The Isle of the Mighty .....	134
<i>First Contact</i> .....	135
Early Battles .....	135
<i>The Massacre in</i>	
<i>Bowland Forest</i> .....	135
<i>The Battle of Hunnum</i> .....	136
<i>The Battle of the Wounded Glen</i> .....	136
Three Years of War .....	137
<i>The Battle on the Irthing</i> .....	137
<i>The Siege of Goole</i> .....	137
<i>The Battle of the Awful Hand</i> .....	138
<i>The Battle of Clemell Street</i> .....	138
<i>The Night of the Sluagh</i> .....	138
The Battle of Blencathra .....	138

The Battle of the False Sun .....	139
Repercussions .....	139
The Ordo Miscellanea .....	139
THE SAXON RUNES .....	139
A, Ac, "Oak" .....	139
Sample Ac Rune Spells .....	140
Æ, Æsc, "Ash" .....	140
Sample Æsc Rune Spells .....	140
Yr, Yr, "Arrow" .....	140
Sample Yr Rune Spells .....	141
Ea, Ear, "Grave" .....	141
Sample Ear Rune Spells .....	141
G, Gar, "Spear" .....	141
Sample Gar Rune Spells .....	142
K, Calc, "Chalk" .....	142
Sample Calc Rune Spells .....	142
Q, Cweorth, "Fire-twirl" .....	142
Sample Cweorth Rune Spells .....	143
St, Stan, "Stone" .....	143
Sample Stan Rune Spells .....	143
Or, Ior, "Water monster" .....	143
Sample Ior Rune Spells .....	143



## List of Inserts

Demonic Weaknesses .....	7	Who Is The King? .....	102
Dium Manesica Penater .....	8	The Treaty of Paris .....	103
Giuseppe .....	10	Dramatis Personae .....	104
Plinth and Stylobate Cult Member Creation .....	11	Damhan-Allaith, The Spider .....	108
Giuseppe .....	14	Calera, Redcap of House Mercere .....	110
Lemures .....	15	Rufus, Redcap of House Mercere .....	111
DuPurin's Ghost .....	16	A Redcap's End .....	112
DuPurin's Black Dogs .....	17	Magical Investigations .....	112
Father Carth's Ghost .....	18	Cob's Band .....	114
Manes: Lost Souls of Ombres L'assomption .....	19	Monstrous Spider .....	115
The Rest of the Sphere .....	22	Expanding the Caves .....	116
Strategic Truth .....	22	Spiders in Mythic Europe .....	118
Lodestones of Caelus' Octahedron .....	22	Rufus, a Redcap's Shade .....	119
Spirits of Fraud .....	23	Spider Swarms .....	120
Revenant of Caelus .....	24	The Jars of Calera .....	121
Manes: The Oarsmen of the Itius .....	25	The Morbid Ague .....	122
The Crown Sinks .....	26	A Lord in the Covenant's Pocket .....	124
Larvae .....	27	Running the Court Case .....	124
Nero, the Infernal Ghost .....	28	Galera After Five Years .....	125
Green Snakes of Malebolge .....	29	Simon Spidersoul .....	127
The Grass Crown .....	29	Simon .....	129
A Warmer Beginning .....	32	Inspiderwikt .....	130
It's All in the Names .....	33	What if Simon's Master is a Player Character? .....	132
Father Pádraig .....	35	The Origin of the Tumulus .....	132
Father Uallachán .....	35	Is Damhan-Allaith Truly Dead? .....	132
Tadhg .....	36	Giaro of Mercere .....	134
Bog Revenant .....	37	Who was Damhan-Allaith? .....	136
Aillén Trechenn .....	39	Ac Guidelines .....	138
Storyguide Character .....		Æsc Guidelines .....	140
Advancement, Five Years Later .....	40	Yr Guidelines .....	140
The Red Knights .....	42	Ear Guidelines .....	140
Hell Hound .....	46	Gar Guidelines .....	141
Fiona McTiernan .....	48	Calc Guidelines .....	141
Where is Lord Scirlin? .....	48	Cweorth Guidelines .....	141
Storyguide Character .....		Ior Guidelines .....	142
Advancement, Five Years Later .....	51	Stan Guidelines .....	142
Pádraig's Entrancement .....	52		
Uallachán's Ars Goetia .....	53		

## Chapter One

# Introduction

Each chapter of *Thrice-Told Tales* is a sequence of three stories, all connected, but separated by a number of years. Each chapter is, if you like, a thread in the tapestry of a saga. Each chapter could be run by a different member of the troupe, the players taking turns as storyguide as the events unfold over time. This chapter contains short summaries that avoid giving away too many secrets; only the person who intends to storyguide a chapter should read the main text.

each other, but is there another culprit? Can the magi find the lost Seeker and keep the baronies from war?

The mound is a persistent problem, and the revelations the magi find refuse to stay buried. Twice more evil surfaces, sowing strife and discord throughout both baronies, forcing them ever closer to open conflict. The final threat disgorges a nightmare so harrowing that it threatens the very kingdom, and unless stopped will return society to a dark age of blood, murder, and lost hope.

that magi have to peacefully co-exist with feudal society. When a noble lady in distress comes to the covenant to tell a most unusual story, the magi investigate her plight and unmask a terrible plot. They must make hard choices about truth, morality and love; magic grants great power, not necessarily great wisdom.

After five years the noblewoman again calls upon the magi to assist. This time it is their own secrets they must guard, and a race against time develops to resolve the problem before hostile forces uncover what should best be forgotten. Finally, some fifteen to twenty years later the story comes to fruition, as the full ramifications of the events of the previous stories threaten to shatter the political security of a nation and two Tribunals. Have the magi made the right choices, and can they live with the consequences?

## Earth and Sky

Almost a century has past since the covenant of Ombres L'assomption disappeared, quite possibly into a regio. Now, a last survivor has come to the covenant, with word of an ancient evil. Demons threaten the whole area, and the characters must find what was hidden, and thwart their plans.

## Servants of God

The story starts with a Quaesitor's routine investigation of possible mundane meddling by magi from a neighboring covenant. A nearby town has suffered a major fire, and the characters are asked to help determine whether any magi were involved. A high official in the Church has complained to the Order, and as the investigations proceed, links between clergymen and magi, and with supernatural power, become apparent. The characters find themselves facing a serious threat to the Order, from an unusual source.

## The Mound

Situated in the peat bog between two baronies lies a mound, a place long forgotten by the local lords and neighboring peasants. It has recently been discovered by a Bonisagus Seeker, who has not returned from his initial explorations. The Seeker's parens approaches the magi and asks them to find the lost magus. Upon arrival, the magi find that both baronies have been attacked by savage revenants, corporeal ghosts who kill those they meet. The baronies blame

## Summer Is Icumen In

Nominally set in the Provençal Tribunal, this story can be told anywhere

## The Traitor's Game

A redcap has gone missing, and it seems like a straightforward search and rescue mission. However, a web of deceit and betrayal leads to a darker story of envy and hatred, with its roots in the ancient history of the Order. Acts of spite threaten to destroy the covenant, and the magi find an innocent caught up in plots that go back far beyond his birth.

## Chapter Two

# Earth and Sky

The player's covenant is in the same Tribunal as an infamous magic aura, where the lost covenant of Ombres L'assomption seems to have simply vanished. It was known as a small, weak covenant that housed a device allowing people to find regio entry points. It is suggested that the device drew the entire covenant into an unknown regio when it was mishandled, but this is nothing more than speculation. The Tribunal considers the covenant and its grounds to still be under the control of Ombres L'assomption until it is proved that the covenant has truly ceased to exist.

This game is designed for late Spring or early Summer covenants and makes use of *Realms of Power: The Infernal*.

## Expected Sequence of the Stories

The hermit Dium comes to the players' covenant after receiving a vision and offers to lead them inside Ombres L'assomption to claim a device called The Sphere of Caelus' Octahedron.

The Sphere of Caelus' Octahedron is found, as well as notes about the ancient ship called the Itius and her cargo: The Grass Crown. The missing piece needed to make the Sphere operate is a lodestone from Caelus' Octahedron.

Allies of the Brotherhood of Zenodorus come to the covenant with a lodestone and an offer to work with the magi to investigate Caelus' Octahedron. In the end, the Itius is found and the Grass Crown claimed.

Once the characters have the Grass Crown, the Infernal spirit of Nero and the Brotherhood of Zenodorus prepare for war. They attack the covenant with the colossus. The characters can fight back to

Nero's Pit to defeat them, but to completely destroy the colossus they must use the Grass Crown as an Arcane Connection to destroy Nero's animating spirit.

## Pre-History

During Nero's reign over Rome, a colossus was built by misguided members of the Cult of Zenodorus. Through Infernal incantations, a Grass Crown was created to provide the Arcane Connection that infused Nero's corrupted soul into the statue. During the years following Nero's death, the cultists were defeated by Mithraist cultists, who stole the Crown. Unable to destroy it, they hid it on a ship, the Itius. Nero's spirit became trapped within the colossus.

The Mithraists also animated the physical form of the colossus and forced it to bury itself. Although they were unable to damage the colossus' form, they were able to remove the great pins that anchored the head, arms and legs to the torso. These six parts of the colossus were walled away in separate chambers of the pit that the colossus had excavated.

The group of Mithraists who held the Grass Crown entered a traveling regio and eventually lost contact with the outside world. They carried their responsibility beyond death itself, and became revenants.

Whispering through the Crown, Nero was able to corrupt some of the spirits in the regio, resulting in a demonic presence therein. Some of these demons were able to escape and eventually find the colossus. For centuries, the demons worshiped at this site, shaping it into an Abyssal regio called

Nero's Pit. The route to this place came to be known by the locals as the Quiet Slope.

The colossus was lost to history until 80 years ago. An elder craftsman from a town within the Tribunal had suffered a grievous loss. In desperation, he wandered out of the town to the Quiet Slope. There, while he was contemplating suicide, a Green Snake of Malebolge came to him, showing the ruined man the passage to the chambers of the colossus. The Brotherhood of Zenodorus was founded upon the craftsman's return to the town. Over the course of the following decade, the Brotherhood gathered members, discovered the buried colossus' chambers, and created an Infernal shrine.

In another part of the tribunal, Titus of Jerbiton of the covenant Ombres L'assomption was researching regiones. The magus made important discoveries, and created a device that could find any regio, if an Arcane Connection to something within the regio was placed in it. This device could also open a way into the regio. Titus demonstrated the device at Tribunal, greatly impressing everyone.

## Demonic Weaknesses

Each demon described has a uniquely defined **Weakness**. A character with Infernal Lore or who has had appropriate exposure to such literature has a chance to discern the Weakness of a given demon. This is done with an Intelligence + Infernal Lore roll against an Ease Factor of 9 + (Might / 5). Some of the Weaknesses provided are also named, as they were once used as specific rituals. Named rituals allow the players to use Magic Lore or Theology in the place of Infernal Lore.

The Brotherhood of Zenodorus learned about the device, and sent an agent to convince Titus to use the device to find the Itius. The agent was very convincing. Unfortunately for the Brotherhood, they did not know all the powers of the device. Once the lodestone from the regio was set within it, the magus was able to find the regio, and find out a great deal about what was inside it. Suspecting a plot, Titus split the device into pieces to hide it, and took the agent of the cult prisoner. Alas, the cultist had already succeeded in corrupting a priest living at the covenant.

The priest, Father Carth, distributed Aegis tokens to the Brotherhood of Zenodorus. The cultists returned to Ombres, with reinforcements. The demons were powerful, and Titus performed a ritual he had developed to move the covenant into

a regio that could only be entered by residents, and those they guided. Unfortunately, as far as the ritual was concerned, "residents" meant "anyone in the regio when it is created". The demons were not cast out, and the covenant fell. Titus sent Dium, his apprentice, to safety at the last possible moment. Dium fled in fear, joined a monastery, and eventually became a hermit.

## Dramatis Personae

The following characters are important to the three stories, as they bring hooks and provide additional information to the players throughout the tales.

## The Brotherhood of Zenodorus

The Brotherhood of Zenodorus aims to restore the Colossus Neronis and assume power, under Nero, their lord. As part of this, Nero seeks to retrieve the Grass Crown from the regio, but he does not know where it is. The cult got hold of half of a lodestone (see later), which serves as an Arcane Connection to the regio hiding the crown, but they have no way to use it. However, they know that the Sphere of Caelus' Octahedron, which was in Ombres, can, somehow, use the lodestone to get to the regio. The demons have set the cult to finding and using the sphere, and the cult has passed this dangerous task onto a young candidate for membership, Giuseppe.

## Dium Manesica Penate

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 83 (83)

**Decrepitude:** 4

**Warping Score:** 2 (2)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Wanderer, Guardian Angel, Disfigured, Reclusive, Visions

**Personality Traits:** Quiet +3, Reclusive +3, Manipulative +2 (sinful trait)

**Reputations:** Oracle of God 1 (Local Monastery)

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +6

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

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

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 3 (birds), Area Lore: Ombres L'assumption region 2 (legends), Area Lore: hovel location 5 (legends), Artes Liberales 5 (ceremonial magic), Awareness 5 (alertness), Bargain 4 (distrusting client), Code of Hermes 2, Concentration 5 (prayer), Craft: Hidework-

ing 2 (shoes), Craft: Woodworking 5 (whittling), Dominion Lore 6 (angels), Faerie Lore 1 (Ombres L'assumption), Folk Ken 5 (peasants), Hunt 4 (small game), Intrigue 1 (gossip), Latin 5 (Hermetic usage), Living Language 4 (storytelling), Magic Theory 1 (Corpus), Native Language 5 (expansive vocabulary), Organization Lore: The Church 6 (legends), Organization Lore: Ombres L'assumption 2 (children), Profession: Apothecary 3 (finding ingredients), Profession: Architecture 2 (small structures), Profession: Brewer 2 (herbal infusions), Survival 5 (near his hovel), Teaching 3 (Biblical)

**Arts:** Cr 5, In 5, Mu 1, Pe 0, Re 1, An 3, Aq 1, Au 1, Co 4, He 4, Ig 0, Im 0, Me 1, Te 0, Vi 0

**Twilight Scars:** None apparent.

**Equipment:** Hand-carved wooden cross, woodland survival gear, hermit's rags.

**Spells Known:**

*Chamber of Spring Breezes* CrAu5/+7

*Wind at the Back* ReAu5/+3

*Footsteps of Slippery Oil* CrAq5/+7

*Bind Wound* CrCo10/+10

*Physician's Eye* InCo5/+10

*Sight of the True Form* InCo5/+10

*Eyes of the Cat* MuCo5/+5

*Spasms of the Uncontrolled Hand* ReCo5/+6

*Conjure the Sturdy Vine* CrHe5/+10

*Hunt for the Wild Herb* InHe5/+10

*Intuition of the Forest* InHe5/+10

*Dance of the Staves* ReHe5/+6

*Sight of the Transparent Motive* InMe10/+7

**Appearance:** Dium is a frail, thin, and ancient hermit. He wears a wooden cross carved by his own hand with a dried rose wound around it. The left side of his face is dominated by the scar of an old wound. Dium's spells are accompanied by the sound of distant monastic chanting.

Dium is on a Divine task for his Guardian Angel, so feel free to provide Dium with Divine protection from the players characters upon their initial meeting.

After 10 years of Jerbiton apprenticeship, Dium has some skill in the Arts. He could serve as a laboratory assistant, but most of his Abilities reflect his past as a monk and hermit. Note that although the records of the Order show him as an apprentice at Ombres L'assumption, and he would now be a Failed Apprentice in the eyes of the Order, no magi know that he is still alive before the story starts. Dium's record within the Order should not come into play unless he becomes active in the Order once again.

## THE HISTORY OF THE CULT

Zenodorus was a Gently Gifted astronomer who lived around 250 BC. His work with perspective, circles, and spheres developed into a cult of builders who aided in creating some of the greatest structures of the pre-Christian era. During this period, the writings of Zenodorus became corrupted by Infernal plots set upon expanding idolatry through great structures dedicated to prominent humans.

Over the years, the copies of Zenodorus' *On Isometric Figures* were manipulated to change the cult into the misguided tradition (*Realms of Power: the Infernal* page 127) called the Cult of Zenodorus, which came to Nero with a design to create the Colossus Neronis.

This Infernal cult itself effectively died out after the fall of Nero. However, the colossus and Nero's spirit still exist today, and have rebuilt the cult. Nero is the sole ruler, or Finial. The demons and infernal spirits who have gathered below him are his Chapter-classed grand masters. Mortals who have been brought into the cult and allowed to make a copy of *On Isometric Figures* serve as the next level, known as the Plinth-class masters. Finally, hand-picked apprentices and potential sponsors who display the appropriate sinful traits of pride, fraudulent desires, and theft are approached and if interested, are given the title of Stylobate. Uninterested individuals generally meet an untimely end, unless useful to the Brotherhood in some other fashion.

For the purposes of this story, the Brotherhood is restricted to a large town within the troupe's Tribunal. The Brotherhood is currently housed in a property near the Quiet Slope. It functions as a successful crafting guild (stonemasons, carpenters, or blacksmiths).

The cult uses incantations found in *On Isometric Figures* to call Infernal spirits common to Greek and early Roman culture. Using the Powers of Effusion and Diablerie (*Realms of Power: the Infernal* pages 106–108), the incantations allow the cultist-builders to create structures that are recognized as the ultimate symbol of a single mortal.

The supernatural abilities commonly associated with the Brotherhood of Zenodorus are Ceremony, Diablerie, and Effusion, and Incantation.

The cultists can invoke Infernal powers,

or maleficia. To perform an Incantation, a player spends 1 Confidence Point and rolls:

### INCANTATION ROLL:

STRESS DIE + COMMUNICATION +

INCANTATION + POWER + AURA BONUS

The rules for ceremonial magic apply. All Incantations for the Brotherhood of Zenodorus appear to be mundane in nature; usually the crafting of a symbolic keystone or anchor pin accompanied with songs of strength, pride, valor, and conquest of community and ideals. All Ceremonies involve of 13 participants, each adding in their Ceremony Ability score to the total, minus 13. Full rules are given in *Realms of Power: the Infernal*.

Incantations found in *On Isometric Figures* are as follows.

## BEHOLD THE PRESENCE OF THE SYMBOL

Incantation/Diablerie, Level 55

R: Touch, D: Forsaken, T: Structure

This incantation binds a soul to a structure. The spirit must have an Infernal Might score, or be the spirit of a person with Infernal Warping. If a living being is bound, the person commits suicide at the conclusion of the ritual, and the spirit returns as an incorporeal being with an Infernal Might score of 15 + highest sinful personality trait. After that, a portion of the spirit's Infernal Might diffuses into the structure, giving the structure an Infernal Might score as well. The maximum Might of the structure is 18 (soft stone), 24 (hard stone), or 30 (base metal). Pure metals like silver or gold cannot be used as part of this incantation. Within the structure, the structure's Infernal Might / 5 acts as an Infernal aura.

When the bound spirit touches or presides within the structure, the two Mights merge. Once merged, treat the structure as the spirit's physical body. Any powers of the spirit are cast through the structure. All the powers and abilities of the structure are available to the bound spirit when merged.

(Base 15, +1 Touch, +4 Forsaken, Structure +3)

## FORGE THE LORD OF THE STRUCTURE

Incantation/Diablerie, Level 60

R: Eye, D: Forsaken, T: Ind

Imbues an Infernal Spirit with the power Lord of the Structure; see DuPurin's Ghost, later. This incantation must be cast within the bound spirit's structure. (Base 35, Eye +1, Forsaken +4)

## DESPERATIONS OF TRUE REVERENCE

Incantation/Diablerie, Level 60

R: Touch, D: Forsaken, T: Ind

This incantation allows the spirit of a structure to grant bonuses to the people within. When this power is inscribed into a structure, it aids people in a spiritually unhealthy way. People with sinful traits will perceive elements of the structure as a positive representation of said trait. Skill checks for sinful characters within the structure that reflect the character's sin gain a bonus equal to that character's sinful personality trait. It costs the spirit of the structure 5 Might points to grant the bonus to a single character, and those points are recovered when the bonus is withdrawn, or the target leaves the structure. More than one character may be affected at a time, if the spirit has enough Might.

(Base 35, Touch +1, Forsaken +4)

## MY SYMBOL SHALL COME UNTO ME

Incantation/Effusion, Level 70

R: Eye, D: Forsaken, T: Ind

Once a spirit has been bound to a structure, the bound spirit may have this effect placed upon it. This effect allows the spirit to summon the structure to their location, much like a true demon's *Coagulation* Power. To summon the structure to the bound spirit must spend Infernal Might equal to the structure's Might / 5.

(Base 45 (to grant a power that would require more than one Major Virtue), Eye +1, Forsaken +4)

## Giuseppe

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 22 (22)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Warping:** 0 (2)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Craftsman

**Personality Traits:** Determined +3, Loyal (Brotherhood of Zenodorus) +3, Fair -2 (sinful trait)

**Reputations:** Worthwhile Apprentice 1 (his hometown)

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init -1, Attack n/a, Defense +0, Damage n/a

**Fist:** Init -1, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +1

**Mason's Hammer:** Init -1, Attack +5, Defense +1, Damage +3

**Kick:** Init -2, Attack +2, Defense -1, Damage +4

**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:** Animal Handling 2 (beasts of burden), Artes Liberales 5 (geometry), Athletics 2 (climbing), Brawl 1 (bludgeon), Carouse 3 (drinking), Concentration 2 (reading), Craft: Stonemason 3 (buildings), Folk Ken 4 (townsfolk), Infernal Lore 2 (powers of mortal diabolists), Local Language 5 (business talk), Latin 3 (academic usage), Leadership 2 (work crews), Magic Lore 1 (Roman cults), Profession: Architecture 2 (grand designs), Profession: Stonemason 5 (planning projects), Ride 3 (long distances)

**Equipment:** An (unfinished) copy of *On Isometric Figures*, stone mason's clothing and gear, overland traveler's gear.

**Appearance:** Giuseppe is a thin, wiry young man from the local stock. He dresses in loose, mason's tunics. His eyes are sky blue and spark with excited intellect. He is a passionate speaker and tends to punctuate his words with hand gestures. His hands are workman's hands, but carry the stains of ink.

Giuseppe is being groomed to join the Brotherhood of Zenodorus. He does not know that his mentor has succumbed to the Infernal. Giuseppe himself has no true exposure to the Infernal arts, beyond his master's copy of *On Isometric Figures*. He has little understanding of the Brotherhood, but believes it has much to offer those who are worthy. He initially considers the members of the Order to be over-indulgent children of magic who have little respect for 'true' crafting skills.

Giuseppe is being groomed for corruption. During Stories I and II, Giuseppe is simply doing the guild's bidding to gain access to his masters' deeper secrets. As he spends time with the magi he becomes friends with them, regarding the Order as a potential affiliate of the Brotherhood.

Between stories he gains 10 experience points per season, and he spends a total of 2 seasons with his mentor. The apprenticeship will end four years after this story begins. The events of these stories will have a strong influence on whether Giuseppe ever formally joins the Brotherhood.

## BENEATH ME, FOLLY OF THETIS!

Incantation/Effusion, Level 55

The structure is warded against all natural, non-living materials.

(Base 15, Touch +1, Forsaken +4, Structure +3)

Infernal regio, but Dium can lead the characters inside. There, demons fight each other while searching for the fragments of a map, the importance of which none of them truly understand. Dium remembers that his covenant fell to a demonic assault, and warns the characters of the threats they are likely to face.

If the characters do find the map, Dium does not know what they should do with it next. He does keep his promises regarding the site and resources of Ombres L'assumption, as he has no interest in such matters now.

## The Hook: Destiny Comes Knocking

To begin these stories, Dium comes to the player's covenant, seeking to speak with magi of the Order. He carries three glass flowers (see Entering the Lands of Ombres, later) that contain 6 pawns of Creo vis. These serve both to gain the attention of the magi and to demonstrate his ties to Ombres. He wants to discuss his visions with the magi.

In the visions, Dium sees hordes of terrible demons, all wearing much-dripping crowns of woven grass, pour out of the old covenant of Ombres L'assumption and lay waste to the surrounding lands, including the troupe's covenant. The rampaging monsters leave Dium alone in Ombres, where his long-dead master, Titus, hands him a bone scroll case. Dium is sure that he needs to do something to avert disaster, but does not think that he could do it alone.

If the characters offer to help, Dium is grateful, and offers them whatever re-

## Story I: An Angry Wound

The hermit Dium is troubled by recurring visions that seem to be connected to the covenant of Ombres L'assumption, where he was trained as an apprentice. The troupe's covenant is the nearest to that location, so he goes to see them, explaining what happened, and offering access to the remaining treasures of the covenant if they will help him prevent the disaster he foresees.

The covenant is now trapped within an

## Expanding Ombres

Certain details and history of Ombres L'assumption have been left vague for the storyguide to expand upon within the scope of their saga. The Order considers Ombres to be a small covenant that provided a single important breakthrough (the Sphere).

mains of Ombres L'assumption's resources. While it is not absolutely clear that he has the right to do this (he was only an apprentice, after all), it would give the characters a much better claim than anyone else, particularly if they saved the resources from demons. If the characters refuse to help, Dium asks them to house him at the covenant while he writes to a Quaesitor to draw attention to the possible threat to the Order. This may convince the characters to change their minds. If the players are simply uninterested, you can drop the sto-

## Plinth and Stylobate Cult Member Creation

As the Brotherhood is based on a group of stonemasons, its members all have some ability in that craft or profession. Most members also have some training in a bow skill, due to the founder's love of archery. Use The Specialist (ArM5, page 21) or The Tough Guy (ArM5, page 22) for general laborers, and The Rogue or The Witch (ArM5, page 23) for Plinth characters. As these characters have Major Virtues and Flaws, they must be companions, rather than grogs.

### STYLOBATE

Usually in their mid-20's and past apprenticeship, with the appropriate Craft at level 3 or higher. They have a copy of *On Isometric Figures* and might be trained in Bows. They have embraced a sinful personality trait and have at least 1 point of Infernal Warping. They have the Virtues of Incantation (Major, Unholy Method) and Diablerie (Major, Unholy Power) or Effusion (Major, Unholy Power).

### PLINTH

Age a Stylobate-classed member 10-20 years. Increase the Infernal Warping by 1 point per five years aged. Add Leadership (work teams), Guile, and Area Lore Abilities. Incantation and the Unholy Power should also be increased substantially.



ry, or skip forward a few years to Story III, and face them with the Colossus Neronis.

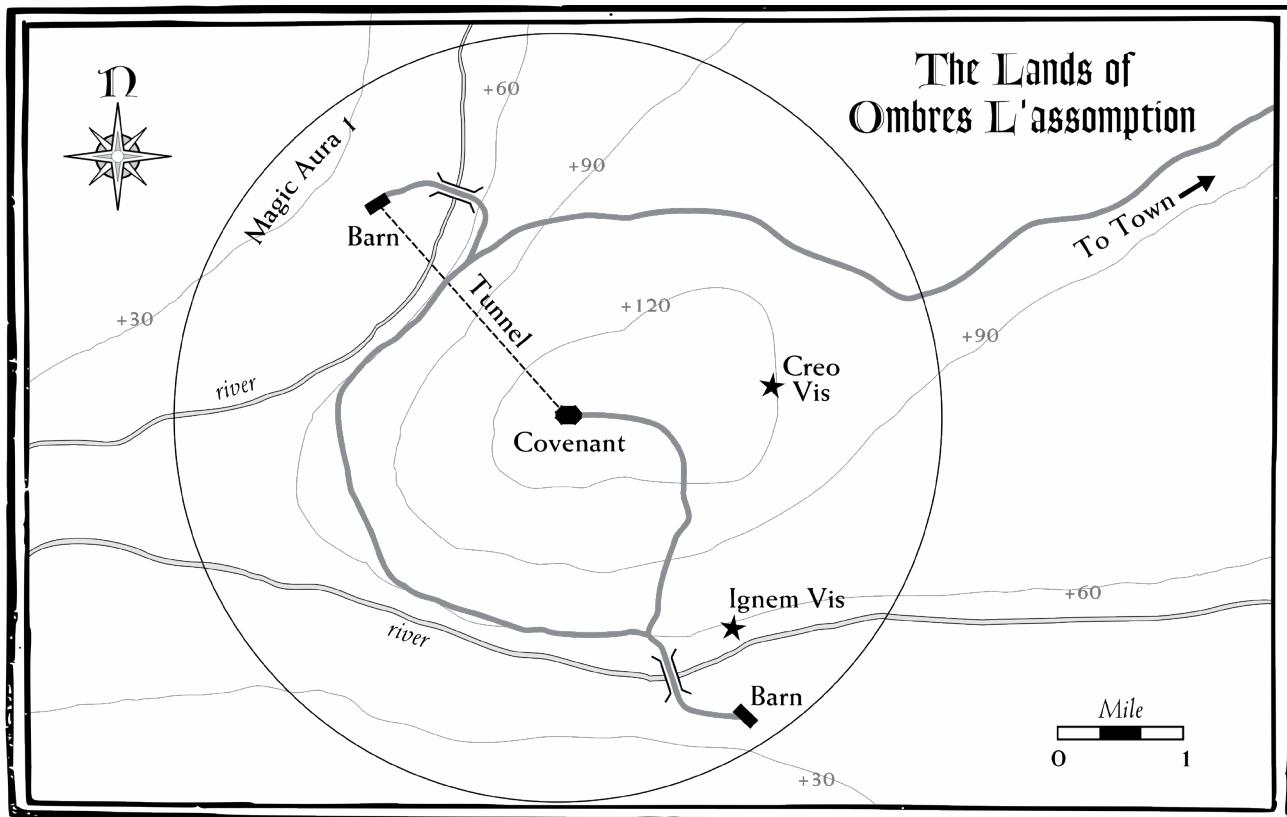
If the characters are working with him, Dium tells them that Ombres was dedicated to the study of Divine, Fey, and Magic regios, and disappeared during an Infernal assault 68 years ago. Dium is sure that the magic of Titus, his parens, was responsible for the covenant's disappearance, but does not know the details.

Dium blames the fall on his pater's quest to find "mystical currents." Within these currents was a device called the Grass Crown. Dium is not sure what these "currents" are, but he does know that the Grass Crown is magical in nature. When Titus came to suspect that demons were also seeking the Grass Crown, he planned an escape route from the covenant. Dium was able to use that route to escape, and is sure that he will be able to lead the characters into the regio by following it back again.

### GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT OMBRES

Ombres L'assumption should be located near a town, and the troupe's covenant. It was a poor covenant that struggled to make it from one year to the next. The player characters or their parens might have heard about the Sphere being presented at Tribunal some 70 years ago; they may even have been in attendance. Also, it is common knowledge that Ombres L'assumption simply vanished shortly after the Sphere became public.

Characters may know about the covenant; roll Intelligence + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes against the following Ease Factors. Most of this information is also available from Dium, but relying on the characters' own knowledge provides some assurance that he is telling the truth.



Ease Factor	Information
9	The covenant is rumored to have been harassed by demons.
12	This covenant had incurred numerous debts in its initial construction. It was founded with the lofty intent of integrating of Magic, Divine, and Faerie powers, and led by three middle-aged magi: Sequnda of Merinita, Caeso of Bonisagus, and Titus of Jerbiton.
15	In its final years, its magi were said to have focused their studies on works that referenced cults of early Rome.
18	A Roman map of mystical currents was said to have been collected from a Mithraeum site. Even at the time, there was nothing more than speculation as to the nature of those currents.
21	It is said that Ombres L'assomption was born of an idea formed by Titus, when he noticed the two shadows that he cast while harvesting a vis source that glowed on a sun-lit day.

## Local Beliefs about Ombres L'assomption

The local authorities consider the land ruined and lost.

*The place of old magics is a haunted place. A place of diabolic spirits and Satan's lap-dogs. My grandfather once had to enter those lands, before the time of Ombres's fall. Those within wore the garb of monks and the robes of the educated. They dealt with grandfather as shrewd merchants, greedily seeking to trade sand for silver. Still, buildings were erected, a church was built, walls were made, and the lands were given over to the plow.*

*That was before the fall, though. These days, most folks don't care to look in the direction of Ombres L'assomption. Not unless they want something to look back.*

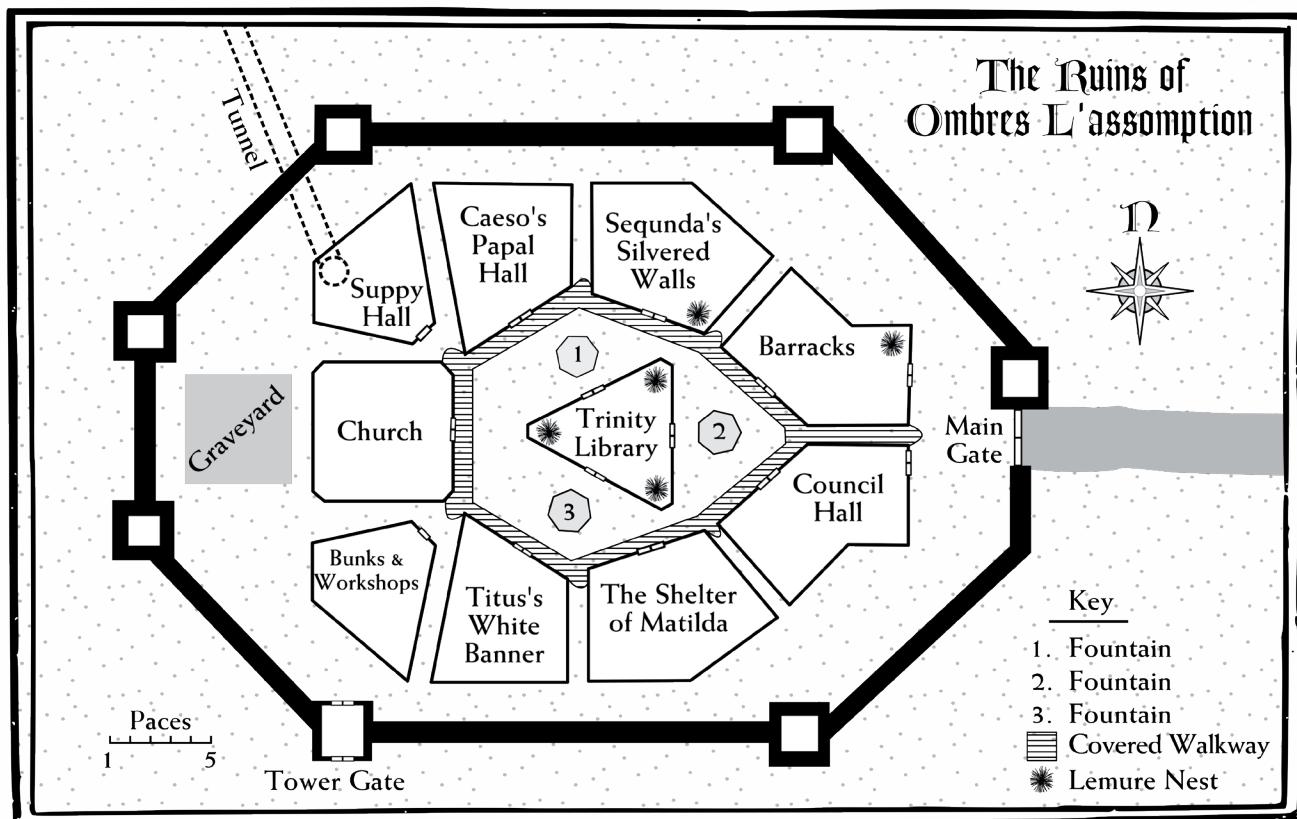
*No good ever comes of that place.  
Never has. Never will.*

## Ombres L'assomption

The 53-year life of this covenant was plagued with small scale Infernal attacks, and it fell in a demonic assault. Today, the covenant is a battlefield of the Infernal, with a few Magic spirits hiding within the ruins. The Infernal struggles that carry on are effectively eternal, as the three factions

### ON ISOMETRIC FIGURES (CULTISTS OF ZENODORUS)

Zenodorus wrote the treatise *On Isometric Figures*, which contained deeper, mystical secrets that eventually developed into a Greek cult of architects. Thorough students of history may find hints that the cult of Mithras actively sought the destruction of the "Zenodorus philosophy," which was accused of plotting to disrupt the activities of the gods. The corrupted forms of the volume available in 1220 are summae of level 5 and quality 18 in Ceremony, Incantation, Diablerie, and Effusion.



(Lemures, DuPurin, and Father Carth) have no ability to truly eliminate the others.

The area around the covenant has an Infernal aura of 1 by night, but this is overridden by the natural Magic aura of 1 during the day. The covenant itself is within a level 3 Infernal regio, in a Perfidious aura.

## THE PERFIDIOUS AURA

The Infernal auras near Ombres are Perfidious auras, as described in *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, pages 15–17. In addition to the standard modifications to supernatural powers (ArM5, page 183), the aura has the following effects.

Recovery rolls suffer a penalty equal to the aura's strength, and diseases never improve within the aura; the best that can happen is that they stabilize.

Lies become more believable, with the aura strength added to the Ease Factor when attempting to spot a lie.

All Infernal beings within the aura gain 1 Confidence Point.

Any character who fails a roll modified

by Confidence within the aura is struck by the mind-numbing contempt of Hell, immediately losing all remaining Confidence Points, and is stunned for one round per 2 points lost.

## DENIZENS OF OMBRES L'ASSOMPTION

All demons in Ombres take on a solid form at sunset, if they have the Might to do so. Any Infernal beings destroyed in Ombres L'assumption are reborn on the night of the next new moon, until Nero realizes that the map has been taken away.

Note that some characters still possess a Social Virtue or Flaw, even though they are ghosts. This remains, as that character plays to that aspect of their personality when coagulated into their physical form.

## ENTERING THE LANDS OF OMBRES L'ASSOMPTION

No animals live here. Plant life appears to be struggling with the first signs

## The Ruins of Ombres L'assumption



### Key

- 1. Fountain
- 2. Fountain
- 3. Fountain
- Covered Walkway
- ★ Lemure Nest

of blight. There is an eerie, chilling sense of quiet through the landscape at night. The outer lands of Ombres L'assumption were vast, with a Magic aura of 1 stretching a full 3 miles from its center. During the day, the Magic aura overcomes the Infernal aura, but when the Infernal aura rises to 2 at night, it takes over.

There are two vis sources within this aura. Dium knows them both, and shows helpful characters how to harvest them.

Creo, 2 pawns in spring. Form: A single glass flower opens under the first full moon of the season. This flower blooms for the whole season.

Ignem, 1 pawn in summer. Form: Two streams merge in a small creek. In this location, a rock studded with quartz gathers the heat from the sunlight of the central day of the season. At twilight, a tiny, boiling Ignem-based whirlpool appears, and persists for 3 days before dissipating.

A single road winds round the lands from the east, traveling counter-clockwise until it ends at the front gates of where the covenant once stood. There was also once a direct route through the forest, but it is long since overgrown.

Dium leads the players to the northern barn on the property, which is dry rotted and ruined. This was shelter for the oxen of the covenant, but a pack of DuPurin's Black Dogs has torn through a side wall and now uses it as a den.

If desired, the storyguide may run encounters in this area. A pack of DuPurin's Black Dogs might launch a hit-and-run strike. Once the attack is complete, the dogs retreat back to DuPurin's base camp to report on the strengths and weaknesses of the invaders. Second, Father Carth may visit the group and attempt to possess a grog or companion. Carth hopes to persuade the party to 'put down' DuPurin's dogs, and DuPurin himself.

### RETRACING DIUM'S ESCAPE

When Dium fled the covenant, his pater gave him a scroll case sealed with wax telling him that it contained important information about the fate of the covenant. Fearing that it would condemn him to hell, but too frightened to destroy it, Dium buried it under the floor of the barn. Now, after a life of service to God, and driven by his visions, Dium is ready to read the message. The scroll reads as follows.

#### Markos the Wanderer

*I am Markos Heliodromus who observes the traveling border of the Octahedron. It is my duty to pass the Lodestones of Caelus' Octahedron on to Solon Heliodromus. As is the Way of Passage, I hand this list of my actions to my successor.*

*My first duty was to attend to the Pater as he used the secrets of the Sphere's six wedges to enter the Octahedron.*

*Our primary duty was the protection of the Corax as they harvested. Within the Octahedron was the frame of the ship, known to us as the Itius. We called upon our arrows of silver fire to touch upon the shadows that followed the Corax's wagons.*

*The playful ship was released into the mists with 30 oarsmen. We were allowed to attend the passage of the Itius, carrying the great Crown into the mists of the unknown. As part of this ceremony, I was gifted the Sphere and taught to unite the pieces so that I might serve the Pater. The shadows have stopped. I have hidden the Sphere.*

*Meditate on these words, Dium.*

Dium has no idea who Markos, Solon, or the Corax are, has never heard of the Itius, and only knows that a crown was connected to the demons in some way. This is what is known within House Jerbiton as a paradoxographic letter (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 48). Such letters are written within the House as a means of expressing experiences to intimates using a mixture of facts and humorous lies. This letter was a first draft by Dium's pater, intended to serve as an example of paradoxographia to the (then) budding apprentice. When the demons invaded, Titus had no time to write a clearer explanation of what was going on.

The entrance to the secret passage that Dium took out of Ombres is near the barn, hidden in an overgrown rocky area. The passage is two miles long, and it was built by the covenant's stone mason and laborers, with the aid of Terram magics. It leads to a storeroom in the covenant.

If the characters follow the passage without Dium, it is blocked after a couple of hundred yards, where the roof has caved in. If he is with them, they cross into the regio at the same point. The exit into the covenant is closed by a trap door. The side of the trap door facing the tunnel has been magically carved with the words "Look to the Next World where water joins the Powers." Dium recalls that his pater often referred to the three fountains in the courtyard as "The Next World."

If Dium is killed during the approach to the covenant, his ghost guides the characters into the regio before passing on.

### THE RUINS OF OMBRES L'ASSOMPTION

Ombres L'assumption's ruins are a place of conflict, an Infernal regio with a Perfidious aura of 3 (see earlier for details of the effects of the aura). There are few, if any, treasures remaining within the covenant, as it has been picked clean by the demons. There are, however, two vis sources, which are tainted by the Infernal as long as the aura remains. Originally, the covenant had a Magic aura of 3, which will suppress the Infernal aura if the latter aura is weakened.

Perdo, 2 pawns in winter. Form: A one-pace wide patch of rotted earth appears

on the first full moon of the season in the shadow of a wall. It remains for one week.

Imaginem, 1 pawn in winter. Form: A shimmering droplet of dew that contains the image of the full moon appears at the rise of the season's first new moon.

**The Walls and Six Towers:** Sixty-odd years without upkeep has taken its toll. The stonework's mortar is beginning to crumble, and some weaker sections of stone lie broken and shattered on the ground. The wooden ramparts, roofs, and flooring all suffer from dry rot and decay, making them dangerous places to walk. Moving on them requires a Perception + Athletics stress roll against an Ease Factor of 6, or the flooring gives way in a 1 pace area.

**The Main Gate:** A rusting gate lies in ruins, with the cart laden with stone that was used to smash it also lying in fragments. This is the location of Segher's spirit (see Manes, earlier). He knew that a secure gate might allow the magi time to save the covenant, and stood his ground when the gate fell.

**The Tower Gate:** The wooden doors have long since fallen into the yard and be-

### Giuseppe

If the troupe spends any amount of time in the nearby town, Giuseppe (see earlier) crosses the players' path. He is under orders to take note of anyone curious about the lands of Ombres, and to find a "map to a great crown of magical power" that is supposed to be in the area, but he fears the rumors of demons.

Giuseppe offers the characters what information he has, but he cannot tell them anything useful at this point. If it becomes apparent that the characters have found the covenant, Giuseppe seeks them out to ask about it, but is a little vague as to his reasons for being interested. He should appear to be a minor character, as he becomes more important in Story II.

## Lemures

**Order:** Fury (Master)

**Infernal Might:** 25 (Mentem)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (within the Infernal Aura)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Intuition (to find singular object); Greater Malediction (no Powers in true daylight)

**Personality Traits:** Judgmental +3, Reclusive +3, Compassionate -3

**Reputations:** Terrible ghost who haunts family members +3, Collection agents for Nero +1

**Hierarchy:** 3

**Combat:**

**Bludgeon (corporeal form):** Init +2, Attack +7, Defense +5, Damage +3

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

**Grapple (corporeal form):** Init +2, Attack +6, Defense +6, Damage +3 (suffocation rules apply when the victim is drawn into the watery form)

**Throw Stone (corporeal form):** Init +2, Attack +2, Defense +1, Damage +3

**Soak:** +0

**Fatigue Levels:** n/a; watery form is elemental-like in nature.

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Ombres L'assumption 3 (location of collected objects), Awareness 5 (searching), Bargain 2 (hard sell), Brawl 4 (grapple), Guile 2 (elaborate lies), Hunt 3 (specific object), Intrigue 2 (rumor-mongering), Latin 5 (area of obsession), Stealth 3 (sneak)

**Powers:**

**Coagulation:** 3 points, Init -1, Corpus: Using the ambient, unformed matter of the universe, a specific form is forged for the demon. This form is the one described in that demon's appearance section. It takes 1 round per point of Might possessed to take this form. The effect may be canceled at any time, leaving the body to breakdown to its base elements in a matter of moments. Note that demons in Christian lands are forced to abandon their

physical form on Holy Saturday.

**Envisioning:** 1 or 5 points, Init 0, Mentem:

This power allows one of two dream-like powers. At a cost of 1 point, the demon appears in a target's dream. The dream itself is gradually imposed upon and twisted to take a darker and more frightening tone. The demon speaks through figures in the dream. At a cost of 5 points, the demon forces the target into a waking dream. The waking dream is a powerful hallucination of whatever the demon desires. The shocking aspects stun the victim for a round, requiring a Brave Personality roll (Ease Factor 9) to avoid an extreme reaction (retching, convulsions, abject terror). Demons use this power to manipulate the dream states of their victims. It also serves as a method to provide visions to a victim, with the end goal of leading them into corruption through a desire to obsess and hoard some object.

**Enslave the Mortal Mind:** 8 points, Init +0, Mentem. See **ArM5**, page 152.

**Grasp and Crush the Good Intent:** 2 points, Init +0, Vim: This effect is the same as a Mastered, Fast Cast *Unravelling the Fabric of Vim*, level 10.

**Kinesis:** 5 points, Init 0, Terram. See **ArM5**, page 193

**Obsession:** (hoarding one item), 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim: This power is used only when there is a chink in the armor of virtue, through the indulgence in a venial sin. This allows the demon to impose its particular sin upon the target. Magic Resistance must be Penetrated, as normal. The victim is assaulted with sinful thoughts and acquires a Personality Trait to represent this. This Personality Trait has a score equal to the number of points used by the demon to activate the power. This becomes the target's Obsession Trait. (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 32)

**Wreaths of Foul Smoke:** 2 points, Init +0, Auram. See **ArM5**, page 125.

**Equipment:** Hoards a specific item (daggers, horse shoes, parchment etc) in a specific location.

**Weakness:** An item from a Lemure's trea-

sure hoard may be used as an Arcane Connection to the demon (+2).

**Vis:** 2 pawns of Corpus vis, in the ghostly remains of its grasping hands.

**Appearance:** Humanoid in appearance, but in a disturbing way. They are shapes of watery darkness that constantly flow within a roughly humanoid outline. The only constant is a set of black within gray eyes that are constantly seeking, and insistently grasping hands.

Lemures are spirits of avarice. Each delights in scavenging and hoarding a specific object (be it spoons, black pebbles, silver jewelry, or anything else). They prefer to get these items by violence or deceit, and claim the location of the hoard as a private sanctuary. In most cases, Lemures specialize in preying on their mortal relatives, and gain a +5 bonus to Penetration when doing so. However, unless there is a good reason to say otherwise, none of the player characters are related to these Lemures, so the issue does not come up.

The Lemures have been set to find a "map sphere" that will lead to the Grass Crown. They have no idea what the map might look like, nor do they know anything about the Itius. This ignorance is why they have yet to find anything. If the characters appear to be looking for something, anything, the Lemures see them as competition, and become actively hostile. Once interest is shown in the fountains, the Lemures come to suspect that the fountains have something to do with the map they seek. If that occurs, the Lemures attempt to collect the fountains for themselves, or guard them if unable to move them.

Note that although their physical form is water-like in nature, it cannot diffuse into other liquids, nor is it able to 'flow' through small spaces. A Lemure must keep its shifting humanoid appearance when coagulated.

## DuPurin's Ghost

**Order:** Fury

**Infernal Might:** 20 (Corpus)

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +2, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +1

**Size:** +2

**Confidence Score:** 1 (within the Infernal Aura)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Outlaw, Giant Blood, Greater Immunity (fire), Bound Ghost, Disfigured (death wound), Wrathful

**Personality Traits:** Angry +3, Dedicated (to controlling Ombres L'assomption) +3

**Reputations:** Marauder (local) +4

**Hierarchy:** 2

**Combat:**

**Dagger:** Init +1, Attack +8 (+11 if Fury Power is used), Defense +7, Damage +7

**Fist:** Init +1, Attack +7 (+10 if Fury Power is used), Defense +7, Damage +4

**Flail:** Init +2, Attack +11 (+14 if Fury Power is used), Defense +9, Damage +12

**Grappling:** Init +1, Attack +8 (+11 if Fury Power is used), Defense +8, Damage +4

**Soak:** +3 (as ghost), +10 (coagulated)

**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:** Brawl 5 (grappling), Great Weapon 5 (Flail), Local Language 5 (insults)

**Powers:**

**Black Dog Lord:** 0 points, Init constant, Animal:

This power derives from those ghosts who have taken an oath to follow DuPurin. DuPurin understands the Black Dogs' barks, growls, and body language, and they understand his commands. The Black Dogs obey DuPurin's commands without question.

**Coagulation:** 2 points, Init -1, Corpus. See Lemures, earlier.

**Eyes Like Lanterns:** 5 points, Init +5, Mentem: DuPurin paralyzes a victim with terror. This requires eye contact, and the victim must fail a Brave check against an Ease Factor of 9. The victim may make a new check each round if attacked, against an Ease Factor of 6. Slapping or shaking the

victim also allows a check, against an Ease Factor of 6.

**Fury of the False Veneer:** 3 points, Init +2, Mentem: Add the Angry +3 trait to DuPurin's combat rolls. DuPurin stirs his anger up so much that he is better at fighting. When using this power, which has a Diameter Duration, DuPurin fights in a rage.

**Incorporeal:** 0 points, Init Constant, Mentem.

**Lord of the Structure:** 5 points, Init +5, Terram: This power is much like the spell *Lord of the Trees* (ArM5, page 139), but Terram based with Herbam requisites. Doors slam into people, gates fall, and shackles fixed to the wall whip out at anyone within range. This power can move anything that is both permanently attached to the structure, and normally capable of being moved. The maximum size is an area of 10 common rooms. The Duration of this effect is Concentration.

**Obsession:** (obedience to DuPurin), 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

**Possession:** var points, Init +2, Mentem: The demon spends points to create a Possession Might Pool. These points actually enter the victim and are not regenerated by the demon until the possession ends. The demon may choose the number of points to spend on possession. Spending more points allows the possessing demon to do more, but reduces Penetration as normal. If the target's Magic Resistance is overcome, then possession is successful. If the demon uses its entire Might, the demon disappears into the victim, with any physical manifestation of the demon vanishing. The demon may also divide its consciousness by only placing a portion of its Might within a victim, allowing the possessing part of it to act independently from the rest. Communication between the 'parts' may not occur unless they are within sight of each other. The Possession Might Pool allows the demonic fragment to use any of its Powers, as long as it has the points to do so. Points cannot regenerate until the possession ends. The demon may choose to

apply the Possession Might Pool as Magic Resistance, with the host being affected by wards and supernatural beings as though it were a demon. The demon may also choose not to apply the Magic Resistance allowing the evil spirit to 'hide' within the body and bypass wards with impunity.

**Weakness:** DuPurin can only regain Might within the Infernal aura of Ombres L'assomption.

**Vis:** 4 pawns of Corpus in the form of mist-like ghost eyes that follow the closest living being.

**Appearance:** A bear of a man, standing a little over seven feet tall. He is dressed in patched and tattered leather scale armor, and he sports the weapons and tools of his highwayman's trade. His disfigurement upon death due to a fall from the southernmost tower (crushing damage to face and upper body).

Pierre DuPurin was a roguish brute whom the demons raised against Ombres L'assomption. He worked for the Brotherhood, and his soul was lost to Nero as his greed-based raids became more and more driven. Upon death, Pierre became an Infernal tool that was first used by Nero to attack Ombres L'assomption, and then to serve as the overseer of the property. The spirit now seeks to control the structure of Ombres L'assomption. When he has secured his power there, he plans to control the lands around. Those subjugated by DuPurin are forced to worship him, being cursed with the form of Black Dogs upon their deaths.

Ultimately, DuPurin is an unwitting instrument of Nero's plans. He and his Black Dogs are the strong arms of Ombres L'assomption, serving as distractions that allow the Lemures to continue their search for clues that would lead them to the Grass Crown. When DuPurin coagulates into a physical form, the Giant Blood, his full suit of leather scale armor, and the weapons listed in the Combat section come into play.

## Thrice-Told Tales

come overgrown. This tower is like the others, except for the 3 pace wide entry passage that serves as its main floor. This is the location of Nannen's spirit (see Manes, earlier). She was tending a flower garden outside the tower gate when the dogs came. This castle was her sanctuary, and she longs to see the covered walk made serene once more.

**Supply Hall:** The place is completely ruined. There is nothing but dust and decay, and the southwestern wall and ceiling have partially collapsed. The secret tunnel into the covenant emerges on the western side.

**Lab I:** "Caeso's Papal Hall." Based upon the study of Church rituals, and completely ruined.

**Lab II:** "Sequnda's Silvered Walls." Based on Church influence over the fay, now ruined with any remaining images broken or twisted into a submissive stance. In this location is a Lemure nest made of door latches.

**Barracks:** Once the accommodation for the warriors of the covenant, this

building was the first to fall to the Infernal invaders. It is partially caved in and ruined. It contains a Lemure nest made of ruined parchment sheets.

**Council Hall:** This building is in somewhat better repair than the other structures, as Father Carth has quietly maintained it as a possible sanctuary dedicated to the 'righteous teachings of power.'

**Lab IV:** "The Shelter of Matilda." There was to be a fourth member of covenant, but she abandoned the project. This was used as a lab for visitors. It was burned from the outside and now lies in a heap of fallen walls.

**Lab III:** "Titus's White Banner." Based upon study of the order of the Knights Templar, and now completely ruined.

**Bunks & Workshops:** This was where the covenfolk lived. There is a small metal working shop along the rear of the building. A mason and a small crew of laborers also lived here, using the yard near the Tower Gate as their work area.

**Church:** The church has a Divine aura

of 4 within the walls during the day, and 3 at night. At both times, the Divine aura overrides the Infernal. The outer walls show signs of attacks by the demons. Note that the presence of the holy ground is no more than an annoyance and is a minor issue compared to the battle between the demonic factions. Note, also, that the demons can enter the church, although they are weaker there, and generally avoid doing so.

**Graveyard:** This area was ruined by rituals performed by Father Carth. This is the location of Armelle's spirit (see Manes, earlier). She was tending her husband's graveside when the demons came, and they never let her out of that holy ground. She desires to be buried next to her husband in hallowed ground.

**Covered Walk:** A covered walk once connected all the buildings of the keep, allowing residents to move from building to building protected from the elements. Its wooden roof has now mostly fallen in.

<b>Order:</b> Fury
<b>Infernal Might:</b> 10 (Animal)
<b>Characteristics:</b> Cun 0, Per +2, Pre -4, Com 0, Str 0, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +2
<b>Size:</b> 0
<b>Confidence Score:</b> 1 (within the Infernal Aura)
<b>Virtues and Flaws:</b> Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded (Fatigue Rolls: +3), Sharp Ears, Bound Ghost, Reckless
<b>Personality Traits:</b> Reckless +3, Loyal to DuPurin +3, Raging +2
<b>Qualities and Inferiorities:</b> Domesticated, Keen Sense of Smell, Pack Animal, Pursuit Predator, Vocal
<b>Reputations:</b> Terrifying (local) +1
<b>Hierarchy:</b> 2
<b>Combat:</b>
<b>Bite:</b> Init +2, Attack +13, Defense +11, Damage +1 (see Venomous Bite Power)
<b>Soak:</b> +2
<b>Fatigue Levels:</b> OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious
<b>Wound Penalties:</b> -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20),

## DuPurin's Black Dogs

Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (distance running), Awareness 3 (keeping watch), Brawl 8 (bite), Local Language 5 (eavesdropping), Hunt 4 (track by scent)

**Powers:**

*Aura of Black Mist-Flame*, 3 points, Init +2, Ignem: The Black Dog becomes engulfed in shadow flames of darkness. The beast itself is not affected, but any other beings within a pace of it suffer the effects of frostbite, taking +5 damage. Range: Individual, Duration: Diameter.

*Eyes Like Lanterns*, 5 points, Init +5, Memento. See DuPurin, earlier.

*Straight Chase*, 1 point, Init +2, Animal: The dogs pass through mundane solid objects and walls when in pursuit of a target. Duration: Diameter.

*Terrifying Howl*, 3 points, Init +2, Animal. See ArM5, page 193.

*Venomous Bite*, 2 points, Init +5, Aquam: This is a paralysis toxin causing 2 levels of Fatigue, resisted by a Stamina

roll against an Ease Factor of 9.

**Weakness:** Separation from the pack. When any Black Dog is out of sight or earshot of DuPurin or other Black Dogs, it loses 1 Infernal Might per turn.

**Vis:** 2 Pawns of Animal Vis, one in each ear.

**Appearance:** Large, black, shaggy hounds with bat-like ears, and silver-gray venom dripping from wicked looking fangs.

These creatures are dogs twisted and empowered by the Infernal ghosts bound to them, so they are physical creatures, and cannot take incorporeal form. The ghosts were once DuPurin's fellow marauders. If a dog is killed, the ghost returns to DuPurin, who finds another dog to serve as a host. If the ghost possessing the dog in question is destroyed without killing the dog, then the dog returns to a mundane, non-possessed state.

**Trinity Library:** The library is split into three wings, each dedicated to one of the Magic, Divine, and Faerie realms. At its center sits a grouping of small study tables beneath a shattered and fallen dome. The building and inner area are now in ruins.

Three Lemure have created nests in this building's wings. The nests are composed of benches, cook pots, and workman's tools.

Outside the library sit three fountains. Each fountain weighs roughly 2250 pounds, and contains two map elements. Each map element is a wedge, one sixth of a sphere, and is actually built into the decoration of the fountain. (Terram magic was used to put them in place as the demons arrived.) The pieces can be found by using Intellego Vim, or a Perception + Awareness stress roll against an Ease Factor of 12, if Dium is able to give advice. Note that each sphere piece must be somehow broken free of the fountain.

**Fountain 1:** Represents the merging of Magic and Faerie. Germanic elves, dwarfs, and dens of giants spin in a battle-dance of day versus night. The Night Queen and Day King each have one sphere section worked into their appearance.

**Fountain 2:** Represents the merging of Faerie and Divine. Spirit-like representations of the twelve Greek Olympians gather inside a house presided over by the Sun. Two sphere elements have been worked into the sun's split visage.

**Fountain 3:** Represents the merging of Divine and Magic. The Chaldean Oracles pass fruits of wisdom around a round table. Eating from the two largest bowls is are rulers and gods of pre- and early Roman times, such as Seleucus and the goddess Diana. The two largest bowls of fruit on the table are the sections of the map.

### A SERIES OF AVARICIOUS EVENTS

Investigating the fountains alerts the Lemures, and they examine them once again. If the characters found nothing, the Lemures still do not know what they are looking for, but if the characters removed even a single wedge, the demons start looking for anything similar. The Lemures make an Intelligence + Awareness stress roll against an Ease Factor of 18 once each night to find one sphere wedge. Each success lowers the Ease Factor by 3. The Lemure carries the wedge it found to its nest to protect it.

The characters need all the pieces of the sphere to make use of it, but if they fail to retrieve any from the Lemures, Giuseppe brings them in Story II, as part of his negotiations.

## Father Carth's Ghost

**Order:** Tempter

**Infernal Might:** 15 (Mentem)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (within the Infernal Aura)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Priest, Piercing Gaze, Premonitions, Strong-Willed, Bound Ghost, Disfigured (death wound)

**Personality Traits:** Condescending +3, Authoritarian +3, Patient -3

**Reputations:** None

**Hierarchy:** 2

**Combat:**

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

**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 3 (rhetoric), Awareness 4 (searching), Civil and Canon Law 3 (papal decrees), Dominion Lore 3 (life after death), Etiquette 3 (the Church), Intrigue 2 (plotting), Latin 4, (Church ceremonies) Leadership 3 (inspiration), Lo-

cal Language 5 (preaching), Magic Lore 1 (ghosts), Organization Lore: The Church 5 (history), Organization Lore: Ombres L'assomption 1 (history), Premonitions 3 (ghosts and spirits), Stealth 3 (insubstantial), Theology 2 (heresy)

**Powers:**

*Coagulation*, 2 points, Init -1, Corpus. See Lemures, earlier.

*Envisioning*, 1 or 5 points, Init 0, Mentem. See Lemures, earlier.

*Fraudulent Desire*, 3 points, Init +0, Mentem: Functions as *Rising Ire* (ArM5, page 148), but creates a strong avaricious desire.

*Obsession* (inspire followers for Father Carth), 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

*Possession*, variable points, Init +2, Mentem. See DuPurin, earlier.

**Weakness:** Surprise and blind side. Father Carth has a Magic Resistance and Defense Total of 0 when surprised or attacked from his blind side.

**Vis:** 4 pawns of Mentem vis located in an incorporeal tarnished silver ring worn on the left hand.

**Appearance:** Father Carth appears as a middle-aged parish priest,

with a hard, judgmental stare. His black hair and eyes coupled with a thin, longish nose give him a crow-like appearance. His mortal wound is a deep gash from his right shoulder and down his back. This wound was caused by DuPurin, when the marauder and his men attacked the covenant.

Father Carth is a twisted soul who was led down the Infernal path when he gave in to his personal sins. Carth was the priest of the church within Ombres, and it was through Carth that the other demons in this story got a foothold in the covenant. Carth's basic sin is simony: the sale of sacraments of the Church. The core of Carth's twisted belief is that all souls *must* come to him for redemption.

Carth demands nightly worship from the lost souls and the purchase of sacraments during those ceremonies. He generally avoids the other two factions in the covenant, but badgers them if he finds any who have strayed off alone. Otherwise, he uses his ability with stealth to slink off and plot.

## The Sphere is Collected

Once all six wedges of the sphere have been collected, the troupe has half of the tools needed to find the Itius. The sphere needs an Arcane Connection to the interior of a regio to open a path to it, and the lodestone held by the covenant was taken by Father Carth at the time of his covenant's invasion. It has been in the possession of the Brotherhood of Zenodus since Ombre's disappearance. However, the Brotherhood and Nero have no understanding of the lodestones' Arcane Connection to its other half.

They do know that the sphere and the lodestone will, somehow, allow them to retrieve the Grass Crown, and once they know that the characters have the sphere, they start making plans to contact them. This contact opens Story II.

### THE SPHERE OF CAELUS' OCTAHEDRON

Titus of Jerbiton created this device after acquiring a lodestone of Caelus' Octahedron, to find a way into the regio.

The Sphere is hollow, about six inches in diameter, and comprised of six wedges.

The Sphere's latitude and longitude marks are filled with opal dust (+4 travel, +5 sight). The sphere itself is made of silver (+2 Intellego effects) and is polished to a mirrored surface (+6 display images). It must have an Arcane Connection to a regio placed inside it before it can be used.

#### *Seek the Passage*

InVi 30

Pen +0, unlimited uses

R: Arc, D: Conc, T: Ind

This effect finds the entrance to a Magic regio to which the Arcane Connection inside the sphere is connected. The direction is displayed on the surface of the sphere, and can easily be followed.

(Base 3, +4 Arc, +1 Conc, +10 unlimited uses)

#### *Behold the Gate*

InVi 27

Pen +0, 3 uses/day

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Vision

This effect allows the holder of the sphere to see the entrance to a Magic regio, and find his way between the levels, leading others if desired.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +4 Vision, +2 3 uses/day)

#### *Scry Beyond the Mantle*

InTe(Vi) 40

Pen +0, unlimited uses

R: Arc, D: Diameter, T: Ind

The wielder views the immediate area surrounding object to which the Arcane Connection is linked. Darkness and containers block vision, as normal. The effect includes a requisite to find a way through regio boundaries, and thus works even if a particular regio normally blocks magic

## Manes: Lost Souls of Ombres L'assumption

**Magic Might:** 5 (Vim)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** None

**Personality Traits:** Devoted to Ombres +5

**Reputations:** None

**Combat:**

**Grapple (Kinesis):** Init +0, Attack +0, Defense +0, Damage 0

**Throw (Kinesis):** Init -1, Attack +1, Defense +0, Damage +2

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Lands of Ombres 2 (job-related), Local Language 5 (peasant accent), Organization Lore: Ombres L'assumption 2 (own job), Profession: Own Job 5 (at Ombres)

**Powers:**

**Eudaimone:** 3 points, Init +0, Mentem (at night only): This power is similar to *Enchantment of Detachment* (ArM5, page 150), but only suppresses sinful personality traits.

**Immanis:** 3 points, Init +0, Vim (daylight hours only): This power allows a

blessing that promotes good fortune in the form of +1 Confidence a single, defined task.

**Kinesis:** 5 points, Init +0, Terram. See ArM5, page 193.

**Incorporeal:** 0 points, Init constant, Corpus Vis: 1 pawn of Vim in the form of dim, grayish candlelight.

**Appearance:** They are simple spirits, both insubstantial and invisible.

Within the ruins of Ombres are three spirits: Segher, Nannen, and Armelle. They follow Mana Genita, a household goddess of protection against death. These devotions led to their being linked to the Magic realm, and their survival as Manes.

Manes are restless spirits. They can continue the activities they pursued in life, but only members of their mortal family may release them. Until that is done, the manes tend to lurk around the household as 'flies on the wall', occasionally disrupting the efforts of their living kin. Manes can be released by the Rite of Feralia: a simple rite wherein a living family member offers sacrifices of food,

crafts, and written scripts that would have pleased the manes in life. This frees a manes to enter the Magic Realm for one year and a day as a spirit with free will and total consciousness. During this time, it may ascend to Heaven or descend into Hell.

Manes' powers function at different times: the Eudaimone power may only be cast at night, while the Immanis power may only be used during the day. Kinesis may be used only upon the task they deem most important.

The Lost Souls are in this story to show that magic still exists within Ombres, and to provide additional guidance, challenges, or sub-plots for the storyguide. The one, general trait that all of these lost souls share is their common bond to the covenant of Ombres L'assumption in the study of Mana Genita. It is unlikely that any of the player characters are related to the manes, and thus able to lay them to rest, but finding surviving relatives would be a suitable sub-plot if the site of Ombres plays an ongoing role in the saga.

across the boundary, as long as the regio can be entered by following a particular route. Note that the effect also works if the Arcane Connection is connected to something that is not in a regio.

(Base 4, +4 Arc, +1 Diameter, +1 requisite; +10 unlimited uses)

#### Touch the Mantle

Re(In)Vi 40

Pen +0, unlimited uses

R: Arc, D: Conc, T: Ind

The wielder of the sphere can cast effects on the item to which the Arcane Connection is linked, as through the spell *Opening the Intangible Tunnel*. This effect can support spells of up to level 20. The effect includes a requisite to find a way through regio boundaries, and thus works even if a particular regio normally blocks magic across the boundary, as long as the regio can be entered by following a particular route. Note that the effect also works if the Arcane Connection is connected to something that is not in a regio.

(Base 3, +4 Arc, +1 Conc, +1 requisite; +10 unlimited uses, +5 item maintains concentration)

#### What to Do with the Ruins?

Once the sphere is removed, Nero loses interest in the covenant, and recalls the demons. The Infernal aura and regio remain, but diminish at a rate of 1 point per year, and thus are quickly overridden by the natural Magic aura.

The storyguide should decide what happens to the regio, and the possibilities of access. One possibility is that if Dium participates in an Aegis ritual, the other people involved become residents of the regio, able to enter and leave, and bring others. Another possibility is that the regio is a feature of the Infernal aura, and so disappears when the Magic aura becomes dominant, after a year.

Dium offered the characters control of Ombres' property, and if the troupe are not interested in that sort of story, the Tribunal might simply accept that. However, the legal basis is not entirely clear, and if the troupe would like to play out the dispute, some magi might try to claim the lands and vis sources for themselves.

## Interim

As long as the characters did not simply ignore this story, their actions have led Nero to learn about the sphere, and he now has an idea of how to retrieve the Grass Crown. He guides the Brotherhood of Zenodorus away from gathering members to focus upon reassembling together the Colossus Neronis. This could take several years, or be completed in one, depending on the needs of the saga. At the least, it should leave enough time for the magi to work out how to operate the Sphere, probably by investigating it in the laboratory. When the colossus is complete, Nero sets Story II: Water's Vista in motion.

## Story II: Water's Vista

The characters may feel that they have defeated the demons and prevented the disaster seen in Dium's visions, but the visions do not stop. If Dium is still alive, he continues to have them, and any player characters with the Visions Flaw start to experience them as well. They are infrequent at first, but happen more and more often, until Nero is ready to move.

The cult sends Giuseppe to speak to the covenant. He tells them that he has had visions of demons overwhelming the area, visions that sound a lot like the visions Dium has seen. He says that he is afraid that the demons will find the Grass Crown, and use it to raise an army. He brings half of a Lodestone of Caelus' Octahedron, which he says he believes may be key to finding the crown. Dium recognizes the Lodestone as something that his pater had, and confirms Giuseppe's story, at least that far.

Giuseppe is willing to accompany the characters, or to hand over the Lodestone and let them act by themselves. He stresses that the most important thing is that the Grass Crown be brought somewhere safe and defended, such as the characters' covenant. If the characters need further urging, he suggests that the crown might be a

powerful magical artifact.

Whether or not Giuseppe is to go with the characters, a Spirit of Fraud (see nearby) follows them, to keep track of events for the Brotherhood. Nero is confident that he can take the Grass Crown back from the covenant whenever he wants, provided that he knows where it is.

## Currents of Caelus' Octahedron

The Sphere, using the Lodestone, can easily find the entrance to Caelus' Octahedron. However, the entrance moves, never staying in the same place for longer than a single season. The characters may be able to reach the first entry point they find, or, if you wish to take the opportunity to run other stories, the entrance may move just before they reach it, leaving them in an area of your choice in Mythic Europe. Characters who trace the movements of the entrance point for at least a year can predict where and when it will next move with a stress roll of Intelligence + Magic Lore against an Ease Factor of 12. This is unlikely to matter for this story, but may be useful in the future.

The entry point to Caelus' Octahedron is always found on naturally stoney ground under wide open skies. Once the characters are nearby, the Sphere can show them how to enter.

Note that there are few supplies within the regio, and the characters may want to enter and leave more than once. If you want to add another story, the entrance might move while some characters are outside the regio. As long as the entrance does not move, however, the Sphere makes entering and leaving easy; if it is used in the immediate vicinity of a regio entrance, there is no need for an Arcane Connection.

## Within Caelus' Octahedron

The regio of Caelus' Octahedron is a Magic regio, aligned to Auram. This means that the regio's aura is added twice to any Magic effects that deal with Auram.

**Level 1** is a seemingly infinite realm of thick fog, limiting visibility to 10 to 20 paces. The ground is made of slick stone. Alert characters are able to occasionally find a lodestone, if they know to look for one (Perception + Awareness + simple die, Ease Factor 15). The Magic aura of this level is 2.

The characters enter the regio at the start of a straight, and obviously artificial, stone road. This leads to the temple of Mithras at the inlet that serves as the entrance to the second level of the regio. If the characters do not simply follow it, the Sphere can be used to find the other half of the Lodestone, which is in the temple.

## The Mithraeum at the Inlet

The road leads to a Mithraeum. Under the temple is a short cavern that leads to a low and wide underground chamber. This is the primary location of the bulk of the revenants who maintain this sect. Daily, a ceremonial feast is prepared in mime, as the food stores were emptied a millennium ago. The Pater leads the feasting rites and prayers in silence, as he no longer has a tongue to speak the words. A procession goes out to the shore of the nearby inlet, where four or five medium-sized boats rest upon the shore. If there are five boats, then three Corax revenants board one boat and travel off to find and maintain the Itius. Occasionally, a boat of three Corax revenants returns from their task and rejoins the daily routine in the Mithraeum. It is not unusual for weeks to pass before a boat returns.

The Pater has the half Lodestone that is connected to the one held by the characters, although it is of no use to him.

This cult is clearly closely related to surviving Mithraic cults in the Order of Hermes, but centuries of undead isolation has created some important differences.

The Sphere can show the characters the route into the second level of the regio without any trouble, but cannot them guide them to the Itius and the Grass Crown. While the characters may be able to use magic to find it, the easiest way is to rely on the revenants' information. There are three ways to get this.

### PLAN 1: THE RITE OF ADMISSION

One or more characters may decide to join the cult of Mithras. This gains the Pater's full trust and cooperation. Any characters interested in doing so must demonstrate that they are not in league with the Infernal. A character who slays a demon and destroys the vis before the Pater within the upper temple of the Mithraeum gains enough of the Pater's trust to proceed to the Initiation Rite for the title of Corax.

This Initiation focuses upon the seeker's interest in the care and maintenance of the temple. The Initiation ritual requires one season of effort, most likely including leaving the regio for building materials. The Initiate gains grade of Corax within the cult of Mithras, and the Major Virtue of *Restore the Carpenters' Efforts* (as the listed Corax Power, later), which costs two Fatigue levels to use. (See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 44 for rules for powers as Virtues).

Becoming a member of this cult may provide the basis for a good reputation with the Legion of Mithras (*The Mysteries Revised Edition*, pages 118–122) and the Cult of Mithras within House Flambeau (*Houses of Hermes: Societies*, pages 17–18).

The Target Level is 21. The Pater's Mystagogue Presence + Lore is 6, and the Initiation Script give a bonus of +15, meeting the requirement.

**Quest:** Slay a demon (+3), the Initiate must then destroy the resulting vis as a Sacrifice to Mithras (+1).

**Quest:** Obtain carpentry materials (+3), the Initiate has to travel far to reach a sacred grove spoken of in Mithraic lore during the time that Jupiter is in the sky (+3).

The Sacrifice of one season's worth of activity in rebuilding the temple with the Pater grants exposure in Cult of Mithras Lore and a (+1) script bonus.

(+1) sympathetic appropriateness in taking responsibility for the temple to Mithras.

(+3) The Mystagogue sacrifices one season in teaching the Initiate the Supernatural Ability.

Only a single character need become a Corax. This individual becomes a diplomat between the remaining characters and the Pater.

If the characters are only interested

in finding the Itius, they may not feel that spending a season to join a cult of undead pagans is a wise use of time. However, if they decide to make long-term use of the regio later, it may be a worthwhile investment.

### PLAN 2: STEALTH MISSION

The characters can follow the three Corax who travel off to maintain the Itius. Those who chose to do so may even go so far as to board the boat being rowed by the Corax. As long as the Corax' tasks are not impeded in any way, they are oblivious to outsiders. Keep in mind that these beings do not require food, water, or rest, and that the boat is completely without provisions.

### PLAN 3: FORCING COMPLIANCE

Intellego or Rego Mentem effects can be used to trick or force the Pater into revealing the location of the Itius. If the Pater realizes what is going on, he considers the caster to be in league with the demons, and orders the revenants to harass them as long as they remain within the regio.

### REVENANT GRADES

The Mithraists left behind followers to maintain the Itius. They served devotedly within the regio, and when they died there, the magic of the place brought them back as revenants. Even in death, their degrees of initiation into the mysteries of Mithras shape them and determine their powers. The Pater is a unique individual whose ghost retains its awareness and free will. The Leos serve as the keepers of the temple, both defending it and maintaining its feasting rites. The Corax preserve and repair the Itius. Note that these beings have not created a 'society' within this regio. Each Revenant now endlessly repeats the most fundamental service that it provided in life, and if they are prevented from doing so, they strike out violently.

The Pater rules over the other revenants, and keeps the passage to the Itius, and the Rite of Admission. After a thousand years of the same task, the Pater does not handle change well. He still sees the

Infernal as the enemy, but has all but forgotten why he is maintaining the temple and the Itius. As a result, he does not interfere with characters who do not seem to interfere with those tasks, even if he sees them removing the Grass Crown from the regio. The Pater wears the other half of Giuseppe's lodestone as a necklace.

The Pater has two tasks: the Mithraeum's upkeep through adherence to its rituals, and the upkeep of the ship Itius. Because of this, the majority of the revenants are in and around the Mithraeum, while teams of three Corax are sent out to check on and repair the Itius.

The Pater has a Presence score of +1, and a Penetration Ability of 3, specialized in Commune with the Grades. He has the Powers of the Leo and Corax-grade Revenants, and the following additional powers.

*Commune with the Grades*, 0 points, Init +1, Mentem. The Pater can access the mind of anyone whom he Initiated into the cult. This includes all of the revenants. The Pater can use the target's senses, and give commands, which must be obeyed. Over years, the Pater could change the revenants' default tasks through this power, but at present he has no interest in doing so. Note that this power must Penetrate Magic Resistance (with a Penetration of 9), so any magi who join the cult are effectively immune.

*Itius' Chart*, 6 points, Init +1, Vim. The Pater is able to divine the precise location of the Itius, as well as its general course of travel. This course check must be updated on a daily basis, as the currents of this regio are prone to unexpected changes. This power is used to guide Corax-grade revenants to the Itius.

**Leo Revenants:** These are the 'lions of the den', who serve as caretakers of the Mithraeum. They follow their routines, unless given instructions by the Pater.

Leo-grade Revenants have the Powers of the Corax-grade Revenants. They also have the following additional Powers.

*Leo's Batillum*, 2 points, Init +1, Ignem: Creates a shovel's worth of small red-hot coals that are 'tossed' onto a single, specific target (Damage +10). The coals last for a Diameter.

*Thunder of the Leo*, 2 points, Init +1, Auram: The revenant roars, affecting the target as *Jupiter's Resounding Blow* (ArM5, page 125).

**Corax Revenants:** These 'ravens' travel between the Mythraeum in Level 1 and the Itius in Level 2. These creatures are also under the Pater's control.

*Restore the Carpenter's Efforts*, 6 points, Init +1, Herbam: Returns a damaged or rotted area of a wooden structure to its pristine state. It takes the revenant hours to perform the rituals that create this effect, but it does not need any materials.

### Onward!

The next level of the regio can be reached through the nearby inlet. On the first level, the inlet goes into the mists, and soon after the temple shore disappears into the mist, another shore appears, bringing characters back to the stoney ground. If they pass through the entrance to the next level, the mist clears.

The second level is a limitless sea. The water is pure and infinitely deep, as are the skies above. Day and night are exactly 12 hours long, but there is no sun, and no moon. At night, the fixed stars are visible, but there are no planets, either. From time to time, soft music is heard drifting from on high. The Magic aura of this level is 4 (again, doubled for Auram effects).

While the Itius is not a small ship, it has sailed a limitless sea for almost a millennium. Its course has not been a straight one, nor has it simply coasted in circles. It is all but impossible to find the ship without some guidance. The Pater can provide the necessary information, either directly or to the Corax, but otherwise the characters must come up with some magical way to find the ship. They do not have any Arcane Connections to it, which sharply limits their options.

If the characters have guidance from the Pater, the Itius happens to be relatively close to the inlet, and they find it within hours. If they are following the Corax, or their own magic, it may take much longer, and while the revenants have no need for

### The Rest of the Sphere

If the characters did not manage to retrieve the whole Sphere from Ombres, Giuseppe brings the remaining pieces. He claims to have been guided to them by his visions, and, if questioned about the demons in the fallen covenant, says that there were no demons there. Investigating Ombres shows that he is telling the truth; the demons have gone.

### Strategic Truth

Almost everything that Giuseppe tells the characters is true. He really has had visions, and he does think that the demons will use the Grass Crown to raise an army (they lied to him). Simple magic used to check his truthfulness does not expose him as a demonic cultist. The Spirit of Fraud intervenes, using its *Mastery of Misdirection* power, to maintain the charade against more thorough magic. If it cannot, Giuseppe is exposed, and the characters must decide what to do about the demonic cult. The sequence may well skip this story, and move straight to Story III. After destroying the colossus, the characters may decide to investigate the Grass Crown, just in case.

### Lodestones of Caelus' Octahedron

An unbroken Caelus' Octahedron Lodestone is a form of Auram vis (1 pawn). Each Lodestone has a fissure along its equator. If the stone is separated along this fissure, then the pawn of vis is expended, but each half becomes a fixed Arcane Connection to the other. The other half of Giuseppe's Lodestone is owned by the Pater, within the regio (see later).

food, the same is not true of the characters. The storyguide may add problems here if the troupe finds them entertaining.

## The Itius

The Itius is a Roman trireme. The Grass Crown is stored in the hold, inside a ward against demons. The ward is a circle, inscribed on the planks form-

ing the floor, and strong enough to keep out most demons.

Once the ship was crewed by Mithraic cultists, but as they died, they returned as manes (see earlier), and continued rowing. Nero was able to whis-

## Spirits of Fraud

### Order: Fury

**Infernal Might:** 20 (Imaginem)

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

**Size:** +3

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Sense Holiness and Unholiness, Theft of Emotions (see later); Cruel, Wrathful

**Personality Traits:** Cruel +3, Angry +3

**Reputations:** None

**Hierarchy:** 6

### Combat:

*Body Bludgeon:* Init +1, Attack +9 (+12 if Fury Power is used), Defense +7, Damage +14

*Dodge:* Init +2, Attack n/a, Defense +7, Damage n/a

*Smothering Grapple:* Init +2, Attack +8 (+11 if Fury Power is used), Defense +8, Damage +2

*Tentacle:* Init +2, Attack +8 (+11 if Fury Power is used), Defense +8, Damage +2

**Soak:** +3

**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 7 (climb), Awareness 5 (determining effect), Brawl 7 (tentacle), Emotion Theft 5 (trust) Latin 5 (negotiation), Sense Holiness and Unholiness 3 (evil), Stealth 5 (shadowing).

### Powers:

*Coagulation*, 2 points, Init -1, Aquam. See Lemures, earlier.

*Envisioning* (A great stage or puppet show), 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentem. See Lemures, earlier.

*Fury of the False Veneer*, 2 points, Init +0, Imaginem. See DuPurin, earlier.

*Incorporeal Darkness*, 0 points, Init constant, Vim. As the *Incorporeal* Power, but creates shadows as the spell *Gloom of Evening*. See ArM5, page 142.

### Infatuation

4 points, Init +0, Imaginem: The spirit 'speaks' with a voice so rich with lustful promises that a strong desire to approach washes over the target group (up to 10 people). Characters may resist the lure with an Intelligence stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9. Those affected do whatever is necessary to reach the demon in as straight a path as possible: leaping off bridges, steering ships into the rocks, or climbing cliffs. They will not take obviously suicidal actions, but they will take insane risks, and do not care about risks to others.

*The Lie Affirmed*, 1+ point, Init -1, Mentem: The targets completely believe the next lie that they are told, no matter how outlandish. The cost is 1 point per target. The demon normally has a good idea of what the next lie will be, but even if it is wrong, the targets believe the next lie they are told. This power can backfire.

*Mastery of Misdirection*, 1-8 points, Init +0, Imaginem: The Spirit of Fraud is capable of producing an Infernal copy of any non-ritual Imaginem spell of 40th level or lower that pertains to misdirection and concealment at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of effect. Most forms of magic, including Hermetic magic, are incapable of determining that these effects are false.

*Obsession* (will agree with any expressed opinion), 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

*Possession*, var points, Init +2, Mentem. See DuPurin, earlier.

**Weakness:** Silvered mirrors held to reflect the demon act as though the holder is within an effective *Circular Ward Against Demons* of 1 pace radius, centered on the mirror, when dealing with a Spirit of Fraud.

**Vis:** 4 points, appearing as a hand-sized

swirling mass of black fluid.

**Appearance:** A flowing blob of black ichor that may shrink as small as a normal man's footprint. Normally, it appears as a flowing, tentacle-grasping thing of black water 3 paces across. It moves across fluid surfaces as though they were solid, but cannot enter said surfaces.

When a spirit under Nero fully gives in to fury and avarice, it is reborn from the blackest of pits. These are beings without shape or form. They are shadow forces that make all true things appear pointless through fraud.

The Theft of Emotion Ability allows the demon to manipulate the emotions of others as a Supernatural Ability. The demon must first find a person expressing the emotion it wishes to instill in another. Then it makes a Presence + Emotion Theft roll against an Ease Factor of 6 + the target's Personality Trait for that emotion. If successful, the emotion is removed from the target, leaving her devoid of it (although it may naturally recover, over time). The demon then transfers the emotion to another by touch. The target feels the emotion as strongly as the original 'donor.' The demon cannot transfer feelings of True Love, True Friendship, or True Faith.

In combat, Spirits of Fraud may attack up to 3 targets with a tentacle. A tentacle strike that succeeds by more than 6 + the target's Size grapples the target, and draws him to the demon. The victim is then subject to a *smothering grapple* in the next combat round, and the demon can still make three tentacle attacks against other targets. Against a single foe, it attacks with the Body Bludgeon and one tentacle strike, seeking to draw the victim into a smothering grapple.

per to the spirits through the crown and corrupt them, and learned that the crown was at sea. After several centuries, he realized that it was in a regio. The demons (larvae, see later) are individually too weak to move the crown, even if they could touch it, and, in any case, they do not know where to take it. If they destroy the ship, the crown will sink into the ocean, and most likely be lost forever. The situation on the ship has thus been a stalemate for centuries.

The characters break this stalemate. They have been followed by three Spirits of Fraud, so there are enough demons to carry the Grass Crown if they cooperate. Fortunately, demons are not good at cooperation. Unfortunately, they cannot bear to see the characters take the crown where they have failed. Once a battle starts, the demons are unconcerned about damage to the ship, at least in the heat of the moment.

The number of demons should be chosen to present a challenge, but not

a deathtrap. As many manes as larvae, and as many of each as there are player characters, is a good place to start. The ship could hold 170 oarsmen, but over a thousand years most have passed on.

### ABOVE DECK

A handful of manes oarsmen are the power behind the craft. There are many empty seats, as most of the manes have either found peace and ascended, or have succumbed to rage and have become Infernal larvae.

### BELOW DECK

The Larvae are oarsmen who have fallen to the Infernal. These Infernal Spirits wander the hold, seeking some way to get the Crown.

## The Grass Crown

A grass crown was the height of honor in the Roman military. It was woven from the bloodied blades of grass where a major military victory was earned, and then presented to the leader of the victorious army to represent the field, sacrifices, and men who took part in that conflict.

This Grass Crown fits atop a 30-pace-tall colossus. It is composed of welded brass 'grass blades' forming a woven circle roughly a half-pace thick and tall, and seven paces in diameter. It weighs about 2,000 pounds.

The crown is a powerful Infernal artifact, and the characters may want to destroy it. This is not easy, as it is protected by the effect *Beneath Me, Folly of Thetis!*, described earlier. The characters may also worry that there is a good reason why the Mithraic cultists did not destroy it. If they do destroy it, that has little effect on the story; Nero knows that it has been destroyed, and moves ahead with his plans.

## Revenant of Caelus

### Magic Might: 6 (Corpus)

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

### Size: 0

### Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** No Fatigue, Improved Soak (x3), Lesser Power, Baneful Circumstances (outside of Caelus' Octahedron).

**Personality Traits:** Vengeful +3

### Combat:

**Bony Claws:** Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +2

### Soak: +11

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

**Abilities:** Brawl 3 (claws), Cult of Mithras Lore 5 (tasks)

### Powers:

See individual Revenant Grades.

**Equipment:** Tattered burial shroud.

**Vis:** 1 Corpus in skull

**Appearance:** A leering skeleton whose bony fingers are as sharp as claws.

These walking skeletons differ from ghosts in that their only form is an ani-

mate, material corpse where the spirit is bound to a physical body. These beings are connected to the living world through an overwhelming personal need. In this case, the need manifests in the form of servitude to the lore of the Mysteries of Mithras. From this base, each individual spirit derives its own unique personality and motivation.

Revenants tend to keep Abilities related to their mortal ties. They are tireless and inexorable opponents. They are immune to fatigue and pain, and having no blood or vital organs, they ignore wounds that would be fatal to a living person. The No Fatigue and Improved Soak Qualities represent this supernatural resilience.

Magic can affect both the revenant's body (Corpus), and the animating spirit (Mentem). Destruction of the body does not harm the spirit, although the spirit lacks any power to affect the physical world once its body is destroyed. The revenant's attacks are blocked by Magic Resistance, as the physical form is animated through the power of the bound ghost.

## Option: Piloting the Ship

If the Itius does not sink during the battle, the Corax continue to maintain it. Although it has always been crewed by the cultists of Mithras, other characters, or enchantments, could move it, and it is large enough to house a laboratory.

## The Return

If the characters still have the Sphere and the Lodestone, leaving the regio is easy. The Sphere can find the entrance to the lower level, and show them how to get through, and then they can follow the road to the exit. Of course, as the regio moves, the exit could lead anywhere in Mythic Europe.

The Grass Crown is large and heavy, and the characters will almost certainly

need to use magic to move it. If desired, the process of getting it back to the covenant could easily give rise to further stories.

## A Petition

If Giuseppe accompanies the characters, he starts to have real doubts about the Brotherhood. He has not previously encountered actual demons, and once he has, the path of virtue seems more appealing. He may abandon the cult, and tell its secrets to the magi, if that will move the story along.

## Option: A New Home

Caelus' Octahedron is a huge Magic regio that is difficult to gain access to, and thus a possible location for a covenant. As the exit is mobile, such a covenant would have access to a wide range of regions and stories. The cult of Mithras may not be the only ancient group that knew of it, and of at least one place where an entrance could be found.

There are also potential stories within the regio. The revenants remain, and at least one character would almost certainly have to join the cult to win them over, although wiping them out is also an option. At present, there are no supplies within the regio, so the covenant would either have to develop them, or find a reliable way to bring them in from outside. The regio may also have further levels, and more inhabitants.

## Interim

Nero and the Brotherhood prepare the Colossus Neronis for their assault on the region. This takes several more years, and Nero uses the time to recruit more cultists, and to allow the characters to think that the threat has passed. The Brotherhood instructs Giuseppe to monitor the covenant, so he tries to build a relationship with it. If he is considering running from the cult, the

covenant looks like a relatively safe place to go.

The visions of demonic armies do not stop even if the magi recover the crown. The magi could conduct their own investigations, and discover the cult. That discovery precipitates the final story. If the magi do not take the initiative, Nero moves first. In any case, the final battle is upon them.

## Story III: The Emperor Returns

Nero's plans at last come to fruition, and the colossus rises once more to terrorize the region. The player characters are the people in the best position to stop it.

This story starts by assuming that the troupe's covenant holds the Grass Crown, and that Nero seeks to retrieve it. If, in your saga, the crown has been destroyed, or Nero already holds it, skip straight to The Rise of the Colossus.

## Retrieving the Crown

Nero initiates his plans to take back the Grass Crown. Giuseppe (or another cultist, if Giuseppe has left the cult or died) sends a letter to the covenant, which reads:

*Seekers of the Itius, the time has come. I am the keeper of the Lodestone, and the rightful owner of the Grass Crown. I have been charged to lay claim to the Crown by the laws of my Brotherhood. I am securing transport and will claim the crown within the month.*

Giuseppe arrives at the covenant as announced, accompanied by 8 armed guards, a heavy cart, and two draft horses. He expects compliance, as pride is a common failing of diabolists. If the play-

er characters do simply hand the crown over, he returns the crown directly to the colossus site, and the story moves to The Rise of the Colossus.

It is quite likely that the player characters refuse. In that case, Giuseppe does not have a back-up plan. His guards would be insufficient to attack the covenant even if it had no magical support. Giuseppe rages at the magi, but then leaves and returns to the city, nursing a grudge.

In this case, Nero decides to use the colossus to regain the Grass Crown. Move to The Rise of the Colossus, but the covenant is the first target of the demons.

## The Rise of the Colossus

The colossus enters the world by tearing its way out of Nero's Pit and crashes through the Quiet Slope. If the characters still hold the Grass Crown in the covenant, the colossus marches to and attacks the covenant, seeking to regain the crown. If it is unable to damage the covenant, mostly likely because the Aegis is too strong, it

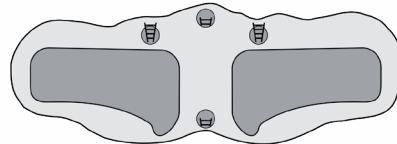
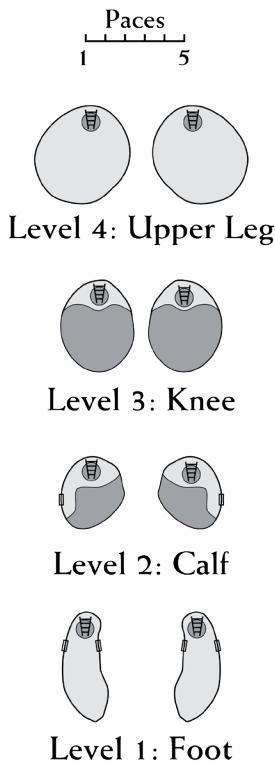
### Manes: The Oarsmen of the Itius

Use the statistics for Manes: Lost Souls of Ombres L'assomption, in Story I, earlier, with the following changes.

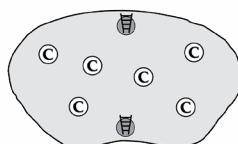
**Personality Traits:** Devoted to the Itius +5

**Abilities:** Boatman 5, Latin (storytelling) 5, Navigation (Caelus' Octahedron) 3, Sailing (hard weather) 5

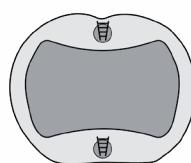
The crew of the ship Itius are now long-dead and performing their tasks until released. When one 'sits' upon a rower's seat within the ship and sings their rowing chants, that bank of oars begins rowing. Note that the oarsman have no idea where they are, nor where they are headed.



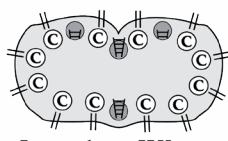
Level 8: Shoulders



Level 7: Chest

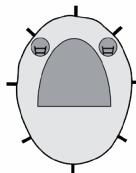


Level 6: Stomach



Level 5: Waist

## The Colossus Neronis

Level 9:  
The Lower FaceLevel 10:  
Upper Head

### Key

	Entrance
	Ladder Up
	Ladder Down
	Arrow Slit
	Crown Anchor Pinning
	Area Open to Level Below

rampages through the surrounding area, trying to draw the magi out so that Nero's agents can steal the Grass Crown.

If the Grass Crown has been destroyed or lost, the colossus attacks the local town, demanding that the population submit to their new lord. The citizens have little choice, but someone, possibly Giuseppe, goes to the covenant to seek help.

The Colossus Neronis is accompanied by demons and cultists as necessary to make a challenging, but not overwhelming, encounter for the players. This is Nero's full strength, and it is weak. Demons have no patience, and the emperor has moved too soon.

## The Pit of Nero

If the story follows the anticipated line, the characters never come here, as the colossus comes to them, first. However, there are several opportunities for the magi to trace the cultists back, so they may find themselves facing the colossus

in its lair. This is inside a hill near the local city. It is a shunned place, where the downtrodden, lost, and exiled are rumored to flee. It is where the suicides surrender themselves. The side of the hill is known as the Quiet Slope. The Slope itself has an Infernal aura of 3. The air is completely still and feels cold. Obvious, safe-looking paths are filled with ankle-twisting hidden roots and leaf-covered holes. Small limbs have grown woven together, so that they whip out when people push through them, striking the face and neck. Fungi spout rash-inducing clouds of spores if disturbed. Vines sport thorns. For each hour of movement roll Perception + Awareness + stress dice against an Ease Factor of 9. Failure results in the environment causing 1 Light wound. Botches result in the environment causing 1 Medium wound.

The Slope is the site of the guildhall of the Brotherhood of Zenodorus. Most people avoid visiting it, due to the ill-favored area. Near the hall is an entrance to the Infernal regio containing the Pit of Nero, and Green Snakes of Malebolge, from the regio, are often found on the hillside.

## Inside the Pit of Nero

The Pit is an Abyssal regio (see *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 16), with an Infernal aura of 4 that imposes in the numbing chill of being forsaken by God. Mechanically, each of the eight characteristics is reduced by 4. Further, characters must make an Intelligence stress roll against an Ease Factor of 4 every day that they are in the regio. Failure results in madness represented by Flaws such as Compulsion, Delusion, or Depressed. This madness fades over the

## The Crown Sinks

What happens if the Grass Crown sinks? The demons have no way of retrieving it, so it is, effectively, lost forever. Nero gives up on retrieving it, and moves to the next stage of his plan.

If the Mithraists had known this, they would have simply thrown the thing into the ocean in the regio. Alas, they did not know, and so they concocted a much more elaborate plan.

course of four weeks unless the roll was a botch, in which case it is permanent.

Nero's Pit resembles a subterranean wagon wheel. The body of the colossus stands at its hub, with six gigantic 'spokes' connecting outward to the halls that once housed the various sections of the colossus after it had been disassembled. Unless the characters come here very early, the colossus is probably complete, and Nero animates it as soon as the invasion is noticed.

## The Colossus

The structure of the colossus is bronze empowered by the Infernal magics of the Cult of Zenodus, and it has the powers listed in *On Isometric Figures*, earlier. It has an Infernal Might of 12, which acts as an Infernal aura of 2 within the structure, and Nero's ghost can control and move the colossus, using his skills to direct it.

The colossus is hollow, with ten internal levels that serve as both structural support and floors for supplies and personnel. Nero knows about Magic Resistance, and he has supplied his troops with mundane weapons.

## Larvae

**Order:** Fury

**Infernal Might:** 10 (Mentem)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** None

**Personality Traits:** Unyielding +3, Diplomatic -2

**Reputations:** Tormentor of the Dead +2  
**Hierarchy:** 3

**Combat:**

*Brawl (corporeal form)*: Init +0, Attack +2, Defense +2, Damage +3

*Dodge (corporeal form)*: Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +3, Damage n/a

**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:** Brawl 2 (dodge), Infernal Lore 5 (undead), Latin 5 (curses), Magic Lore 3 (magical traditions), Stealth 5 (sneak).

**Powers:**

*Coagulation*, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus. See Lemures, earlier.

*Envisioning* (An entombed landscape of the target's most inspiring place), 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentem. See Lemures, earlier.

*Fraudulent Desires*, 3 points, Init -3, Mentem. See Father Carth's Ghost, earlier.

**Guide**, 4 points, Init -4, Mentem: The larva is able to subtly guide visitors in a desired direction, or to a desired location. The victim feels a strong emotional urge to go to that place, and while this is not a compulsion, the target would need to have a good reason to try to resist.

**Mask of Change**, 6 points, Init -5, Imaginem: A mask that represents a specific sin appears over the target's face. The effect is two-fold. First, the target is disguised, as in *Disguise of the Transformed Image*. Second, the target gains a sinful personality trait +3, with the same effects as the Power *Fury of the False Veneer*. This effect has Sun duration.

**Obsession** (Manipulating Acts of Kindness), 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

**Weakness:** The rite Lemuria, which consists of the sharing of a meal in the presence of the Larvae. The demon's Might is reduced to 0 for a year and a day upon the conclusion of the meal.

**Vis:** 1 pawn of Infernal Mentem in the form of a cold, black shimmer of static shadow.

**Appearance:** The larvae appear similar to their mortal forms, but with their faces twisted by some sin. These larvae have mostly been twisted by avarice, envy, or wrath.



When walking, the colossus moves 21 paces per step, and each footprint is 1–3 paces deep, depending upon the surface.

Note that the below Characteristics are directly affected by the colossus' Might score. If its Might is reduced, the Characteristics are reduced as well.

**Characteristics:** Str +24 (Size + Might), Dex +6 (half Might), Qik +0 (Might – Size)

**Size:** +12

Combat Ability is based upon Nero's training added to the colossus' body.

*Foot Fall*, Init –1, Attack +11, Defense +4, Damage +27

*Fist Bash*, Init +0, Attack +11, Defense +5, Damage +24

**Soak:** +31 (Might + Size + 6 (metal))

Note that the colossus is immune to damage from mundane, non-living materials,

due to *Beneath Me, Folly of Thetis!*

**Wound Penalties:** –1 (1–17), –3 (18–34), –5 (35–51), Incapacitated (52–68), Destroyed (69+)

Moving within the walking colossus requires all corporeal beings to make balance checks every time the colossus attacks (Dexterity + Athletics + stress die against an Ease Factor of 9, –1 for every level above the ground). Failure results in a Light wound, botches result in a Medium wound.

**Level 10: The Upper Head:** Nero observes with the colossus' eyes and is in a constant state of concentration to operate it. If the ghost comes under direct attack, Nero abandons the control of the colossus, leaving it to stand idle.

**Level 9: The Lower Face:** This level is empty, but archers could shoot from the mouth.

**Level 8: Shoulders:** Weapon storage for Roman short swords and stonemasons' hammers.

**Level 7: Chest:** 5 *Stylobate* and 1 *Plinth* cultists are stationed here, each suffering from 1–3 light or medium wounds due to failed balance checks during the colossus' movement. All are armed with short bows and 10 arrows, along with a simple hand weapon (hammers and chisels).

**Level 6: Stomach:** This area is wide open and empty, as the colossus flexes here.

**Level 5: Waist:** 12 *Stylobate* archers

## Nero, the Infernal Ghost

**Order:** False God

**Infernal Might:** 25 (Imaginem)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Sense Holiness and Unholiness, Thief of Emotions (see Spirits of Fraud, earlier); Cruel, Disfigured, Wrathful

**Personality Traits:** Cruel +5, Wrathful +3, Angry +2

**Reputations:** Corrupt Emperor 9

**Hierarchy:** 5

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +0, Attack n/a, Defense +7, Damage n/a

**Kick:** Init –1, Attack +6 (+9 if *Fury* Power is used), Defense +5, Damage +0

**Short Spear:** Init +2, Attack +8 (+11 if *Fury* Power is used), Defense +6, Damage +2

**Short Sword:** Init +1, Attack +10 (+13 if *Fury* Power is used), Defense +8, Damage +2

**Soak:** +12 (corporeal form)

**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: Ancient Rome 5 (politics), Area Lore: Local Area 2 (politics), Artes Liberales 5 (rhetoric), Athletics 1 (running), Brawl 5 (dodge), Charm 2 (first impressions), Civil and Canon Law 4 (Ancient Rome), Emotion Theft 5 (trust), Folk Ken 4 (nobles), Guile 4 (elaborate lies), Latin 5 (expansive vocabulary), Infernal Lore 5 (summoning), Public Speaking 5 (large groups), Sense Holiness and Unholiness 3 (evil), Stealth 5 (shadowing)

**Powers:**

*Envisioning* (A Rome of impossible beauty), 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentem. See Lemures, earlier.

*Fury of the False Veneer*, 2 points, Init 0, Imaginem. See DuPurin's Ghost, earlier.

*Infatuation*, 4 points, Init +0, Imaginem. See Spirits of Fraud, earlier.

*Incorporeal*, 0 points, Init constant, Mentem. Nero is visible and can be smelled, but he cannot be touched or harmed by physical means.

*The Lie Affirmed*, 1 points, Init 0, Mentem. See Spirits of Fraud, earlier.

*Lord of the Structure*, 5 points, Init +5, Form Terram. See DuPurin's Ghost, earlier.

*Mastery of Misdirection*, 1–8 points,

Init +0, Imaginem. See Spirits of Fraud, earlier.

*Obsession* (worship Nero/the colossus), 1–3 points, Init –5, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

*Possession*, var points, Init +2, Mentem. See DuPurin's Ghost, earlier.

**Weakness:** Groups (3 or more) of united, educated men within a Room. Nero suffers from *Confusion of the Numb Will* for as long as the group remains intact and in the area.

**Vis:** 5 pawns of Infernal Vis; each pawn located in a digit of his right hand.

**Appearance:** Nero's ghost appears as he did upon his death: a frightened monarch in his early thirties. His death wound eternally weeps life-blood, leaving a stained trail wherever he wanders (the trail disappears once he is a pace away). He stands about 5 feet tall, marked with freckles, and stinks of the dead. His hair is sandy blond, and he has watery blue eyes. He has a thick neck, round belly, and thin legs.

Nero has been imbued with the incantation *My Symbol Shall Come Unto Me*. This allows Nero to summon the colossus to his location at a cost of 3 Might points.

near slot windows, wounded as the group on Level 7.

**Level 4: Upper Leg:** Prisoner shackles (currently empty).

**Level 3: Knee:** This area is open and empty, as the colossus flexes here.

**Level 2: Calf:** Doors to the outside.

**Level 1: Foot:** Green Snakes are housed in here, and crawl out into the colossus' footprints through holes in the bronze.

## The Story's End

The defeat of the spirit of Nero is a fitting end to the story, but these events could have further consequences. The colossus may have done great damage to the local area, which needs to be repaired. The Brotherhood of Zenodus may still exist, if they were not clearly linked to the colossus, and even if they do not, *On Isometric Figures* can bring the cult back. The Quaesitors may be interested in the amount of Infernal activity around the covenant, and the troupe may not have fully resolved the ownership of Ombres and Caelus' Octahedron.

## The Grass Crown

If the colossus has the Grass Crown, Nero merges fully with the structure. Their Mights are added, for a total Might of 37, and an internal Infernal aura of 7, and Nero's ghost can no longer be attacked independently of the colossus. Characters who study *On Isometric Figures* realize this, and may wonder why they were supposed to retrieve the crown.

It would, indeed, have been better for the characters to destroy the Grass Crown, or leave it in Caelus' Octahedron. People do not always choose the wisest course.

## Green Snakes of Malebolge

**Order:** False God

**Infernal Might:** 10 (Imaginem)

**Characteristics:** Int +1, Per +1, Pre -6, Com +2, Str -8, Sta +2, Dex +4, Qik +5

**Size:** -4

**Virtues and Flaws:** Lightning Reflexes; Infamous

**Personality Traits:** Proud +3, Hostile +3, Merciful -4

**Reputations:** None

**Hierarchy:** 4

**Combat:**

**Bite (fangs):** Init +5, Attack +10, Defense +9, Damage -7 (see Powers: *Venomous Bite*)

**Bite (surprised):** Init +14, Attack +10, Defense +9, Damage -7 (see Powers: *Venomous Bite*)

**Soak:** +2

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

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (3), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5)

**Abilities:** Awareness 4 (prey), Brawl 2 (fangs), Hunt 4 (rodents), Latin 5 (curses), Stealth 4 (stalking prey), Survival 3 (grasslands)

### Powers:

*Envisioning* (A veneer of an opulence hiding a decayed world), 1 or 5 points, Init +5, Mentem. See Lemures, earlier.

*His Master's Voice*, var points, Init +6, Vim:

The demon summons other demons or corrupt beasts to its current location. This costs one Might Point for every point of Infernal Might of the being summoned, so is used sparingly. The demon has no control over the demon it has summoned.

*Lend Senses*, 1 points, Init +5, Mentem: The demon touches the target to share its sense of smell. The target gains the ability to discriminate odors as well as a bloodhound. This effect lasts until the target sees a religious act of one of the Divine religions.

*Obsession (Avaricious)*, 1-3 points, Init 0, Vim. See Lemures, earlier.

*Shroud the Stench of the Pit*, var points, Init +8, Vim: Might cost equal to target

Power's Might cost. If used to shroud another Infernal Power, the said power appears Magical or Faerie in origin. It can also be used to make a Power appear mundane to super-

natural detection, but if the power is not subtle mundane senses may be enough to determine that it is supernatural. The Shroud has the same duration as the targeted Power.

*Venomous Bite*, 2 points, Init +8, Aquam. See DuPurin's Black Dogs, earlier.

*The Wealth of Nations*, 3 points, Init +5, Terram: The demon summons riches (things with intrinsic value, not useful objects) equal in value to 1 pound of gold per point of current Might score (before spending the points for this effect). The wealth is summoned from some other place, and the previous owner is unlikely to be happy.

**Weakness:** The Green Snakes cannot touch or act against people with True Faith at all, nor against anyone touching them.

**Vis:** 2 pawns of Imaginem vis in a belly scale.

**Appearance:** A small, emerald green snake no longer than a hand's length, whose shadow twists and turns against normal light sources, even when the body is still.

## Chapter Three

# The Mound

This series of stories centers around a mound, an ancient burial site used a millennium ago by a pagan religion. The natives worshiped the Dark One, a powerful demon posing as a chthonic harvest god. During the spring and autumn festivals, the nearby clans assembled and offered young men and women as grooms and brides to the Dark One, in exchange for good weather and healthy crops. At the climax of the worshipers' rituals, the false god rose from below, accompanied by his demon minions, and accepted the offered youths. The newlyweds then followed the god into the mound and never returned.

A Christian saint converted the pagans several centuries later, and entombed their god in the mound. Generations passed and the mound was forgotten. Hidden in a dense peat bog, it sat ignored for decades. Recently a young magus named Crispus discovered mention of it in old church chronicles. Exploring beneath its mossy turf, Crispus awakened the mound's evil and released its ancient horror.

The first story, "The Missing Magus," introduces the player characters to the mound and the two hostile baronies on either side of it. The second adventure, "The Red Knights Return," brings the magi back to the mound to stop the demon's minions from assembling an army, in anticipation of their master's return. In the final adventure, "The Blessed Union," the magi are invited to a wedding that will finally bring peace to the fractious neighbors, but diabolical forces would rather resurrect the old god.

The first adventure can be extremely dangerous, and is not recommended for young magi, unless one or more are demon hunters. The second adventure

follows five years after, and the third five years after that. The default setting for the Mound is the Hibernian Tribunal, but it can easily be moved to the player characters' Tribunal. Suggestions for doing so are found in the accompanying sidebar.

## Story I: The Missing Magus

*In the year of Our Lord 465, the Apostle of Ireland traveled to Magh Slécht (the plain of prostrations), where the Dark One, a pagan god of blood and human sacrifice, had a mound of worship, at which the tribes gathered to venerate wickedness, perfidy, lust, and villainy. From his grassy hill the Dark One assaulted the saint with his fiendish legions, but St. Patrick prevailed and struck down the pagan god with his righteous anger.*

— From the annals of Domnach Mór (Big Church) in Templeport parish

Crispus, a respected hunter from House Flambeau, read about the mound in the old church records at Templeport. He searched the peat bog unsuccessfully until he met a local boy who led him to the mound. Forcing an entry, Crispus uncovered a series of subterranean Infernal regiones, one of which contained the bodies of the brides and grooms wedded to the chthonic deity. Instead of resting peacefully, the corpses were animated by demons. A few days later the regio temporarily opened, on the anniversary of the ancient pagan spring festival, and the demons escaped into the bog. Villagers from the two bordering baronies

regularly harvest peat from the bog for turf, which they chop, dry, and then burn for fuel. The demons, called "revengants," attacked the turf-cutters, killing several and driving off the rest. The villagers of both baronies blame those of the other for somehow inflicting this nightmare upon them.

Meanwhile, Crispus does not return, and eventually his parens, Aster Mor, asks the magi for help.

## Starting Things Off

Aster Mor visits the covenant, arriving without escort or luggage. He asks to speak to the magi, and once they are assembled he explains his visit.

"Crispus, my friend and former apprentice, is missing." Aster Mor looks at each of the listening magi. "From what I have gathered, Crispus learned of an ancient burial mound and went to explore it. He is known for hunting monsters, of all types and from all realms. He has been gone for two months and not returned. I ask your assistance in retrieving him or information about him."

If a player succeeds with an Intelligence + Order of Hermes Lore + a simple roll against an Ease Factor of 6, his character has heard of Crispus. A magus a few years out of apprenticeship, Crispus has made a name for himself by slaying monsters, evil faeries, and minor demons.

Aster Mor says that Crispus told him about the mound after reading the old monastic records at Domnach Mór, a church in the village of Templeport in the Kingdom of Briefne. He left with five warriors, and that was the last As-

ter Mor saw of him. He suggests that the characters travel to Templeport to pick up Crispus' trail. He apologizes if asked to join the rescue party, stressing that he has other, more pressing responsibilities that he must attend to. How they travel from their home covenant to the mound is left in the stroyguide's capable hands.

## The Location, an Overview

The adventure takes place in a large bog, which serves as the border between two baronies, Tullyhaw to the northwest and Tullyhunco to the southeast. Both baronies are in the Kingdom of Briefne and both barons are vassals of Ualagarg mac Cathail Leith, King of Briefne. Each barony is ruled by a single, large family, whose extensions and client vassals serve as the feudal government. Tullyhaw is governed by Gillisa McGovern, the head of the clan and known as "The McGovern," a common Irish practice for naming a clan's leader. Tullyhunco is ruled by Hugh McTiernan, called "The McTiernan."

Population centers in both baronies include several villages, a score or so stone fortresses for the local nobility, and the baron's castle. Each village is surrounded by a wooden palisade and holds a score of wattle and daub huts. At night the villagers lock themselves in their huts and secure their cattle in attached byres. During the day the herds are at pasture, overseen by the men, while the women and children work the fields just outside the palisade. The stone fortresses are larger operations, each holding a noble, his family, and a dozen household knights. The baronial castles hold the baron, his family, thirty or so servants, and a score of household knights.

Templeport is a Tullyhaw monastery, surrounded by a wooden palisade and containing several rude cottages, a tall stone watchtower, and a large wooden church called Domnach Mór. The monastery is well known within the Tribunal and easy to find.

In Mythic Ireland, monasteries include both the monks who work for God and those who work for the monks, farmers and crofters and their families, making Templeport akin to a small village.

The bog that separates the two baronies is approximately two miles wide and six miles long. Both baronies are densely wooded and hilly, pock-marked with pastures and ponds. Templeport is 14 miles northwest of the bog, which takes a walker a day to transverse and a rider half a day. The McGovern's castle is seven miles north of Templeport and 21 miles from the bog. The McTiernan's castle in Tullyhunco is 15 miles southeast of the bog. Villages lie on either side of the bog, the closest being within one mile.

Play may drift to the smaller settlements, but the most likely settings are the monastery at Templeport and the bog that separates Tullyhaw from Tullyhunco. A baron's castle will not come into play until the second or third story.

## Templeport & Domnach Mór (The Big Church)

The monastery at Templeport regularly receives visitors. The palisade gate is open and unguarded, and the grounds inside are bustling with summer activity. Templeport is governed by the abbot, Father Pádraig, a cheerful man with bright blue eyes and wooly white hair. Working alongside him is Father Uallachán, a short and serious priest who has assisted Pádraig for many years. As the player characters enter, a lowly monk greets them, asking them their business and if they are staying overnight. If an unGifted character interacts with the monk, the group is led to a private building for their night's stay. If a Gifted member leads the discussion, the monk puts them in an empty cattle byre for their stay. When the player characters ask for the abbot, the monk quickly complies.

Pádraig and Uallachán greet the visitors. Both are helpful if they are interacting with an unGifted individual, but cool and reserved when speaking

with a Gifted magus. Pádraig remembers Crispus, who was allowed access to the monastery's library after making a substantial donation. He was only allowed to stay three days — the limit of the monastery's hospitality obligation — and Father Uallachán had to be present. Uallachán says that he was suspicious of Crispus' intentions, but he obeyed his abbot's direction none the less. Crispus found a mention of a pagan mound where Crom Dubh, which translates to "the Dark One," was once worshipped, hidden in a bog southeast of the church. Uallachán says that Crispus calculated that the chronicle meant the bog that still sits between Tullyhaw and Tullyhunco and immediately took his group in that direction.

If asked, Uallachán shows the magi the relevant page, taking only an hour to go through the church rolls kept in the church's basement. Pádraig confirms Aster Mor's time line; Crispus arrived approximately two months ago, a month before the May Day celebration. If asked what that is, Pádraig says it is the Feast of Saint Ceallach, a martyred bishop from the 6th century, which happens halfway between the spring equinox and the summer solstice.

There are other clues about Crom Dubh in the church records, clues that Crispus didn't find and Uallachán has yet to uncover. Access to the records can be gained through the smooth social interactions of an unGifted character, a generous donation of at least 10 Mythic Pounds, or magic. If a character spends a day reading the church chronicles, effectively a library on Area Lore: Briefne (+4 on Research rolls), Church Lore (+2), and Infernal Lore (+1), let the player make a Research roll (Intelligence + Ability + simple die), using one of the Abilities just mentioned. If the research roll succeeds against an Ease Factor of 9, the character discovers the history of Crom Dubh, a chthonic deity that traded human sacrifices for good harvests, and his banishment by Saint Patrick. Finally, the reader discovers that the Feast of Ceallach is the rechristened Bealtaine feast, the same pagan holiday on which Crom Dubh was celebrated.

Pádraig and Uallachán are continuing characters whom the magi will meet in all three stories. Ultimately, they will both be deceived by Infernal agents and together attempt to return Crom Dubh. At this point, Uallachán is tainted by the Infernal, but under the delusion that his powers are granted by pagan gods rather than demons. Uncertain in his abilities, Uallachán will not take any measures to interfere with the magi.

## En Route to the Mound

Leaving Templeport, the magi head southeast toward the bog. It is easy enough to avoid population centers if the magi wish. Anyone from Templeport can supply adequate directions to the bog, so the magi can travel the entire 14 mile distance without interruption. The

### A Warmer Beginning

The story's opening is fairly cold, designed as a universal entrance for player characters across the spectrum of sagas. You can warm it up by personalizing it for your player characters. Aster Mor can be introduced beforehand, or replaced by another, more familiar, storyguide character. The role is small and can be filled by a character generated from a player character's Virtue or Flaw: Mentor, Patron, or even an Enemy. The magi might owe some service to Aster Mor or his covenant, or offer aid to grease the wheels of a future interaction.

If you have taken the suggestion and placed the mound within your player characters' Tribunal, a second option is to have one of the villagers ask for help with the revenants in the bog. This complicates the adventure's beginning because the magi will find the mound before knowing about Crispus, and may miss the interaction with Pádraig and Uallachán at Templeport. They can be introduced later, accompanying the barons to the mound for the adventure's conclusion.

weather is beautiful, late spring under a blue sky, and the group travels through grassy meadows bordered by flowering cherry and crab apple trees.

As they near their destination, the magi notice a group of six local warriors riding toward the bog. An Intelligence + Area Lore: Briefne + a simple die against an Ease Factor of 6 indicates that they are Tullyhaw knights. They ask the magi a few simple questions: who are they, where are they from, where are they going? The knights explain that several of the local villeins working in the bog have been attacked by revenants. They are certain that the baron of Tullyhunco is somehow behind the attacks, and they plan to ride through the swamp and raid Tullyhunco. The knights conclude by saying that the baron of Tullyhaw plans to raid Tullyhunco in the near future.

Players might wonder if Crispus was involved in the revenants' attacks. If the knights are asked about Crispus, they say that some local folks had spotted a strange man in long black robes accompanied by a small band of warriors heading for the bog. They thought nothing of it at the time, but now think that the man was a wizard working for Tullyhunco to raise the dead from the bog.

If the magi avoid the knights, they enter the swamp without this knowledge.

### Inside the Bog

This large wetland is cloaked in thick fog, which curls in wispy eddies and limits vision to a dozen paces. Tawny thorn bushes, stunted yellow willows, and dreary green weeds grow unkempt. The bog is covered by an Infernal aura of 1, a lasting remnant of the violence from the distant past. Moving through the bog is difficult, and players must make Stamina + stress die rolls against an Ease Factor of 6 after an hour of travel. Failure costs characters a Long-Term Fatigue level, and botching costs an additional Fatigue Level per botch.

While searching, the group sees another party of six knights, dismounted and guiding their reluctant steeds. Tul-

lyhunco knights, they face the same problem and have the same misguided intentions as their Tullyhaw neighbors. If questioned, they explain that Tullyhunco villagers who work the bog have been mauled by revenants, and they assume that some Tullyhaw wizard has risen the dead that legends claim live in the area. They have not seen Crispus or anyone matching his description. They also say that the baron of Tullyhunco will soon ride to Tullyhaw, leading a large band of knights.

Another hour of wandering and the magi hear cries for help. Rushing forward, they see two revenants scrabbling to get up a tree and failing, and a young boy precariously balanced in the tree's lower branches. If the magi do nothing except watch, the revenants tirelessly claw at the tree, and after a few hours the tired boy will fall from his branch and be torn to pieces. This also happens if the magi wander off, although they won't witness the boy's demise. If they destroy the revenants, the boy climbs down and thanks them. Unsettled as he might be by the magi's Gift, he is grateful to his saviors.

He is Tadhg McGovern, one of the baron's sons. He has been fostered to an uncle that lives in a nearby village, and routinely sneaks out to explore the bog. He spotted the wizard Crispus and secretly followed him as he fruitlessly searched the bog. Eventually discovered by Crispus' grogs, Tadhg learned that Crispus sought the mound. Tadhg knows where it lies, saying that he can sometimes, "see things that others can't see." The magi should eventually realize that Tadhg has Second Sight and can see regio boundaries. Tadhg says he met Crispus a week before the Feast of Saint Ceallach. Tadhg led Crispus and his grogs to the mound, watched them enter it, and then returned to the village. A few days after the holiday, villagers started saying there were revenants in the bog, and some were even attacked. Tadhg reduced his explorations of the bog, but didn't cease entirely. Today was the first time he saw a revenant, two in fact, and he raced to the tree once they saw him. He knows the way home and needs no further as-

## The Mound

sistance from the magi.

If asked, Tadhg will guide the magi to the mound within an hour, considering it an obligation to the people who saved his life. If the magi don't want such guidance, they must find the mound on their own. Hopefully they have ways of spotting regio boundaries. If not, the mound's regio boundary is apparent to all for two minutes at sunrise and again at sunset, and the player characters find it. There is also a chance that they run into one or two revenants. Use your judgment when determining whether your group of player characters meets any revenants. Strong groups might relish fighting two or three of the shambling dead, while weaker parties could quickly be overwhelmed by more than a single revenant.

The mound is hidden in an Infernal regio with an aura of 1, the same strength as the Infernal aura in the bog. Those with Second Sight can see the regio boundary on a successful Perception + Second Sight + stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 5. Hermetic Intellego Vim spells can also spot the regio boundary (see *ArM5* page 158, *Piercing the Faerie Veil*, for equivalent spells), and once the boundary is spotted a character can easily enter the regio. Those without such capabilities cannot see the boundary or find the mound. However, the boundary opens at sunrise and sunset, letting anyone view and thus enter the mound's regio. It only stays open for two minutes, but that should be enough time for the group to get through.

Approximately 350 feet in diameter and 40 feet high, the mound is a hill rising above the mire. Its slopes

are overgrown with weeds and black thorn bushes, and a pair of stunted willows stands on the top like horns atop the devil's head. The original entrance to the mound was destroyed centuries ago. Crispus reopened the entrance, and the evidence of rocks and stones piled around the dark opening is apparent. The interior passageway is lined with six-foot tall stones on both walls and ceiling. The tunnel runs straight for 100 feet before ending in a small room with three alcoves. The alcove across the tunnel holds a bench-like pedestal with a small depression in its otherwise flat top. The alcoves to the left and right are empty. This area once served as a minor sacrificial site for the cult, where small items and foodstuffs were offered to the god by individual supplicants.

A regio boundary lies at the very end of the tunnel. Once a year the regio boundary opens, on the morning of the pagan Bealtaine holiday, when

## It's All in the Names

As written, this set of stories is located in the Hibernian Tribunal. Moving the location to the player characters' Tribunal makes the threat more immediate and their participation less forced. To relocate the adventure, change the names of the principle storyguide characters and the locations. The social framework — lord, vassal, cleric, and peasant — is standard enough to fit in any area of Mythic Europe, and every location has an ancient pagan god that the villagers worshiped before the arrival of Christianity. Following is a list of suggested name changes for three other *ArM5* tribunals.

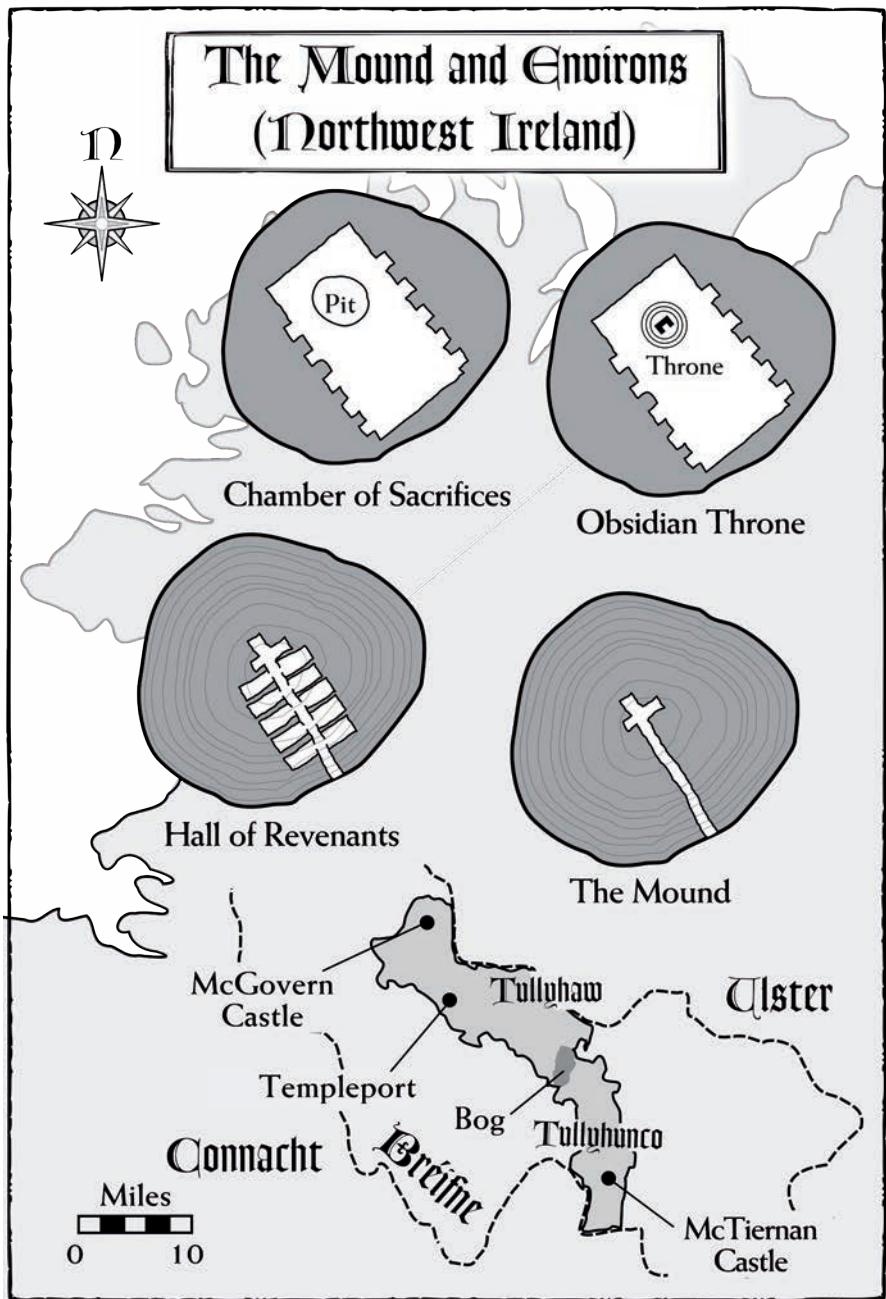
Story Element	Hibernia	Thebes	Normandy	Rhine
The Dark One	Crom Dubh	Kore	Dis Pater	Nerthus
Baronies	Tullyhaw	Kalpaki	Bayeux	Duchy of Limburg
	Tullyhunco	Konitsa	Caen	County of Jülich
Barons	The McGovern (Gillisa)	Gregoras Clabas	Renaud de Ville-Thierry	Duke Henry III
	The McTiernan (Hugh)	Theodoulos Tagaris	Pierre du Thillia	Count William IV
Feudal Lord	King of Briefne	Despot of Epirus	Duke of Normandy	Holy Roman Emperor
	Ualagarg mac Cathail Leith	Theodore Ducas	(see below)	Frederick II
Heirs	Tadhg McGovern	Thomas Clabas	Étienne de Ville-Thierry	Waleran
	Fiona McTiernan	Zoe Tagaris	Isabelle du Thillia	Matilda
Abbot	Pádraig	Meletios	Anseau (chancellor)	Philippus
Priest	Uallachán	Vitus	Oliverus	Wikerus

In the Thebes Tribunal, baronies are called districts. Titans are sometimes bound underground, and Crispus was likely looking for a trapped titan when he entered the mound.

In Normandy, baronies are called bailliages. The position of the duke of Normandy is vacant, his powers assumed by the king of France, although King Henry III of England has a strong claim to the title.

In the Rhine Tribunal, the contestants are William, the Count of Jülich, and Henry, the Duke of Limburg. The demon is female, a False Goddess named "Nerthus."

If a bog is not suitable for the wasteland between baronies, change it to a cave, hidden ravine, dense forest, or some other type of lonely, forsaken place that is hard to cultivate.



the morning sun shines directly down the passageway and hits the bench-like pedestal. When this occurs, the rear wall vanishes, revealing another long passageway on the other side of the pedestal. Character then step over the pedestal and enter the next regio level, which has an Infernal aura of 2. If opened on Bealtaine, the boundary stays open for 24 hours. Last Bealtaine, the revenants roused by Crispus escaped into the bog when the regio boundary opened. Like most regiones in Mythic Europe, this re-

gio can also be spotted and entered by Hermetic magic and other supernatural powers. The Ease Factor for a Perception + Second Sight roll to see the boundary is 6.

### THE HALL OF REVENANTS REGIO

The next regio level is another long passageway leading to another small room of three alcoves. Unlike the regio level below, this passageway has

archways on both walls. The archways are blocked by stacked stones that rise almost to the top of the archway, leaving a foot-high space that serves as a window. The archway immediately to the characters' left is open, and the stones that used to block it are scattered around the archway. Past the opening is an oval chamber, in the center of which lie three dead warriors and two butchered revenants. The warriors are Crispus' shield grogs. There is no evidence of Crispus or his other grogs.

When the mound was a site of active worship, the sacrificed brides and grooms would be placed in these rooms and later animated by demons. When Saint Patrick drove the Dark One from the mound, a team of priests sealed these rooms by blocking their entrances with the stone. The revenants, active and semi-alert on the other side of the stone barricade, cannot remove the stones themselves.

During his exploration, Crispus breached one of the archways. His group was quickly overcome by the sheer number of rushing demons. Rather than retreat completely, he led the survivors deeper into the mound, hoping that the revenants were the mound's only occupants. When the boundary to the lower regio opened on the morning of Bealtaine, the loosed revenants escaped into the bog. The slain grogs have weapons and armor that may be helpful to the magi and their party.

The passageway has nine more archways, each blocked by stacked stones. Each archway leads to a room that holds 20 revenants, who shuffle about restlessly. When the demons notice the group, likely from the party's source of illumination, they crowd the entrance and claw against the stones seeking escape. Reaching through the window, a revenant can attack someone in the hallway with a -3 modifier. While they are supernaturally barred from knocking the blocking stones over, anyone else can push the barricade over easily with a successful Strength + stress roll against an Ease Factor of 6.

The three alcoves at the end of the tunnel hold the boundary to the next level of the regio. Hermetic magic can

## Father Pádraig

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 58 (52)

**Decrepitude:** 1 (4)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Senior Clergy; Clumsy, Monastic Vows, Regular

**Personality Traits:** Bureaucratic +3, Orderly +2, Greedy (for money) +1

**Reputations:** Wise Leader 4 (Ecclesiastic)

**Combat:**

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

**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 (cows), Area Lore: Briefne 4 (10) (Ecclesiastical properties), Artes Liberales 2 (Rhetoric), Athletics 1 (running), Awareness 1 (lost cows), Civil and Canon Law 6 (tithing), Folk Ken 2 (local barons), Intrigue 3 (local barons), Irish 5 (agricultural terms), Latin 4 (church use), Leadership 3 (monks), Philosophiae 2 (natural philosophiae), Profession: Farmer 3 (10) (cows), Profession: Preaching 4 (messages of charity), Profession: Scribe 4 (5) (copying gospels), Stealth 1 (moving quietly), Theology 3 (the trinity)

**Equipment:** Monk's habit and walking cane

**Appearance:** Father Pádraig has broad

shoulders and a straight back, despite his advanced years. His smiling face is bordered by white hair and a thick beard, and his lively eyes still sparkle beneath thick gray eyebrows.

Father Pádraig was born in the Kingdom of Briefne, a son of a prosperous farmer. Entering the Church at an early age, he has been a member of the monastic community at Templeport for over 20 years. Ten years ago he became the abbot, taking over the duties of his aging uncle. Pádraig knows about the long-standing tensions between the two baronies. Living closer to the border than The McGovern, he regularly advises the baron to keep the peace. His words are not always heeded, and Father Pádraig concentrates on keeping his monastery safe.

## Father Uallachán

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 36 (36)

**Decrepitude:** 0 (0)

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (8)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Diabolist, Priest; Ablating, Commanding, Incantation, Psychomachia, Summoning; Affinity with Summoning, Improved Characteristics, Mentored by Demons, Student of Infernal (free); Driven (to return the old gods), Tragic Life, Corrupted Abilities, Manufactured Ignorance, Vow of Celibacy, Witch Marks

**Personality Traits:** Determined to Raise the Old Gods +3, Shrewd +3, Convincing +2

**Reputations:** Worships False Gods 1 (Infernals)

**Hierarchy:** 1

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**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:** Ablating 5 (Furies), Artes Liberales 1 (grammar), Awareness 1 (searching books), Brawl 2 (dodge), Charm 2 (nobles), Church Lore 2 (dioceses), Commanding 11 (Furies), Concentration 2 (maintaining summoning), Diablerie 5 (auras and regiones), Guile 3 (lying to laity), Incantation 4 (5) (against noblemen), Irish 5 (religious terms), Infernal Lore 3 (demons), Italian 2 (church terms), Latin 3 (church terms), (Corrupted) Leadership 4 (intimidate), Penetration 2 (Summoning), Psychomachia 5 (control peasants), Summoning 8 (False Gods), Theology 1 (mass)

**Equipment:** A simple brown robe.

**Favored Maleficia:**

*A Second Thought in the Face of the Fiend* (Incantation/Psychomachia 15/+14) This maleficia makes the target want to return home, wherever that is. The effect wears off in two minutes, but lasts long enough to defuse many tense situations.

(Base 4, +2 Voice, +1 Diameter)

**Appearance:** Father Uallachán is short and stooped with a hawkish nose and thinning brown hair. When he smiles he appears avuncular and kind, when he

frowns he becomes terrible and fierce. Father Uallachán was born and trained in Dublin (or another large city if you have relocated the story). During a pilgrimage to Rome he met and was deceived by a demon claiming to be one of the city's pagan gods. By granting the priest supernatural powers, the demon seduced Uallachán into believing that the old gods should be worshiped alongside the Christian God. He does not overtly espouse this belief at this time. Completing his journey, Uallachán returned home and relocated to Templeport, following the Italian demon's advice. He quietly works to resurrect Crom Dubh and reinstate him as the local deity. He does not realize that he is Infernally tainted, thinking that his supernatural powers are those of an ancient religion rather than Satan's brood.

At this point in the adventures, Uallachán is researching Templeport's church rolls and the surrounding area. He is specifically looking for the True Name of Crom Dubh, which he has not yet found. He helped Crispus find the mention of Crom Dubh and gave the magus directions to the bog. He is curious about what happened to the magus, but not curious enough to explore the bog himself.

allow a caster to view the boundary, and the Ease Factor for a Perception + Second Sight roll is 6. The boundary also becomes visible if human blood is poured into the shallow depression in the middle of the pedestal. To those who can see it, the boundary looks like a wall of fog that replaces the far alcove's back wall. Stepping through this fog leads to the next level.

### THE CHAMBER OF SACRIFICES REGIO

Stepping into the next level, with an Infernal aura of 3, the characters see a large chamber lined with rough-cut square blocks of black obsidian stone. The chamber runs 30 paces deep and 15 paces wide, with a 20-foot high ceiling. A heavy iron chandelier hangs from the ceiling, unlit candles sitting in their sockets. At the far end of the room, beneath the hanging chandelier, is a pit, 10 feet in diameter and 30 feet

deep. Shallow alcoves are cut along the wall. The chamber's fetid air makes breathing difficult. Penalize all physical activity rolls by -1 and include an extra botch die. An angry buzzing of flies fills the room, although no actual fly can be found, penalizing all auditory Awareness rolls by -3. When the mound was an active pagan site, victims would be sacrificed here, their blood collected to fill the pit sitting at the end of the room.

Near the center of the room lie the bodies of Crispus and two shield grogs, savagely torn asunder, limbs scattered across the floor. The magus' body has been badly mauled, but it is not in pieces like his two former shield grogs. Besides his traveling clothes and oak staff, he has four hardened acorns in a pouch, each a pawn of Creo vis. The two grogs have been torn to pieces and their martial equipment scattered. Their long swords and chainmail are potential loot. Two long spears lie nearby, their

heads broken off, and can be used in combat as staffs.

A magus may be powerful enough to cast the spell *Whispers through the Black Gate*. If so, he can speak with Crispus' ghost by talking to Crispus' corpse. The ghost says that he was curious about the site after discovering it in the Templeport church rolls. He quickly ascertained that it was Infernal, and hoped to slay as many demons as he could. The revenants were too much for his group, and he hoped to rest and regain lost fatigue before tackling them again. He warns the party that some foul beast leaped from the shadows and killed him while he was reading the inscription on the back wall, but he did not get a good look at the creature. The grogs' corpses have been rent asunder and are not complete enough to act as a target for the spell.

Words are inscribed waist-high along the back wall, on the other side of the pit. The Latin inscription praises Crom Dubh, extolling his power and expressing his terrible wrath. Above the inscription are several bas-relief sculptures of dragons, battles, lions, and warriors. Each scene is bordered, so that all ten carvings are separated into individual pieces of art. Slightly off center to the right is a carving of three knights wearing full chainmail and sitting astride three armored horses. Directly beneath the carving the inscription mentions Crom Dubh's generals, "terrible captains three, who each lead sixty and six legions to the woe and wailing of their foes." If human blood is splashed on the carving and the inscription, the narrow section of wall beneath it shimmers and is replaced by a black mist, the boundary to the next and last regio level. Again, Hermetic magic and Second Sight can spot this boundary.

At some point, ideally as the magi stand engrossed, the Aillén Trechenn attacks, striking from the shadows.

The Aillén Trechenn is trapped within this regio, held here by the same miraculous power that holds the Red Knights imprisoned (see following). As the characters enter, it swishes around the ceiling in spiritual form, sizing up

## Tadhg

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

**Size:** -1

**Age:** 12 (12)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Son of Landed Noble, (Inherited) Knight, Second Sight, Overconfident, Heir, Reckless

**Personality Traits:** Overconfident +3, Reckless +3

**Combat:**

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

**Dagger:** Init -2, Attack +7, Defense +1, Damage +4

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Briefne 3 (bog), Athletics 1 (jumping), Awareness 3 (standing guard), Brawl 2 (dagger), Charm 1 (nobles), Etiquette 3 (hunting manners), Folk Ken 1 (knights),

Intrigue 1 (Tullyhaw nobles), Irish 5 (courtly terms), Second Sight 2 (regio boundaries), Stealth 3 (hiding), Survival 2 (bog)

**Equipment:** Simple clothing

**Appearance:** Tadhg is dark haired with blue eyes and a rosy complexion. He is well-built and obviously strong for his age.

Tadhg is one of The McGovern's sons. He is fostered to one of The McGovern's knights in a nearby village. Discipline is lax, and as long as Tadhg does his chores he is free to explore the surrounding countryside. Tadhg is due to be trained as a knight.

The boy has Second Sight, and for story purposes automatically sees the regio that leads to the mound. He may see additional regio boundaries inside the mound, depending on his Second Sight rolls.

Tadhg's Characteristics and Size have been modified due to his age. His low Intelligence does not mean that he is stupid, rather that he makes the same mistake over and over again and does not learn from his failures.

its opponents and preparing for the best time to strike. The upper reaches of the room are likely lost in shadow. When the time is right, when the intruders seem the most vulnerable, it materializes perched on an upper shelf. It screeches once or twice, using its *Whose Ears have heard heard the Master's Call* power, and after deafening one or two targets plunges through the air and attacks.

## THE OBSIDIAN THRONE ROOM REGIO

The final regio is a chamber shaped like the one before, a large room with alcoves along either wall. A stone dais sits in the back of the room, a three-tiered square of masonry that stands ten feet tall. Two staircases are cut into the dais and lead to a black obsidian throne that sits at the top; the throne's high back and thick arms loom angrily over the room. The near wall, the one behind

the characters as they emerge from the regio boundary, holds the same ten bas-relief sculptures of demons, monsters, and warriors that the previous regio's wall held, in reverse order. The throne room has an Infernal aura of 4.

The ten alcoves contain terracotta pots full of gold armbands, ancient Roman coins, jeweled brooches, rings, and necklaces. Sacrificed by pagan kings long ago, they have been collected into a sizable treasure equal to 500 Mythic pounds.

The bas-relief carvings loom in silent witness behind the characters. Three demons, generals of Crom Dubh that were bested and bound by the saint, are imprisoned in the sculpture of the three mounted knights. Intellego Vim detection spells show that a Divine miracle of the 9th magnitude keeps these fiends contained. They have very little power at this point, trapped as they are in the carving. Touching any of the gold in the clay pots breaks the

demons' supernatural bindings, a weakness in the saint's miraculous binding power. Once a character picks up one of the glittering armbands or sparkling brooches the demons are released. They immediately return to Hell, screaming as they go. While they are undetectable in their spiritual form, their screams are heard by all.

Looking at the bas-relief carving of the three mounted knights, a successful Perception + Awareness simple roll versus an Ease Factor of 6 indicates that the sculpture is changed, its lines dulled and its overall appearance marred. Aesthetically, it is noticeably different from its neighboring sculptures. If the Perception + Awareness roll was 12 or higher, the observer notices a fine Latin scrawl etched into each knight figure. Each is the True Name of the demon, a considerable advantage for those who little later meet the knights in combat when they come back for adventure two, "Red Knights Return."

If the magi never enter this regio level, they do not release the knights, and one of the storyguide characters does it offstage. Likely candidates are Uallachán, exploring the mound for Infernal Lore, Tadhg exploring what he thinks is an empty mound, or one of the barons, looking for the mound's rumored gold.

## The Return Trip

Leaving the Mound's several regiones is much easier than entering them. Except for the initial entrance between the bog's Infernal aura 1 and the Mound's Infernal regio 1, each regio passage is readily apparent. Each looks like a hazy rent in the wall, obscured by gray mist. Stepping through each rent takes a walker from the current regio to the next. The entrapped demons cannot use these ready exits because they are bound in their respective regiones by Divine miracles.

## Bog Revenant

A bog revenant is a demon inhabiting the withered corpse of one of Crom Dubh's willing newlyweds. A mound revenant can be male or female, with no statistical differences.

**Order:** Furies

**Infernal Might:** 10 (Corpus)

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Pre +1, Com -3, Pre -3, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +2, Qik +2

**Size:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Greater Infernal Power, Berserk, Great Strength, Tough, Mute

**Personality Traits:** Wrathful +4, Self-Control -6

**Hierarchy:** 0

**Combat:**

**Claws\***: Init +1, Attack +12, Defense +9, Damage +6

**Soak\*:** +8

\* Calculations include the revenant's berserk state

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

**Wound Penalties:** 0 (1-5), -1 (6-10), -3 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Brawl 5 (claws)

**Powers:**

*Endurance of the Enraged*, 0 points, Init +2,

**Corpus:** The bog revenant does not suffer from wound penalties except on Defense totals.

**Weakness:** Abhorrent Material (butter)

**Vis:** 2 pawns of Corpus vis sordida, one in each eye

**Appearance:** A mound revenant is a pale, emaciated, animated corpse. It has long, dirty fingernails that are as strong as claws, and wild, uncombed hair. Naked, its clothes have long since rotted away.

Bog revenants are mad, ravening fiends intent on slaughter. A revenant does not spare a wounded target, and continues to attack until the target is dead. Up to five revenants can fight as an untrained group.

A bog revenant cannot touch butter, medieval Ireland's main export. If your saga is set elsewhere, select a common foodstuff from the area to act as the demon's weakness.



## Lest we Forget the Barons

The world above has not sat idle as the magi explore below. The revenant attacks have rekindled an age-old grudge between the two baronies. The McGovern and 10 knights ride to raid Tullyhaw. The McTiernan has done the same and leads 10 Tullyhunco knights toward Tullyhaw. The groups happen to meet near the mound. Though armed and belligerent, at this point the barons would rather rattle swords than cross them. Both start shouting at each other, proclaiming ownership of the bog and its contents, and demanding the other leave the area.

Hidden in its regio, the mound is not visible to the knights. The view from the mound is a wispy gray mist that surrounds the mound's circumference. Those who can see through regio boundaries see the bog laying beyond the mist and the armored men. Those who can't see through regio boundaries just see the mist. Walking into the mist, however, is enough to exit the regio and

step into the bog. Chances are that neither party sees the other.

Tadhg can see through regio boundaries. If he is with the magi he sees the Tullyhaw and Tullyhunco knights and warns the magi. If he is not with the magi, he is with his father, The McGovern, who met the boy on the ride through the bog. The McGovern insisted that his son ride with him rather than leaving him alone in the bog. In this case, Tadhg sees the magi and warns his father. Seeing the boundary is enough to enter the regio, and Tadhg can lead the knights in if the magi refuse to come out.

If the magi's presence remains undetected, the barons argue and a short melee ensues. If the player characters don't enter the fight, don't run a combat encounter using only storyguide characters. Instead say that after a few minutes of melee both sides leave, taking their dead and wounded with them. The barons survive to fight again.

If the groups meet each other, The McGovern accuses the magi of working for The McTiernan, which The

McTiernan denies before accusing the magi of working for the McGovern. The magi can explain the truth, that Crispus unintentionally disturbed the mound's revenants. Neither baron trusts a Gifted speaker, but an eloquent unGifted character can convince the barons on an appropriate Social Ability + Communication stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9. Both barons admit to not hiring the magi to stir up trouble, and when both have heard the other's admission they begrudgingly curb their anger and their knights. If the magi admit that Crispus was the culprit, the barons want some form of compensation for the villagers the revenants have killed. The magi may pay them a nominal amount, perhaps 10 Mythic Pounds, or tell them to take it up with Crispus' master Aster Mor.

They do ask if the magi found anything underground, since barrows and tumuli are rumored to hold ancient treasure. The magi can handle this however they want. If they have treasure, they can share it. If they don't, or don't want to part with their goods, they can step aside and let the barons enter. If led by Tadhg the barons get to the second regio, the Hall of Revenants, and engage the demons, a fight that may spill out to the lower regio level and perhaps the bog. Run this as you see fit, keeping in mind that the knights try to contain the revenants and slay as many as they can.

The magi should be able to extract themselves from any lingering trouble outside the mound, whether through magic, negotiation, or subterfuge. If the magi want to destroy the mound, both barons refuse, claiming the site as a historical feature of the land. They say that destroying the revenants is enough to remove the peril. The magi may destroy the mound regardless. If so, it collapses, and reforms for the second adventure, rebuilt by the same Infernal powers that created it originally. The magi leave with Crispus' body, and some gold if they are lucky. Aster Mor offers to bury Crispus' corpse. He gives the magi ten pawns of vis for their assistance, offering them any type of vis they desire.

# Interlude One: Five Years Pass

Depending how far away the monastery is from the covenant, the magi may wish to stay in touch with the barons, the clerics, or the boy Tadhg. The barons are not interested in maintaining ties with the magi. The clerics are more interested contacts, and they periodically exchange letters with the magi if the wizards make the effort. Tadhg returns to his fostered uncle and continues his martial training, preferring swords and horses over pens and letters.

Father Uallachán continues to read Templeport's church rolls. He also acquires other church chronicles and adds them to the Templeport collection. He reads that hundreds of years ago many local families, including the McGovern and McTiernans, worshiped Crom Dubh. In his research he discovers the True Names of the three Red Knights formerly trapped in the mound. He speaks with Pádraig about the old gods and their relationship to the formation of the early Church. These conversations are never confrontational; they are Uallachán's slow attempt to sow the seeds of deceit.

After the magi leave, Uallachán explores the bog and the mound on his own. Aided by a local knight, he uses his Commanding power to pacify and slay any bog revenants he finds. He starts collecting their eyes, each a pawn of Corpus vis sordida, which he plans to use in his Infernal summonings.

The three demon knights escape and return to Hell. It is ideal if the magi freed them, but if not, Uallachán does as he explores the mound. He cannot see regio boundaries, but his Infernal Lore suggests means to enter the higher regiones. An Intelligence + Infernal Lore + simple roll versus an Ease Factor of 12 indicates the various mundane ways to enter each regio boundary, e. g. by filling the shallow depression in the alcove's pedestal with human blood.

A month after the demons leave the mound, the regio boundary between it and the bog's Infernal aura closes. It no longer opens at dawn or dusk, nor on the

anniversary of the pagan spring and fall festival. A particular property of this regio is that, at this time, the boundary cannot be seen by Second Sight or found by Hermetic spells. While closed, the mound regio system relocates itself to another spot in the bog. When the regio boundary re-opens in Story Two, the mound is still in the bog, but in a different location.

# Story II: Red Knights Return

In the second story the three demon knights that were trapped below the mound in the Obsidian Throne Room return. Generals of Crom Dubh, they come to prepare the way for their demonic lord by spreading war and slaughter. To further the conflict, they pose as their enemy's enemy. In the time honored tradition of Ireland, they collect their victims' heads.

## Aillén Trechenn

The Aillén Trechenn is a monstrous demon that regularly emerged from its cave to attack the people of ancient Ireland. It was reportedly slain by the 1st century poet Amairgin, but as your characters discover, that tale is incorrect.

**Order:** Furies

**Infernal Might:** 20 (Auram)

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

**Size:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 3 (1)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Berserk, Tough

**Personality Traits:** Wrathful +6

**Reputation:** Ancient Monster 3 (Local)

**Hierarchy:** 3

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +6, Damage n/a

**Beak:** Init +2, Attack +9, Defense +6, Damage +4

**Talons:** Init +3, Attack +7, Defense +8, Damage +3

**Soak:** +5

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

**Wound Penalties:** 0 (1-5), -1 (6-10), -3 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Awareness 5 (interlopers), Athletics 4 (flying), Brawl 5 (talons)

**Powers:**

**Coagulation:** 2 points, Init 0, Corpus: This power allows the Aillén Trechenn to take physical form.

**Obsession:** 1-3 points, Init -4, Vim: As per Realms of Power: Infernal, page 31, the demon can manifest the Personality Trait: Wrathful in a sining

character. The score of the Personality Trait equals the number of Might points spent.

*Waxing Tide of Humors*, 3 points, Init +7, Mentem: The demon causes a target to become wrathful. The character may resist the emotion by making an appropriate Personality Trait + stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 9.

*Berserker Rage*, 1 point, Init +5, Mentem: The demon gives a character the Berserk Virtue, which lasts until the character calms down.

*Endurance of the Enraged*, 0 points, Init +5, Corpus: As described for Bog Revenants.

*Whose Ears have heard the Master's Call*, 4 points, Init +5, Corpus: The call of the Aillén Trechenn causes great pain and renders the hearer deaf. The target of this power loses his sense of hearing, which heals as a Heavy Wound. Sufferers take a -3 penalty to combat totals.

(Debauchery/Malediction Base 10, +2 Voice)

**Weakness:** Abhorrent Material (butter)

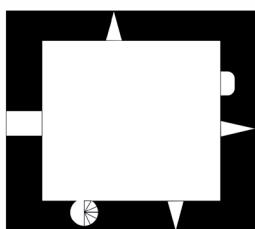
**Vis:** 4 pawns of Vim vis sordida in its largest beak.

**Appearance:** The Aillén Trechenn appears as a triple-headed vulture the size of a man. Filthy, tattered, and vile, the ebony fiend drops feathers and feces in its wake.

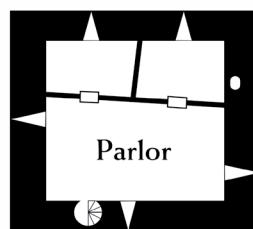
As a three-headed creature, the Aillén Trechenn can make three beak attacks in a combat round. It can replace one of its beak attacks with its talons attack.

## The Basalt Tower

Ground Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor

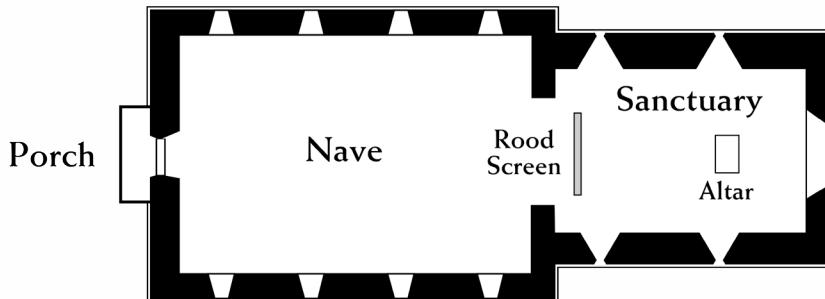


Fourth Floor



\* to Prison Regio

## Domnach Dau - The New Church



### Storyguide Character Advancement, Five Years Later

Three characters from story one have to be advanced five years, each receiving 75 experience points. The magi may or may not meet any of the three, depending on circumstances, but you should keep track of these characters' experience points and abilities. Even if not met in story two, the three play important roles in story three.

#### TADHG McGOVERN

Tadhg makes the biggest change due to age, leaving his childhood and entering adolescence. Remove the -1 penalty from his Size and Characteristics. Tadhg has been training as a knight, although he has yet to earn his spurs and gain the title. Change his character sheet as follows.

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

**Age:** 17 (17)

**Size:** 0

#### Combat:

**Dodge:** Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**Long Sword:** Init +1, Attack +10, Defense +4, Damage +8

**Soak:** +3

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

**Changed Abilities:** Ride 2 (in pursuit), Second Sight 3 (regio boundaries), Single Weapon 3 (long sword), Thrown Weapon 2 (javelin)

#### FATHER PÁDRAIG

The abbot continues overseeing his flock and running his monastery. While he listens to Uallachán's dialogues about the old gods and the old ways, he treats it as entertaining dinner conversation. Adjust his character sheet as follows.

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 63 (57)

**Decrepitude:** 1 (8)

**Changed Abilities:** Area Lore: Briefne 4 (15) (Ecclesiastical properties), Awareness 2 (lost cows), Folk Ken 4 (local barons), Profession: Scribe 5 (copying gospels)

#### FATHER UALLACHÁN

The priest continues to explore the bog, search the old records, and, in secret, practice his dark arts. He does not do this near the church, instead favoring the bog where his powers seem more impressive. Adjust his character sheet as follows.

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

**Age:** 40 (39)

**Decrepitude:** 0 (3)

**Abilities:** Ablating 8 (Furies), Infernal Lore 4 (demons), Summoning 12 (9) (False Gods)

They create a magical headquarters for a lair, using a magic device called the Basalt Tower. All three demons are Vessels of Iniquity, originators of violent and cruel sins, and they rend the area with warfare, carnage, and wanton murder.

Meanwhile, Father Uallachán has expressed his interest in the old gods to Father Pádraig. The abbot says that the old stories may be enjoyed, but anything more is sacrilege. But alone in his bedroom, Uallachán's stories of the old gods' wealth itch at Pádraig's resolve. Uallachán has long suspected that the abbot's fondness for wealth and worldly goods may be the path to convincing Pádraig that Crom Dubh needs to return. As story two begins, Pádraig contemplates the idea of a grander monastery using Crom Dubh's riches.

## Setting the Infernal Stage

The Mound returns, accompanied by Crom Dubh's Red Knights. They capture the local McGovern lord — leader of the village where Tadhg was fostered — and drag him in chains to the mound, where they decapitate him. Into his collected pool of blood they place the Basalt Tower, a miniature tower that magically creates a real tower within a created Infernal regio.

If the mound is in the same Tribunal as your player characters, those with Premonitions or Visions feel a sudden shudder and plangent despair. Those who succeed at a Perception + Premonitions stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 feel a sense of impending doom.

Tower complete, the Red Knights prepare for war. The Hibernian Tribunal, like many, contains bands of roving mercenaries, men and women who follow anyone for the right price. Siphoning wealth from the Dark One's inexhaustible supply of riches, the Red Knights are generous paymasters. Within a week they have enough men to raid nearby villages. The Red Knights can change their appearance and the appearance of those who ride with them. Lord Scirlin and his men raided Tullyhaw disguised as McTiernan men, while Lord Varrf and his men raided Tullyhun-

co masked as McGovern knights. Lord Clemiall stayed at the Basalt Tower receiving new recruits.

When the first waves of false Tullyhunco warriors raid Tullyhaw, the principle storyguide characters act. Hustling to the scriptorium, Pádraig pens a letter to the same magi who helped five years ago. "Our need is great," he writes, "evil is come again from the old bog." His swiftest messenger departs for the covenant. Tadhg, 17 years old and a squire in service to his uncle, does not think the raiders are from Tullyhunco, and thinks powerful magic is disguising their true identity. Uallachán also suspects something, and tells Pádraig that he is crossing the swamp to talk to The McTiernan. Once alone in the bog, the cleric looks for the Basalt Tower.

### THE BASALT TOWER

The Basalt Tower has three powers, all enacted with a single triggering mechanism. It is a small replica of a tower carved from a single stone, and submerging the replica in a pool of human blood causes it to create an Infernal regio with an Infernal aura of 5, and a large tower within the regio. All powers remain in effect for as long as the miniature tower stays in the pool of blood.

The following powers happen sequentially starting from the first, and include powers that may not be available for your player characters.

#### Debauchery/Diablerie 85

Pen 0, 1/day

R: Touch, D: Forsaken, T: Boundary

This power creates an Infernal regio with an Infernal aura of 5. The duration is equal to Forsaken, a unique Infernal Duration that causes the effect to last until the target seeks repentance. Since blood can not ask forgiveness, the effect remains until the miniature stone tower is removed from the pool of blood. The pool must be generated through evil means, such as murder and suicide.

(Effect: Base 45, +4 Special, +4 Boundary)

#### CrTe 35

Pen 0, 1/day

R: Touch, D: Forsaken, T: Ind

This power creates a large tower. (Effect: Base 3, +1 Touch, +4 Special, +3 size)

#### Debauchery/Diablerie 80

Pen 0, 1/day

R: Touch, D: Special, T: Room

This power creates an Infernal regio with an Infernal aura of 6. Called "the Prison regio," it is connected to an upper floor of the tower. It has the same Duration as the first power.

(Effect: Base 50, +4 Special, +2 Room)

## Involving the Magi

A messenger arrives at the covenant to deliver Father Pádraig's request. The McTiernan clan is attacking the McGovern clan with a ferocity never before seen, and the aged abbot thinks the bog's evil might be behind it. The magi helped last time, will they come again?

They might not. Magi are notoriously self-centered and able to craft a multitude of reasons that prevent them from delivering assistance. The messenger leaves crestfallen, but in two weeks Tadhg arrives, his horse lathered in sweat and collapsing at the covenant's door. Tullyhaw masses for war, he says. Warriors from the bog raid villages looking for his kinsman, and taking their heads as trophies. This is not a simple cattle raid, he emphasizes, but a chevauchée, a "horse charge," whose purpose is solely to wreck havoc, destroy the countryside, and weaken the enemy. Tadhg fears that a huge army might walk out of the bog at any moment.

Worse still, he does not think it is Tullyhunco at all. He has escaped raiding parties twice, and both times he swears he saw foreign mercenaries lead by a red rider astride a red horse, but only for an instant and when he looked again he saw Tullyhunco knights. "We cannot contend against such powerful magic," he says. "Ride with me to Templeport."

You know your players. If these approaches won't work you will have to somehow entice them back to the bog. Some suggestions follow.

- Aster Mor returns and says that Crispus' ghost warns that evil is afoot once more, and that the Infernal regio in which he died is again spewing a diabolical threat. He knows the magi are busy, but they know the

area and he will compensate them handsomely for their aid.

- The local Quaesitor arrives, asking if the magi know about the war that is bubbling in the Tribunal. It is coincidentally happening in the same area that they explored five years ago, and the Quaesitor wonders how clean the magi's involvement with the mundanes was. She says she has other matters to attend to first, but

at some point she will go to Tullyhaw and ask around. She suggests that the magi might want to head up and see what is going on. If she is a stickler for rules, like Galerius from *Antagonists* (pages 67–79), the magi should be properly motivated.

- The treasure that the magi took five years ago vanishes. Crom Dubh, anticipating his return, gathers money to pay for his army. Like many False

## The Red Knights

The Red Knights are from the demonic order of the Vessels of Iniquity, inventors of malevolence and wickedness. Each Vessel is a physical manifestation of an abstract sin, a specific maleficence that pesters and ruins mankind. Lord Scirlin embodies greed, specifically the greed of victorious besiegers plundering a taken city; Lord Varrf embodies the sin of battlefield frenzy; and Lord Clemialh embodies the sin of wanton butchery.

**Order:** Vessel of Iniquity

**Infernal Might:** 30 (Corpus)

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

**Size:** 0 or +3

**Confidence Score:** 2 (6 points)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Self-Confident, Tough

**Personality Traits:** Cruel +6, Depraved +6, Hatred +6

**Reputations:** Vassal of Crom Dubh 5 (Infernal)

**Hierarchy:** 5

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +1, Attack n/a, Defense +6, Damage n/a

**Gauntlet:** Init +1, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +7

**Longsword:** Init +3, Attack +14, Defense +10, Damage +11

**Mounted longsword:** Init +3, Attack +17, Defense +13, Damage +11

**Soak:** +17

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

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

**Horseman Form Wound Penalties:** -1 (1–8), -3 (9–16), -5 (17–24), Incapacitated (15–32), Dead (33+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 4 (searching), Brawl 5 (gauntlet), Infernal Lore 3 (rankings), Leadership 4 (demonic legions), Penetration 5 (Obsession power), Profession: Torturer 5 (ugly wounds), Single Weapon 7 (longsword), Ride 3 (charging)

**Powers:**

**Form of Wickedness:** 4 points, Init 0, Mentem: This power allows the Red Knight to assume the form of its particular sin, looting (Lord Scirlin), battlefield frenzy (Lord Varrf), or wanton butchery (Lord Clemialh), as an indescribable physical manifestation that causes the ten closest people to succumb to that sin and act upon it. A Stamina + stress roll against an Ease Factor of 6 breaks the obsession. The roll can be made hourly, but each failure costs the target a Fatigue Level.

**Form of Man:** 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: The Red Knight can assume any human shape he desires. He prefers armored knights, clad in chainmail, brandishing a broad sword. This power replaces the Coagulation power used by other demons.

**Form of Horseman:** 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: The Red Knight can assume the shape of a horse and rider, making his overall Size +3. In this form, the rider cannot dismount, as the two are in actuality one.

**Form of the Enemy:** 1 – 3 points, Init +0, Imaginem: The demon can make himself and his troops look like an opponent's enemy, either a foreign group or another clan. To change his own form costs 1 point of Might, 2 points to change himself and ten other warriors, and 3 points to change himself and up

to 100 other warriors.

**Contagious Obsession:** 1 point, Init -5, Vim: See Realms of Power: Infernal, page 39. Anyone who has succumbed to one of the Red Knight's Obsession powers acts as a carrier and passes that Personality Trait on to others he interacts with.

**Obsession:** 1–3 points, Init -5, Vim: See Realms of Power: Infernal, page 31. A Red Knight can impose a temporary Personality Trait on a target. The Personality Trait is the same as the demon's preferred sin (looting, battlefield frenzy, or wanton butchery) and is valued at +1 to +3, depending on how many might points are spent.

**Weakness:** Abhorrent Material (obsidian)

**Vis:** 6 pawns of Vim vis prava in the Red Knight's sword.

**Appearance:** A Red Knights appears as armored knight, standing head to toe in red-painted mail, with blood red livery and tabard. His face is entirely covered by chainmail; he does not need human eyes to see. His second favored form is the same knight riding a red horse, with red bridle and tack.

As demons, the Red Knights have a spiritual form and several physical forms. They can change forms whenever they want. In spiritual form, they are immune to physical attacks. If pressed or near defeat in the field, a Red Knight changes to its spiritual form and fly back to the Basalt Tower, where it will change back into its physical form. If reduced to half its original Might or penalized by a cumulative -15 Wound penalty, a Red Knight retreats to Hell, removing it from the story.

Gods, he can magically move money around, transferring funds from afar to coffers nearby. Hopefully, the magi want their loot back and have a good idea where to get it.

These suggestions, combined with Father Pádraig's letter or Tadhg's arrival, indicate that action awaits at the bog. The magi know how to get to Templeport, and the messenger or Tadhg offer to ride with them. Figuring (correctly) that the problem lies in the bog, the magi may want to head directly there. If the magi want to go to Templeport, play "To Templeport." If the magi head directly to the swamp, play "Penetrating the Peat Bog." At some point, either as the group heads for the monastery or the bog, you need to introduce Fiona McTiernan through the event, "The Dogs of War."

## To Templeport

The war has not yet spread to the surrounding territory and is currently contained in the areas surrounding the bog: northwest into Tullyhaw and southeast into Tullyhunco. The Red Knights' raids have not yet reached Templeport. If the magi enter the areas already attacked, they see the aftermath of the Red Knights' raids. Unburied victims lay in charred villages, trampled wheat fields line the roads, and the wind carries the stench of burnt flesh. Refugees wander the roads, people who have left their homes and are retreating to the forests. Scoundrels prowl the highways, armed looters looking for easy gains.

### HARD MEN AND CRUEL MISTRESSES

On the way to Templeport the characters meet a group of warriors and their camp women, desperadoes drawn to the Red Knights' banner. The warriors are soldiers (ArM5, page 22) and reek of sour wine and sweat. The women are noncombatant prostitutes, runaways, and thieves. While the soldiers

are ready to fight, this is not necessarily a combat encounter, and rather shows the lasciviousness and moral depravity of those heeding the Red Knights' call.

The group is not large, a dozen at most. They attack only if they have numerical supremacy, and run off at the first sign of magic or stiff resistance. If questioned they say that they, like several other mercenary groups, are heading into the bog to join the Red Lord's army. They aren't clear on who the Red Lord is, but know that he is neither McGovern or McTiernan, and that he pays well and promptly. They have been told to camp near the border of the bog and wait for the Red Lord's envoy to come to get them. This encounter shows that there is another party active in the area, one who uses the bog as a headquarters, and that it is not the McGovern or the McTiernans who started hostilities.

If the player characters join the mercenaries, probably through the subterfuge of pretending to be mercenaries themselves, the group walks to the bog and camps on its edge. Within a day or two, one of the Red Knights' seneschals arrives and leads the party to an old oak tree that serves as the mound's mundane boundary marker (see later).

### A BEACON IN THE NIGHT

The monastery at Templeport is a haven for refugees. Unlike five years ago, the gate to the monastery is closed. Watchers from the stone tower see the magi as they approach, and call down to the men guarding the gate. A sentry from atop the wall asks who the magi are, and if satisfied that they are not raiders lets them in (an unGifted character should do the talking). The church grounds are crowded; Domnach Mór is lined with huddled survivors, either shivering in terror or unconscious from fatigue. Children and women squat outside huts, their faces and clothes streaked with soot and blood. A small team of monks tend to the sufferers.

The guards summon one of the brothers to speak with the magi, and Brother Oscar comes immediately. He is put off if speaking with a Gifted character, but

still delivers the necessary information. He will not offer to let a Gifted character stay, unless they are wounded. Father Uallachán is gone, says Oscar, leaving from Templeport to Tullyhunco when the monks first heard word of the troubles. Father Pádraig left for The McGovern's castle at the same time, both seeking to broker a peace agreement between the barons. Pádraig returned in a few days saying that The McGovern did not start the raiding, but will not sit idly by while his barony is attacked. Word has gone out for his loyal knights and retainers to assemble. Upon hearing that Uallachán was still absent, Pádraig left Templeport for Tullyhunco, crossing the same bog that separates the two baronies. Brother Oscar says that Pádraig has not returned.

The magi may ask again to look at the Templeport church rolls. In the five years since their last visit, Father Uallachán has amassed more chronicles, combining those from other churches into one large codex of information. As before, a player may make an Intelligence + appropriate Ability (Area Lore: Briefne, Church Lore, or Infernal Lore) + a simple die for each day their character spends reading the library. If the roll succeeds against an Ease Factor of 9, the old records reveal that Crom Dubh has 66 generals, called the Red Knights or the Red Lords, who are masters of warfare and who can change their identity to appear as an opponent's enemy. The generals usually appear in groups of 3. Characters may remember the three bas-relief sculptures of three knights in the Obsidian Throne Room.

If the magi's companions have successfully interacted with Brother Oscar socially, he allows them to stay as long as they like, and use the monastery as a base for their operation. The church has a Divine aura of 4, and the monastery grounds have a Divine aura of 2. The monks can feed the hungry and mend the wounded.

At this point, the players have several pieces of information: Crom Dubh has at least 3 demon knights who can change their appearance, and both Uallachán and Pádraig have entered the bog on their way to Tullyhunco.

## The Dogs of War

As the magi head to the bog, either from Templeport or directly from their covenant, they pass through the area devastated by the Red Knights' chevauch es. With the scars of war all around them, the road takes the characters toward a large copse of trees. As they close on the trees, perhaps 15 paces distant, a horse and rider bolt from cover and gallop directly at the characters. Snapping at the rider's heels are a pack of dogs, snarling and barking and desperate to bring down the horse.

Call for Perception + Awareness stress rolls. A 9 or higher allows the character to roll Initiative as normal and act on the first round of combat. The rider steers around the characters and the pack of Hell Hounds attacks them. A 12 or higher gives a character an action; he has one combat round to do something as the rider charges down the road and the Hell Hounds emerge from the brush. A 15 or higher gives the character two actions, acting just after the galloping rider leaves the woods. The same total also reveals that the rider is a young woman.

The rider, Fiona McTiernan, avoids the player characters, but hesitates to see how they fare against the hounds. The Hell Hounds stop chasing Fiona and attack the characters. There are 12 Hell Hounds, which attack as 3 trained groups of 4 Hounds each.

If the magi defeat the Hell Hounds, Fiona thanks them and asks who they are. She introduces herself as The McTiernan's daughter and says that she was following her father into the bog. He had told her not to accompany his raiding party, but she did so anyway. Instead of watching his victory over their enemies, she saw her father defeated and captured by a McGovern force. Watching from behind a bush, she also saw the victors' illusion disappear and reveal their true identity. What looked like The McGovern and a group of Tullyhaw knights was really a towering Red Knight (Lord Varrf) riding a blood-red horse and leading a band of mercenaries.

As she watched, the Red Knight

spotted her. She fled. Instead of rushing home, she headed to Templeport. Realizing that the baronies weren't warring, and that evil forces were manipulating them, Fiona hopes that Pádraig and Uallachán can convince The McGovern that her father isn't behind the Tullyhaw attacks. She also plans to ask for a rescue party to follow her into the swamp. "Somewhere in that bog is father," she says, "and I'll find him." Hopefully your players will volunteer their characters to assist Fiona.

If the magi can't beat the Hell Hounds and have to retreat, you must to engineer their encounter with Fiona later, so that the players learn that important prisoners are kept in the Basalt Tower. Fiona could simply wander in to them, on her way to Templeport, or arrive at Templeport while the players are talking to Brother Osgar.

If the player characters have not yet been to Templeport, Fiona could ask them to accompany her to protect her. If the players are already committed to rescuing The McTiernan from the Basalt Tower, they do not necessarily need to know that Pádraig and Uallachán also need rescuing. If it will help them decide to invade the Basalt Tower, though, you might want to send them to Templeport.

## Penetrating the Peat Bog

As the characters head to the mound, they find that it is not where they left it. It has moved, appearing in a different location within the bog when the boundary regio between the mound and the bog reopened. The characters can search for it using the same means they used five years ago. They can follow one of the raiding groups returning to the mound with captured prisoners. They can follow one of the groups of new recruits, who have been told to camp outside the bog and wait until someone comes for them. Or, if they have an Arcane Connection to one of the people held within the Basalt Tower, they can use that as a navigational tool to magically find the mound. There are many personal effects



of Pádraig and Uallachán at Templeport, any of which serves as an adequate Arcane Connection to the owner. Fiona has one of her father's favorite daggers, which she took to protect herself and which serves as an Arcane Connection to The McTiernan.

## THE MOUND REVISITED

Deep in the midst of the bog is an ancient, dead oak tree. New recruits are led to this spot and then wait until sunrise or sunset for the mound's regio boundary to appear, behaving as it did five years ago. The bog and the mound's first regio have Infernal auras of 1. Once the regio is seen it is easy to walk onto the mound. The entrance and interior have not changed at all, and if the magi wish they can explore those areas. They are either empty or full of revenants, depending on the events of five years ago. The important change is atop the mound.

Hidden by sedge and brown cat-o-nine tails lies a viscous pool of dark red blood. Finding the pool requires a successful Perception + Awareness stress roll against an Ease Factor of 15. Intellego Corpus spells reveal that the blood is human and belongs to the missing McGovern noble. Submerged in the pool sits the miniature Basalt Tower, the enchanted device responsible for creating the larger Basalt Tower and Infernal regio. If the miniature tower is removed from the pool, the magic ends. Any person within the Infernal regio when the enchantment ends is hurled into the mundane world, receiving damage as if they fell from whatever floor they happened to be on at the time. Any demon within the Basalt Tower is flung back to Hell and removed from the story.

Two willow trees stand atop the mound, and their lower branches form an arch. This arch is the boundary that lead to the first level of the Basalt Tower regiones. If the magi do not know the ritual that allows entrance — standing under the arch and saying "Burn in Hell" in Latin ("Adolebit in Inferno!") — they must search for the regio opening

with spells or Second Sight (Perception + Second Sight + stress roll against an Ease Factor of 13). If the characters lack these spells or equivalent enchanted devices, they must wait for a mercenary group and watch them make the sign to enter. The group is either a raiding party returning with captives, or new recruits being lead by a knowledgeable knight. One or the other type of group will show up within a few hours, but the mound is not unguarded. Waiting characters are harried by Hell Hounds, savage beasts who emerge from the fog to tear into the party (with the same stats as before).

## THE BASALT TOWER REGIO

A square black tower sits in the center of the created regio, which has an Infernal aura of 5. Four stories high and built of black stone, the Basalt Tower looms over the surrounding bog. Iron gates lead to the ground floor's great hall, a large chamber dominated by the blazing hearth set in the far wall. Several long, wooden tables hold platters of nuts and meat, and goblets of honeyed mead. A dozen warriors and their disreputable retainers sit at the tables, sweating profusely from the blazing hearth's heat. Depending on how the characters present themselves at the entrance, the warriors may not attack, perhaps taking them for new mercenary recruits. The characters could literally say nothing and walk through the hall to the far spiral staircase. No one will accost them.

A narrow circular staircase is recessed into the right-hand wall and leads to the floors above. The second floor contains a large parlor and two private bedrooms. The parlor is dark, lit only by candles placed haphazardly around the room. Couches, chairs, and tables block vision and obscure the characters' view. Shadowy figures skulk around the perimeter of the room. No one is supposed to be here without the Red Knights' permission, and the seneschals in charge know this. Emerging from the shadows, the seneschals confront the magi and ask who they are and why they are here.

The only acceptable response is that

the characters have arrived to do the Red Knights' bidding, although they must refer to a Red Knight by name. It is unlikely that the characters will know this. The mercenary captains refer to the Knights as "the great lords" but do not know individual names, and this informality will not appease the seneschals. They demand that the characters leave immediately. If they refuse, the seneschals call the room's guards and melee ensues. Use the standard soldier template for the guards and the specialist template for the seneschals (ArM5 pages 21 – 22). There are as many seneschals as main player characters (magi and companions), and as many guards as grogs.

The sounds of melee do not bring the mercenaries below rushing upstairs. They are used to hearing commotion from above, and while the sound of melee alarms them, they do not ascend the stairs. They remain alert, however, and may interfere with the characters' exit.

The third floor is the Red Knights' bedroom. Many animal hides, both familiar and foreign, drape the walls, and ugly iron furniture sits in the center of the room. Three large tapestry beds have frames and posts built from human bones. The room houses treasure, mounds of stolen gold taken from monasteries and rich residences. None of it has been melted down and characters can find necklaces, armbands, gold plates and chalices, and all sorts of religious plunder: candelabra, censers, and crosses.

The fourth and highest floor is a large, single chamber, which the Red Knights use as their war room. A large oak table sits in the center of the space, cluttered with severed McGovern and McTiernan heads. Lord Varrf stands at the table, admiring his handiwork. He turns and asks the characters who they are, and however they reply suggests that they don't meddle with his plans. His mission is to collect heads for Crom Dubh, and if the characters don't leave the room he will happily remove their heads from their necks. If the characters attack him, which seems likely, he only stands his ground if there is a chance of winning the battle. Like all demons Varrf is a coward at heart and will retreat to Hell rather than die for Crom Dubh.

### THE PRISON REGIO

The upper most level of the regiones is a prison, with an Infernal aura of 6, which is accessed from the Red Knights' chamber on the third floor. The prison's regio entrance lies against the wall, between a hung hyena hide and a wildebeest pelt. To those without Second Sight or Hermetic spells, the black stone wall looks like any other in the tower. Those who can see the regio boundary see a swirling vortex of murky black. Stepping through the vortex takes a character from the bedroom and into the regio. Another way of seeing the boundary is to stand next to the wall and say the same phrase that made the first Basalt Tower regio boundary shimmer into view: "Adolebit in Inferno!"

Through the opening is a long, stone chamber, dimly lit by hanging oil lamps, its walls lined with chains, wooden racks, iron maidens, and other torture instruments. The moans of the occupants drifting through the air, followed by the stink of charred flesh. Empty manacles hang from iron brackets in the stone wall, and waist-high braziers belch clouds of black smoke, hindering

breathing and blocking vision. Midway down the room The McTiernan, maybe The McGovern, and a half dozen other McTiernan and McGovern prisoners hang manacled from their wrists, too weak to move and helplessly awaiting their inevitable execution. At the far end of the room, Pádraig and Uallachán likewise hang, naked and covered in blood. Both men are unconscious and dangle limply by their wrists.

As the characters investigate and possibly try to revive the prisoners, Lord Clemialh steps out of the black smoke obscuring the rear of the prison. Drawn sword in his right hand, he holds four savage Hell Hounds on a chain in his left. Lord Clemialh's motivation is to complete Uallachán's initiation, and warns the characters away from the unconscious priest. If the characters try to negotiate a truce, which is an infraction of their Oath of Hermes, Clemialh will let them take Pádraig and every other captive, but Uallachán must remain behind. He will not explain why. If the characters cannot come to terms with the demon, he releases the hounds and attacks. Lord Clemialh does his best to kill the characters, but retreats if the

battle goes against him. If the characters defeat him, they can rescue and remove the prisoners. Their exit is still barred by the warriors below, waiting in the great hall, but if they prove their superior strength – displaying a Red Knight's head would work – the mercenaries turn tail and run.

The nobles were captured and brought here to be tortured and killed. Uallachán willingly submitted to Lord Clemialh and is undergoing an Infernal Mystery Initiation, which grants him the Virtue: Infernal Blessing. Pádraig was captured while in the bog and brought to the Basalt Tower, where Uallachán and Lord Clemialh convinced the abbot to join their cause. So persuaded, Pádraig swore allegiance to Crom Dubh, the pagan god. Purposefully misled, Pádraig has unknowingly submitted to the devil. The abbot is undergoing an Infernal Mystery Initiation that grants him the Major Supernatural Virtue: Entrancement and gives him the Flaw: False Power (Entrancement). Pádraig's Initiation is finished and he is lying unconscious from his ordeal. Uallachán's Initiation is incomplete, and if the characters "rescue" him he does not receive his new Virtue, which is detailed in the updated character information for Story Three.

### Hell hound

**Order:** Furies

**Infernal Might:** 10 (Animal)

**Characteristics:** Cun 0, Per +2, Pre -10, Com 0, Str 0, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik +2

**Size:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Greater Infernal Power, Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded, Sharp Ears, Corrupted Beast, Reckless

**Personality Traits:** Violent +6, Reckless +3

**Hierarchy:** 0

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +1

**Soak:** +2

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

**Wound Penalties:** 0 (1-5), -1 (6-10), -3 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (distance running), Awareness 3 (keeping watch), Brawl 3

(bite), Hunt 4 (track by scent), Leadership 3 (in combat)

**Powers:**

**The Baleful Bark**, 4 points, Init +6, Corpus: The Hell hound possesses a terrible bark. A targeted listener receives a -4 penalty on combat Ability die rolls and 4 additional botch dice.

(Incantation/Malediction Base 5, +2 Voice, +1 Diameter)

**Weakness:** Running Water

**Vis:** Two pawns of Animal vis infesta in the beast's tongue

**Appearance:** A large, black mastiff, this Hell hound has a large, savage muzzle and glowing red eyes.

Up to four Hell hounds can fight as a trained group, giving the group a +12 advantage that can be used for Attack or Defense.

### The Aftermath

Story Two has several possible resolutions. A total victory sees the magi killing all three knights and rescuing all the storyguide characters. A partial victory is destroying the Basalt Tower and Infernal regio by removing the enchanted device from the pool of blood. Those inside "fall" 20 feet when the regio disappears and take +10 Damage. Noble captives who die are replaced by a legitimate heir. Pádraig and Uallachán return to Templeport, and the threat of the demons is removed.

If the magi fail to stop the Red Knights and fail to rescue the storyguide characters, Tadhg suggests removing the miniature enchanted device from the pool of blood. Fiona agrees to help, and both ask the magi for their assistance.



Hell Hounds attack the group, but the two heirs should succeed with the magi's help. This resolution provides some measure of victory, as just described.

Unlike the last story, the mound's regio boundary does not close, but remains fixed and permanently open. If someone suggests building a church atop the mound, a time-honored tradition across Mythic Europe, everyone agrees that it is a good idea. The McGovern and The McTiernan reluctantly supply funds to build the church. If the magi suggested this before, all congratulate them on their foresight. The mound continues to have an Infernal aura of 1, and the regio levels inside remain for as long as the Infernal aura continues. All agree that building a church atop it will replace the Infernal aura with a Divine aura.

made contributions, they were unable to keep paying for the project. This lack of noble support hasn't seemed to slow construction, however, and many wonder how Pádraig and Uallachán can keep building without the barons' fiscal contributions. Some ask questions, but it remains a mystery. The answer, of course, is the vast collection of wealth that Crom Dubh can divert to the project.

Uallachán has developed his Summoning and Commanding powers and found the True Names of Crom Dubh, 2 Red Knights (which may or may not be those encountered in story two), and a handful of lesser demons. Through an Infernal intermediary, the diabolist has informed the Dark One that he is preparing to summon the demon to earth, and the Dark One has responded with gross capital. Knowing his limitations, Uallachán has not yet attempted summoning Crom Dubh.

Having joined his colleague's cause, mistakenly thinking he is aligned with a pagan god, Pádraig travels to the nobles' castles and advances the idea that they should worship at his new church. During these visits Pádraig does not suggest they worship the old gods, instead he brings local minstrels and musicians and encourages them to sing the old songs, those that celebrate old heroes, old gods, and old ways.

The new church nears completion.

Pádraig wants to dedicate it to Crom Dubh and assemble a congregation of worshipers. Uallachán wants to summon Crom Dubh and command the Dark One to do the diabolist's bidding. They construct a plan. They will engineer a wedding between the two closest families, the McGoverns and the McTiernans, and gather the families at the church for the wedding. Pádraig will extol the powers of the ancient deity and convince the family leaders to worship it. Uallachán promises to assist, but has an ulterior motive. When the group is assembled he will summon Crom Dubh and return his master to the world.

Uallachán isn't powerful enough to summon the Dark One and needs Infernal vis to augment his capabilities. He is powerful enough to summon a Red Knight, whose corpse is worth 5 pawns of vis prava, which he could use to summon the Dark One. His Ablating Ability isn't powerful enough to drain the vis prava from the Red Knight, nor is he strong enough to kill it and take its vis. The magi are; they did it five years ago. During the wedding gathering, he plans to summon a Red Knight and command it to attack the bride and groom. He hopes the magi will prevent the attack and slay the demon. He will offer to take care of the filthy corpse, when he will take the vis prava and summon Crom Dubh. If his plans

## Five More Years Pass

Tullyhaw and Tullyhunco remain at peace for a year, each barony draining portions of the bog and turning it into arable land. Near the end of the second year work begins on a stone church atop the mound. While both barons promised funds, and initially

works, the magi inadvertently assist in returning the Dark One.

Father Pádraig visits The McGovern and The McTiernan to convince them to marry their heirs, Tadhg and Fiona. Their reluctance crumbles under the priest's Entrancement power. The wedding is arranged. The new church is finished. The local bishop consecrates the church, but does not perform the second Domination rite – in this case a Mass – which allows the Dominion to enter the building. The diabolists do not want a Divine aura, which will hinder Pádraig's convincing and Uallachán's summoning. They tell people that they will hold a Mass before the wedding. During this false Mass Uallachán plans to summon Crom Dubh.

Uallachán sends a personalized wedding invitation to the magi, delivered by someone whom he hopes will convince them to attend.

## Story III: The Blessed Union

On a cheery, cloudless day, Fiona McTiernan and a small entourage arrive at the covenant. Spring, summer, or autumn, pick the season that best meshes with the other developments of your saga. Hopefully some of the characters remember her and are happy to see her. After pleasantries she tells the magi that she is marrying Tadhg McGovern and invites them to the ceremony. "Not at all odd," she says. "You were instrumental in clearing the evil from the mound, where the new church is and where the wedding is to take place. So many people are invited that I am not surprised you are too." She says that this marriage celebrates not only their union, but the new church and a new peace between age old enemies.

It is obvious that Fiona is not happy about her situation. Through further dialog she explains that she had many suitors; seemingly anyone who meets

her falls in love with her (remember her Curse of Venus Flaw). Proposals from the O'Reilly clan from Clanmahon and the O'Farrelly clan from Lough tee were being entertained when suddenly her father changed his mind and agreed to a marriage with the McGovern. It's not that she doesn't like Tadhg; she's just surprised at her father's change of mind. "There is no love lost between us and the McGovern," she says.

If the player characters ask about her invitation, she'll correct them. "It's not *my* invitation, not that I don't want you there. I do. But it is the priests who specifically wanted us to invite you." Both priests? "Father Pádraig has been regularly visiting lately, but it was Father Uallachán who asked father if I would personally deliver the invitation to you." Fiona is also annoyed that she was excluded from her father's conversations with Pádraig. "He isn't normally so secretive," she says.

Fiona needs a few days to recover from her journey before returning home. She plans to return to her father's castle before heading to the new church for the wedding, and she hopes to have the magi in tow.

If the player characters developed a better relationship with Tadhg than Fiona, Uallachán realizes this and instead sends the McGovern heir to invite the magi to the wedding. A war-

### Fiona McTiernan

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

**Size:** -1

**Age:** 13 (13)

**Confidence Score:** 2 (6)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Daughter of Landed Noble; Apt Student, Inspirational, Self-Confident; Curse of Venus, Optimistic

**Personality Traits:** Optimistic +3, Stubborn +3

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init -2, Attack n/a, Defense +1, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 2 (horses), Area Lore: Briefne 2 (nobles), Athletics

1 (running), Brawl 2 (dodge), Charm 2 (family members), Chirurgy 2 (burns), Church Lore 1 (local priests), Craft: Weaving 2 (tapestries), Folk Ken 2 (family members), Intrigue 3 (Briefne marriage alliances), Irish 5 (poetry), Ride 2 (racing), Swim 1 (tidal waters)

**Equipment:** Clothes suiting a young noble woman

**Appearance:** Fiona is a fit, wiry adolescent, with dark hair and complexion and a devilish look in her eyes.

One of The McTiernan's many daughters, Fiona is the eldest and most favored. Her father's confidante, she is used to knowing her father's plans and being included. She does not always get her way and can be petulant and demanding.

Fiona's Characteristics and Size have been adjusted due to her age. Remove the -1 penalty when she becomes 14.

### Where is Lord Scirlin?

The third Red Knight's location is not specified, and you can use him or not as your story demands. If the players are too weak to handle three Red Knights, Lord Scirlin is off-stage harrying the local villages, and only threats of his arrival enter play. If the players can probably handle the demons, Lord Scirlin is counting heads with Lord Varrf. Here, he retreats under the same conditions as Lord Varrf. If the party is exceptionally qualified to deal with the Infernal beings, Lord Scirlin is enjoying himself in the Prison regio with Lord Clemialh and also fights to the death.

rior, Tadhg arrives with a smaller escort, a single fellow rider. After greeting the magi he invites them to the wedding. His story is similar to Fiona's: "I'd been raiding the McTiernan herds, taking a few head each time, and was summoned by my father. I anticipated a reprimand, especially when I saw the Templeport priest in the background, but was instead told that I'd be marrying the McTiernan girl Fiona."

Tadhg is slightly confused by this turn of events, but accepting of them. If asked, he doesn't plan to change his behavior too much. He'll marry a McTiernan and still raid McTiernan herds, perhaps not Fiona's father's but definitely her cousins' herds. He anticipates a rousing good time at the wedding feast and hopes the player characters will accompany him. If asked who is sending the invitation, Tadhg says that the Templeport priest Father Uallachán asked his father to send him. Tadhg can be ready to return home the next day or the one after, depending on how soon the player characters can travel.

The wedding is scheduled in a week or so, depending on how much time your player characters need to get ready. If the magi want to stop at their guide's home first, adjust the schedule to allow for that. If they would rather head straight to the festivities, allow for that as well. There is also a chance that the player characters accept the invitation, but decline to return with the messenger, either Fiona or Tadhg. In that case, set a date for the wedding that accommodates their traveling desires.

## Prenuptial Visitations

Depending on how the magi are reeled into this story, they may visit The McGovern or The McTiernan before attending the wedding. For better storytelling purposes, they should arrive a few days before the wedding. It takes almost a day to travel from either of the baron's homes to the new church.

## THE McGOVERN CASTLE

The McGovern lives in a typical baronial castle, a stone fortification holding servants, craftsmen, his personal family, and a dozen household knights. The castle does not have an aura of any type. When the magi arrive The McGovern is preparing his departure for the wedding. It is a prestigious affair, to which all of his kin have been invited, and the preparations are time consuming. During the day The McGovern can be found in his solar, impatiently pacing back and forth while his wife, Imag, sits by the window embroidering.

Neither noble is interested in talking to a Gifted individual, and finds some excuse to end any such meeting. Companions and grogs who show the proper etiquette receive an interview. The McGovern is annoyed, and not just because the wedding preparations are taking so long. He is hesitant about the upcoming marriage and that confuses him. Half the time he thinks it is sheer idiocy, but then, after a meeting with Father Pádraig, he thinks a McGovern-McTiernan alliance makes perfect sense. He doesn't know that the priest is supernaturally convincing him, but certainly remembers wholeheartedly agreeing to the proposition. This lingering confusion frustrates him.

His wife has certainly noticed his vacillations. She has heard him scoff at the idea, then meet privately with Father Pádraig — who has always been friendly and helpful — and then loudly celebrate and accept the idea, only to wonder why he did so the next morning. If asked, she says that Father Pádraig visits every two or three days. While his musicians entertain the family, singing old songs and telling tales of the old gods and heroes, the priest speaks with The McGovern alone in the bedroom.

A low-level Intellego Mentem spell (base 5) reveals that The McGovern's mental faculties have changed drastically over the last few weeks. A low-level Intellego Vim (base 10 — detect the recent presence of weak magic) indicates that The McGovern's mind has been recently controlled. All evidence points to Father Pádraig: the private conversations, the frequent visits, and the traces

of lingering mind-control magic.

The McGovern is sick of agreeing and then disagreeing to the marriage, and has decided to go regardless. He'll either marry his son to the McTiernan girl, or start a fight with his hereditary enemy, deciding when he gets there.

## THE MCTIERNAN CASTLE

Similar in construction to the McGovern's castle, The McTiernan's castle sits in Tullyhunco. Fiona leads the player characters to her father's solar, where her aging father sits in contemplation. Weaker than his Tullyhaw counterpart, Hugh McTiernan is more easily controlled by Father Pádraig's Entrancement power. Sitting with his wife Caoimhe (pronounced KEY-VA), his fourth wife and Fiona's step-mother, The McTiernan welcomes visitors and thanks them for attending. His household should be ready to leave in a few days.

Only ten years older than Fiona, Caoimhe is obviously not her mother. Strikingly attractive, the red-haired wife eagerly awaits the marriage, and looks forward to Fiona's removal from the McTiernan castle. If the characters ask a servant or other household member, they hear that Caoimhe resents Fiona's close connection to Hugh and is happy the young woman will soon be leaving. Because of her eagerness, she is not as cooperative as Imag McGovern in pointing out Father Pádraig's interventions.

If asked, she says that Father Pádraig visited the castle, which is entirely routine and part of the abbot's duties. She says she can't remember whose idea the marriage was, but it is such a good match that its originator is immaterial. "Tadhg needs a wife, Fiona needs a husband, and it will end a century-long feud between the families." Caoimhe seeks to end the meeting as soon as possible and show the magi the door.

Hugh has been influenced just as Gil-lisa McGovern has been, and the same spells mentioned previously give the same results if cast on The McTiernan. If the player characters reveal this magical manipulation, which may be difficult during Caoimhe's insistent demands that

they leave, Hugh becomes angry. He insists on traveling to the new church, wearing his armor instead of packing it, and confronting Father Pádraig directly.

### THE NEW CHURCH

Called "Domnach Nau" in Irish, the new church sits atop the mound, its stone walls gleaming white in the morning sun. The bog is gone, replaced by a large, grassy field, the fecund result of draining the former marshland. Built like many western churches, the church has two large rooms, the nave for the laity and the sanctuary for the clergy. An ornate wooden partition, called a rood screen, separates the sanctuary from the nave. The nave does not have pews, an addition that starts to appear in Mythic Europe later in the century. A porch sits outside the nave, useful for open-air events and informal congregational gatherings. The building runs west to east, porch-nave-sanctuary, with the main doors in the west end and the sanctuary facing east.

Tents have been raised, large multicolored pavilions that serve as temporary residences and feasting halls for the wedding party. The area is busy with cooks and pages, craftsmen and laborers, all overseen by bustling monks. The first guests have arrived, groups of McGovern and McTiernan kin who keep a wary distance from each other while pretending to be civil. There is still much to be done, and Fathers Pádraig and Uallachán direct a team of monks, servants, and craftsmen as they prepare for the wedding and the church's first Mass. The mound and church still have an Infernal aura of 1, and the fields surrounding the mound have no aura.

The magi may arrive with the McGovern party, the McTiernan party, or by themselves, depending on how they chose to respond to the wedding invitation. As soon as The McGovern and The McTiernan arrive, Pádraig engages them in conversation so he can enforce their decision to marry their children with his Entrancement power. Unlike a magic spell, his Entrancement power does not need special words or significant gestures, and just happens as he stares into his victim's eyes

and wills it. He commands them, "Agree to the marriage of Tadhg and Fiona," in a soft voice, which can be overheard by bystanders. Pádraig is confident that even if he is overheard, a listener will not understand what is happening.

With so many enemies in close proximity to each other, rivalries intensified by Pádraig's free ale, the situation beneath the pavilions is tense. If the magi have already revealed Pádraig's mind control of the barons, the situation will be worse. If goaded by a player character, a baron accuses Pádraig of possessing his mind. Pádraig tells the baron not to believe his accuser, and use Entrancement to make the suggestion stick. A powerful tool against the barons, Pádraig's Entrancement is less effective if used against a magus, and the priest himself has little protection against magical attacks.

Once accused, the abbot demands a trial to prove his innocence, and due to his ecclesiastical rank can only be tried in the bishop's court. In the Hibernian Tribunal, this would take place in Armagh, in the province of Ulster. The accusing baron takes Pádraig into custody, and eventually takes him to Armagh to stand trial. This action happens well after the conclusion of the story and is unlikely to involve the player characters. Father Uallachán sides with the barons. He says he is surprised at his superior's attempts to manipulate the families. Uallachán suggests that since the wedding is obviously off, the group stay, enjoy the feast, and join him in the morning for the new church's dedication Mass.

If Pádraig is not caught, he and Uallachán congratulate the happy couple and prepare for the coming ceremonies. Pádraig prepares his sermon while Uallachán waits until nightfall to enact his plan.

### The Wedding

The diabolists' plans diverge on the eve of Tadhg and Fiona's wedding. Pádraig spends the evening contemplating the morning's sermon and his revealing his desire to incorporate Crom Dubh into the area's worship. Uallachán plans to include

more than just the Dark One's name, and hopes to return his dark master to earth. Finally, he thinks, his time has come.

### THE NIGHT BEFORE

The clerics encourage the attendants to feast, and have provided ample food and drink. The hired musicians and poets sing the old songs, the same ones they have been playing at the barons' castles. The player characters may find the subject matter odd and comment on it. The locals shrug and say that Pádraig has been encouraging such music for a few years. Most enjoy the musical revival and tap their feet in accompaniment. No one takes the subject matter seriously.

That evening Uallachán skulks to the new church, and under the light of a ring of black candles inscribes a summoning circle in the sanctuary behind the altar. Once complete he stuffs two bog revenant heads beneath the altar, trophies acquired in the time between adventures. Each head holds two pawns of *Corpus vis sordida*. Each pawn of *vis sordida* (or *vis prava*) adds +5 to Uallachán's Summoning Total. At midnight, Uallachán summons a Red Knight, and then commands it to attack the storyguide character the player characters are most fond of. He then follows the Red Knight to the target's tent, because he wants to be on hand when the magi defeat it.

There is a chance that Uallachán is stopped before this point. Suspicious player characters may spy on him, magically or simply by following him, and if successful see him sneak to the church, light the candles, and start drawing a summoning circle. Any magus who sees this circle, drawn with compressed sticks made of charcoal and Uallachán's blood, knows what it is. It takes him 30 minutes to draw the circle, plenty of time for a watcher to run and get the magi. If apprehended at this point, Uallachán uses his Incantation/Psychomachia powers to control shield grogs and make them attack their magi masters, then flee in the confusion. He uses the *vis* in the revenant heads to bolster the strength of his maleficia.

The magi have a chance to interrupt Uallachán's summoning if they arrive in

time. Because of the close connection to the mound and its original residents, it only takes the diabolist three rounds to summon a Red Knight. At the end of the third round, check Uallachán's Summoning Total to see if he is successful (see insert). If disturbed during the summoning, Uallachán needs to make a suc-

cessful Stamina + Concentration + stress die check against an Ease Factor based on the type of interruption (see ArM5, page 82). If he successfully summons a Red Knight while under attack, he orders the demon to protect him. While under no obligation to the diabolist, the Red Knight joins the fray for the sheer

pleasure of it.

If Uallachán succeeds undetected, the summoned Red Knight marches down the mound to the pavilions and starts searching for his target, either Tadhg or Fiona. This causes a ruckus among the late night drinkers, whose cries for help wake sleeping player char-

## Storyguide Character Advancement, Five Years Later

The characters from the previous adventures age another five years, each receiving 75 experience points. All four characters will be encountered, so it is important that their character sheets are up-to-date.

### TADHG McGOVERN

Tadhg becomes a knight in his father's retinue. Make the following adjustments to his character sheet.

**Virtues and Flaws:** Landed Noble, Knight, Second Sight, Overconfident, Heir, Reckless

#### Combat:

**Dodge:** Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**Long Sword:** Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +8

**Long Sword (mounted):** Init +2, Attack +14, Defense +9, Damage +8

**Abilities:** Ride 3 (in pursuit), Single Weapon 4 (long sword)

### FIONA MCTIERNAN

Stepping from childhood into adolescence, Fiona becomes a leading figure in the McTiernan household. Make the following adjustments to Her character sheet:

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 18 (18)

**Confidence Score:** 2 (6)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Landed Noble, Apt Student, Inspirational, Self-Confident, Curse of Venus, Optimistic

**Personality Traits:** Optimistic +3, Stubborn +3

#### Combat:

**Dodge:** Init -1, Attack n/a, Defense +2, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +2

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

**Abilities:** Leadership 2 (household staff), Intrigue 3 (local noble politics)

### FATHER PÁDRAIG

Having undergone an Infernal Initiation, Pádraig has a new Virtue and a new Flaw. Adjust his character sheet as follows:

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 68 (62)

**Decrepitude:** 1 (13)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Senior Clergy, Entrancement, Clumsy, False Power (Entrancement), Monastic Vows

**Personality Traits:** Bureaucratic +3, Orderly +2, Greedy (for money) +2

**Reputations:** Wise Leader 4 (Ecclesiastic)

**Hierarchy:** 2

**New Abilities:** Entrancement 5 (nobles)

Entrancement allows Pádraig to convince the nobles to marry their heirs. Since this is a False Power, Pádraig does not know it is aligned to the Infernal, and instead thinks it is derived from the Magic realm. It is not, and characters with Sense Holiness/Unholiness may be able to sense this power's Infernal taint.

### FATHER UALLACHÁN

If the player characters "rescued" Uallachán from the Basalt Tower, they interrupted his Infernal Initiation and he does not receive the Major Virtue: Infernal Blessing. If the player characters did not enter the Basalt Tower, or failed to remove Uallachán from the prison regio, he finished his Infernal Initiation and

has the Virtue. In either case, Uallachán spends the last five years practicing his Summoning and Commanding powers. Adjust his character sheet as follows:

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

**Age:** 45 (44)

**Decrepitude:** 1 (1)

**Warping Score:** 0 (3)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (8)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Diabolist, Priest, Ablating, Commanding, Incantation, Infernal Blessing\*, Psychomachia, Summoning; Affinity with Summoning, Improved Characteristics, Mentored by Demons, Student of Infernal (free), Driven (to return the old gods), Tragic Life, Corrupted Abilities, Manufactured Ignorance, Vow of Celibacy, Witch Marks

\*Received through Initiation

**Reputations:** Worships False Gods 3 (Infernals)

**Hierarchy:** 3

**Soak:** 0

**Abilities:** Commanding 12 (Furies), Penetration 4 (Summoning), Summoning 15 (9) (False Gods)

#### Favored Maleficia:

*The Perfidious Dagger* (Incantation/Psychomachia 30/+14): This maleficium makes the target attack someone chosen by the caster. Uallachán will use this maleficium to make grogs attack their magi. (Base 15, +2 Voice, +1 Diameter)

The Major Virtue: Infernal Blessing confers 120 levels of maleficia effects, each effect with a maximum effect of level 60. Uallachán's effects are: Infernal Protection (15 magic resistance, level 40), Infernal Greatness (Uallachán receives Greater Immunity to steel, level 60), and Infernal Ability (Uallachán's palms and feet can turn tacky, allowing him to climb walls and ceilings like a spider, level 20).

## Pádraig's Entrancement

There is a chance that Pádraig will use his Entrancement Ability in play. Rules for using Entrancement can be found in ArM5, page 65. To resist, the target gets a Stamina + stress die roll, with a bonus based on the specifics of the command. The marriage proposal is a questionable command. Not believing what a Gifted character says in an innocuous command. Attacking a superior is a dangerous command. Gillisa McGovern has a Stamina +2, and the feebler Hugh McTiernan has a Stamina of 0. Pádraig's Entrancement is an Infernal power and receives a bonus in an Infernal aura.

acters. Commanded to kill his target, the Red Knight fights to the death. Uallachán waits in the wings of the watching crowd. Once the Red Knight falls, Uallachán warns the crowd of the dangers of the corpse and offers to remove it. He desperately wants the sword, worth 6 pawns of vis prava (+30 to his Ars Goetia attempts).

The Red Knight may be too powerful for the group. In this case, the demon kills its target and, fulfilling its order, leaves the mundane realm. Following tomorrow's Mass, Uallachán promises to hold a funeral instead of a wedding.

### THE MORNING

If the wedding is still on, Father Pádraig and Father Uallachán are in the church readying the Mass that proceeds the marriage ceremony. If Pádraig has been apprehended and the wedding is off, Uallachán invites his guests to the Mass. The barons and 200 guests crowd the nave. The officiating priest, Pádraig or Uallachán, asks Tadhg and Fiona to join him in the sanctuary. Those in the sanctuary are separated from the nave by the rood screen. Only the first few ranks of the congregation can hear the ceremony, which is spoken in Latin. Most of the guests, even the barons, aren't paying

close attention to the clerics.

Father Uallachán leads the Mass. To those with scores in Theology, everything seems normal. The church has been consecrated previously, and the Mass is the Dominion rite that will give the area a Dominion aura (*Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, page 11). Midway through, his back to the crowd, Uallachán stops the Mass and starts his summoning ritual, which takes five rounds to complete. Father Pádraig, if present, notices the change but does nothing. Tadhg and Fiona stand unaware, unable to tell the difference between a Latin Mass and the Latin summoning incantations. A keen observer sees Uallachán take the Red Knight's sword from the alter, or the revenant heads if he was unable to get the sword, on a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 12 (remember that the viewer is looking through the small slits in the rood screen).

The magi have a chance to stop the ritual. If they are in the front of the nave, noticing Uallachán switching from the Mass to the summoning ritual requires a successful Perception + Awareness stress roll against an Ease Factor of 12. Raise the Ease Factor to 15 if they are near the middle of the room, and to 18 if they are standing in the rear. To catch the shift from Mass to the summoning ritual the listener must speak Latin and must succeed with an Intelligence + Theology simple roll against an Ease Factor of 6. Once the ritual has been noticed, there are many ways to interrupt his summoning by breaking his concentration, from a spectacular spell to a simple shove. Use the concentration rules (ArM5, page 82).

If they succeed, he is surely at their mercy, his strength lying in his Ars Goetia and not in direct confrontations. Uallachán asks for an ecclesiastical trial. The barons pause, and if not influenced by the player characters agree, bundling the priest in chains and dragging him off with Pádraig. Uallachán is the more dangerous of the two. As soon as he is able he draws a summoning circle and conjures demons for aid. Until he is slain he continues to be a thorn in the barons' side.

If not interrupted, he finishes his summoning ritual. A dark smear forms in the air, and in a single round coagulates into Crom Dubh, the Dark One. Fiona screams.

## His Hellish Bonds Broken

Uallachán must concentrate to keep Crom Dubh in the summoning circle. Knowing that he can't concentrate and attempt to control the demon, he stops, hoping to command the demon before it reacts. Faster and stronger, Crom Dubh strides from the circle and strikes the diabolist to the ground. Moving past the terrified bride and groom, he throws the rood screen aside with a powerful backhanded blow. The demon is beautiful, appearing as a Biblical king of old. With bronzed skin and sculpted chest, he strides forth wearing shining chain mail. His black beard is oiled and groomed, and his long black hair falls to his shoulders in curled ringlets. A lion stands behind him, tail swinging lazily.

Crom Dubh addresses the crowd. "My people," he says in the area's native tongue, "I have returned. Much has happened in my absence, and many need to be brought back to my banner, but all will be remedied." He promises wealth and opportunity to the powerful, to those who have stood by the old gods and the old ways. Crom Dubh then uses his *Obsession* power on Gillisa McGovern, giving him a temporary Personality Trait: Murderous +1. Following this he uses his *Gather the Murderous* power to force The McGovern to join his side. Hugh McTiernan flatly refuses to join the Dark One, as do his men.

"We will build a new kingdom," Crom Dubh cries, "We will rule a new world!" Crom Dubh uses his *Sculpt the Bloody Battlefield* power and causes a chasm to open in the church floor under the feet of the McTiernans. Initially a long, sinister crack, in two rounds the crack widens into a gaping chasm 15 feet wide, 60 feet long, and 30 feet deep. To avoid falling in the pit, characters need to make an Athletics + Quickness

stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9. Those who fall take +30 Damage. Make Quickness stress rolls for the principal storyguide characters. Crom Dubh then orders The McGovern to have his men attack those who didn't fall in the chasm. Swayed by his temporary Personality Trait, The McGovern happily complies and orders his men to attack their long-time enemies. As the McGovern warriors rush into the McTiernans, Crom Dubh summons bog revenants and Red Knights from Hell to help, spending up to half his Might points in this manner.

Anticipate a wild melee, as the player characters fight Crom Dubh's deluded and supernatural forces. Women and children flee. Leaving the battle to his minions, Crom Dubh uses his *Sculpt the Bloody Battlefield* power to craft steps into the side of the chasm. Descending to the bottom, his surviving diabolists behind him, he opens a pathway to the first regio in the mound, which leads to the Hall of Revenants (see adventure one). From there he proceeds to the Obsidian Throne Room, where he will rest and regain his Might.

Of the approximately 200 guests, half are soldiers, and half of them have followed their baron to join Crom Dubh. Aided by a handful of revenants and a Red Knight or two, they have the advantage in the fight. Don't concentrate on the overall melee, focus on the player characters. Do they fight or do they flee? Or do they chase Crom Dubh into his hole and attack him?

If they fight, treat the warriors as standard soldiers (ArM5, page 22), who brought their axes but left heater shields and scale mail in their tents. Five untrained soldiers and one supernatural entity — use your best judgment based on the player characters' capabilities whether this is a revenant or a Red Knight — rush the magi. If the magi win, send a second and then third group, which should include Red Knights. If they defeat those groups, assume that the remaining warriors allied with Crom Dubh have also been defeated.

If they flee, give the players the chance to make heroic decisions even though their characters are in flight: a knight threatens a helpless woman, Fiona trips and hangs from the edge of the

chasm, Tadhg is hard pressed by a revenant. Give them some small measure of victory so that their retreat doesn't leave a sour taste in their mouths. Naturally, they will return better prepared to deal with Crom Dubh and his minions.

If they are powerful enough, and brave enough, to charge after Crom Dubh, interrupt their dash forward with a group of soldiers and a Red Knight, positioned to cover their master's departure. Give Crom Dubh five or six rounds to reach the bottom of the chasm and slip into the mound's regiones. If the magi can overwhelm the soldiers quickly, they meet the Dark One on the stairs. Just out of the Stinking Pit, Crom Dubh is not about to go back. He fights for a few rounds, but if seriously threatened takes spiritual form and retreats. His first choice is to fly to the Obsidian Throne Room, but if the magi are hot on his heels he rushes instead into the countryside, looking for some natural hiding place where he can recover and summon his generals and their legions.

## Dealing with the Dark One

If the magi could not defeat Crom Dubh immediately, they need to return to deal with the False God. The longer they wait, the stronger Crom Dubh's army grows. Based around his manipulated baron, knights join him daily, swayed by the promise of easy gold and martial victory. Soon parties of knights and men-at-arms ride out to raid the countryside. Each week more knights ride to Crom Dubh's banner, enticed by his jingoistic nationalism, "What was once ours will be ours again," and swayed by his bottomless wallet.

Within a month Crom Dubh's army is strong enough to take Tullyhunco. Two weeks later they take a second neighboring barony, and a week after that a third barony falls to the Dark One. At that point, the king of Briefne fields an army to stop the Dark One. Unfortunately, the odds favor the False God, and the recent drain on the king's treasure sorely limits the size of his army. Total war has come to the Tribunal.

## Uallachán's Ars Goetia

Summoning Totals, Summoning Target levels, Commanding Totals, and Commanding Target levels are all described in *Realms of Power: Infernal*, Chapter 11. For simplicity's sake, Uallachán's Summoning Total to summon a demon in the new church is  $68 + \text{a stress die}$ , and his Commanding Total to command a demon in the new church is  $58 + \text{a stress die}$ . The Target levels for both Summoning and Commanding are 55 for a Red Knight and 95 for Crom Dubh.

If Uallachán achieves double the Summoning Target level, the demon is trapped in the summoning circle and must stay until dismissed. If Uallachán merely exceeds the Summon Target level, the demon only stays in the summoning circle while Uallachán concentrates.

If the demon is trapped in a summon-

ing circle, Uallachán need only exceed the Commanding Target level to command the demon. If the demon is not in a summoning circle, Uallachán needs to double the Commanding Target level.

For ease of play, if the player characters are not in the new church on the night before the wedding, Uallachán succeeds in summoning a Red Knight, then maintains concentration and commands it to attack a storyguide character. If the players are in the new church, make Uallachán's Summoning roll.

Make Uallachán's Summoning roll when he tries to summon Crom Dubh. He has almost no hope of doubling the Target level, and only wants to summon his False God. If he has vis prava from a Red Knight he will use it. If not, he will use the vis sorrida from the bog revenant heads.



## ON THE FIELD

The magi may decide to defeat Crom Dubh and his army on the field of battle. The demon starts with the 50 knights who swore fealty in the church, and each week adds ten additional knights and a score of men-at-arms to his host. The Dark One leads his forces, having replaced The McGovern as the leader of the army. In the field Crom Dubh uses his *The Dark Clouds Gather* power to block sunlight and protect himself from its harmful rays.

It is unlikely that the magi have an army with them, but they may have found a way to clandestinely join the king of Briefne's army. Mass combat is handled as a series of vignettes, each focusing on a smaller combat that includes the player characters. If the characters can win three such events, they win the battle. Each event lasts for five combat rounds. *Lords of Men* has detailed rules to develop other events than the three described. *Lords of Men* also has combat statistics for standard combat groups (page 108).

### EVENT ONE: ATTACKING THE LINE

Crom Dubh rides in the center of his army, so the magi have to penetrate ranks of warriors to reach him. Mounted knights ride in the front, a typical medieval tactic, offering a solid line of gleaming mail and burnished swords. The magi must defeat two trained groups of five mounted knights to succeed, meaning they have broken through the line and stand in a wild, chaotic melee. Failure means that the magi can't push through, and must try again at a different point in the line; repeat this event with a slightly different sized force.

### EVENT TWO: AWASH AMONG THE INFANTRY

Having bashed through the front, the characters stand surrounded by footmen. Three groups of five untrained infantry charge with poleaxes. The magi must rout them within five rounds, by slaying more than half of them (8 men-at-arms), or through magical effects.

Taking longer brings more infantry to bear. Failure means that the characters are pushed away from the army's center and must deal with the mounted knights again; repeat Event One.

### EVENT THREE: TAKE THE GENERAL'S HEAD

Their success takes the magi to the very heart of the army, and the group stands before Crom Dubh. The False God is mounted on a huge destrier, accompanied by a trained group of five mounted knights, who act as the Dark One's defender. So defended, the Dark One creates pits beneath the magi's warriors' feet, dropping them into the ground and disrupting their group. Once the magi's party is in disarray the group of knights disperses, each knight picking an individual target. The Dark One saves the magi for himself, and will not spare them for anything. This event can take as many rounds as necessary.

If the characters gain the upper hand, Crom Dubh assumes his spiritual form (this takes one combat round) and retreats to the mound. If he can, the magi might be too strong for him and kill him quickly. In both cases, the Dark One's army is defeated and a general rout ensues.

### BELOW GROUND

The magi may want to defeat the Dark One below ground, in his throne room under the mound. Attacking immediately after Crom Dubh returns to the mundane realm is easiest. If the magi linger and let Crom Dubh assemble an army, he uses the church as his headquarters and keeps his troops in the surrounding field. While his troops are on campaign, he periodically returns to his throne room to plot and scheme, changing into his spiritual form to quickly make the journey from the battlefield to his headquarters. The magi may lie in ambush, waiting for his return.

Use your judgment in deciding how to populate the mound's interior. If the group can handle a greater challenge, let them encounter revenants in the Hall of

Revenants. Add a Red Knight or two to the scene in the Chamber of Sacrifices, which might include the diabolist Uallachán. Bolster the Red Knights with soldiers if necessary. If the player characters will be hard pressed just to defeat Crom Dubh, they meet him alone in the Ob-

sidian Throne Room, where he sits contemplating his evil machinations. If they need aid, let them gather resources in the time between Crom Dubh's initial summoning and this battle. Templeport may have a relic or other Divine item they can borrow. For example, the breastplate

of St. Patrick grants the wielder Divine Magic Resistance of 40, the white fruit of St. Kevin instantly heals an eater's Heavy Wound, and the crozier of Colm Cille (St. Columba) smites demons, delivering a blast of *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* that reduces a demon's Infernal Might by

## Crom Dubh, The Dark One

Crom Dubh is the Irish phrase for "The Dark One." In other Tribunals he is known by other names. An evil mirror of the pagan god Mithras, Crom Dubh is the Prince of Slaughter and desires the worship of warriors, murderers, and other assorted killers.

**Order:** False Gods

**Infernal Might:** 50 (Terram)

**Characteristics:** Int +1, Per -2, Pre +2, Com +3, Str +5, Sta +4, Dex +5, Qik +4

**Size:** +1

**Confidence Score:** 1 (6)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Large, Puissant Great Weapon

**Personality Traits:** Proud +6, Murderous +6

**Reputations:** Prince of Slaughter 9 (Infernal)

**Hierarchy:** 9

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init +4, Attack n/a, Defense +11, Damage n/a

**Gauntlet:** Init +4, Attack +13, Defense +13, Damage +7

**Great sword:** Init +6, Attack +21, Defense +17, Damage +14

**Great sword, mounted:** Init +6, Attack +24, Defense +20, Damage +14

**Soak:** +13

**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:** Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 4 (searching), Brawl 7 (gauntlet), Infernal Lore 5 (diabolists), Leadership 6 (knights), Great Weapon 9+2 (great sword), Ride 3 (flank attacks)

**Powers:**

**Coagulation:** 5 points, Init -1, Corpus: This power lets Crom Dubh assume his human form.

**Obsession:** 1 - 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Crom Dubh can implant the Personality Trait: Murderous +1 to +3,

depending on the number of Might points spent.

**Envisioning:** 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentem: Crom Dubh can appear in a sleeping person's dream (1 point cost) or make a target experience a waking dream (5 points).

**Shroud the Stench of the Pit:** variable points, Init +3, Vim: Crom Dubh can mask the Infernal nature of his other Supernatural Powers.

**The Wealth of Nations:** 3 points, Init +0, Terram: Crom Dubh transfers wealth from one treasury to his own (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 37)

**His Commander's Voice:** variable points, Init +1, Vim: Crom Dubh leads 66 generals and their legions. He can summon generals (Red Knights) and legionnaires (bog revenants), which magically appear that round and attack the nearest living thing. It costs 2 Might points to summon a revenant and 6 to summon a Red Knight.

**The Dark Clouds Gather:** 5 points, Init +3, Auram: Crom Dubh can create an overcast sky, gathering a large assembly of dark clouds. While rain looks imminent, the clouds do not unleash their watery content. Once created they are vulnerable to natural and supernatural effects.

**Sculpt the Bloody Battlefield:** 4 points, Init +4, Terram: This power allows Crom Dubh to cast Rego and Perdo Terram effects, which he can use the alter the terrain. The highest level effect possible is 20. He typically uses this power to mimic the Hermetic Spell Pit of the Gaping Earth, The Earth's Carbuncle, and Crest of the Earth.

**Gather the Murderous:** 1 point, Init +6, Mentem: With this power Crom Dubh can immediately convince a

warrior to join with the Dark One in battle. The victim must have some type of warlike or belligerent Personality Trait. Targets get a resistance roll based on Stamina + stress die + peaceful Personality Trait against an Ease Factor of 9. Crom Dubh often uses this power after using his Obsession power on a target.

**Tread the Master's Halls:** 0 points, Init +4, Vim: Crom Dubh can pass between all the regiones in the mound whenever he wants.

**Weakness:** Vulnerability: Sunlight

**Vis:** 10 pawns of Vim vis prava in his two eyes

**Appearance:** Tall, broad-shouldered, and beautiful, Crom Dubh is a muscular man standing a head and a half taller than average. He is clad in gleaming steel chainmail and wields a great sword. He wears a samite cloak trimmed with leopard fur. A lion always appears nearby.

The lion is part of Crom Dubh and not a separate entity. In combat it can make its own attacks, but shares Crom Dubh's Fatigue Levels, Wound Levels, and Magic Resistance. In battle the lion has the following stats:

**Size:** +2

**Combat:**

**Claws:** Init +4, Attack +18, Defense +15, Damage +9

**Bite:** Init +4, Attack +16, Defense +12, Damage +8

**Soak:** +10

The Dark One is vulnerable to light. He cannot stand bright light, and sunlight can actually wound him. He suffers a Light Wound for each round he is hit by direct sunlight.

5 with a Penetration of 55. They could also ask the Order of Hermes for help, calling in specialists and known demon hunters to help destroy Crom Dubh. Use your best judgment; don't hand out an easy victory, but try not to dole out any early graves.

## Dealing with the Diabolist

Having failed to control Crom Dubh, Uallachán hopes to serve as a lieutenant in the Dark One's new reign. He follows his master down the chasm and ensconces himself in the Sacrificial Chamber. Hoping to fill the sacrificial pit with corpses, he slays any prisoners captured in the upcoming warfare. On the far side of the pit he draws a summoning circle, and summons bog revenants to ablate, slowly collecting a store of vis sordida. Once he has amassed 12 pawns, the maximum number that he can use in a Commanding attempt, he tries to control Crom Dubh. 12 pawns (+75) + Commanding Total (58) + a stress die needs to beat an Ease Factor of 190, or

95 if Crom Dubh is standing in a summoning circle. The later is unlikely, as is Uallachán's chance of success. Nonetheless, he attempts it.

When the characters encounter him, he has just finished summoning a bog revenant, who stands in the summoning circle. When Uallachán notices the magi he commands the bog revenant to attack them. He has to succeed on a Commanding stress die roll, which he will unless he botches the roll. He then uses his maleficia in an attempt to make the grogs attack the magi. The Infernal aura adds to his maleficia total (+3), and he uses pawns of vis sordida to ensure success. He has 8 pawns of Corpus vis sordida.

If outmatched, he flees to the Obsidian Throne Room, hoping Crom Dubh is there to assist him. If Crom Dubh isn't in residence, Uallachán falls to his knees and begs for mercy. He hopes that pity is the magi's weakness. His contrition is feigned, and in his black heart he continues to scheme and plot. He promises anything, yet when alone returns to his evil summonings. The player characters should have no remorse over killing such a recalcitrant villain.

## The Conclusion

Once the dust and brimstone settle the characters can participate in the necessary healing and repairs. The new church can be fixed, the chasm filled in, and the floor mended with new stone. A celebrant can perform Mass and enact a Dominion aura, which overrides the previous Infernal aura. The first level of the regio becomes part of the mundane world. The mound becomes permanent, and the Infernal regiones in the mound lie beneath the church's Dominions aura, inaccessible as long as the Dominion aura remains. The villagers return to their former homes and begin anew. Grudges are kept, certainly, but the horror has ended.

Besides experience and Confidence points, which you should award generously, each member of the group receives a positive Reputation in both local and Hermetic circles. Long will the area remember those who stood fast and defeated Crom Dubh!

## Chapter Four

# Servants of God

Facing challenges from a supernatural agency is a normal occurrence for a covenant, and most threats can be dealt with using a combination of magic and diplomacy. But when the challenge is a threat to the magi's way of life, when the antagonists are mystics with powers deeply rooted in the Dominion and powerful connections in the church, and when the magi face an unknown traitor in the Order, the situation must be handled in delicate and perhaps unconventional ways.

## The Antagonist

The main antagonist for this Sequel is Fabianus, a magus ex *Miscellanea* and the architect of the Servants of God. He has a grand plan for unifying the Order of Hermes with the Church, merging magic with the divine. Fabianus uses magic to disguise himself in the rare occasions he is around other magi, and has done so for decades. The archdeacon, canons, and anyone else not of the Order of Hermes know him simply as Hugo — a pious academic with knowledge of divine powers. These safety measures ensure that his plot is not easily exposed. Note that in sections detailing actions he takes he is referred to as Fabianus, but when mentioned in descriptions or events connected with clergy he is referred to as Hugo.

## The Plan

In the decades prior to this sequence of connected stories, Fabianus has been working toward his grand goals. He plans to revive the Servants of God, and work with the Church so that its temporal power is on his side. He has found three church canons — later referred to as the three mystics — who are intellectual descendants of the Servants of God, and ensured they have the necessary resources to develop their skills. He has told them about the older tradition, and they are genuinely supportive of his plans. When Fabianus met Archdeacon Petrus he was impressed by the man's personal zeal, and began offering him advice and assistance. He guided the three mystics and the archdeacon through Contemplative Mysticism to learn Ceremony, so that they can perform miraculous effects of great magnitude.

Years before these events Fabianus advised the archdeacon to enlist the help of priests across the diocese in looking for unnatural or strange events. Fabianus intends to either find evidence of Hermetic interference or the work of some other supernatural agency in a place where the mundane populace was suffering. By helping the community overcome these difficulties he wants to show to mundanes and the Church alike that magic can be used for good and can be attuned to the Divine realm, and convince the Order of Hermes that they can and should harmonize with the Dominion.

As the canons became powerful holy mystics under his guidance, he discovered Edward — a Gifted boy — among the orphans in a church school and

instructed him in Holy Magic rather than normal Hermetic magic. Edward is being taught by both Fabianus and the mystics, and to counteract the detrimental effects of The Gift, Fabianus taught him the secret of *Parma Magica* at once, so that he could share it with his teachers among the clergy. This is without doubt a violation of the Code of Hermes, clearly Fabianus' greatest mistake. The plan is for Edward to finish his training before he is introduced to the Order, and once he has sworn the Code the risk of someone realizing that he knew the *Parma* early is minimal. Fabianus hopes that Edward and his future filii will form a new tradition within *House ex Miscellanea*, with a tradition that will include unGifted mystics trained in Holy Powers. In time Fabianus hopes to advocate the teaching of *Parma Magica* at the beginning rather at the end of apprenticeship.

## The Catalyst

One year before the first story unfolds the magi Decarius of Tremere and Arctura of Flambeau are once again at odds over the settlement referred to as the Town. Decarius digs the natural harbor deeper, bringing more ships and trade. He aims to boost trade and crafts, and brings in his own covenfolk to set up businesses. His long time rival Arctura also has her eye on the Town in order to find recruits for her piratical projects, so she prefers it to be difficult to make an honest living there. Arctura suspects (rightly) that Decarius used magic to help the Town's recent growth along, and lodges a complaint with the Quaesidores, alleging that

the use of magic may unbalance the natural order of things or possibly endanger the Order. The Quaesidores, in turn, send Eutropia to investigate.

A priest finds the sudden de-silting of the harbor to be a highly unusual and unnatural event, and alerts the archdeacon. Once Fabianus' attention is on the location, he discovers that Arctura and Decarius both are active in the settlement, and at odds. Fabianus involves himself as a neutral mediator between the two magi, both to resolve their conflict and to monitor the situation. As news of the fire reaches Fabianus, he knows this is sure to trigger a formal complaint from the archdeacon to the Quaesidores. Eutropia is still at Arctura and Decarius' covenant, and a senior Quaesitor arrives to brief her on the developments in the case. As the meeting of the magi breaks up to allow Eutropia to speak with her superior, Fabianus decides to scry on mundane covenfolk but accidentally overhears a part of the two Quaesitors' conversation. Even though it was an accident, scrying on sodales is prohibited by the Code, which Fabianus has sworn to uphold, and therefore sinful. Fabianus was weak, and did not stop scrying the moment he realized that magi were present. This is something he truly regrets, and he does penance with charitable work afterward.

Fabianus honestly believes the fire to be the work of a Hermetic magus and the start of a major incident, although in truth it is a mundane accident. Arctura is the obvious suspect due to her House, but both she and Decarius are uncooperative and each is trying to "improve" the evidence implicating the other. Fabianus wants justice be done, but also to show how the same energy used to disrupt mundane society could be harnessed to help instead. Information about Decarius and Arctura is found toward the end of this chapter, as they may appear again for the final events. Eutropia visits the closest covenant to enlist the help of more neutral magi, thus bringing the player magi on stage.

# Preparation

Before these stories are run the storyguide needs to fit them into the saga.

## Geography

This sequence of stories deliberately does not use specific locations; it can take place in almost any Tribunal with minor adaptation. The non-magi have names that have versions in most European languages, and can easily be adapted. The storyguide should decide on three locations fairly close to the player magi's covenant, ideally places that the characters know of in advance.

### THE TOWN

The first story takes place in a small town experiencing rapid growth, henceforth referred to as the Town. It is not the closest settlement to the covenant, nor the place where the bulk of their income or supplies is generated, nor their main vis source, nor the location of a chapter house or an important ally or contact. Instead, it should be a place where the magi could have future plans

for expansion, business, or a network of informers, where servants or specialists can be recruited, or a frequent stopping point on travel routes. The covenant might have secondary business interests here, which deepens their involvement in ways that are discussed later.

The Town has already seen a significant migration from rural areas. It is a coastal town where currents appear to have formed a deeper harbor within the last year, allowing larger ships to dock. A river navigable by barges leads to large settlements — the City, for instance — resulting in increased trade and transport business. Raw materials shipped to this harbor are worked into finished goods by a growing number of craftsmen.

The important feature is that the town is rapidly expanding due to a recent unexpected improvement in circumstances, which was caused by interfering magi. The town could be placed inland with only minor adaptation.

### THE CITY

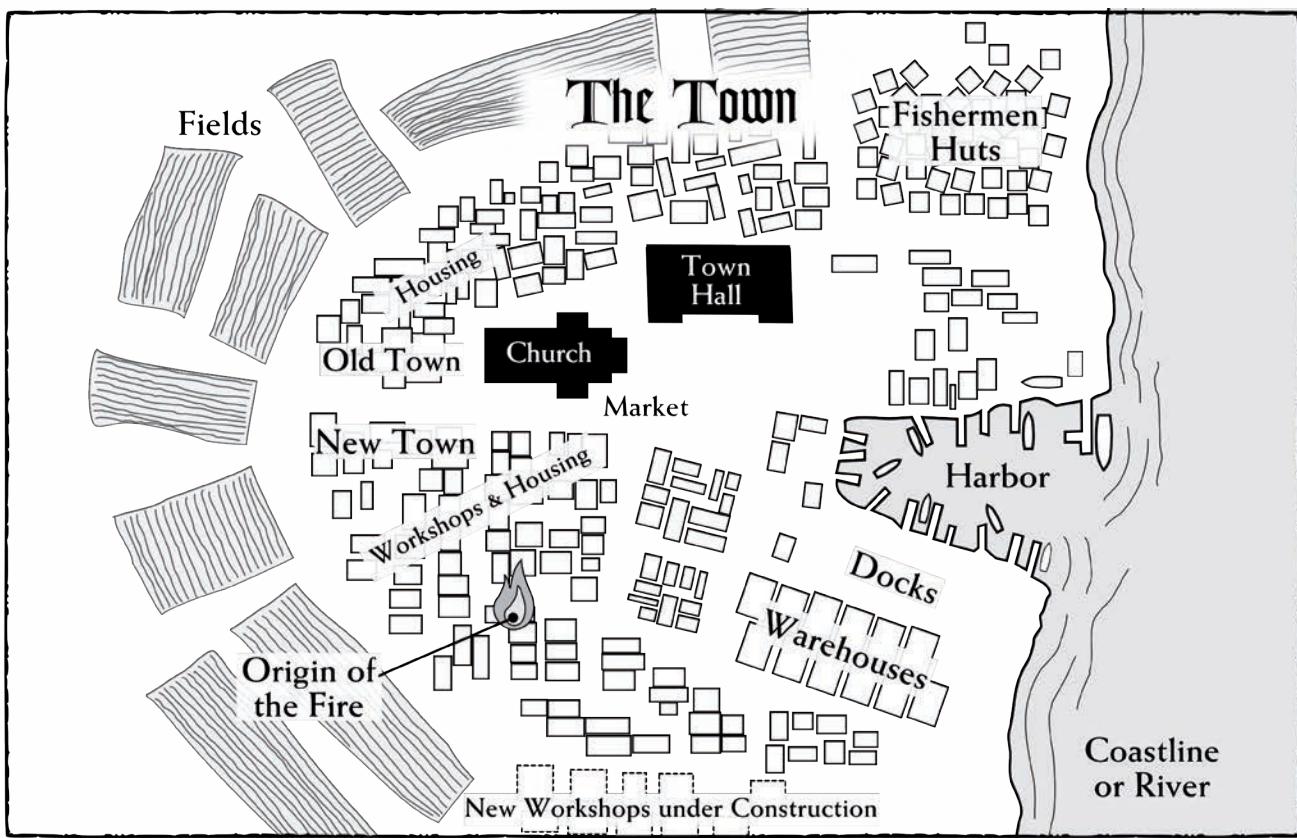
The second location is a large town or a city, henceforth referred to as the City. This is where the archdeacon normally resides, and it has a large church housing the chapter of canons, which is referred to as the Urban Church. The

## Holy Societas: Servants of God

Generations ago a holy tradition known as the Servants of God, the predecessors of the antagonists of this story, practiced Divine supernatural effects. As their ranks thinned due to the rarity of True Faith, members began guiding mundane clerics through Contemplative Mysticism into single Method and Power combinations to avoid dying out. Contemplative Mysticism is described in *The Church*, pages 21–22. In short, characters can gain holy Virtues by performing a series of pious actions.

When a holy mystic called Diludicus was the only member with True Faith, the tradition formally disbanded. The individual holy mys-

tics (people possessing one or more Holy Methods, Powers, or Divine Supernatural Abilities) spread out, and their students often rose to significant positions within the church. Diludicus took a Gifted child as apprentice, joined the Order of Hermes, and guided his filius to learn Holy Magic. The last Hermetic descendant of this line is Fabianus, the primary antagonist of this story, who inherited the library of the Servants of God, a collection of considerable power. As the story starts Fabianus is a little-known magus, regarded as pious and no more than a hedge wizard. His roots in the holy tradition are generally unknown.



Urban Church's crypt holds the base of operations for Fabianus and his holy mystics. Distance from the player covenant is only limited by the need to be within the same diocese. The City may very well have more churches than the archdeacon's. However this sequence of stories does not involve the bishop of the diocese, and therefore the City should not hold his cathedral. The player magi need no prior connections to this place.

### THE NEIGHBORING COVENANT

The third location is the Neighboring Covenant, which can have any existing relationship with the player covenant, or none. This is the covenant of Arctura and Decarius, but further details of this covenant and other magi are not presented in this material, since it depends heavily on the saga setting. The saga may even already have two magi in dispute to take the roles intended for Arctura and Decarius. In either case one or more of these magi have previously meddled in minor affairs in the Town,

leading to raised eyebrows but no legal action. The Neighboring Covenant does not play a major role in the stories, so it should be easy to use an existing covenant in the role.

### Hardship and Blessing

It is essential to the first story that something cause hardship to the inhabitants of the Town. The material presented is based on a great fire ravaging the settlement, destroying many buildings and damaging most of the surrounding ones, but another disaster can easily be substituted. The important points are that the disaster is natural, that its effects are localized, and that it badly damages, but does not wipe out, the Town.

The archdeacon himself visits the settlements affected along with a few of his canons — the three holy mystics — and Fabianus (known to them as Hugo), who poses as an assistant to the clerics. As part of their special sermons they work minor divine effects. The

### Expected Sequence of Play

This sequence is the most obvious way for the stories to play out. Naturally, players will not follow the obvious route.

#### Story I: A Fire in the Town

Investigating the Town  
Existence of a traitor is discovered  
Reporting to the archdeacon

Interlude: Silence Follows Thunder  
Setting a trap

#### Story II: The Urban Church

Finding the mystics  
Learning of Fabianus' plans

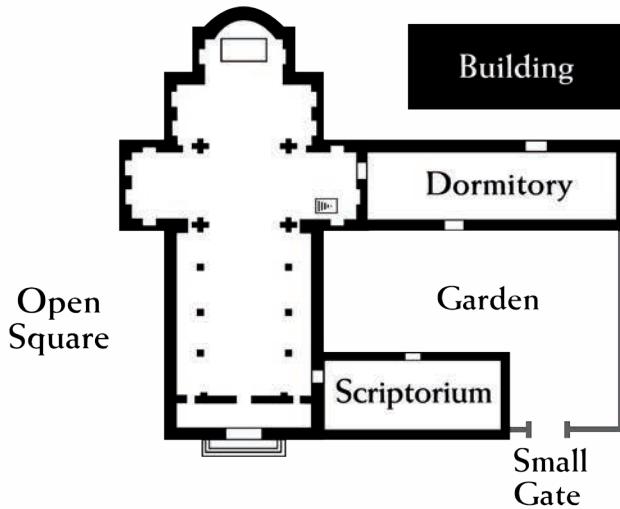
Interlude: Preparation for Tribunal  
Political events

#### Story III: Tribunal

Scrying on the Quaesidores  
Teaching Parma Magica  
Future of the Servants of God

# The City's Church

## Building



## Building

## Building

### The Upper Crypt

### The Lower Crypt

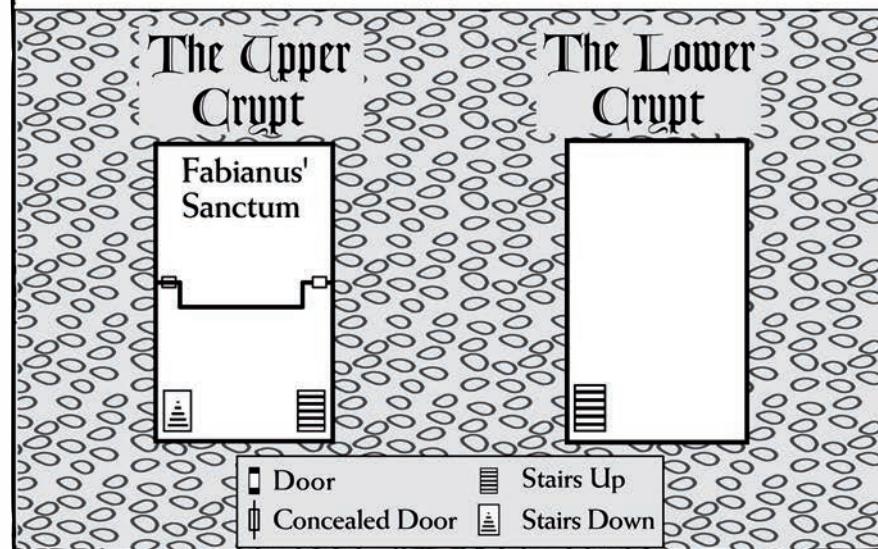
#### Fabianus' Sanctum

Door

Concealed Door

Stairs Up

Stairs Down



archdeacon, who does not know of the supernatural powers of the holy mystics, attributes the results to the power of prayer. The effects help the local populace in the pious work of rebuilding their homes and shops, in caring for the sick and injured, and in growing their food. Those indulging in sin and not attending church were never affected by the blessings. By comparison, it seems they are suffering punishment and bad luck, but there is no such curse.

## Divine and Infernal Influence

While the power of the divine is intervening to support the Town, it does so in a subtle way. Fortuitous events like finding resources and provisions unharmed by a destructive fire, or the rapid rebuilding by the townsfolk are remarkable, but they do not attract an influx of investigating clergy and visiting pilgrims. Player characters with

Holy Magic or True Faith may have better understanding of the divine effects, but what they do with that understanding is up to them.

On the other side of the battle, Mythic Europe features demons often thought responsible for sickness and misfortune. Players and characters may initially suspect a demonic plot in the Town, but there is none, and the mystics and clerics are specifically not infernally corrupted. If the players do not accept that the complete absence of evidence of demonic involvement is, in fact, evidence of the absence of demonic involvement, they may make misjudgments with very serious consequences. It is up to the troupe to decide how to handle that.

## Political Climate

Events in the latter part of this sequence involve a Tribunal and different political factions. We assume that the saga already has an established Tribunal, and that there are factions within it that will either have differing opinions on Fabianus' actions, or oppose each other on general principles. Only in the most unusual Tribunals would it be difficult to justify controversy over these events, but storyguides must adapt the details for themselves.

## Story I: A Fire in the Town

The first part of this series of stories is the investigation of a fire in the Town for evidence of supernatural interference. As discussed in the nearby insert the player character can become involved in several different ways, but the text assumes that they are asked to assist a Quaesitorial investigation.

## Eutropia Arrives

Eutropia of Guernicus, a junior Quaesitor, arrives as planned, with a single grog named Michael. She is expecting the characters to help with her investigation, as requested. Her core competences lie in magical investigation rather than people skills or offensive power, and so she would appreciate a local and sociable guide in addition to protection. She politely informs the magi that their neighbors are suspects in the case. Time is of the essence if they want any chance of sensing traces of supernatural effects, as the disaster struck little over three months ago. If the player magi refuse to help, Eutropia leaves in a huff and continues on her own. Her investigation is consequently minimal and her report criticizes the unhelpful covenant. In this case there is no story about the investigation, and you should skip to the conclusion of this first story. The player magi may also choose to investigate by themselves without collaborating with Eutropia. She carries out her own investigation on her original schedule, and the if player magi leave right away they may meet up in Town.

## What is Known

The players may roll Int + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes when the magi first hear the names of the magi involved in these stories. Consult the table below to see what they know. Apply a +1 to +3 bonus for taking the time to research books and records, or correspond with appropriate sodales.

Ease Factor	Information
6	Fabianus ex Miscellanea is known to be a magus dealing in incomprehensible magic, a hedge wizard, living an unremarkable life within the Order. Arctura is a Flambeau and Decarius is a Tremere from the Neighboring Covenant, and the two have been at odds for many years.
9	Arctura is of the School of Apromor, and she favors raiding

## Involving the Player Covenant

### PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS

Not all sagas have the same interpretation of the Order's cohesiveness and the Quaesitores' impartiality, in which case there may be no request for aid from House Guernicus, and perhaps not even a formal investigation. In this case, the storyguide should give the player magi personal reasons to get involved. Story and Personality Flaws are a good starting point, such as Mentor, Feud, Fostered Apprentice, or Tormenting Master. Another magus — likely from the Neighboring Covenant or the old and powerful covenant in the saga most likely to receive the archdeacon's complaints — may ask the player magi to look into the matter of the fire in the Town. Covenant Hooks are another good entry point.

If the Town happened to be a resource for vis, provisions, or income, player magi should feel even more motivated to act. They hear of the disaster early on and are likely to investigate without being asked. It is recommended they hear of the archdeacon's concerns about Hermetic interference, relating to the recent de-silting of the harbor as well as the fire. However, forcing the players onto the defensive in this way is easily overdone. The focus here is on having the player magi proactively involve themselves in the matter, to give them an opportunity to gain resources and contacts if they work for it.

### A QUAESITOR AMONG PLAYER MAGI

If the player magi include a Quaesitor the simplest approach is to make this an official mission. Eutropia may be assigned to assist if her specialist skills would be useful, but she need not appear at all.



12

and piracy as a source of income. Decarius is an elementalist and seeks to improve the production and commerce of his covenant.

Fabianus is believed to have local knowledge and connections in the player magi's region. He is diplomatic and often acts as mediator between magi. Arctura and Decarius once had a dispute over covenant resources. Their conflict caused disruption and destruction, and as a result they were both denied the resource and punished under the charter of their covenant. Eutropia was trained in a different Tribunal. She is young and inexperienced, specialized in investigating supernatural events. She is said to be ambitious for high position among the Quaesitores. Fabianus was trained in Holy Magic, and he discreetly advocates change within the Order, for which he seeks supporters.

18

## The Town

This settlement is a chartered town consisting of two distinct parts. To one side is the old town, with the market square, church, and other official buildings. Bordering this are the houses of the original population of fishermen and farmers with gardens and plots of farmland. To the other side are the new neighborhoods containing the workshops, offices, and storehouses of the growing town. This is where the fire started, in one of the blacksmith's shops. The town has a Dominion rating of 2, higher inside the church and the graveyard.

A charter from the presiding lord grants the town trading rights and the right to form a guild, and allows the senior masters of this to form a town council. This council effectively runs the town, plans the town's growth, and arranges night patrols to watch for fires or theft.

The direct as well as collateral damage of the fire is clearly visible. Although the fire was contained and stopped 3 or 4 months ago, there are still many poor, hungry, homeless, and desperate. As some workshops were destroyed, all trades involved in supplying those shops with raw materials or selling their finished product suffered as well. The livelihood of many families was destroyed, and the ensuing panic and rioting did not help the situation. The townfolk are

naturally wary of strangers and if not approached with caution they become withdrawn and uninformative, especially if subjected to Gifted individuals.

## Aftermath

Following the fire, the town faced hunger and poverty, but within a fortnight the archdeacon made a visit outside his normal schedule, accompanied by some of his canons. One canon gave an extraordinary evening sermon of such excellent quality that the participating townspeople left with renewed faith in the Lord. The following morning builders working to restore damaged buildings found a granary thought empty to be filled with grain, and several warehouses filled with timber, metal ingots, and bolts of cloth. This verged on the miraculous and averted the looming hunger, provided materials to rebuild homes and businesses, and allowed craftsmen to produce goods and merchants to sell them. God's grace favored these humble professionals, who toiled together with great success.

# Observing the Inhabitants

When the townsfolk are first approached individuals are not very talkative and retreat to their fellows to form groups. A Perception + Folk Ken roll against an

Ease Factor of 9 reveals that the people fall into one of two categories. The larger group is positive and pious; they support each other but are initially reserved. Once they have spoken with other members from their group, individuals are more self assured and speak more freely to the visiting strangers. They are steadily rebuilding

the town's businesses. The other, smaller, group is the opposite; they are gloomy, bicker and threaten each other, and almost fight amongst themselves. They all appear to be hiding something.

Once player characters start asking around in various groups, rolls of Communication + appropriate social Ability

## Quaesitor Eutropia of Guernicus

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 32 (32)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (4)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift; Hermetic Magus; Life-Linked Spontaneous Magic; Affinity with Intellego, Affinity with Vim, Hermetic Prestige\*, Improved Characteristics, Minor Magical Focus (investigating supernatural residues), Puissant Intellego, Puissant Vim, Skilled Paren, Blatant Gift, Deficient Technique (Muto), Clumsy Magic, Deficient Form (Corpus), Legacy, Weak-Willed

**Personality Traits:** Ambitious +6, Transitionalist +1, Assertive -2

**Reputations:** Promising Quaesitor 3 (Hermetic)

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Local Area 2 (geography), Artes Liberales 3 (ceremonial magic), Awareness 3 (searching), Charm 2 (being witty), Code of Hermes 4 (mundane relations), Concentration 2 (spells), Latin 4 (Hermetic), Magic Theory 5 (Vim), Native Language 5 (storytelling), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (politics), Parma Magica 2 (Mentem), Penetration 1 (Mentem), Philosophiae 3 (ceremonial magic)

**Arts:** Cr 0, In 13+3, Mu 0, Pe 0, Re 7, An 0, Aq 0, Au 5, Co 0, He 0, Ig 0,

Im 0, Me 5, Te 0, Vi 13+3

**Twilight Scars:** None

**Equipment:** Maga's robes, exquisite dress, travel clothing

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Spells Known:**

Cloak of Duck's Feathers ReAq 5/+8

Sailor's Foretaste of the Morrow InAu 20/+22

Ward Against Rain ReAu 10/+13

The Call to Slumber ReMe 10/+13

Confusion of the Numbed Will ReMe 15/+13

Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie InMe 20/+22

Odor of Lingering Magic InVi 30/+49F

Impression of the Faded Sigil InVi 30/+49F

Peering into the Mortal Mind InMe 30/+22

Sight of the Active Magics InVi 40/+33 Fincludes Focus

**Note:** To detect supernatural effects of other realms than Magic Eutropia needs to cast spontaneously. Her focus covers detecting the residues and details of supernatural effects of any realm, not just Magic. Her highest possible casting total is: In (16)+Vi (16)+Focus (16)+Stm (1)+Voice and Gestures (2)+Ceremonial (8)=59 + a Stress Die, excluding aura modifiers. With her Life-Linked Spontaneous Magic, she can take it even further.

**Vis:** 12 pawns of Vim vis in the form of silver spheres of crystal, carried in a pouch at her belt

**Appearance:** Eutropia is slightly plump young woman with a nice smile, reddish brown straight hair, and gray eyes. Among mundanes she tries to fade into the background in hooded robes, but inevitably draws attention to herself as the cut and quality of her clothes set her apart from everyone.

Eutropia is a junior Quaesitor who was born in these parts but trained in a neighboring Tribunal. Her pater is a Quaesitor of significance back home, and so great things are expected of her. Intensively training by a true master has not only formed her into an impressive specialized investigator, but also left her highly ambitious and, unfortunately, with a bit of an inferiority complex. She asked to be assigned to a region away from her pater's influence, where she could make her own name. She readily involves other magi in her plans to achieve greatness and is not beyond asking for help to cover the multitude of areas where her skills fail her. However, her impressive talent for investigating magical and other supernatural effects means she avoids the most routine Quaesitorial investigations, interrogations, and dry judicial matters. Eutropia sees the strange occurrences in the Town as a great opportunity to make her name, and is now giving this matter her full attention. She is loyal to the Order, wants to right wrongs, and to keep relations with the mundane world smooth. She will not casually break the Code, but her ambition may lead to her to justify bending the rules, at least to herself.

She is accompanied by her trusty aide Michael on all her travels and investigations. He is socially skilled and a fount of knowledge on the Order and mundane organizations alike, and a vital mouthpiece for his Blatantly Gifted mistress. While Eutropia looks at evidence and magical traces, Michael puts questions to the mundanes, both as directed by the maga and on his own initiative. For character statistics, the Advisor from *Grogs*, page 88 is highly appropriate.

against an Ease Factor of 12 reveal more information, opinions, and witness accounts. Different abilities are appropriate depending on the situation: Charm generally makes people talkative, Carouse works well among the sinful people in the alehouse, Intrigue works for a more devious approach, a Profession is good for the relevant vocation, Leadership works if a characters takes charge or acts with authority, for example by hiring people or set up business. The townsfolk are naturally curious as to why the player characters are asking around, so apply a -3 to +3 modifiers depending on how appropriate their cover story is. Strangers who just happen to be passing through fall at the low end, while stories about future business and trade or references to previous visits give a bonus.

## PIOUS AND SUCCESSFUL GROUP

The pious individuals are almost all trained craftsmen, merchants, or other providers of professional services. Spirits are high among them, and they attribute it all to the grace of God. The turning point for their crisis was the visit from the archdeacon, and the lucky breaks they had following that with finding the resources unharmed by the fire. They humbly but readily tell stories about success of their fellow pious townsfolk, but are reluctant to talk about the responsibility of specific people for the fire, or about those who are not doing so well.

## SINFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL GROUP

Most of the sinful group is made up of seedier and suspicious-looking inhabitants working in taverns and brothels, or engaged in criminal activities. It also encompasses some of the dirtier and heavier crafts, especially those involving forges, kilns, or other fires. This includes bakers, potters, blacksmiths, and coincidentally a lot of unskilled workers employed as night watchmen by the guild. Reluctantly, they admit to not being avid churchgoers, and that they also did not attend the special service held while the archdeacon visited. The blacksmiths all accuse each other of responsibility for the fire, behind their neighbors' backs. Some lay the blame on the night watchmen or the flawed fire response. A few people truly believe they have been cursed and hint that the visiting clergymen may have been praying to the wrong god. They all refuse to elaborate upon the matter if asked directly.

If both groups are questioned and the specific facts of success and misfortune analyzed, it seems the sinners have suffered no higher frequency of bad luck than could be expected. A series of unfortunate events simply resulted in a situation all but impossible to turn around. However, the pious group shows skill at rebuilding beyond what anyone, including themselves, expect, and seem to have unnaturally good luck. In addition to this, they help each other, so that even the least skilled person eventually turns his misfortune around.

## THE TOWN COUNCIL

The council consists of the most influential and wealthy craft, service and trade masters leading their respective groups in the guild (see insert nearby). They are busy leading the rebuilding effort for their own business as well as planning the Town's regrowth. They are harder to get access to than most other townsfolk, but the potential for bringing in new trade is a great incentive, and a clever cover story wins their time. The merchants, builders, and clothiers are part of the pious group, and their leaders

## What Caused the Fire?

The fire was a completely natural tragedy, caused by a chain of events in which no single one involved bad intent or gross irresponsibility. See section 'Observing the Inhabitants' for further information about people and groups.

Somehow all three of the blacksmiths' actions affected the outcome. In Matheus' workshop the embers and hot ashes had been put in an earthenware container at the end of the work day, but not removed. A cat belonging to Andreas chasing a mouse knocked the lid off. A draft from a window improperly shuttered by Lucas — because Andreas had not fixed it — blew an ember out of the pot. It landed in pile of straw that Matheus should have had swept up, but he was waiting until Lucas removed his crate. Here the flames grew until Lucas' wooden crate caught fire, and the flames subsequently spread to the whole house. The unseasonably dry weather cause the fire to grow rapidly. As these details are not known until magic is used to investigate, the three neighboring blacksmiths do not know in which of their shops the fire started.

But not all the blame lies with the

blacksmiths. The guild members acting as night watchmen underestimated their duties and responsibilities, and had insufficient manpower, discipline and knowledge to prevent this tragedy. The night patrols were forced to cut corners to cover the whole neighborhood, and as their first visit to the blacksmith's shops at the end of the work day showed the forges properly put out they skipped their next rounds here. The third tier of blame lies with the town council, which is responsible for planning for emergencies. And in this they failed miserably.

The pious group in the Town keep the facts secret because this series of unprofessional actions might jeopardize the trading rights granted by the town's charter, which specifically states the responsibilities of the council. The sinful group, on the other hand, keep quiet for fear of being singled out as directly responsible for certain events and punished for them, especially since a lot of them were directly involved by being the proprietors of the workshops where the fire started, being on fire watch during the night, or taking part in the unsuccessful effort to stop the fire.

tell similar stories. However the smiths are at a low point, as the fire destroyed the neighborhood containing most of their members' workshops. The rest of the council is putting pressure on the Master Smith to get his members cooperating rather than sowing discord. The Master Boatman has conflicting reports, since his members are split between the pious and sinful groups. Overall, the council is interested in working together to rebuild the Town, and to avoid the mistakes of the past.

## The Town Church

The church itself is at least a century old and by no means impressive, but it is well kept. With the recent growth of the Town it is rapidly becoming too small. The lack of space further reduces the least pious inhabitants' inclination to attend sermons. Otherwise, it is as churches should be, with a minor relic beneath the altar, creating a Dominion aura of 4 inside.

## THE PRIEST

The church in Town is run by the middle-aged priest Father Charles, a fair-minded, educated, and perceptive individual. He was asked in person by Archdeacon Petrus a few years ago to keep an eye on any unusual events, and to report directly to the archdeaconry should any happen. This did not seem at all odd to him, as the archdeacon is a senior cleric watching over his flock. When the harbor was suddenly found to be deeper than usual his suspicions were raised. After looking into the matter — superficially and with no special skills — he found no evidence of supernatural interference, and raised no alarm, although he did inform the archdeacon of this. He was also asked to keep a spare room to accommodate various clerics needing to rest a few days during a journey or to stay and study with him.

With the recent boost in trade and travel activity, Father Charles is accustomed to strangers like the player

characters, although acting suspiciously earns his mistrust, and speaking with him consequently yields only superficial answers. He is not at all impressed by academics speaking Latin and quoting the Bible, although anyone he has seen attending his services is treated better.

It is quite easy to get him talking, and he readily speaks about the recent crisis and the following rebuilding effort. He says that the fire was a dreadful accident and it is time to move forward, not dwell on the past and pass blame. Before he could even make a report to the bishop, the archdeacon, a few of his canons, and a novice arrived in town. One of the canons gave a heartfelt sermon, speaking of charity and the belief that God helps the pious overcome such horrible setbacks. This certainly lifted the spirits of the townspeople, and subsequently finding unharmed stores of grain, trade goods, and building materials made the effort to recover from the disaster possible. The archdeacon and his canons stayed in the spare room the priest keeps in his house, and they left for their home after only two days. If asked further about the spare room he

tells it has been used several times by a pious academic named Hugo, who is a friend of the archdeacon's. Over the last year he has stayed there for a few days at a time once every three months, although not since the fire. As the Town is in disorder, the priest gladly offers the player characters his back room to stay in. He does so even if their number include Gifted persons, since it will distance them from his flock.

The priest lives alone in a small house next to the church. He has no housekeeper; instead he is helped occasionally by volunteers from among his flock. The house has a front room with a hearth, a cot, and a chest for Charles' belongings. The back room is what he grandiosely calls his study. It is merely a cramped room with a small desk and a chest of books, plus some floor space for sleeping pallets. His letters are all on administrative matters, and the chest holds the church missal, a Bible, and a poor quality Latin learning aid. The characters may want to search the room to see whether the archdeacon and canons left any evidence. Such a search reveals a torn piece of parchment slipped down behind the desk. It is a fragment of letter in

## Alternative Crises

If another crisis fits better into the saga and setting the storyguide needs to customize the investigation to accommodate this. In any case the story is the same: Mistakes were made and the townsfolk try to cover it up. A few examples are given below.

A plague is traced to the first house affected, witnesses tell a story of a mundane tragedy, and survivors show no traces of supernatural effects. Medicine is the appropriate Ability to use for a mundane investigation.

A flood or landslide shows no signs of supernatural effects at the collapsed hill or the river which overflowed. Witnesses tell of heavy rains causing the natural disaster, and although investigating a weather effect poses difficulties due to the long range to the clouds, nothing suspicious is found here either. Appropriate Abilities in-

clude Survival or Profession: Engineer.

A hard winter affected more than just this settlement, and the surrounding countryside needs to be visited as well. Weather phenomena are particularly hard to investigate, and so should be used if the players are likely to take their results at face value and bring the investigation to a close too quickly.

Warfare or bandits are a bit different, as this crisis is obviously not due to innocent mistakes. While the dead have been buried with church rites, any captured or injured combatants can be interrogated by mundane and magical means. The warfare may have arisen from a typical noble dispute, but in any case investigation finds no evidence of magical influence on the main parties, nor of magical help for either side.

an unknown hand describing, almost to the word, the conversation between Eutropia and the senior Quaesitor who gave her this task. It features neither sender's name nor a seal, but the recipient is the Archdeacon Petrus. The letter is over one month old, and so no longer viable as an Arcane Connection.

### A TRAITOR IN THE ORDER?

If the letter is discovered, Eutropia is alarmed, since this information was known to only those two magi of House Guernicus, and there are only three other magi who could reasonably have found out. She was inside the Neighboring Covenant in a secluded building watched by her grog while conducting her investigation, and speaking with the three magi Arctura, Decarius, and Fabianus when her superior arrived unannounced. She stepped into a separate room and only someone invisible or who scryed on the room could have heard the conversation. This is illegal under the Code of Hermes, and the Quaesitores are especially opposed to scrying on their organization. Furthermore, keeping the archdeacon so well informed of Hermetic matters is no trivial matter either, as

there is a great risk of further complaints from the church whenever magic is or could be the cause of anything believed to be unnatural. Eutropia urges caution, since this unknown informer may intercept messages and relay information to the archdeacon. She would rather discreetly gather evidence and positively identify the traitor before going public. Charging in and questioning under *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* is ill-advised as not only does it risk antagonizing the three suspects, it may tip off the traitor if they do not question him first.

It is entirely possible that the characters do not discover the letter, or do not show it to Eutropia. If she never sees the letter, its significance is likely to remain unknown, and Fabianus' plans most likely move unhindered to the next stage. This is not a problem for the later stories.

Hermetic magi are responsible for the fire. Eutropia must report at first to her Guernicus superior, and subsequently to the archdeacon in his church, at his insistence. If the player magi were involved, she asks them to attend and confirm her testimony. If the player characters were not involved, move directly to Part III: Tribunal; nothing of significance happens until then.

The archdeacon resides and holds office in the Urban Church in the City, alongside a chapter of canons. This section details how the report is received, and further details of the City and the Urban Church are given later.

The Urban Church is linked to the ongoing stories in several ways, and the player magi may choose to visit for a number of reasons. As the investigation was prompted by the Archdeacon's formal complaint, player magi may visit him before ever investigating the Town. This does not cause serious problems, although the mystics may be encountered before their work in the Town has been investigated. Bear in mind that they seem no different from the other canons, except that they have fewer regular duties at the church. The mystics conduct all business related to Fabianus, magic, and Holy effects while secluded in the crypt. Edward's Gift is only noticed by characters without Parma Magica. Edward uses it himself to cover any mystic he is currently working with, and normally keeps his distance from other church employees, so very few people notice his Gift and act upon it. The mystics' duties keep them inside the crypt studying or performing minor clerical church duties away from most visitors. Player magi investigating in depth can even find out that Hugo (as he is known here) is cooperating with the holy mystics before they ever suspect a traitor in the Order. But it is unlikely they realize Hugo is actually Fabianus until they find the sanctum, as Fabianus is a fairly obscure magus, and he uses magical disguises. The main consequences of investigating the Urban Church early are that the first two stories of the Sequel might blend together.

Once the Town has been visited and the priest spoken with, there are more

## Reporting to the Archdeacon

At the end of the Quaesitorial investigation the logical conclusion is that no

### The Guild

The professionals in the Town have formed a single guild, led by masters from various vocational groups encompassing several related types of crafts and professions. Highly specialized guilds for each and every craft is not common until much later than 1220, and also only seen in larger settlements.

The Master Farmer is Roger, a 54-year-old greedy miller who represents all people involved in growing and processing food

The Master Merchant is Peter, a 60-year-old charitable cloth merchant, who also represents all other merchants

The Master Builder is Simon, a 38-year-old pragmatic carpenter. He attended a cathedral school in his youth, and is literate. He represents carpenters, masons and other builders

The Master Smith is Anton, a 41-year-old soft hearted bear of a man, who represents blacksmiths and those working in rare metals alike, as well as potters, glassblowers, and anyone else using fires.

The acting Master Clothier is Elizabeth the Fair, a 32-year-old widow running her aging father's dyeing business as he is too infirm to do so, at least until he is replaced. She represents weavers, dyers, tailors, and recently, with reluctance, also leather workers and tanners.

The Master Boatman is George, a 48-year-old drunkard representing boatmen, dockworkers, boat builders, and fishermen

leads to draw attention to the Archdeacon's church, because of the regular visits from Hugo.

## The Report

The actual report is little more than a formality to appease the archdeacon and show him his complaints were taken seriously. Eutropia truthfully reports what she knows, probably that no Hermetic interference caused the fire, but that prior events in which the harbor was dug deeper were. The archdeacon has no concern with the harbor, as no harm was done and any unbalancing effects it may have had resulted in growth. A growing population usually strengthens the Dominion, so he is happy with this outcome. If he is told of the Divine effects helping the recovery, he is pleased, and reminds that characters that God is always watching over his servants. Eutropia, however, does not volunteer this information.

## Petrus the Archdeacon

Should the magi want to speak with Petrus the archdeacon, he agrees, but takes the opportunity to reprimand them for not using their magic to avert or alleviate the crisis in the Town. If asked about his canons and the sermons, he honestly believes it was simply a well meant prayer performed by one of his canons, accompanied by a complex ceremony his people had taught him. If the miraculous effects are mentioned he merely states that God does what God wills, dismissing the idea that he performed them as almost blasphemous. Subtle questions about the letter found in the Town lead nowhere, as he sends and receives many letters each week and genuinely has no idea what the characters are getting at. If they unwisely confront him with knowledge of his informant in the Order he refuses to comment, and considers their conversation over.

The use of scrying magic or mental domination is not recommended (and Eutropia will argue against it if the characters

mention the idea to her), nor is it easy due to the archdeacon's Magic Resistance, and the high Dominion aura of the church. However, if successful, his mind reveals the name 'The Servants of God' for his organization, and its plans in motion, and identifies his source inside the Order as Hugo, complete with a physical description. This is actually Fabianus' natural appearance, but he is a reclusive magus and uses magical disguises during his rare visits with Hermetics.

If the characters ask Petrus about the Servants of God, he is puzzled they know about this, but says "Aren't we all servants of God?" He says that this is the name used by him and his closest clergy in their efforts to help humanity above and beyond their formal duties within the church. If asked about Hugo he replies that he is an acquaintance of his, a pious academic who visits occasionally. Reading Petrus' mind reveals the existence of the sanctum below the church and the ongoing plans to induct a new generation of holy magi into the Order. The archdeacon does not know about the Parma Magica affair.

If asked why he thought the fire was of magical origin he answers simply that strange things were happening, such as

the harbor suddenly becoming deeper, and such a horrendous fire happening despite the night watch and contingency plans did not seem natural.

After the meeting Eutropia says that Michael followed the archdeacon away from the meeting, and overheard him telling his scribe that he should await a report from their informant in the Order. If the letter was found in the Town, Eutropia ordered Michael to do this; otherwise he acted on his own initiative. Without the letter, there is no proof that the informant has broken the Code, but the matter is still very suspicious, and motivates Eutropia's next actions.

## Investigation Concluded

As the investigation is concluded life resumes its normal course. However, the player magi and their young Quaesitor ally know of a zealous archdeacon and his Hermetic informer, just waiting for an incident to complain about.

## Father Charles

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 45 (45)

**Decrepitude:** 0 (4)

**Warping Score:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Priest; Inspirational, Social Contacts (Archdeacon); Compassionate (minor), Motion Sickness, Vow (celibacy)

**Personality Traits:** Compassionate +3, Pious +2, Talkative +2, Loyal +1

**Reputations:** None

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** 0

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

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10),

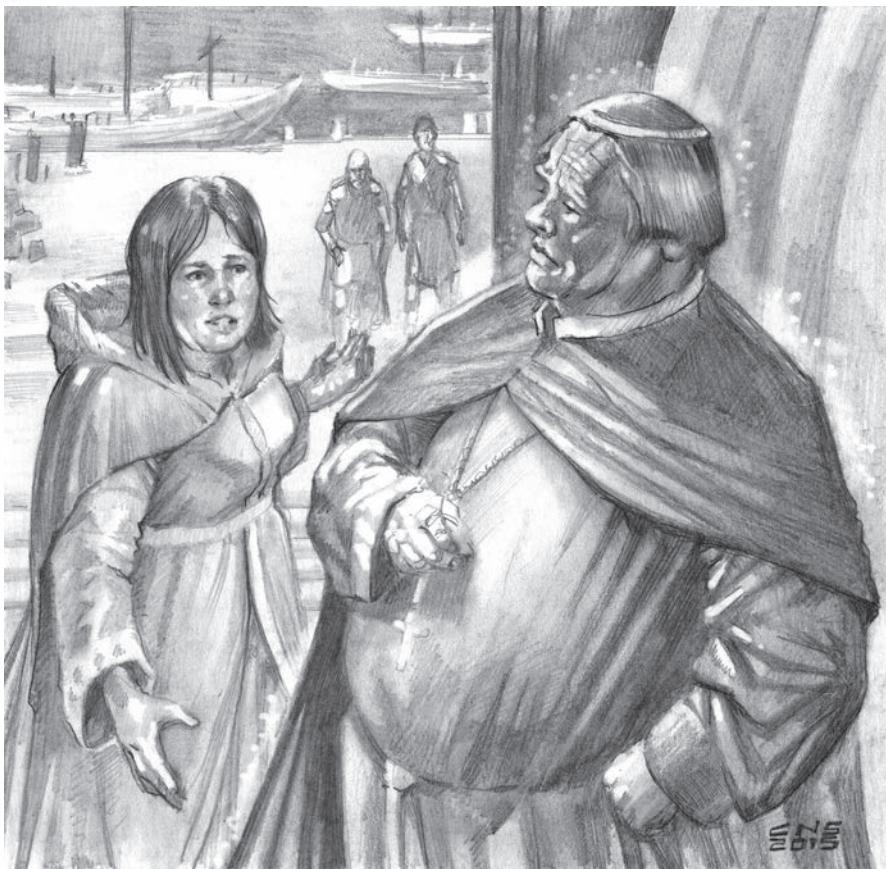
-5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Town 5 (history), Artes Liberales 2 (rhetoric), Awareness 3 (noticing changes), Charm 3 (church goers), Etiquette 3 (Church), Folk Ken 5 (people he knows well), Latin 5 (the Bible), Leadership 4 (preaching), Local Language 5 (preaching), Music 3 (sing), Organization Lore: Church 4 (local diocese), Profession: Herbalism 4 (treating fever), Ride 2 (distance), Teaching 1 (religious subjects), Theology 4 (debate)

**Equipment:** Priest's garb, leather apron for gardening

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Appearance:** Charles is a tall, thin man — almost lanky. His ever-youthful looks have only recently been marred by crow's feet at his eyes and thinning, graying hair.



## Interlude: Silence Follows Thunder

Unless the player magi have found the Servants of God and Fabianus' sanctum below the Urban Church, there should be no leads left to investigate, until the archdeacon's informant in the Order does something to tip his hand. Nothing overt happens for three to six seasons. The exact amount of time before the next event depends on the pace of the saga, but it needs to be enough for the development of Fabianus' plot. The player magi have some time to prepare for things to come. Given the nature of the opposition, many reasonable actions would be controversial if other magi or the church discovered them, for instance inventing Might-stripping spells for Divine creatures, or spying on the archdeacon. Keeping watch on the Town or the

Urban Church, or actively helping or even hindering the rebuilding effort also come to mind. If the magi draw attention to themselves, the archdeacon complains to the Quaesidores again, which starts another investigation, and possibly a case if the characters have arguably broken the Code. If necessary, remind the players that the archdeacon has a history of complaining to the Order, and being taken seriously.

### The Clue, the Bait, and the Trap

The clue leading to the next stage of the story is discovered by magi monitoring the church in the Town. There are good reasons for the player characters to do this, but if they do not, Eutropia does, and draws the characters in. As noted earlier, if the characters are ignoring the town and have alienated Eutropia, they are not involved in this stage of the story, only being drawn in at the

Tribunal to deal with the aftermath.

After some time a novice arrives from the Urban Church to stay a season at a time to observe the Town's priest in action. He brings along a locked chest containing Fabianus' book on *Parma Magica*. The priest is informed by a letter from the archdeacon that the novice has a great gift from the Divine, which might be unsettling unless he accepts a short prayer and laying on of hands from the novice each day until he is used to it. This novice is Edward, who is the apprentice under Fabianus' formal tutelage and therefore Gifted. His sharing of *Parma Magica* deliberately includes an innocent prayer; he need only touch the willing priest to share it. Fabianus intends this to be a test, to see how it works to have the Gifted student share it with a teacher who is not used to such things. The priest willingly accepts this arrangement as he trusts the archdeacon and the "prayer" alleviates the feelings of unease about the novice.

Edward does not avoid all interactions with the residents of the Town, and any visitor may hear of the creepy visiting novice. Even the old priest is heard remarking that the boy sometimes gives him eerie feelings of unease. If asked in more detail he confides in trustworthy individuals that, had it not been for the novice's daily prayer to ease his mind, the youngster would have been sent packing long ago. Player characters who meet Edward feel the same unease, unless they are protected by the *Parma Magica*. Any magus is likely to suspect that the boy is Gifted, and briefly suppressing one's own *Parma* is an easy way to confirm that.

The boy spends his free time reading books he keeps safely locked inside the chest sent by the archdeacon. (Note that seasonal activities are an abstraction for ease of play, clearly seen when a professional works two seasons and has the other two free for personal endeavors. It is perfectly feasible for Edward to be trained intermittently by the priest as his duties allow and to read the book during free time over the course of two seasons, in order to use the standard progression rules. Inside the chest is a book on the subject of *Parma Magica*, anonymous but

written by Fabianus. The book is simply called *Hermes' Parma Magica* and is a Summa with level 3 and Quality 12. The materials and workmanship of the book are quite professional, as seen in books used by magi, academics, and clergy alike. However, the illustrations have a decidedly religious theme. Anyone with even cursory knowledge of the Church or the Divine recognizes this, even if they have no score in the Abilities.

There are several ways in which this book can lead investigators further down the plot line. The point is to show that a Hermetic magus is acting irresponsibly with the secrets of Parma Magica — most likely the archdeacon's informer.

While a book can function as an Arcane Connection to the author this connection only lasts a few weeks, and this book was written longer ago than this. However, a tiny speck of human blood can be noticed on one page, or found with an Intellego Vim spell to detect active Arcane Connections. Identifying the speck as blood is an Intellego Corpus base level 4 spell, but using the connection to track the owner requires a relevant Intellego spell of Range: Arcane. Note the shortcut of first casting *Opening the Intangible Tunnel* so the follow up Intellego spells only needs to be R: Touch (as described in *Hermetic Projects*, pages 78 and 84). The blood is from Julius, an illuminator from the Urban Church in the City, who cut himself while sharpening a quill as he was illustrating the book for Fabianus. This Arcane Connection leads the magi to the Urban Church in the City, and ultimately to the holy mystics.

While a book on Parma Magica by itself is not a crime, it is highly suspicious if found outside the protection of a covenant or sanctum. As described in *Apprentices*, a magus can teach Parma Magica but omit the vital key needed to actually use it. This means that a book that does not contain the key, and this one does not, should not create the risk of the Parma Magica being learned outside the Order. Even though this is a safeguard against abuse, Fabianus could be accused of irresponsibility.

Edward's knowledge and attitude to magi are described in his stat block, found later. The magi may be able to

## Magical Investigation

Intellego magic such as *Tales of the Ashes* Inlg5 (ArM5, page 141) used in the blacksmith's shop shows how the fire started, revealing it as a non-supernatural event. Uncovering the series of unfortunate events described in the earlier insert *What is Really Happening* would need several spells, and some luck. Speaking with inanimate objects is tedious and difficult to pull off with spontaneous magic, and investigators need to find a relatively unharmed object to communicate with. The cat and mouse involved make excellent witnesses (as far as their limited intelligence allows) but finding these exact animals is like finding the needle in the proverbial haystack. They are still in the area, but many rats and mice roam the ruins since there are scraps of food to find and places to hide, which bring in cats hunting them.

For more detail the magi need spells more powerful and specific than this, especially if they want to check for any supernatural effects in other locations than the ruins of the smithies. Intellego Vim spells (ArM5, page 158–159 and *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 71 and 75) reveal supernatural effects, as well as details depending if the spell is powerful enough.

- While still blessed, the townspeople are affected by an ongoing, powerful non-Hermetic and Divine effect of 13th magnitude, detectable with a Base 1 Intellego Vim spell. This effect causes Warping due to being a powerful as well as a continuous supernatural effect. The citizens of the town gained 1 Warping point when it was cast, as well as 1 per season and 1 per full year affected. The Duration (Fast) is unlikely to last more than a month, and definitively no more than a single season. Once the effect is over — when the casting mystic ends his fast — the residue drops to half magnitude. As Duration: Fast is equivalent to Moon, the residue decays a further magnitude with each passing month. This means that the residue reaches magnitude 0 seven months after the mystic stops fasting, giving ample time for investigating magi to discern it.

- In the granary and warehouses where goods had miraculously survived the fire, those searching find traces of non-Hermetic Divine effects of 6th or 9th magnitude respectively, no longer active. At the end of the power's duration the effective magnitude is halved and drops by 1 for each round passing until it reaches 0. Further decay is at 1 magnitude per year which passes. The Duration of Momentary causes the effects to decay to magnitude 0 in mere moments, decaying a further magnitude per year until reaching –10, as they are the equivalent of a Ritual. As the player magi are likely to investigate within a year of being asked, the residue is probably magnitude 0. A Base 10 InVi guideline is needed to sense the traces at all. Taste is the lowest possible Target, but requires the material investigated to be put in the mouth. A Duration longer than Momentary would also be beneficial.
- The harbor was dug deeper about two years prior to these events by Decarius using *Pit of Gaping Earth*, a Duration: Momentary spell that has now degraded to magnitude –2. This requires a Base 20 InVi. Even though Eutropia can examine the sigil of a cast spell, *Impression of the Faded Sigil* only works on positive magnitudes, and as she does not yet know *Restore the Faded Threads*, she would need a 5th magnitude spontaneous Creo Vim spell to make the sigil visible. As this is not covered by her focus, she does not even try.

Note that spells detect effects from a particular realm. Eutropia is not custom made for this purpose, and as her spells sense Magic effects, she needs to spontaneously cast versions to detect the Divine. Her theoretical casting total is calculated in her stats found earlier. A further two magnitudes added to the guidelines listed reveals details of what the effects did. Most Hermetic magi know nothing of holy magic so they learn no details about Methods, Powers or the special divine Duration of the effects. The holy effects are detailed in the nearby insert.

## The Divine Effects

The Divine effects performed by the three holy mystics in the Town are described in this insert, and further details can be found in *Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, chapter 3. These special parameters are available to Hermetics using Holy Magic as well as mystics using Divine Powers. Hermetic magic normally requires a parameter like Duration: Year to be a Ritual, but the Divine miracles do not; they merely add the required number of magnitudes. The special Duration: Fast for Divine effects lasts as long as the caster fasts according to his faith. It is equivalent to Moon, but may last longer.

Casting Total equals Characteristic + Method + Power + Aura and only needs to equal the adjusted level of effect to succeed. Holy mystics need not learn or invent specific effects in advance as Hermetic magi do for spells. When cast using leaderless Ceremony, add the Characteristic + Method of further participants, as well as group modifiers equal to the sum of all Ceremony scores minus the number of participants. All three holy mystics use the Method Invocation, which uses the characteristic Communication, and each one knows a different Power. All mystics, the archdeacon, and Edward the apprentice have positive Communication, and know Ceremony with a specialization in Invocation. If performing the effects in a normal urban Dominion aura of 2 to 3 their Casting Total reaches 60 plus a stress die. Note that Invocation requires the expenditure of a Confidence point by the main caster, but it is not unreasonable to assume that they earn new Confidence from using their powers successfully for good. The four Divine effects used are as follows.

**Let he who serves the LORD be guarded by an angel** (Invocation, Adjuration, Level 30)

R: Voice, D: Grace, T: Ind

Theologians say that every person has a guardian angel, though few can sense it and even fewer notice any intervention from it. This effect petitions a guardian angel to protect a target, effectively granting the Virtue of the same name from ArM5, page 43, although the

angel may choose to intervene more directly as well. This effect needs to Penetrate the Angel's Magic Resistance in order to work. See Zurfiel, the Guardian Angel of Fabianus, for an example of such a creature.

(Base 4, +2 Voice, +4 Grace)

**The LORD blesses those who are faithful** (Invocation, Blessing, Level 65)

R: Touch, D: Fast, T: Room

This blessing, performed as part of a church service, results in a +3 bonus to virtuous tasks for all those inside the church who truly worship God. In this situation, virtuous tasks are concerned with surviving, rebuilding the Town after the disaster, and helping to do good. This affects a church holding up to 1000 people, provided it is not divided into separate sections.

(Base 30, +1 Touch, +3 Fast, +2 Room +1 Size)

**Let the LORD fill the granary** (Invocation, Wonders, Level 30)

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Group, Ritual equivalent effect

This wondrous effect can create an amount of grain in excess of 5 tonnes, but the caster can voluntarily limit the effect to a smaller amount. Although equivalent to a Hermetic momentary Ritual, holy effects cannot be Rituals and simply add four magnitudes to the final level.

(Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 Group, +4 for permanent effect)

**Let the LORD fill the timber storage** (Invocation, Wonders, Level 45)

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Group, Ritual equivalent effect

This wondrous effect creates up to 100 cubic paces of processed and prepared timber. Similar effects could create bolts of cloth totaling 10 cubic paces or iron ingots totaling 100 cubic feet.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Group, +1 size +4 for permanent effect)

learn that "Hugo" is behind the affair, and in fact a magus, but Edward genuinely does not know where Hugo is at this time. Characters can also simply watch Edward, and see to whom he talks on his return to the Urban Church.

Father Charles does not believe he is in any way involved in a plot and answers most questions willingly. Using magic on him reveals no more.

The book itself could be used as bait to set a trap. Even if the priest is not in the know, if the characters make sure he hears rumors of people interested in the locked chest, the information is passed on to the archdeacon, and then Fabianus. This leads Fabianus to feel that it is too risky to have the book out of his control, and send a church servant to pick up the book and bring it to his sanctum, unwittingly leading observers there as well.

## Story II: The Urban Church

In the City there is a large, old church, where the archdeacon holds his canon court when he is not on the road, a responsibility delegated to him by the bishop. It also hosts a chapter of canons, three of whom are holy mystics working with Fabianus. The church is detailed in the nearby insert; it has a Dominion aura of 5 inside, while the church grounds and city streets have an aura of 3. As long as the sounds of mass can be heard the aura is 1 higher, and as masses are a source of income for the church this may occur at any hour of the day. The church is open to all during the day, and it is always teeming with activity as minor clergy perform masses for the dead at the many secondary altars. The crypt below the church is closed by a locked door and watched over by burly churchwardens who always seem to be close by. Several more wardens patrol the buildings and grounds to prevent theft of church property. If they feel they might be getting in over their heads they fetch

one of the canons to ask for guidance, or call out for help. Refer to the nearby insert for basic statistics.

To one side of the church is an enclosed garden, between the scriptorium and accommodation for the archdeacon and the other clergymen. Both buildings have doors from the church and garden. The wall is just over man-height and easily scalable, and the gate to the garden is never locked or barred.

Infiltrating the crypt is not straightforward, but it is by no means impossible for skilled specialists and clever magi. No one in the church is aware of guarding the crypt, but their duties have been arranged to take them past strategic locations frequently — like entrances to the church and the stairs to the crypt. They are, of course, aware of the risk of theft and vandalism to other locations, even though it is not a major problem. A violent assault on the church would almost certainly succeed, although the relatively high Dominion aura could reduce the effectiveness of magic, but the fact that violence against the church is seriously frowned upon if not outright illegal in the Order's view should deter most characters from such extreme measures.

## The Crypt and Sanctum

If the characters observe the church for some time, there are strong signs that there is something special about the crypt. Churchwardens often pass near the entrance while keeping watch, and priests perform mass more often at the altars near the stairs down. Provisions are taken down and waste is removed at least once per day. When the church is relatively quiet, Edward can be seen entering or leaving the crypt so as to not draw attention to his Gift. The canons Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael only participate in the other canons' duties on special occasions. Finally, Julius the Illuminator refers to a library for special books down there.

The locked door leads down to a surprisingly small crypt with a much larger lower level. On the top level a dark alcove conceals a door marked with a



sanctum marker and the names Hugo and Fabianus ex *Miscellanea*. As the door bears the name "Hugo," none of the mystics give it a second thought. Beyond the door is another flight of stairs, leading to a large communal chamber, well lit and heavy with the scent of incense. One corner holds bookcases and book stands, and there are doors to the private bedchambers of the holy mystics and the Apprentice. One chamber holds Fabianus' cramped and rudimentary Hermetic lab.

Unless the characters observe the mystics and Edward, and carefully choose a time when they all have business outside the crypt, at least one of them is present. Fabianus is not here, but there is ample evidence of his presence in the form of the name on the sanctum marker, correspondence, books, and items naming him as owner. The mystics do not read Hugo's correspondence, and are not really aware of the name "Fabianus." Even characters who examine the correspondence may initially assume that Hugo and Fabianus are separate individuals, but thorough investigation shows that they must be

the same person. Fabianus has not spent much time here recently, so the duration of months for the kinds of Arcane Connections casually left behind — like single strands of hair, favored tools, or books written — have all expired. The holy mystics disapprove of the intruders but use no more than stern words to convince them to leave, claiming the right of privacy in church property, because there is no chance that the characters entered by accident. If seriously threatened, the mystics surrender and ask to be admitted to the Order of Hermes and judged by a Tribunal. If violence erupts they have no offensive powers, but their summoned and contracted Guardian Angels intervene to protect them. Use the statistics for Zurfiel found later.

While the angels put up a fight there is nothing else to prevent the magi from fighting and killing the mystics, except maybe their consciences or a fear of being Marched. The death of three canons of a large church does not go unnoticed, even if their bodies are never found. Archdeacon Petrus suspects the Order if there is

any hint of strangeness, such as the bodies going missing. See section about Legal Matters later.

## The Holy Mystics

The mystics tell a story of having known through the early years of their ecclesiastical careers that they had power beyond their mundane brethren, or at least the potential for it. When they

were assigned to the same chapter of canons, they started working together to develop these abilities. It was only later that they realized they were deliberately brought together by Hugo. They met Hugo shortly after they started working together, and he told them of the origins of their supernatural powers among the Servants of God. He provided teachings and texts from the old tradition to further their training, and taught them about the existence of The Gift and the magi of the Order of Hermes. They be-

lieve that magi have much power, and the potential to use it for good if guided toward the right path.

Hugo reformed the Servants of God and started working closely with the archdeacon in order to provide this guidance. The mystics' duties involve helping the pious in times of crisis, both out of charity and to test the Order's response. Any negative interference from magi leads to formal complaints, while positive activities show who might be ready to cooperate. Hugo shows that

<b>Characteristics:</b> Int +3 (3), Per -2, Pre -1, Com +3 (3), Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik -1 (1)
<b>Size:</b> 0
<b>Age:</b> 50 (50)
<b>Decrepitude:</b> 1 (2)
<b>Warping Score:</b> 0
<b>Confidence Score:</b> 1 (3)
<b>Virtues and Flaws:</b> Senior Clergy; Wealthy; Ceremony, Educated, Guardian Angel, Relic, Strong Willed, Temporal Influence; Dependent (Servants of God), Pious; Higher Purpose (Reconcile Order of Hermes with society), Obese, Pal-sied Hands, Arthritis
<b>Personality Traits:</b> Pious +6, Meddlesome +3, Proud +1
<b>Reputations:</b> Worker of wonders 3 (Ecclesiastical)
<b>Combat:</b>
<b>Dodge:</b> Init -3, Attack n/a, Defense 0, Damage n/a
<b>Soak:</b> +5 (Guardian Angel)
<b>Fatigue Levels:</b> OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious
<b>Wound Penalties:</b> -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+)
<b>Abilities:</b> Area Lore: Diocese 4 (churches), Artes Liberales 5 (debate), Brawl 2 (dodge), Ceremony 4 (Invocation), Charm 5 (debate), Civil and Canon Law 5 (ordination), Concentration 4 (Ceremony), Dominion Lore 2 (saints), Folk Ken 6 (magi), Guile 5 (debate), Intrigue 6 (debate), Latin 5 (preaching), Leadership 4 (debate), Local Language 5 (arguing), Music 2 (composing), Organization Lore:

## Archdeacon Petrus

Church 4 (ordination), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (personalities), Teaching 2 (Latin), Theology 5 (Biblical knowledge)

### Powers:

**Magic Resistance 25.** The Archdeacon has a Magic Resistance of 25 granted by the Divine Realm, from a combination of an angel (as per the Virtue Guardian Angel) — summoned and bound by the holy mystics — and a piece of the True Cross (as per the Virtue Relic). Remember to modify the Resistance by the Dominion aura, and to subtract three times the aura from the casting totals of magic effects.

**Equipment:** Archdeacon's vestments

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Appearance:** Petrus is a fat, balding man with a mouthful of bad teeth. But with a straight back, fierce eyes, and a firm voice, he is still an imposing man, especially clad in his clerical robes and backed up by his aides.

The Archdeacon Petrus is not designed as a player character, and his Virtues and Flaws do not balance. His relic and guardian angel are the results of his achievements within the church and with the Servants of God.

In Petrus' youth he often assisted his bishop in the consecration of new churches following mundane expansion into the wild, and traveled the lands a great deal. During one of these ventures he angered woodland faeries by trying to banish them with prayers, but it opened his mind to the existence of other realms. His moves up the career ladder were due

solely to his personal skills and influence; he did not meet Hugo until he was already archdeacon, although the magus led Petrus to include the holy mystics in his chapter of canons.

Archdeacon Petrus knows of the Order of Hermes, and that the magi are not all heretics and diabolists, being like most of humanity with elements of both good and bad. But just as he feels his own position gives him great responsibilities to help humankind, so too does the great power of the magi. He despises magi using power for their own gain, especially when it is at the cost of innocent mundanes. Hugo led him to believe the crisis of the great fire on the Town was caused by meddling magi, and that this was an opening to approach the Order and let them know they are being watched. His great wish is for the Order of Hermes to seek to harmonize their magic with the Dominion, and he will do his part to further their acceptance among the church and the mundanes. At first he will work only behind the scenes, but in time, as magi convert to holy magic, he intends to step into the open, hoping he will have been elevated in clerical rank to hold more political power among nobles and the church both. He feels personally responsible for the entire organization of the Servants of God, which is still growing in numbers as well as power. While he readily uses connections to the bishop as deterrent he has no real power to mobilize him, and the bishop does not appear in these stories. The storyguide may choose to include the bishop if this fits her saga and play style better, but it is beyond the scope of this book.

the Dominion is compatible with Hermetic magic through the use of Holy Magic, and is working on a way of further combining Holy Methods and Powers with this.

While unGifted themselves, the holy mystics found a Gifted candidate among the misfits and orphans sent into to the care and schooling of the church. Hugo opened the apprentice's Hermetic Arts, attuning him to Holy Magic from the beginning rather than teaching him standard Hermetic magic. In the long term, the plan is to use Contemplative Mysticism to teach him Ceremony, the Invocation Method, and at least one Power. The mystics teach the Divine Abilities, and in practice the mystics do most of the teaching, with Hermetic Arts being covered by the books and Hugo's teachings. The goal is to ensure that future generations of Hermetic Holy Magi are skilled as holy mystics as well.

Both Edward and the mystics report that Hugo insisted that Edward learn the *Parma Magica* to protect himself against the evils of the world, and to protect the mystics from the effects of his Gift.

They willingly surrender the tome on *Parma Magica* to the Quaesidores, and truthfully say they did not know how important these secrets are nor how controversial Fabianus' actions are in the eyes of the Order.

If the visit to the crypt does not end with diplomatic solution with the mystics, and they still survive, they go to the Tribunal's senior Quaesitor soon after to tell their story. They hand over the *Parma Magica* book if it is still in their hands, and ask the Order to accept them. As they are unGifted, they would not normally be considered, but their supernatural abilities, knowledge of the Order, and position in the Church mean that their petition cannot easily be dismissed. The player magi hear of this soon after as the Order debates the best course of action. Even if they had no part in the mystics' petition to join, the player magi still have ample opportunity to work for or against their assimilation in the political arena. The details of such a debate are highly saga-dependent, and so are not laid out here.

## Resolution and Legal Matters

If the investigation of the crypt drew unwanted attention, or caused material damage or bodily harm, the Order soon after faces an enraged archdeacon. He demands justice, penance by the guilty parties, and stricter enforcement of the rules to ensure that this does not happen again. He hints it is within his power to suggest to the bishop here and in other dioceses to enforce a hard line against magic. Such a situation would certainly count as "bringing ruin on my sodales." The Order will certainly investigate, and if the player characters can be shown to be responsible, they will be punished at Tribunal. The archdeacon is careful to ask that they be given the chance to make good the damage they have done, rather than being Marched, but has less influence over the course of Hermetic justice than he thinks. If they are Marched, the archdeacon offers them sanctuary, in return for their support,

## Clerical Personnel

A single specific person as well as some general personnel are briefly described here, with only their key statistics listed. The clergy live on the church grounds, and their business occasionally takes them away from the site. The wardens, on the other hand, all live off site, and can be spoken to elsewhere, with fewer prying eyes and a less detrimental aura.

### JULIUS THE ILLUMINATOR

Player characters coming to the church asking questions about books are sent Julius' way. He is a jolly dwarf of a clergyman employed as scribe and illuminator for the church. His Personality Traits are Happy +3, Pious +2, Naive +2. If the storyguide uses the clue with a drop of blood from the book on *Parma Magica*, the Arcane Connection leads to him. He happily prattles on and on to learned visitors about books on academic or church-related subjects, and

if asked indirectly about 'special books' he counters by asking them to be more specific. If the player characters ever mention Hermetic or "magic" books, or something similar, Julius gladly tells them that he has no current such projects but that the books he finished were all taken by the canon Raphael, who handles the books for the down-stairs library. Julius has never been there but he knows that the entrance is down through the crypt. He does not mention Hugo casually, but this information is revealed after a successful Com + appropriate social Ability roll against an Ease Factor of 12. Mentem magic may reveal all his secret knowledge: Julius has illuminated the *Parma Magica* book, as well as the non-Hermetic books on holy Methods, Powers, and Abilities (see the library description found later). However, he cannot distinguish between them as they are all simply 'special books' to him. In his eyes, Hugo is some kind of holy mystic, and he suspects that the same is true of several of the canons. He sees this as nothing

sinister, only very interesting and best kept from outsiders.

### CHURCHWARDENS

These men are employed by the church to keep order and prevent intruders and thieves. They are hired for their brawn rather than any other qualities, and they are quite loyal to the church as an employer but not terribly pious.

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

**Personality Traits:** Loyal +3

**Combat:**

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

**Bludgeon:** Init 0, Attack +8 Defense +5, Damage +4

**Soak:** +4

**Equipment:** Bludgeon, quilted hauberk.

this possibility is touched on later. In any event, these matters are raised at Tribunal, which must also deal with Fabianus and the mystics themselves, if they have survived.

## Staying in the Shadows

The player characters may choose to keep the secret for Fabianus. If the Quaesitors are not pursuing Fabianus, for whatever reason, he continues to develop his plans.

Fabianus has time to fully train Edward and the premature teaching of *Parma Magica* avoids detection. Fabi-

anus and the archdeacon continue to monitor any supernatural meddling in the Town, and may ask for investigations of future events. Fabianus tries to remain inconspicuous for as long as he can, acting behind the scenes to affect his sodales and keep the archdeacon informed. Once the mystics are discovered or choose to reveal themselves he finally shows his true colors in order to support them. Once Edward has finished his training, Fabianus introduces him while forming the Order's first Holy covenant, hoping it can contribute to the changes he desires. The mystics are unGifted and most likely can't join the Order, but in fact do not need to. They can work just as well as specialist covenfolk in the new Servants of God covenant. Much political turmoil is avoided this way, with no magi knowing Fabianus broke the rules of *Parma Magica*, and no attempt to bring unGifted non-Hermetic mystics into the Order. This is the way Fabianus intended his plans to unfurl, to quietly ease the practice of Holy Methods and Powers inside the Order.

## Resources for the Servants of God

Fabianus inherited books on Divine, supernatural subjects from his pater, and has collected some Hermetic books for use by the Servants of God. As primers are found in plenty his procurement of them over the course of a decade has not raised suspicions. The library is supplemented by books on academic and church related subjects, copied from the church's library. Their known vis sources includes a holy spring yielding 20 pawns of Divine Creo vis annually. As they have little use for vis, a significant amount has been stockpiled. The exact amount of vis income and in stock should to be adjusted to match your saga's vis economy. Apart from this, the church provides food, lodgings, work-force, protection, and even covers other expenses as well, enabling the Servants of God to exist as a group of holy mystics, or perhaps as a covenant later on if Fabianus' plans unfurl. The mystics earn these privileges by doing service as canons, mostly special missions as in the Town during the first events of this sequence of stories.

### Church Books:

*The Bible*: Summa, Theology (Level 10, Quality 3); Summa, Organization Lore: Church (Level 3, Quality 3).  
*The Parish Register*: Summa, Area Lore: Parish (Level 2, Quality 5).  
*The Missal*: Tractatus, Organization Lore: Church (Quality 7); Tractatus, Music (Quality 7).  
*Breviary*: Tractatus, Organization Lore: Church (Quality 10).  
*The City of God*: Dominion Lore, Summa (Level 4, Quality 10).  
*Decretum*: Summa, Civil and Canon Law

(Level 5, Quality 11)

*De Operationes Daemonum Dialogos*: Summa, Infernal Lore (Level 5, Quality 12)

### Academic books:

*Scivias*: Tractatus, Theology (Quality 13)

*Liber Vitae Meritorum*: Tractatus, Philosophiae (Quality 13); Tractatus, Theology (Quality 13)

*Liber Divinorum Operum*: Summa, Philosophiae (level 2, Quality 13); Summa, Theology (Level 5, Quality 13)

*Ordo Virtutum*: Tractatus, Artes Liberales (Quality 13); Tractatus, Philosophiae (Quality 13); Tractatus, Theology (Quality 13)

*Sympthonia Armoniae Celestium Revelationum*: Tractatus, Artes Liberales (Quality 13)

### Holy books:

*Divine Ceremony*: Summa, Ceremony (Level 4, Quality 12)

*Divine Adjuration*: Summa, Adjuration (Level 4, Quality 12)

*Divine Blessing*: Summa, Blessing (Level 4, Quality 12)

*Divine Wonders*: Summa, Wonders (Level 4, Quality 12)

*Divine Invocation*: Summa, Invocation (Level 4, Quality 12)

*By His Works*: Summa, Holy Magic (Level 2, Quality 12)

*Charitable Magic*: Tractatus, Holy Magic (Quality 12)

*Miraculous Magic*: Tractatus, Holy Magic (Quality 12)

### Hermetic books:

*Hermes' Parma Magica*: Summa, Parma Magica (Level 3, Quality 12), although their copy is most likely kept in the Town; see earlier.

Primers in all 15 Arts (all Level 5 or 6, Quality 15–21)

## Interlude: Preparation for Tribunal

The time until the Tribunal where the cases are heard and resolved depends on the year in which the events happen. These matters do not warrant a special emergency Tribunal, so there may be up to seven years to wait.

The time passing between discovering Fabianus' plans with the Servants of God and the Tribunal can be used by player magi to build support for one side or the other. The two feuding magi, Arctura and Decarius, continue their disagreements in the political field now that the greater attention on the Town demands discretion.

One way to run the political game could be to run small stories before the

## Holy Mystic

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 35 (35)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 1 (1)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Priest; Invocation, [Holy Power]; Arcane Lore, Divine Ceremony, Puissant [Holy Power]; Dark Secret: Involved with Wizards; Offensive to Demons, See Description

**Personality Traits:** Pious +4

**Reputations:**

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Diocese 3 (churches), Artes Liberales 2 (debate), Cer-

emony 5 (Invocation), Civil and Canon Law 3 (canon court), Concentration 3 (Holy Powers), Dominion Lore 3 (angels), [Holy Power]\* 5+2 (Invocation), Infernal Lore 2 (demons), Invocation 5 (in Ceremony), Latin 5 (Church usage), Local Language 5 (preaching), Magic Lore 1 (magical effects), Organization Lore: Church 4 (politics), Teaching 3 (academics), Theology 3 (debate)

\* Each of the three holy mystics knows a different one of the following Holy Powers: Adjuration, Blessing, or Wonders

**Equipment:** Clerical robes,

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Appearance:** Middle aged men with clerical robes, neatly groomed, slightly below average height.

The three holy mystics Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael have very similar game statistics, but each has a different set of three Minor Flaws. Gabriel has Busybody, Clumsy, and No Sense

of Direction. Michael has Carefree, Lingering Injury (Grogs, page 81), and Missing Ear. Raphael has Arthritis, Motion Sickness, and Temperate. When Fabianus found them, he was surprised that they had each taken the name of a different archangel, and he believes that it is a sign that they should work together. Over the years they have been taught by Fabianus and guided toward texts on the subject of their Holy Methods and Powers. They know Fabianus only under the name Hugo, but do know that he is a Hermetic magus — he is the source of their knowledge of the Order of Hermes — from a minority practicing Holy Magic, and that he works with the archdeacon. They are all ordained priests, but their duties for the church are kept to a minimum so they have time to work for Fabianus. The majority of their time is devoted to matters important for both their duties as canons and the grand harmonization project.

## Holy Magic

A magus can seek to use his magic in a way devoted to God rather than its pagan Hermetic origins, typically inspired by a holy blessing, divine Warping, or witnessing a miracle. The details of Holy Magic are found in *Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, pages 66–69; the Virtue is found on page 34. A magus generated to know Holy Magic from the start of a saga needs this Major Virtue, and as a result he learns the Arcane Ability Holy Magic rather than Magic Theory, and all his spells are holy versions of their Hermetic counterparts. The holy magus has a reputation as a hedge wizard among his sodales. On the other hand, if a standard Hermetic magus converts to holy magic through play he does not need this Virtue, and does not gain the bad reputation immediately, although it is likely to develop over time. The most important effects of Holy Magic are as follows:

- The magus is attuned to both the Magic and Divine realms, so he uses the most beneficial aura modifiers and does not gain Warping from either aura. Any lab activities possible for magi can also be performed in the Dominion; this includes vis extraction although the vis is tainted by the divine.
- Formulaic spells need to be reinvented in new holy versions, and in fact most holy magi stop using their normal Hermetic spells as they lead to sin. Holy spells may never be used for evil; the spell simply fails if this is attempted.
- Spells may not be cast with words or gestures, resulting in a -15 penalty, although Virtues like Subtle Magic or Deft Form still apply to offset these. The magus can substitute prayer for Hermetic procedures, requiring a simple roll of Presence + Theology against an Ease Factor of 15.
- Holy magi may use the special divine Ranges, Durations, and Target parameters found in *Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, page 68. They do not need to use vis in rituals, but may substitute one long-term Fatigue level for every three pawns. This fatigue is not regained during the duration of the effect.
- Provided the magus has the necessary Methods and Powers he may use the guidelines for Miraculous Effects from *Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, pages 46–56, using the most appropriate Hermetic Technique and Form instead. They may even surpass Hermetic limits in certain ways, although this requires that the spell be a Ritual.

Tribunal where player magi gauge the opinions of their fellow magi and try to sway the undecided, using known characters from the saga. Almost any event happening during this between time can affect the outcome of the cases. The player magi's actions may change other magi's opinion of them. For example, if a settlement is cleared quietly of infernal influence, several magi who prefer discretion for the Order may cast their votes in the player magi's direction. Alternatively, stories may inspire sympathy or antipathy for the respective causes and the people making cases for them. For example, a run in with a local coven of hedge witches results in several of them joining House ex Miscel-

lanea, so undecided conservative magi join Decarius' camp.

## Story III: Tribunal

A Tribunal is needed to deal with the two charges against Fabianus as well as the petition from the Servants of God to join the Order of Hermes. Fabianus has been identified by name and is summoned to Tribunal. He fully intends to come, and does so unless someone prevents him. In the

story as written, no one tries to stop him, but the story could be developed that way in your saga. Similarly, Fabianus might have fled into hiding, and be unaware that he is supposed to attend Tribunal. In that case, the player magi might search for him.

## Running the Tribunal

The details of the Tribunal will depend on which Tribunal it is, and how such events normally run in the saga. The debate rules from *House of Hermes: Societates*, pages 90-93 might be helpful. Otherwise, the troupe needs to keep track of the opinions of other magi on the issues.

## Edward the Apprentice

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 15 (15)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (1)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Hermetic Apprentice, Apt Student, Book Learner, Divine Ceremony\*, Holy Magic\*, Church Upbringing1, Hedge Wizard, Necessary Condition\* (Prayer), Weak Parens

1) New Flaw, see later

**Personality Traits:** Curious +2, Overconfident +1, Pious +2

**Reputations:** As soon as the Order knows about him, he gains Hedge Wizard 3 (Hermetic).

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +0

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Town 3 (shortcuts), Artes Liberales 1 (grammar), Athletics 2 (running), Ceremony 2 (Invocation), Dominion Lore 1 (angels), Holy Magic 1 (learning spells), Latin 3 (reading), Local Language 5 (slang), Music 1 (singing), Organiza-

zation Lore: Church 2 (hierarchy), Parma Magica 1 (Mentem), Theology 1 (Biblical knowledge)

**Arts:** Cr 4, In 0, Mu 0, Pe 0, Re 0, An 0, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 0, He 0, Ig 0, Im 0, Me 5, Te 0, Vi 0

**Equipment:** Novice's robes

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Spells Known:** None

**Appearance:** An adolescent with a tonsured head, the simple garb of a novice, and the slightly weak physical impression often given by scholars.

Edward is in practice currently being trained by the holy mystics. Formally and legally Fabianus — whom he knows as Hugo — is his master by virtue of having opened his Hermetic Arts, but the mystics continue the training. These are his statistics after training for five years, as per the standard ArM5 rules. While both Fabianus and the mystics are excellent teachers, much time is spent on religious matters which is why Edward's training is comparable to that from a Weak Parens.

Edward has been told to volunteer no information, but to answer questions honestly if asked directly. He thinks of himself as Hugo's apprentice in the Order of Hermes; if asked about the name Fabianus he says that it sounds familiar, but he cannot remember from where. Mentem magic can recover his memory of the name on the door in the crypt. However, Edward

only agrees to lower his Parma if faced by a Quaesitor in good standing. If directly asked, he shows characters the crypt under the Urban Church where he is trained. He will agree to go with characters to face a Quaesitor, and is happy to submit to Hermetic justice. He does not know that his knowledge of the Parma Magica is unusual and possibly illegal, but he does know that his Holy Magic is different from standard Hermetic magic, and that he is to play a role in converting the Order.

### NEW FLAW: CHURCH UPBRINGING

This Minor Personality Flaw covers children schooled by the Church and mostly raised by clerics as well, a fate befalling some orphans, bastards, Gifted children, and other misfits. The Church may act out of charity or a wealthy individual may have paid to discreetly get a difficult child out of the way. This secluded upbringing leaves the character less knowledgeable about the rest of society, which he finds unstructured, uncouth, and confusing. The player must spend 25 experience points from the normal budget on Artes Liberales, Latin, Music, Organization Lore: Church, or Theology. Unless the character has a Virtue that permits it, no other experience points may be spent on Academic Abilities.

## Charges Against Fabianus

Fabianus' actions have been highly unwise, and he is guilty of two major Hermetic crimes, scrying and spreading *Parma Magica*. Relaying information about the Order's business to the archdeacon is certainly unusual, and unlikely to be popular with his sodales, but it hardly constitutes endangerment or mundane interference as it has had no widespread or grave consequences.

His crimes are brought before Tribunal where mystics' petition to join the Order is also treated. Since Fabianus' plans have moved to a new level he has no reason to stay in hiding and wants to work publicly to garner support for the Servants of God and himself. The appropriate penalty for his crimes is probably less than a March, so Fabianus feels confident that he can appear safely. If anyone does attack him, they find themselves the subjects of a new investigation.

### SCRYING

The punishment for scrying needs to fit the damage done or the actual intent, unless magical secrets were uncovered, which is always treated seriously. Fabianus argues that he accidentally overheard a conversation between magi, and stopped scrying upon realizing this. If the magi in question had not been Quaesitors, Fabianus might have expected a light fine, but scrying on Quaesitors is not something House Guernicus lets slide easily. They are unlikely to call for a March, unless the events of the stories suggest it, but a steep fine in vis or services is likely.

### SPREADING PARMA MAGICA

The gravity of spreading the secret of *Parma Magica*, mentioned in brief on ArM5 page 66, requires enforcing the Join or Die policy on the student as well as Marching the magus teaching it. However this only refers to outsiders! Fabianus argues that he never had any intentions of disseminating the Order's secrets to outsiders. He taught it prematurely to his apprentice, because he saw a need for it and as protest against the usual practice. His apprentice would eventually become fully accepted magus



### VOTING

and no harm would be done. He assures the Tribunal that had any risk appeared — the apprentice strayed away or the book gone missing — he would have taken responsibility and worked diligently to remedy any harm done. But nothing did happen, and thanks to the early introduction of *Parma Magica* the apprentice had the chance to learn from tutors other than his parents, to broaden his horizons.

There is no doubt that Fabianus taught *Parma Magica* to someone who had not sworn the Code, so in this case there is clearly space to call for a March. However, the person in question was Fabianus' apprentice, so things are not so clear-cut. While some magi would demand severe punishment, others would want to see this made into standard practice, both for the safety of the apprentice, and to enable other tutors to work effectively. Most magi would not see this as automatically requiring a March, many might look for a lighter punishment, and some might hope to change the Peripheral Code by acquitting him altogether.

The opinions of player magi may vary and whether their votes turn the tide depends on the specific saga. Arcitura, as mentioned in her character description, votes to support Fabianus and she does her best to guide the hands of magi she normally associates with. Decarius, on the other hand, is opposed, not so much to the matter of scrying but to Fabianus' grand plans as a whole.

### WIZARD'S WAR

If Fabianus is not found guilty, his opponents have the option of declaring massive and coordinated Wizard's Wars on him. In fact, this is an option before the Tribunal or even as a replacement for legal measures. Fabianus is too weak to fight any serious opposition, although his Guardian Angel poses a threat. While the archdeacon is powerless to prevent this, he does offer

sanctuary in the crypt below the Urban Church. Any magi assaulting the church are going suffer its wrath and have to face the consequences, possibly including charges at Tribunal; See the section Sanctuary for Fabianus later.

## A Petition to Join the Order

The holy mystics are not part of the Order and as such cannot be judged under its rules. On the other hand, neither are they protected by them. Hermetic

magi have officially practiced "Join or Die" method since the founding, but as the mystics haven't actually been taught Parma Magica and can't even learn it because they lack The Gift there is no need to accept them.

*House of Hermes: Societas*, page 127 explains that normally only Gifted individu-

## Fabianus, Magus ex Miscellanea

Fabianus is known only as Hugo among all clergy and mundanes he deals with. Most of them believe he is just a pious scholar with knowledge of divine powers; none know his real name.

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 59 (54), Longevity ritual from age 35 of 9th magnitude, bought from a specialist magus

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 3 (11)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Hermetic Magus, Gentle Gift, Greater Purifying Touch (pneumonia)\*, Holy Magic; Affinity with Mentem, Deft Imaginem, Deft Mentem\*, Divine Ceremony, Good Teacher, Minor Magical Focus (creating emotions); Chaotic Magic, Deficient Perdo, Necessary Condition (touch holy symbol)\*; Hedge Wizard, Higher Purpose (reconcile society and the Order of Hermes), Meddler, Visions

**Personality Traits:** Devious +3, Meddlesome +3, Conciliatory +2, Pious +2

**Reputations:** Hedge Wizard 3 (Hermetic)

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: [Tribunal] 3 (geography), Artes Liberales 1 (grammar), Ceremony 4 (Invocation), Code of Hermes 3 (mundane interference), Concentration 3 (spells), Dominion Lore 3 (Di-

vine creatures), Folk Ken 3 (clergy), Guile 4 (long term deception), Holy Magic 5 (Mentem), Infernal Lore 2 (abolitionists), Latin 4 (writing), Local Language 5 (clergy), Magic Theory 1 (vis extraction), Organization Lore: Church 3 (hierarchy), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (the gently Gifted), Parma Magica 6 (Mentem), Teaching 3 (holy subjects), Theology 3 (prayer)

**Arts:** Cr 8, In 8, Mu 5, Pe 5, Re 6; An 6, Aq 5, Au 5, Co 8, He 5, Ig 5, Im 5, Me 8, Te 5, Vi 5

**Twilight Scars:** The smell of incense, the sounds of whispered prayers

**Equipment:** Magus' robes, clerical clothing, staff

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Spells Known:**

*Prying Senses* InLm 10/+14

*Disguise of the Transformed Image* MuLm 15/+11  
Mastery 1 (Fast-Casting)

*Words of the Unbroken Silence* CrMe 10/+17<sup>H</sup>

*Panic of the Trembling Heart* CrMe 15/+25<sup>FH</sup>

*Pains of Perpetual Worry* CrMe 15/+25<sup>FH</sup>

*Rising Piety* CrMe 25/+25<sup>FH</sup>

*Perception of the Conflicting Motives* InMe 15/+17<sup>H</sup>

*Posing the Silent Question* InMe 20/+17<sup>H</sup>

*Confusion of the Numb Will* InMe 15/+15<sup>H</sup>

<sup>F</sup>: Spell is covered by the magical focus

<sup>H</sup>: Indicates a holy magic version of their Hermetic counterparts.

**Vis:** 6 pawns of Imaginem vis in the form of mirror shards, in a belt pouch. 8 pawns of Mentem vis in the form of tiny amethysts, set into a ring on his right index finger.

**Appearance:** Fabianus dresses in the garb of a priest and carries no obviously strange objects to betray him as a wizard. Appearing as Hugo before the Servants of God, his natural appearance is that of an honest face with no blemishes, clean shaven and with unremarkable light

brown hair. In disguise, while among his Hermetic sodales, he has a wild, sandy beard and hair, one blood-shot squinting eye, and a few pox scars.

**Casting Sigil:** The shape of a cross appears momentarily in nearby objects, for instance in gravel on the road rearranging itself.

**New Spells**

*Prying Senses* InLm 10, Touch/Diameter/ Room. Allows the use of both sight and hearing to sense what is going on inside a room.

*Rising Piety* CrMe 25, Eye/Sun/Individual. Fills the target with pious emotions, making sinful acts less likely to be performed.

Fabianus' pater was originally an insignificant magus ex Miscellanea from another Tribunal who in time converted to Holy Magic and subsequently trained his apprentice almost exclusively in this way. This why Fabianus has a low score in Magic Theory and mostly holy spells. Fabianus' Visions Flaw is seen by him as a divine blessing, as most often it warns him about supernatural occurrences — mainly magical — affecting innocent mundane victims, and these drive him into action. Sadly they are not very precise. His personal calling is to harmonize the Order of Hermes with the Dominion, and he believes this is God's will. He does this by helping the holy mystics further their knowledge of Holy Methods and Powers so they can teach his apprentice. Once the mystics step forward and are accepted into the Order as a Holy Societas under House Ex Miscellanea, the first generation will be underway mastering both Holy Magic and Divine Powers. His one great mistake is teaching the apprentice Parma Magica prior to him swearing the Code, but it seemed the only way to mitigate the detrimental effects of The Gift.

als are considered for membership of the Order. These usually find a member of the Lineage of Pralix for a short time of formal apprenticeship, which is used to Open their Arts, and teach them about the Order. As the mystics are not Gifted, they can be refused membership. Most other magi don't see any argument for accepting unGifted hedge wizards of any kind, and if the Order suddenly does, a veritable flood of useless mystics thinning the ranks of true magi is an acute risk. If their petition to join is rejected, Fabianus asks they be at least acknowledged as a group of interest and offered some degree of protec-

tion. Magi sympathetic to his cause see a use for them and would rather have them protected by the Code. If nothing else works, Fabianus claims they are integral resources needed for his magical projects, and any harm done to them is deprivation of magic. However, this runs the risk that the Tribunal will decide to execute them as punishment for his crimes.

## A HOLY SOCIETAS

If the mystics join or otherwise closely associate with the Order, the archdeacon is

pleased, even if they are required to stop working for him directly. Indeed, he grants them the necessary permission to do so. As he sees it, his most trusted people have ties to the Order and can work from the inside. His goals are not to destroy or rule magi, but rather nudge them toward harmonizing with and embracing God and the Dominion. He hopes that eventually the mysterious taint of The Gift will disappear and that magi will be accepted by society, with piety taking precedence over selfishness and sin. This he leaves to the holy mystics to further from the inside, in fact he backs off and only raises complaints about gross miscon-

## Zurfiel, a Guardian Angel

**Choir: Angel**

**Divine Might: 15 (Ignem)**

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

**Size: 0**

**Age: n/a**

**Decrepitude: n/a**

**Warping Score: 0**

**Confidence Score: 2 (10)**

**Virtues and Flaws:** Greater Immunity (Fire), Tough

**Personality Traits:** Love of God +5, Fierce +5, Compassionate +4, Loving +4

**Reputations:** None

**Combat:**

**Longsword and Heater Shield:** Init +5, Attack +13, Defense +13, Damage +9

**Soak: +15**

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

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

**Abilities:** Awareness 6 (alertness), Concentration 5 (angelic powers), Infernal Lore 3 (demons), Dominion Lore 3 (angels), Penetration 5 (holy light), Single Weapon 6 (longsword)

**Powers:**

**Guardian Angel:** 5 points, Init +0, Vim: Zurfiel can grant Soak +5 and Magic Resistance 15 to a pious person in his charge, mimicking the Virtue of the same name in ArM5, page 43. While doing this, Zurfiel gains a limited access to the target's thoughts.

**Holy Light:** 1 point, Init +12, Ignem: By emitting a searing, white light, Zurfiel blinds any onlookers, un-

less they succeed in a Stamina stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 each round. The power has Duration: Diameter, but may be canceled at will.

**Orbs of the Sun:** 2 points, Init +10, Ignem: Red hot orbs shoot from the angel's hand and circle the victim, sapping him of strength due to the intense heat, draining a Fatigue level every round. The power has Duration: Diameter, and Zurfiel need concentrate only to shift targets.

The following powers apply to all Angelic creatures of the Choir of Angels, for more detail see *Realms of Power: The Divine Revised Edition*, pages 19 and 26.

**Angelic Mantle:** 2 points, Init +12, Corpus: Angels use this power to manifest in the mundane world with a form of flesh formed by their intellect, causing it to suffer Fatigue and Wounds. The angel cannot die, but the physical body can be rendered useless.

**Enfolding:** 2 or 10 points, Init +10, Vim: The lower cost version allows the Angel to protect the target's soul and mind from any supernatural powers for a short moment. The higher version allows protection of the body, from any physical suffering, even death, for a single moment.

**Envisioning:** 1 or 5 points, Init +0, Mentin: The lower cost version allows the Angel to appear in a dream to deliver a message. The higher cost version allows this while target is awake, making it seem like a vision.

**Divine Guidance:** 1 point, Init +0, Mentin:

The angel may modify a Personality trait by up to plus or minus 3 for the purposes of acting virtuously.

**Heavenly Servant:** 1 point, Init +5, Vim: The angel may double all traits (excluding Might Points, but including Magic Resistance) when battling creatures with Infernal Might.

**Equipment:** Silvery full chain mail, white enameled heater shield, brightly polished longsword with holy inscriptions in white letters.

**Encumbrance:** None (Zurfiel's equipment does not weigh anything while in his possession)

**Vis:** 3 pawns of Ignem vis in his eyes

**Appearance:** Zurfiel looks like a perfectly proportioned marble statue of great beauty. His hair and eyes are golden, and with the white and gleaming silver of his armaments he emits a cold, hard light.

The angel has entered an agreement to guide and protect his charge, even physically if need be, as long as Fabianus remains in a state of grace and acts within the plans of God. Most of the time the help is merely as described by the Guardian Angel Virtue, and Zurfiel remains invisible. In rare circumstances the angel intervenes in person, and such an event is sure to be spectacular. Should his charge be killed, the angel feels obliged to help find justice or vengeance for the deceased.

duct by magi from this point on.

On the other hand, if the affair ended in the death and killing of the mystics or other members of the church in any way, even through due legal process, the archdeacon becomes a powerful and knowledgeable enemy. His enmity is focused mainly on the player magi if a raid on the church ended in the death of his canons, but may encompass the whole Order if the mystics were executed by order of the Tribunal. In the future the archdeacon

can become a catalyst for stories involving the Church. For instance, he watches for mistakes, forcing the player magi to act discreetly and keep out of trouble. He might actively move against them, making magically assisted income sources difficult to utilize, or even threatening vis sources. The spread of the Dominion to magical areas can be crushing for a covenant.

## New Alliances, New Tension

Following the resolution of the charges against Fabianus, the Tribunal returns to its normal business. If the holy mystics remain associated with Fabianus they are now either valuable allies of the player

### Decarius of Tremere

**Age:** 33 (33)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Personality Traits:** Driven +3, Pragmatic +3, Careful +2, Brave +1, Forgiving -3

**Reputations:** None

**Appearance:** Decarius is a stocky man with a full beard, a jovial expression, and stubby fingers

Decarius was trained in House Tremere to prepare for coming crises, and his particular goal is to secure local suppliers of provisions and other necessities, and to prepare a logistics network to ship the goods to where they are needed. This has the nice side benefit of also providing for his covenant in times

of peace. However, his arch-rival Arcura is ruining his work. By eliminating small obstacles and helping to speed up the natural growth of the Town, his aim is to make craft and trade a more profitable alternative to crime. If need be he gladly harasses pirates and highwaymen to further his cause.

Pragmatic to the fingertips, Decarius' focus is on his duty to his House and to a lesser degree his covenant. This means establishing supply chains through production and trade. While the assistance of the holy mystics certainly gave the Town a boost, his knowledge of such matters tells him it is not a sustainable method. The benefit was short-term, and the help is unlikely

to be repeated. Decarius' conclusion is that the Town's prosperity needs to be driven more by ambition and greed, and less by honesty and charity. Therefore he is opposed to Fabianus' plans and asks his Exarch to ensure that the Tremere bloc votes against any such propositions. Politically he tries to gain supporters among the more conservative magi, those wanting the Order undiluted by hedge traditions, and those wanting to regain lost glory of old. This may also include those magi protecting the wild areas from mundane encroachment. Houses Tremere, Bonisagus, and Guernicus come to mind under the first heading, with Merinita and Bjornaer under the second.

### Arctura of Flambeau

**Age:** 35 (35)

**Personality Traits:** Ambitious +3, Brave +3, Stubborn +2, Honorable +1, Careful -3

**Reputations:** Flambeau Acclaim 3

**Appearance:** Arctura has an androgynous look to her. She is rather tall, thin as a rail, and wears men's clothing.

Arctura wants to take over as her covenant's main supplier of income and trade goods. Her plan is to recruit a crew of pirates and commandeer a ship in order to raid trade routes. She intends to take advantage of the sudden stop to the recent growth and prosperity of the Town to find her crew here. Her plans need a balance: hampering honest work makes piracy seem easier and more prof-

itable, but she needs a certain amount of trade to lure in victim ships and to sell her stolen goods. Since apprenticeship she and Decarius have been rivals and competitors, which culminated in disagreement five years prior to the first story over who was to take over a prestigious lab in their covenant. The damage and disruption they caused resulted in both of them being barred from this privilege. Their relationship since then has been as enemies, and they are loath to have anyone else interfere.

At the Tribunal, Arctura enters the political battlefield in support of Fabianus and of accepting the holy mystics. While there is little piety in ruining honest livelihoods to further piracy and crime, these are only the means to an

end: to thwart Decarius and his plans. Arctura has a certain degree of respect in her House and those who respect their values. This group consists of magi who are chivalrous, pious, interested in mundane affairs, interested in harmonizing with the Dominion, and those who oppose the Tremere. This may cover Houses Flambeau, Bonisagus, and Jerbiton, as well as others. She certainly exhibits bravery, good leadership, and respect for her enemies and she fights fairly, most of the time. A cleverly laid plan executed to avoid needless violence is also a victory. By this she hopes to win over even more magi to support Fabianus' cause. Another prize argument of hers is that "we all remember what happened the last time a sinister Tremere plot was left to fester."

magi, a nuisance, or enemies. A lot of magi resent the Holy Magi, hold them in regard as little more than mere hedge wizards, and dislike having to do with anything connected to the Divine Realm. Fabianus and the mystics continue to reside in the crypt below the church, effectively forming the covenant of the Servants of God (if possible; rules vary between Tribunals). They focus on finishing the training of their apprentice in a manner satisfactory to both themselves and Hermetic standards. If Edward is the sole survivor within the Order, he continues Fabianus' mission, but most likely changes his methods.

If Fabianus, the mystics, and Edward are all killed, the archdeacon is an enemy, and seeks out more holy mystics to continue the work. These Servants of God are not at all sympathetic to the Order.

## Conclusion

The aftermath of these stories depends heavily on how the events through all stages have unfurled, how

the player magi reacted, and the degree of their success (or failure).

## Consequences for the Player Magi

The results of these stories change the political situation of the player magi. They are very likely to have made new allies and enemies, and are almost certain to gain Reputations. Active involvement in even a single part of this story, including political actions in the interludes, counts as a noteworthy action for a Hermetic Reputation. Magi with no prior Reputations or nothing in this area gain a score of 1 for their actions (fighter, diplomat, politician etc.) or political stance (for or against harmonization). Magi who already posses an appropriate Reputation gain points as the troupe sees fit. All situations involving direct contact with members of the Church, such as the holy mystics, or Archdeacon Petrus can create an Ecclesiastical Reputation.

If the characters got involved at the request of the Quaesidores, they can expect gratitude, and probably reward. In a Tri-

enal with a common treasury of vis and books, Quaesidores, the Praeco, or the relevant ruling group use these resources to cover expenses and payment. Otherwise, payment depends on donations of those covenants and magi who are satisfied with the results of this case or are taken from fines paid by magi convicted in the case.

## The End

However the player magi were involved in these stories, life as they know it has changed. Holy Magic has become more known, and perhaps more widespread, in the Order. A decision needs to be made regarding the principles of teaching Parma Magica. The magi have interacted with their fellow magi for better or worse and formed alliances and enmities. The same is true for select parts of the clergy. A bustling trading town in growth is either won or lost, possibly affecting the covenant's future economy. There are many threads left to drive future stories.

## Alternative Legal Interpretations

### SANCTUARY FOR FABIANUS

As mentioned earlier Fabianus, flees in the face of certain death and heads for the Urban Church in the City to ask for sanctuary. Should he make it, this is granted to him by Archdeacon Petrus. Although this does not in any way prevent magi from entering the church grounds and killing him or hauling him off, it should certainly act as a deterrent to such rash behavior. Apart from anything else, it is not obvious that a declaration of Wizard's March grants immunity from the clauses of the Code prohibiting interference with the mundanes, and an assault on a church certainly qualifies as that. From here, Fabianus tries, by correspondence with the Quaesitors, to reach a compromise, one that the Order can't and won't grant him by way of the letter of the Code, no matter how compelling his arguments may be. The archdeacon supports him in trying to reach a

diplomatic solution, but he does not intend to make major trouble over it, not unless his church or his clergymen are harmed. If threats are obvious, the church employs professional guards from the City, or a group from a militant order (The Church, page 126) "just happens" to pay the archdeacon a visit. The archdeacon does not want things to escalate, and there are limits to how much he is willing to risk for Fabianus. If things look bad, he is willing to help Fabianus escape and relocate by use of stealth, and if such an attempt is foiled by magi but Fabianus is not caught, his last resort is to send the renegade magus off with an armed escort.

If, somehow, the holy mystics were accepted into the Order and Fabianus was Marched, the mystics are now in a very difficult situation. As they are very unlikely to be accepted without the support of the player characters, the troupe has a good reason to get involved in the story.

# Summer Is Icumen In

"Sumer is icumen in, lhude sing cucu" is one of the oldest medieval folk songs for which we have the words and the tune. In this story a cuckoo is planted in the nest of a medieval court, with potentially dire repercussions for the Order of Hermes. The tale has three parts, and is designed for the sections to be run many years apart, with other stories taking place in between that may well feature some of the protagonists in other ways. In the first part, "Summer is icumen in" a local noble lady has been victim of a terrible crime, and given birth to a much-wanted heir but apparently not by her husband, as he is away. The magi are asked to help save her from disgrace.

## Locating the Story

While written as if occurring in the Provençal Tribunal, the story can be used in almost any Tribunal setting if the names are changed. The lord and lady without an heir may well be established characters in your saga, or the story may be an opportunity to introduce new characters. As written, Lady Gracia's husband is the current castellan of Montcuq, a small town and castle eighteen miles west of Cahors, and not far from the covenant of Jardin, which can be found in *Through the Aegis*. He is a baron (though titled, like most Provençal nobility, "comte") of the important Trencavel family, and currently politically neutral between the Crusader and the Toulousain factions.

The song, incidentally, is English, and from the 13th century.

## Part I: Summer Is Icumen In

Spring is ending, and the first days of summer are here. Groggs on watch bask in the welcome sunshine, butterflies flutter by as covenfolk are busy cleaning and conducting roof repairs, now that the rains of spring have departed. It is a warm, almost idyllic day; birds sing their sweet melodies, interrupted by the harsh cry of a distant cuckoo. Everyone seems unusually content, and even the magi slow their walks to urgent lab business to enjoy just a few moments of the sunshine.

It is a grog who sees the travelers first; a small group of people, one, apparently female and wealthy by her dress, on a horse, with small retinue of guards and servants. They are approaching along the track that leads to the covenant. A noblewoman is approaching the covenant!

## What Has Gone Before

The visiting noble lady is Gracia St. Daune, wife of a local comte. She is an important noblewoman who married into the (until recently powerful) Trencavel dynasty.

Eighteen months ago her husband went to the Vatican to try to get the Pope to restore to the Trencavel family the lordship of the cities of Carcassonne and Beziers, taken from them in the recent Crusade. (Or went on crusade, or traveled abroad for other reasons, depending on your setting. The reason for the lord's absence is not important to the

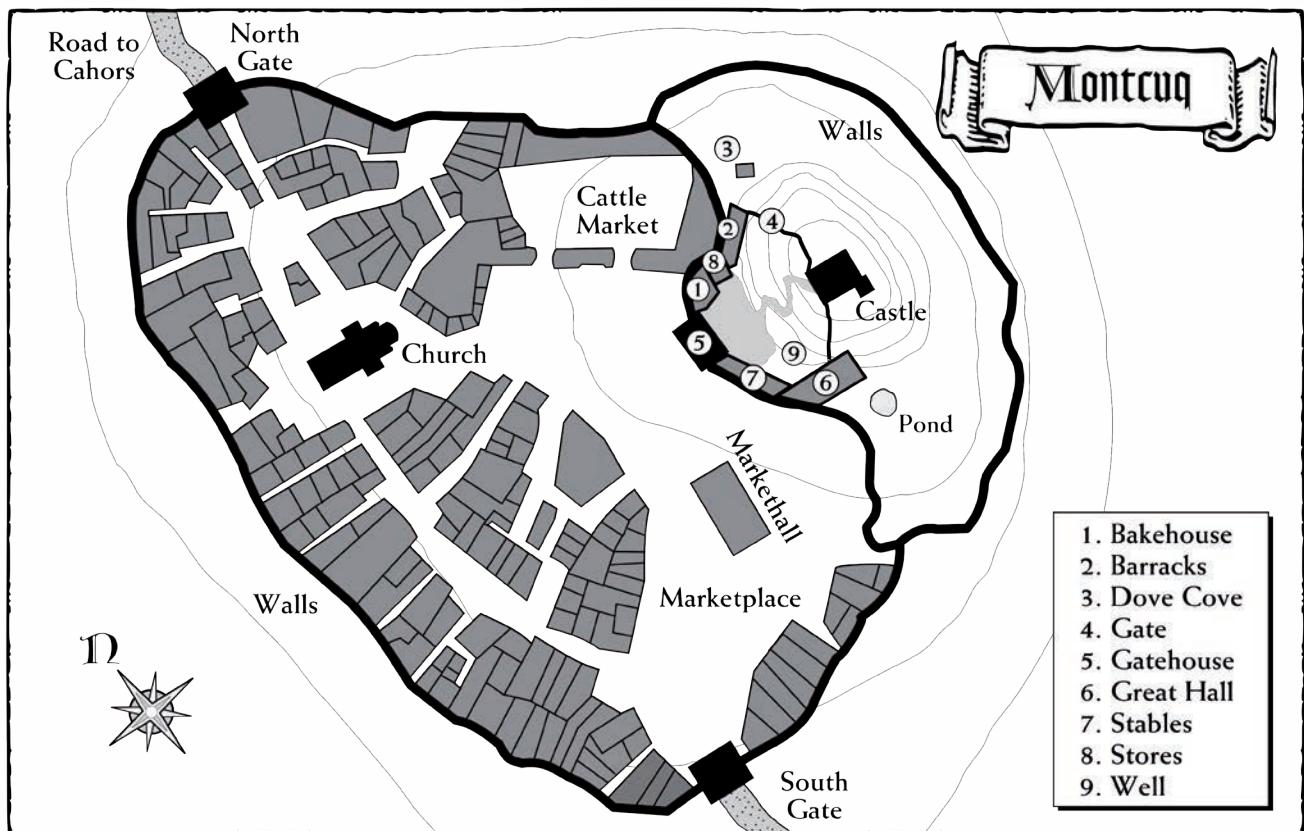
story, only that he has been absent for eighteen months or more).

Ten months ago Lady Gracia was delighted when her husband returned home unexpectedly and made love to her one night. In the morning he was gone, as mysteriously as he arrived, and soon after she found herself pregnant.

One month ago she gave birth to a son, named Valentin, whom she loves dearly. Now, however, she has realized something is wrong, and that her husband cannot be the father of her child.

The truth is that a Merinita magus called Galafre, attracted to Gracia and desiring a child before he takes his Longevity Ritual, seduced her by pretending to be her husband, entering the castle invisibly, and sleeping with her. He then used magic to prevent any curiosity among the townsfolk as to how Gracia became pregnant under such odd circumstances. These elaborate magical plans are likely to be his undoing, for he has created a number of magical devices that are very obvious once a proper magical investigation is launched. Also his Merinita mysteries of Glamour, Perpetuity and Anima Magic were gained at the cost of a Vulnerable Magic flaw: his magic is dispelled by the sound of wedding bells. His attempts to protect his secret may reveal his guilt, as may his lack of knowledge of Occitan culture, for Galafre hails from the Normandy Tribunal. Galafre's plan is far from cunning; this is because he was assisted by a troubadour, Sir Vital, whom he knows to be a faerie and believes to be his friend, but who is befuddling and betraying him (using the Guide power).

Being a member of the Shadow Masters mystery of House Merinita (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* page 82), Galafre



has modeled his whole plan upon a story told to him by Vital; that of how Uther Pendragon engendered Arthur upon Countess Ygraine. Sir Vital, a Highly Cognizant faerie who gains vitality by replaying the myth of the cuckoo heir, is behind the plan. This may not become clear for many years yet, however.

## Lady Gracia Arrives

The visitor is clearly a noblewoman, and as she comes closer Area Lore rolls may reveal her identity. She is Lady Gracia St. Daune, wife of the Lord of Montcuq, the Comte St. Daune. She is an important woman, and not someone anyone would expect to find approaching the covenant. The two outriders and four guards are all clearly cautious, but she appears confident and determined, and is talking to a second woman who by her dress is a maid or similar, who is riding alongside her on a donkey.

### WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT

#### LADY GRACIA ST. DAUNE?

An Intelligence + Area Lore: County of Toulouse test (or similar ability; Gossip and similar Virtues or Flaws provide a +3 bonus) reveals information that is already known to people at the covenant about Gracia St Daune and her husband from talking to visitors, and while traveling.

3: She is a local noblewoman. Lady Gracia and her husband, Rogier, live in a castle at Montcuq.

6: While not royal, her husband is of very high birth. He is one of the minor Trencavels, an important family that, before the Crusade, ruled Beziers and Carcassonne.

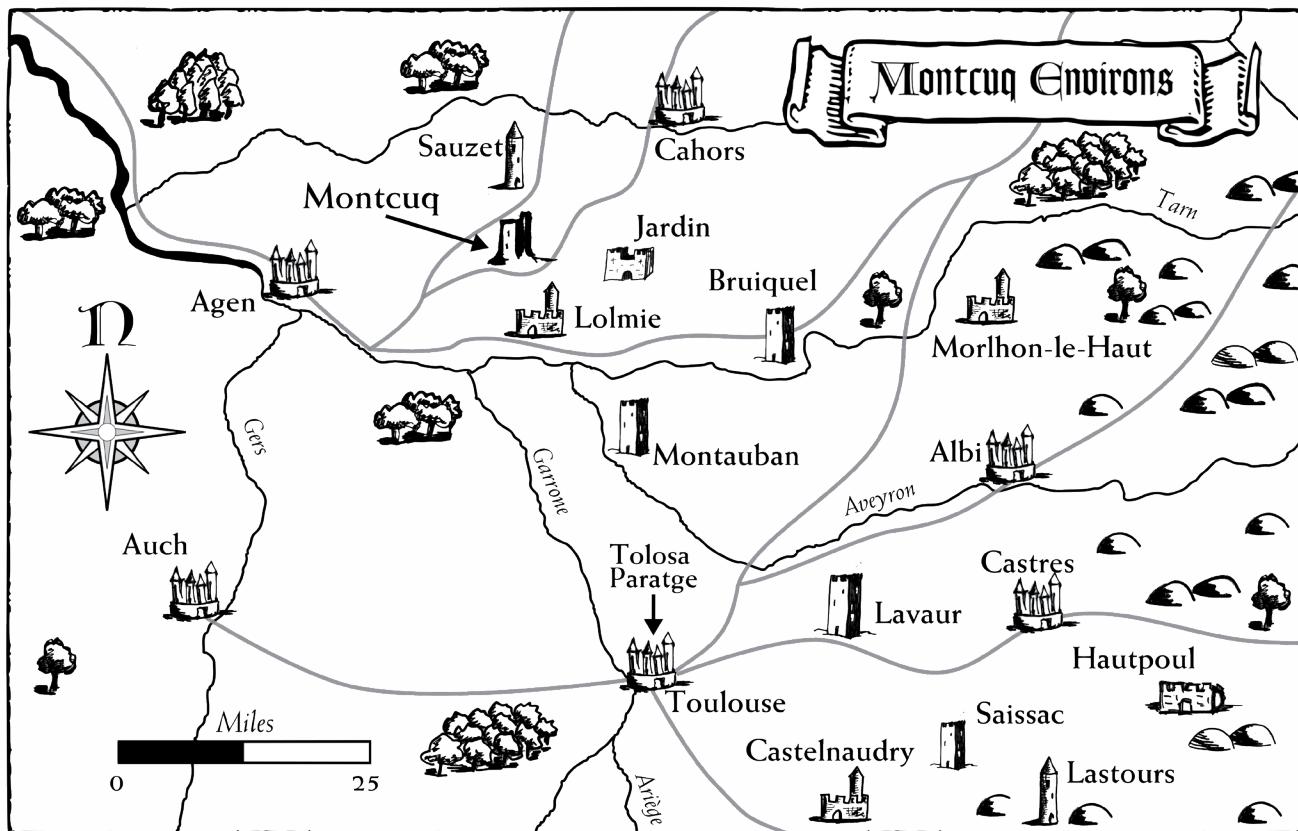
9: In the struggle between the Crusaders and the ancient enemy of the Trencavels, the counts of Toulouse, Rogier St. Daune is neutral. He does, however, control a strong castle and could raise a considerable force of knights. The Trencavels were lords of Beziers and Carcassonne and enemies of the counts of Toulouse until dispossessed by the Crusade.

12: Comte St. Daune has been away from his young wife for well over a year. He is currently in Rome seeking the Pope's return of Trencavel lands that were seized by the crusaders.

15: The Comte and Gracia have no children, and both are desperate for an heir. He is known to have been vexed when duty called him away from his young wife before he had a child.

18: The family has been declining in importance since the crusade and it is vital that they have a child, for while of a relatively minor branch of the family, they are the only survivors apart from the direct heir, Raymond of Limoux, who is uncle to the Comte. Lady Gracia is not of noble birth herself, but the daughter of a prosperous merchant and a foreign lady. Her marriage to the Comte was permitted by the family's loss of status, but all involved prefer that this is not mentioned.

21: Gossip suggests that Gracia St. Daune had a child just a month ago, a healthy son. A washerwoman at the covenant has a sister who is in service in Cahors, who heard from a merchant's wife there that he had seen the baby while



visiting the castle, and no one remarked on the fact that the Comte could not possibly be the father. He found this very strange, apparently.

24: Word has reached the covenant that the Comte St. Daune has just returned from Rome, and is currently at Montpellier (or some other place a few days travel away). He has succeeded in his business, and there will be political implications, but he is keen to hurry home to his wife.

Regardless of how much is known about the lady, once she arrives she confidently spurs her horse right up to the gates and calls out in a strong voice "Soldiers! I am here to converse with the magicians! Tell them that a lady named Gracia seeks their time, and will reward them in ways wizards like to be rewarded!" Despite her elfin features, the blonde hair of a queen, and great beauty, the most striking thing about the lady is her violet eyes. (She has Strong Faerie Blood; her statistics can be found at the end of this chapter. Female characters can't help but be a little put out by her, the result of her Envied Beauty Flaw. The storyguide

should prompt them to act jealous and a little insecure around Lady Gracia.)

Of course Lady Gracia has no idea who is a magus and who is not, and so she will treat anyone not in armor as if they were very important, unless they are clearly of low status. She is polite, but extremely firm; she is absolutely determined to speak with a magus, and she will explain that she is aware of the Order of Hermes, and has heard much of the covenant, and was once friends with a magus of Bellaquin. She is impatient to be about her business, and to leave for the ride home, because she needs to be back at Montcuq before her husband's return in a few days. Assuming she eventually is allowed to enter the covenant and meet with the magi, she orders her four guards to remain with the horses, and leaves the two knights outside, bringing only her maid into the discussion with her. She will ask the magi to send any servants and any but their most trusted retainers out of the room, and explain that what she has to say is for their ears only.

## Lady Gracia's Story

Gracia, once assured that what she says will go no further, tells her story. She is disturbed by The Gift, and if anyone present suffers from the Blatant Gift she asks to speak to one magus or maga, the least disturbing one, alone. She is extremely uneasy, like most people, around Gifted individuals, and on edge through the interview, but desperate enough to be very polite.

Her tale is an odd one. One night just over ten months ago, while her husband was supposedly far away in Rome on important business, he arrived back unexpectedly late at night, and came to her chamber. He said he was tired and would explain his return in the morning, but seemed in good spirits and very cheerful. In the morning he was gone, and no one in the castle had seen him, or knew of his return. Gracia admits she thought then her husband was dead, and cried bitterly all day, before, that very evening, a courier arrived, bringing one of the Comte's regular letters from Rome. All seemed well, but it was two weeks

before she received another letter, dated the day after the encounter, proving that it was no ghost she had seen. The letter spoke of his desperate yearning to return home, and the fact that business dragged on as he bribed his way through the Papal Curia, official after official, attempting to arrange the needed audience with the Pope. It was certain he had not been in Montcuq that night.

Soon Gracia realized she was pregnant, and just a month ago a son was born to her from that union. Now she has finally heard the news she longs for. Her beloved husband the Comte is returning home. The only problem is that when he arrives, she faces utter disgrace, for he has been gone over eighteen months, and she fears he will renounce her and the child. And what of her baby? Who is the father? She fears she has fallen prey to an incubus, sorcery, or worse, and promises to reward the covenant lavishly if they can save her and her son.

However, there is more. Hardly anyone has spoken to her of the troubling matter of her son's parentage. With the exception of one maiden who asked her straight out who the father was, her hostile mother in law who called her every name under the sun, and then seemed to forget the whole thing over the evening meal, and a town priest who questioned her at length, no one seems to think there is anything odd about her giving birth to the child, even with her husband away so long. The only hostility she faces is from the town's Cathars, and they regard any childbirth as an intrinsically wicked act.

Lady Gracia remains extremely calm and poised as she tells her story, but she is clearly troubled, and perhaps mentally unwell. It is likely that the magi have many questions, and she does her best to answer them. First, she promises that she has access to "things you magi will want." If pushed, or questioned by magic, it is revealed that she has, within her own personal dowry land, a vis source: a cave from which spiders that contain potent destructive magic can be harvested. She will happily grant legal title to the hill and cave, in exchange for help. Second, she has purchased some more "things magi want" for silver from the courier who takes letters to and from her hus-

band, who the characters may well soon realize is a Redcap, Jacobella, who carries messages between the Tribunal of Rome and this Tribunal. (This consists of a small stock of vis, just four pawns of Vim in the form of white feathers). Gracia resists discussing the reward in any detail, and indeed if pushed grows annoyed, asking "is not saving an innocent woman reward enough?" If treated badly she simply announces her intention to go to a particular rival covenant for assistance.

A Perception + Folk Ken stress roll against an Ease Factor of 12 (because Gracia is capable of lying if need be) reveals that she is telling what she believes to be the truth, but is holding something back. A few questions the magi might ask follow. Lady Gracia answers forthrightly any question she thinks will help her get the magi involved in protecting her. It is impossible to cover all possible questions, and the storyguide should provide other answers as required based on what Gracia knows.

**Q. You say your husband came to you. Did he come alone and act normally?**

A. He came in suddenly, just after she had retired. The maid servant Eloise saw him, and he dismissed her from the chamber, saying he wished to be with his wife. It was definitely him, in every respect; only his accent seemed slightly odd, but she put this down to him having been in Rome so long. He even addressed her by a secret pet name that no one else ever uses, or to the best of her knowledge knows, and made remarks which no one else could have known (and she blushes) about things that had transpired in their bedchamber in the past!

**Q. How was he dressed when he came in?**

A. He was wearing the same clothes he departed in, but with his armor on. He took off the armor and lay down his sword, and she moved it from where he balanced it against the bed, as it could have easily fallen and injured someone. It is uncharacteristic of him to be careless like that, though. The sword was no dream; it felt heavy and perfectly solid, and so did her husband when they coupled.

**Q. Did anything seem wrong about him?**

A. He seemed cheerful, but was in a hurry to bed her. He was more urgent, insistent and not as gentle as normal; she put it down to the long period they had been apart. She recalls only one thing that was slightly odd; he was wearing a strong musk perfume, sweet and not unpleasant, indeed quite seductive. He told her he purchased it in Rome.

**Q. When did he leave?**

A. He got up at some point in the night, and never returned. Eloise saw him going out to the courtyard, but the soldiers on watch did not see him leave, and no one in the town mentioned seeing him, nor was his horse ever stabled.

**Q. Who are the three people you mentioned who asked you who the father was?**

The maiden who asked about the father was a young woman who had married that day whom she met while out hunting, and to whom she gave a purse of silver. The bride and groom were not from Montcuq, and Gracia was heavily pregnant at the time. The girl seemed to be not very bright, and asked Gracia who the father was. This should have upset her, but she was confused as to why anyone would ask the question, as she keeps remembering a dream she had where the Comte was delighted by news of her pregnancy before he set off. Her mother-in-law, Bonita St. Daune, lives in Carcassonne. She came to throw Gracia out of the castle, having apparently received a letter saying that she was pregnant. A furious row followed, with Gracia insisting the child was her husband's and conceived before he set off, and Bonita furiously arguing with her. However just before the evening meal (taken just after sunset, if anyone asks), she calmed down, seemed embarrassed and apologized profusely. Finally, while out hawking one day she met Father Tomas, a town priest, who questioned her at length about how she could be pregnant when her husband was away so long. Gracia states she responded indignantly, and accused him of listening to Cathar gossip, before riding back to town. He has not raised the matter since.

**Q. Where is your son?**

A. Back at the castle with his nurse. It is not safe to take such a tiny infant on a journey, after all.

**Q. How do you know so much about the Order of Hermes?**

A. As a young girl she met Valgravian of Jerbiton many times, a scholar from the covenant of Bellaquin. He was a good friend of her father, who is sadly no longer with us, having died a decade or more ago. She has not seen Valgravian since. (Lady Gracia's father was a wealthy wine merchant, of no noble status. She avoids revealing this, lying if need be and dodging questions concerning him, but if pressed hard she admits that he was a companion of the magi of Bellaquin (a local covenant). She avoids the topic of her mother almost completely, apart from to say she died

### Why Do Cathars Despise Mothers?

One of the strangest and least appealing aspects of the Cathar faith is their despising of pregnant women, and contempt for midwives, who are shunned. This derives from their basic belief that humans are pure spirits trapped in matter, and that salvation lies in being liberated from the body, which is a prison, and from this material world, which is one of torment and evil ruled over by Satan. The same principles which make some Cathars embrace martyrdom joyously and go singing to their execution leads to their regarding giving birth and trapping another soul in this awful world as being a terrible sin. For this reason non-procreative sexual practices may be favored by Cathars over orthodox coupling, though many reject all carnal relations as evil. In some places mothers are spat upon, and midwives have even been beaten, despite the Cathars' famous pacifism. Attitudes and beliefs vary widely, but generally Cathars regard pregnant and nursing women as unclean at best, wicked at worst. If you have set the story outside Provence this will not matter, and can be ignored, it is not central to the story.

when Gracia was young. This is a complete fabrication. The truth about Lady Gracia's ancestry can be found in Part 2 of this story if the characters pursue the point by magic at this time.)

The main thing Lady Gracia is holding back is that she has come to doubt her own sanity. If questioned carefully enough, and reassured or somehow calmed by magic she may reveal this. She has already hinted (in response to some questions) that she doubts whether she is correct about events. Until recently, she actually believed that her husband had issued a proclamation before he set off to Rome announcing her pregnancy, and that he was the father, and that the mysterious episode of his return must have been a dream. However, now she is even more confused, because while in Cahors and conversing with a lady, she suddenly seemed to come to her senses. She then remembered things exactly as they had transpired, and realized her husband had left long before she became pregnant. Unless she is *now* under the effects of a spell, and some evil magician or demon is seeking to destroy her and her son?

The lady in question, Alcetta, is a notorious gossip, who if tracked down simply states that she was astonished by Lady Gracia's effrontery in passing off her bastard as her husband's son, and when she made a few subtle digs the woman seemed utterly shameless, right up until the moment when she goaded her bluntly and asked who the father was, at which point she seemed to be struck with guilt and rushed off. Alcetta lives to gossip, and will certainly gossip about any mysterious strangers who come asking her questions.

### ELOISE, THE MAIDSERVANT

Eloise is rather diffident and shy, and very discreet. She will confirm what Lady Gracia has said only if Gracia tells her to. She is utterly terrified of magicians, and nervous around men. The Gift renders her petrified, shaking and stammering. She strongly disapproves of Lady Gracia coming here, but does what she is told, and may be persuaded by older female

characters to answer questions, although she knows no more than Lady Gracia. However, she did see the Comte (or his ghost — she is still not convinced he is alive) come in and order her downstairs on the fateful night, and she does recall the peculiar musky smell of his perfume. She therefore sees no problem with the baby.

### Finding the Comte

Some characters will decide the best way to handle affairs is to find Comte Rogier, and apprise him of the situation, or magically investigate his role in the affair. He is currently at Montpellier, and making haste toward the castle. If he is met upon the road he seems unaware that there is anything suspicious about his wife having had a son in his absence, and insists that while dealing with the Papal curia certainly felt as though it took years, he was only away for six months or so. It is clear that his mind has been tampered with by magic, but as he is happy with things as they are this may prove a disincentive to the magi to be further involved. However, Rogier will eventually realize he has been bewitched, and so the characters may wish to do all they can to discover the underlying cause of the mysterious events before his wife is beheaded as an adulteress.

### Travelling to Montcuq

The obvious starting place to begin unraveling the mystery is Montcuq, where the baby is, and where the conception occurred. The journey there is uneventful, and Lady Gracia may travel with the characters, or, if they are on foot, ride ahead saying she will meet them there. If there are Blatantly Gifted individuals on the journey, she will make any excuse she can to leave the magi behind and head off on her fast horse. As the characters approach Montcuq they can, by careful inquiry, discover that the whole countryside is rife with gossip about how Lady Gracia has given birth to a bastard child, though people will not share such gossip with frightening strangers unless heavily persuaded, or drunk.

## THE GATES OF MONTCUQ

Montcuq is surrounded by a dry ditch and embankment, topped with a five-pace-high wooden palisade. There are only two gates into the town, both two story wooden towers, each with a large gate and the Trencavel family shield prominently displayed above the entrance. A toll of a coin is charged by the gatehouse keepers, who live in the rooms above the gates. The north gate is owned by the schoolmaster Poncius, but his duties mean that he leaves the collection of the toll to the lame beggar Perrin, who is happy to talk to unGifted strangers in the hope of more coins. The south gate is manned by Grigori, an elderly soldier who has the grant as his pension after years of duty, and is reluctant to discuss anything with strangers, unless he has seen them with Lady Gracia. He sends his grandson Per to run straight to the castle with news of any unusual strangers of obvious wealth or importance, as soon as he can. Both gates have a faint odor of sensual musk perfume about them, a not unpleasant smell, but the source is hard to pin down.

The gatekeepers are completely convinced that the baby is the Comte's son, and take immense umbrage at any suggestion otherwise, unless the matter is raised very delicately. The same is true of companions and grogs. Magi are not convinced, but they feel something fail to penetrate their Magic Resistance. It may take some time to locate the source of the magical effect, which is the Trencavel shield hanging above the gate, between the two windows to the gatekeeper's room (and easily reached from there, if permission to enter can be gained.) The shield is subtly modifying the memory of the Comte's departure in all who pass through in either direction.

Once the source of the magic is detected the characters are likely to ask where the shield came from, and are told that it was a gift to the town from Sir Berangar, a knight of Carcassonne. He actually gave two, one for each gatehouse. Requests to remove the shield will be refused, unless Lady Gracia orders it. Sir Berangar was, in fact, Sir Vital, who may be recognized from his description if the carters from Cahors who brought

the item here can be located.

Just after entering Montcuq (Dominion aura 3) the characters encounter a wedding procession leaving town. There is a festive air, and the streets are filled with happy and loud people accompanying the bride who is sitting on an ass. They largely ignore strangers, and go out of their way to avoid Gifted ones, but it is possible that some of the guests can be persuaded to explain that they are off to the wedding to be held in a nearby village, "because by the bishop's edict no weddings may be celebrated in Montcuq!" If the characters decide to confirm this at Cahors, the bishop has no knowledge of the proclamation.

## THE CHURCH

Father Tomas can be found near the church, and has little to add to Gracia's account. After the birth of her son he went to the castle to arrange the baptism of the infant, and to politely inquire as to how she came to be pregnant while her husband was so long away. He is embarrassed that he asked, and can no longer remember why he thought it was unusual. He can't remember exactly how long ago the Comte left, but he is absolutely certain that there was nothing suspicious about the birth, though if the characters can assure him he was right in the first place his suspicions return, and he finds it odd he stopped being concerned. As he is rarely in the market building at noon, the keep at sunset, or passing through the town gates, once his suspicions are raised he starts to make discreet inquiries, and starts to realize that something is terribly wrong in Montcuq.

He can throw light on the bishop's edict, even producing a letter written in Latin, ostensibly from the bishop of Cahors, that a monk delivered around eighteen months ago. It simply states that, in the absence of the Comte, no weddings are to be conducted within the walls of Montcuq until his return, as the feudal fees traditionally owed him when a marriage is conducted can not be collected. Therefore all weddings are to occur in neighboring parishes, where persons resident will stand witness for the bride or groom.

He can recall little about the monk who delivered the message, who did not stick around long, but he was surprised because it is not the kind of thing the

bishop usually cares about and because he had never heard of a marriage payment being collected in the county of Toulouse before, though such rights are claimed by some French nobles. If the edict is examined by someone familiar with Civil & Canon Law, an Intelligence + Civil and Canon Law stress roll against an Ease Factor of 9 reveals that the bishop has curiously omitted to add his seal, 12 that the wording is wrong for an ecclesiastical document and that it is a fake, and 15 that it seems closer to the secular common law of Normandy than local or canon law and that the author may not have been a native of the region. Once it is revealed that the edict is false (or another equally false edict rescinding it is somehow sent to the good father), Father Tomas will be delighted to begin celebrating weddings again.

The magi may have worked out by now the connection between weddings and the failure of the spells. How difficult it is to find a young couple willing to wed is left to the storyguide; it should require some clever plan on the part of the characters to find a young couple and arrange a marriage. The church has a rather splen-

## Comtes and Counts in the Provence Tribunal

In this region the term Comte, literally Count, is used for any nobleman of standing, that is a person with the Landed Noble virtue who holds a castle or two. In other settings the equivalent rank is baron, or just a knight who is owed fealty by four or more other knights. Major nobles, such as the count of Toulouse, are referred to by that term to prevent confusion, as everyone knows they owe fealty directly to the king, but the term used is actually comte as well. Knights who hold minor castles, such as Sir Heliot (see Part 3), but owe fealty to Comte Rogier are just referred to as "Sir," again to lessen the confusion caused by the plethora of knights. If your saga follows history then in the second half of the 13th century French usage of titles becomes common.

did bell, which is rung during weddings. Galafre has not got round to removing it yet, but he has cast a spell to silence it.

### THE MARKET BUILDING

Before the gates of the castle stands the market square, a large space now partially filled in with permanent stalls and a large area of cattle pens. One section in the center has

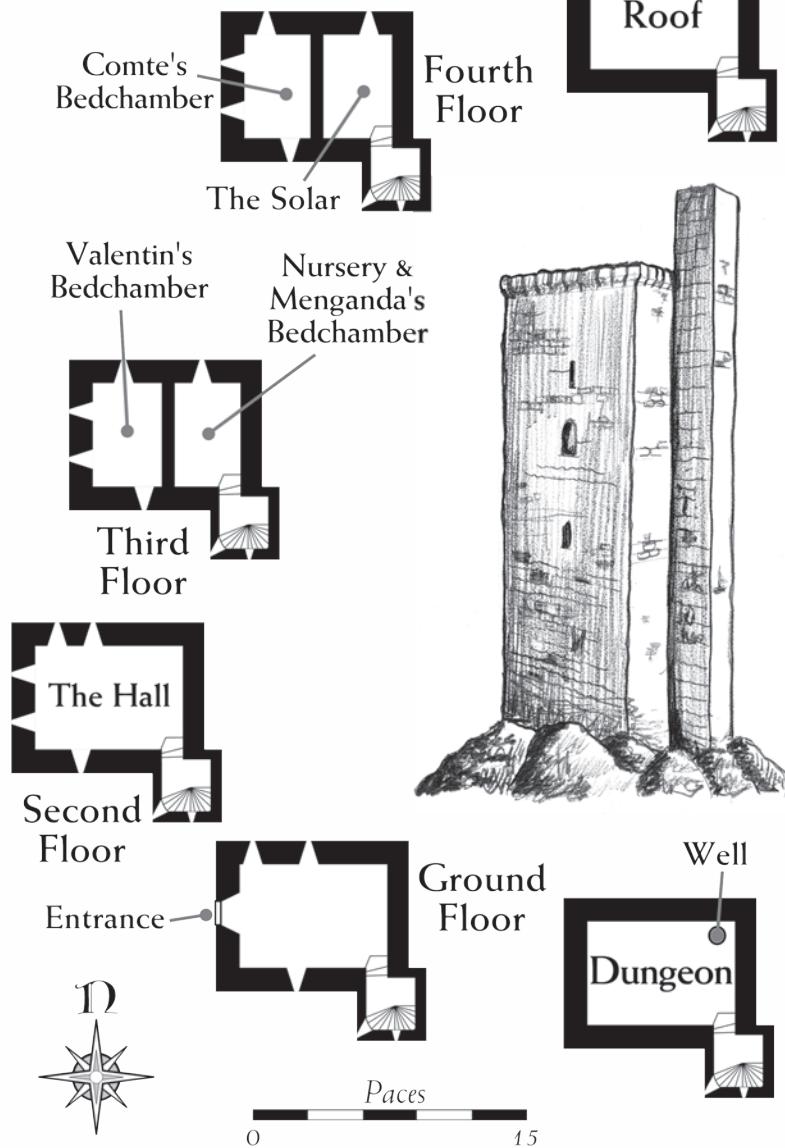
a brick floor and a red brick upper story supported on brick columns, and at ground level is open to the street on all sides. The covered market is used for cheese and dairy transactions, and the upper rooms by the local guilds, who each have it for one day of the week, excluding weekends when it is used for town business. The consuls of Montcuq, twelve elected leading citizens who represent the town's interests by advising the Comte, meet here once a month to drink wine and bemoan

their lack of real influence in local government. The door to the room is locked, and a locked chest within the room contains the consul's seal and various town charters. The room also contains a wooden statue of the Comte — this is actually a Glamour, a physical illusion (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 101), and within the Glamour is concealed a small crown of knotted cherry tree boughs, an enchanted item made by Galafre.

### THE CASTLE

The castle consists of a single stone tower on a rise at the east end of town. A low (three paces high) stone wall surrounds the stables, great hall, bakehouse, and garrison quarters; the gatehouse opens directly on to the town marketplace. The gate stands open during the day, and servants constantly move in and out of the gate, being exposed to the effects of another enchanted Trencavel shield like those over

## Montcuq Castle



### Montcuq: Why is this Funny to the French?

Montcuq is pronounced in French in the same way as "my arse!" As such the place name is considered highly amusing by any character who speaks French as their native tongue, though if they only hear the name and do not see it written down they will not realize the issue. In Occitan it is pronounced "mon-kuk" and hence is not amusing at all. French-speaking, and literate, characters who see the name written down immediately get the joke; Occitan characters can be offended by the French being so childish! However, more significantly, the name derives from the Latin *montem cuci*, or "mountain of the cuckoo," and is still called this in Latin documents, if any are uncovered in the course of the story, or any Latin books are consulted on the town and region. This is no coincidence; it was one of the reasons why Galafre chose Lady Gracia to sire his son upon. If you relocate the story you can name a local hill "Cuckoo Hill" to maintain the theme, and have someone draw it to the characters' attention.

the town gates. Again, magi notice an effect fail to Penetrate as they pass through.

The tower serves as a keep and has five floors, with the entrance up a flight of stairs on the second floor. The accompanying map shows the layout, and tower floors. The guards allow characters introduced to them by Lady Gracia to move freely around the lower three floors, but entry to the Comte's quarters (the upper floors) is only possible if with Gracia. Physical investigation reveals little new, and none of the guards remembers seeing the Comte at any time since he departed for Rome.

All of the servants eat with various family members, prominent townsfolk and various hangers-on in the Great Hall around sunset each day. Lady Gracia and the Comte, if present in Montcuq, preside over the meal, and at sunset a hidden enchanted device activates. This one, another Cherry Bough Crown like the one in the market building, is positioned on the roof, having been thrown there by Galafre during his escape from the castle. The thatch roof is weak and retrieving it could result in a fall; it

## The Shield of the Trencavels

The shields are the source of the musky smell, as Galafre's sigil manifests every time the item's effect is activated by someone entering the gatehouse. It affects only the gate room itself, under the arch.

### THE SCANDAL FORGOTTEN

PeMe 30

Pen +0, unlimited uses

R: Touch, D: Momentary, T: Room

Expiry: 7 years

The shield removes any memory of how long the Comte has been away, permanently. If the target is reminded of the date of his departure, or if wedding bells are heard, the memory is restored until the victim passes through the gate again.

(Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Room, +10 levels Unlimited Effect, Expires after 7 years)



is safer to fetch it with a pole from the walls, as it lies on the roof ridge. This item ensures that no-one in the castle has concerns about the pregnancy for very long.

### Meeting Little Valentin

The baby Valentin lies in his crib, sleeping contentedly and completely unaware of all the trouble he has caused. His nurse, the loud and rather crude Mengarda, dotes upon him and watches him carefully at all times. She is a wet nurse who tragically lost her own child a week before Valentin was born, and she has poured all her affections upon the little prince, as she calls him. While she is happy to let Gracia and Eloise near the baby, she will do everything she can to keep him far away from Gifted individuals, and as Valentin wails piteously whenever one enters the room, that may not prove hard to accomplish. Valentin and his nurse rarely leave the private part of the tower, and they take their meals here, unlike everyone else.

His blonde hair and striking violet eyes are clearly his mother's, and there is little physical resemblance to the Comte.

### Talking to the Citizens

Talking to most of the citizens of Montcuq reveals that most are perfectly normal, hardworking, and loyal folk. While Comte Rogier has only been here for five years, he is well liked, and yet many people talk nostalgically of the years when Comte Baudouin was lord here before his treachery and execution. Some people, however, have avoided being in the castle, at the market building or passing through the gates, mainly minor craftsmen and women, and if questioned very discreetly may reveal they are fully aware that the Comte can not be baby Valentin's father. Many of them have noticed that others do not speak of it, and pretend not to know, and therefore avoid mentioning it for fear of reprisals from the castle. A few are very aware that

something is terribly wrong in Montcuq, recalling problems with their memory and that they keep forgetting something important, but few know what it is exactly they have forgotten. One or two believe the town to be under Comte Baudouin's dying curse; they are wrong, but right to be concerned. If asked about strangers in town, they remember large numbers of them. Unfortunately a lot of people pass through Montcuq, and few are particularly memorable. One who is, a troubadour of amazing talent named Sir Vital, is mentioned many times by people who have seen him play in the market square.

## Finding Sir Vital

Sir Vital is a troubadour who often entertains at the castle, and is frequently in town. Distinctively garbed and deeply

charismatic, everyone assumes Vital is an extremely talented musician, but no one has realized that he is a powerful faerie. Vital is absolutely intent on ensuring that his Faerie nature is kept secret, and the Infiltrator Virtue he possesses (described in *Realms of Power: Faerie* page 52) allows him to pass as human and act appropriately around people, even appearing normally to those with Second Sight.

Sir Vital is a boon companion of Sir Galafre, and has long subtly used his Faerie Power of Guide (see *Realms of Power: Faerie* page 59) to direct Galafre in increasingly heinous acts to follow his plan to recreate the Cuckoo Child story. These acts would rarely seem sensibly planned to a human, but Galafre fails to realize this. The fact he has covered his tracks so badly should, however, raise suspicions in the magi.

Sir Vital has little understanding of Hermetic magic, and fails to realize that the magical devices that Galafre has littered the town with at his instigation are deeply ineffectual and will eventually give the whole plan away. Once it is clear to him that Galafre's plan has been discovered by powerful magicians, Vital approaches them (still posing as a mortal troubadour), reveal that he was with Galafre on the night of the conception, and betray his crime, even offering to testify against him at a trial or Tribunal (although Vital will actually flee). Galafre has outlived his usefulness as a pawn, and Sir Vital wants him out of the way — he will even slay him himself while accompanying the characters if it will preserve the secret that Sir Vital is a faerie. If Vital's nature is discovered, he flees, and even if slain he still has one chance to return. Sir Vital's statistics appear at the end of this chapter.

Sir Vital has one terrible weakness, his Sovereign Ward. He is completely unable to use his powers when church bells are ringing, and for every ten minutes within their sound he takes +10 damage and suffers horrendous agony, as if burned by the sound. This makes it very hard for him to enter most towns, but given Galafre's Vulnerable Magic flaw, which makes his magic end permanently and even worse be utterly undone (even if from an enchanted device) if within the sound of church bells, the two have clumsily conspired to silence the church bell at Montcuq. In doing so

they may have inadvertently revealed their weakness to the characters, but Vital does not think like a human.

## Finding Galafre

Galafre is actually quite easy to find, because he remains in the area of Montcuq, and usually within the town, using his magic to disguise himself as different people, perhaps even as Eloise, Father Tomas or Lady Gracia. The great problem he has is that he has only a limited knowledge of Occitan, and that is an ability he has "borrowed" from Sir Vital, who has a strange Faerie power that lets him take an ability from someone as part of a bargain and confer it upon another (described under Sir Vital below; see Faerie Instructor, a Minor Virtue—, *Realms of Power: Faerie* page 62.) He occasionally visits a cave in a cliff with a Faerie aura of 2 just two miles from the town, if he needs to cast spells.

Galafre uses *Removal of the Conspicuous Sigil* to obscure his magic, but under Vital's baleful influence did not think to put this effect in his enchanted devices. Nonetheless his sigil is little known; an Intelligence + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes stress roll against an Ease Factor of 21 is necessary to identify him from his sigil, with a +3 for Merinita magi, +3 for those from the Normandy Tribunal, and +6 for other members of the Shadow Masters group.

## What If The Comte Returns Early?

It is possible that the Comte returns before the situation can be resolved, and finds he has a son. Galafre has already cast spells on him to confuse him by altering his memories of exactly when he left, and given his True Love for his wife he is inclined to accept the situation even if he suspects bastardy, given the need for an heir. However, he will be unable to tolerate the gossip of the countryside, and once he leaves town and is made aware of the fact he can not be possibly be the father, he orders Lady Gracia's arrest. He then hands her

### The Cherry Bough Crown

At noon each day, when the effect is triggered, the room has a faint musky smell, which might be traced to the statue.

#### INFIDELITY IGNORED

PeMe 28

Pen +0, 1 use/day

R: Touch, D: Momentary, T: Room

Expiry: 7 years

This effect removes the memory of concerns about Lady Gracia's pregnancy from anyone in the room at noon each day. This has had the desired effect of preventing the town's opinion makers and leaders from believing any scandalous rumors. The device fails immediately if it is within the sound of wedding bells. This item has not affected Lady Gracia, whose memories and concerns about the event are much deeper.

(Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Room, +3 Levels Environmental Trigger; Expiry: 7 Years)

over to the Church courts for trial, and because of his True Love for her seeks out the best notaries or scholars to defend her. This may well involve him approaching the magi.

If tried for adultery Lady Gracia is taken to the bishop's court at Cahors (see the next story) and beheaded in the market square if found guilty. The child then becomes a ward of the bishop, who turns it out, and eventually Valentin arrives at the covenant seeking shelter. Comte Rogier enters a monastery to live out his life in repentance and mourning.

## Resolving the Story

It is likely that Galafre's plot is quickly uncovered if the magi use Intellego Vim magics to track down the items. It may well be that his magic's vulnerability is uncovered, and if the hoaxed edict is discovered it is simple to stage a wedding, and dispel the effects of his magic. The enchantments will fail, as they are equally imbued with Vulnerable Magic, and can be collected as evidence for a Tribunal case on a charge of "interfering with mundanes." However, serious moral questions arise. First, the heir is not the true heir, and not the child of Comte Rogier, and yet his mother loves him, and so it seems does the Comte. Second, both are desperate to ensure that the townsfolk and others do not learn of the whole affair, and no scandal attaches to the family name. Unfortunately this may be incompatible with dispelling the magics, or bringing Galafre to Hermetic justice.

One way to resolve the problem is for the Comte to publicly claim that he did return from Rome for a single night to father the child. He would have needed supernatural aid of some sort, whether from a saint or from a magician, and the characters should work out the details of the story with Rogier and Gracia. If the Comte supports Gracia's story, no one dares to publicly contradict them, although there are still people who have doubts.

Further, removing the enchantments does not restore the memories that have been deleted already. Some people will be puzzled that they failed to recog-

nize the problem with the dates and the childbirth, and most will be unwilling to speak against their much-loved lord and lady, but rumors will eventually spread their was something odd about the child's birth. Those rumors will come to fruition in the third part of the story.

## Galafre

Galafre may seem like a charming figure, but the charm is entirely superficial, and his vile acts could easily cause a major problem for the Order of Hermes, as well as being morally repugnant. Of course he does not see things this way; he would argue that all seductions are based on deceit and trickery, and his fathering the child was an unintended result of a simple seduction gone wrong. Furthermore did Merlin the Magician not change the appearance of Uther Pendragon so he could lie with the Countess who became Arthur's mother? He may go further, slipping in to blasphemy as he protests that our Lord was engendered upon the Virgin by the Holy Spirit, and that he should not be judged. The problem is that Galafre really believes that his actions were acceptable and reasonable, and can manage any level of self-deceit to justify himself. He is utterly irresponsible, and always convinced he was in the right and is the victim of persecution by others.

## Part Two: Lhude Sing Cuccu!

Five to eight years have passed since the events of the previous story, as suits the needs of your saga. (This story assumes that Valentin is at the castle — if he now lives with the magi, adapt the haunting to occur when he is with them, but somehow traveling outside the *Aegis of the Hearth*.)

Little Valentin has grown up to be a delightful young boy, and Lady Gracia and her husband still reside in the castle

at Montcuq. However, things have once again become difficult there, and once again Lady Gracia seeks assistance from the magi. The castle is in uproar; mysterious voices announce peoples' secrets, strange knocking noises echo from the walls and an exorcist sent by the bishop of Cahors was hurled bodily into a dung heap! And somehow Valentin is at the center of all this — his toys come to life, his wooden horse races around the castle without a rider, he was found sound asleep balanced on the edge of the battlements, and on one occasion he seemed to fly up in the air during a meal in the Great Hall. Word is spreading that the child is bewitched. Lady Gracia realizes she must seek help, and after the Bishop's exorcist, Jorda, failed to assist, and indeed fled in terror, to whom can she turn but the magi?

The characters probably suspect that Valentin is Gifted, as the disturbances are similar to the experiences they all had before they learned how to control their Gift and were adopted as apprentices. They may even consider Valentin to be a potential apprentice worthy of adoption. Sadly the disturbances are actually caused by faeries, unconnected with Galafre and the troubadour Vital. Neither of those two is present in Montcuq for this story, but it is likely that if they are alive after the first story the magi are expecting to find them

## Sir Vital's Lute

If Sir Vital is slain his body is reduced to an old coat, a pair of boots, some straw and sticks, and two bright brass buttons. However his lute remains, containing seven pawns of Faerie Imaginem vis, and if anyone picks it up they immediately realize it is faerie. It confers the Supernatural Ability Enchanting Music 3 (or a +3 bonus to characters who have it) on the wielder, and while it remains intact Sir Vital can reform his body. If destroyed, he reforms before the third part of the story, and the lute returns to his possession. If the vis is used the lute crumbles to dust, and Sir Vital is not able to return, in which case it may be another faerie, perhaps his brother who returns to continue the story later, having taken on the role.

involved, and various red herrings may distract them from the real cause of events.

Identifying the faeries and stopping the "haunting" should prove to be straightforward, but unfortunately the faeries return until the correct way of dealing with them is discovered.

## A Redcap Arrives

The story begins on a beautiful early autumn afternoon when the grogs on duty at the covenant see dust on the horizon heralding a rider approaching the covenant at great speed. As the figure approaches it is possible to make out that it is female, and wearing the distinctive headgear of a Redcap. It is Jacobella, a friend of Lady Gracia and a Redcap from the Roman Tribunal who often brings messages to this one. She is clearly in a

great hurry. Once she arrives she leaps off her horse, leaving the exhausted beast to be stabled and watered by the grogs, and demands an immediate audience with any magi who can be disturbed. She stresses this is an important matter, and asks for by name the magi who traveled to Montcuq in the first part.

She delivers any messages she has picked up on her travels for the covenant, then relates the events that have brought her here in such a hurry. Lady Gracia sent her, because it seems that the castle, particularly young Valentin, is bewitched. It would take too long to relate all the incidents that have occurred, but as far as Jacobella knows it all began about ten days ago. The Comte mentioned hearing a scratching noise, that he put down to rats in the walls, and so the lazy ginger tomcat from the stables was brought into the tower and allowed to sniff around. On reaching the

private upper stories however he fluffed, hissed and retreated sharply back to his stable, and has refused to be tempted back in to the tower, even for trout!

For three days the scratching continued, and then loud knocking sounds began, a whole flurry of taps. The noises mainly occurred upstairs, but soon were heard in the Great Hall, and then all over the castle. The guards were spooked, and the Comte called Father Tomas in to say prayers. Then five days ago things became far worse, as objects began to move around, and things set down vanished, only to be found hours later exactly where they had been put down. That night the first stones began to appear from nowhere, striking guards on duty as if thrown from the town, and the guard was doubled and sent out on fruitless patrols to find the perpetrators.

Soon stones and other objects were flying around at all times of day and night,

## Galafre of Merinita

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 56 (19)

**Decrepitude:** 1 (1)

**Warping Score:** 1 (1)

**Confidence:** 2 (5)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift; Hermetic Magus; *Animae Magic*, Major Magical Focus (Illusions), *Glamour*; Affinity with *Imaginem*, Affinity with *Mentem*, *Faerie Magic*\*, Inoffensive to Mundane Animals, *Perpetuity*, Second Sight, Self-Confident, Skilled Parens, Unaging, Curse of Venus, Lecherous, Deficient Form (Terram), Flawed *Parma Magica* (*Mentem*), No Sense of Direction, Overconfident, *Vulnerable Magic* (Magic dispelled within sound of wedding bells)

**Personality Traits:** Lecherous +6, Overconfident +3, Irresponsible +2

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init: +0, Attack -, Defense +0, Damage -

**Fist:** Init: +0, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +0

**Kick:** Init: -1, Attack +2, Defense -1, Damage +3

**Soak:** +2

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

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

**Abilities:** Artes Liberales 2 (astronomy), Bargain 2 (faeries), Charm 5 (seduction), Faerie Lore 3 (faerie women), Faerie Magic 4 (Mentem), Finesse 3 (illusions), Folk Ken 2 (townsfolk), French 5 (Paris), Guile 3 (acting), House Merinita Lore 6 (mysteries of the Shadow Players), Intrigue 1 (plotting), Latin 4 (writing), Magic Theory 3 (Mentem), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (Merinitae), Parma Magica 2 (Ignem), Penetration 1 (Glamours), Second Sight 1 (illusions), Stealth 1 (urban)

**Arts:** Cr 8, In 8, Mu 8, Pe 13, Re 8, An 2, Aq 2, Au 3, Co 7, He 2, Ig 2, Im 13, Me 18, Te 2, Vi 5

**Equipment:** Galafre makes any equipment he requires from the stuff of magic, using Glamours, which are solid *Imaginem* spells that only certain Merinita magi can create using a House Mystery magic. See *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, pages 92 – 101 for details of Glamours, *Perpetuity* and *Animae Magic*, all of which are known by Galafre.

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Sir Galafre is a handsome young man who can change his appearance by magic, and his equipment and his clothing by Glamours, and does so whenever he needs to evade pursuit.

**Spells Known:**

*Physician's Eye* (InCo 5) +17f

*The Inexorable Search* (InCo 20) +17

*Eyes of the Cat* (MuCo(An) 5) +12

*Rise of the Feathery Body* (ReCo10) +17

*Gift of the Frog's Legs* (ReCo 15) +17

*Phantasm of the Human Form* (CrIm 25) +31

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

*Disguise of the Transformed Image* (MuIm 15) +31

*Image Phantom* (MuIm 20) +31

*Removal of the Conspicuous Sigil* (PeIm 20) +28

*Silence of the Smothered Sound* (PeIm 20) +28

*Veil of Invisibility* (PeIm 20) +28

*Image from the Wizard Torn* (Re(Im)Im 30) +31

*Sight of the Transparent Motive* (InMe 10) +28

*Perception of the Conflicting Motives* (InMe 15) +28

*Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 20) +28

*Trust of Childlike Faith* (PeMe 10) +33

*Calm the Motion of the Heart* (PeMe 15) +33

*The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 10) +28

*Confusion of the Numb Will* (ReMe 15) +28

*Loss of But a Moment's Memory* (PeMe 15) +33

*Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 20) +28

and one evening just three days ago Jacobella arrived and was shown to her room, only to be bombarded by stones that seemed to fall through the ceiling! That night things became unbearable — the toys in Valentin's room began to dance, his hobby horse raced around the castle on its own, and two of the guards deserted and fled the castle, swearing it was haunted. And then, just after midnight the voices started, loudly crying out the secret thoughts of all present, spreading malicious gossip and claiming to be the ghost of Galafre, come for revenge, and accusing servants of all manner of dreadful things. Even Jacobella was not immune, the voices claiming she was remiss in her duties — "you are no Belin!" — and accusing her of having cheated many a magi in their vis deals. Jacobella could take no more, and on seeing Valentin rise in to the air, apparently quite unconcerned, at breakfast, she rushed to Lady Gracia and asked permission to fetch the magi. Gracia did not hesitate, and asked her to ride forth at once, to tell the covenant her son was bewitched and plead with them to come immediately.

If the magi do not think of it, Jacobella can raise the possibility that the boy is Gifted, and this could be the first manifestations of his Gift, in episodes called 'turbulences' by the Order (see *Apprentices*, page 12).

### QUESTIONING JACOBELLA

Questioning Jacobella is an obvious first line of inquiry, but she actually knows little more than she has told. She can detail a few specific incidents she saw with her own eyes, like Valentin rising in to the air, and the shower of pebbles that seemed to fall through the roof and bombard her. She lacks Second Sight, so saw nothing, but she notes that events seem to occur equally during the day and at night, though at night they may be slightly more violent.

Father Tomas said prayers and sprinkled holy water through the castle, but has not performed a full exorcism rite, as he insists that the bishop of Cahors must authorize such a ritual. An Intelligence + Canon & Civil Law roll against an

Ease Factor of 9 shows that this is correct, as the priest is not an exorcist, and a bishop's authority is always required. A 12 reveals that exorcism rites are usually directed at persons, not places, and that the next thing usually done after a blessing is to celebrate Mass in a room within the 'haunted' building, and repeat this until things calm down.

If asked about the voices, Jacobella says that they seem to come from out of the air, or sometimes from within the walls, are always male but vary in accent and intonation, and always have an odd quality, as if they were played on a pipe organ, or created by some artificial means. They never sound natural like a Creo Imaginem effect, which can be made to perfectly imitate human speech, and they are often punctuated with loud sighs and groans. They constantly lie and spread utterly malicious untruths and gossip. She has noticed one thing: events rarely occur when Lady Gracia is in a room. This has made her suspicious of the comtess.

Jacobella is, however, hiding something. Perception + Folk Ken against an Ease Factor of 9 reveals she is holding something back, and a roll of 12+ reveals that she is embarrassed and worried by something the voices have said. In fact, she knows that the "voices" can apparently read her mind, and that the things they have said about her have been true in the main, while slanted to make things sound as bad as possible. An Intelligence + Organization Lore: Order of Hermes roll against an Ease Factor of 15 reveals that Jacobella has in the past been accused of sharp practice in vis dealings, and of failing to deliver messages promptly and on time, and that once she was brought before Tribunal after her failure to deliver a declaration of Wizard's War had disastrous results. Fortunately, on that occasion the reason was that she had been shipwrecked, and unable to escape the coast of North Africa in time, but Jacobella's reputation has been tarnished since the death of Otto of Tytalus in a Wizard's War he knew nothing of.

### Arriving in Montcuq

On arrival in Montcuq the characters are probably surprised to find some of the wealthier citizens fleeing the town, taking many of their possessions with them. This is normal practice when a pestilence breaks out in a town, but on this occasion has been inspired by stories that the town is assailed by demons. While most incidents remain confined to the castle, rumors have spread of occasional outbreaks in the town itself, and few people feel safe. The church is unusually well attended, and Cathar Perfecti (holy men and women) are preaching openly in the streets that the sins of the rulers have brought the judgment of God upon the whole settlement. Within the Church, the response is more muted, but Father Tomas freely admits he is at a loss to know what to do next.

The panic was caused by the arrival and rather sudden departure of a diocesan exorcist, Jorda, who was sent by the bishop of Cahors. His attempt to drive out the "evil spirits" afflicting the castle was met by a sudden howling wind that tore through the whole structure, and then by a shower of pebbles. Terrified he fled in to the courtyard, where he was pelted and caked with dung from the stables. His dignity and nerves shattered, he has fled back to Ca-

### Flashback: An Option

It may be interesting at this point to explore the notion of "turbulence," and the terrible effect The Gift first manifesting had for one of the magi. Select a player who might enjoy a flashback episode, and get them to help you set the scene of their life before they were taken as an apprentice. The others play roles such as parents, friends and locals, and the story shifts to a flashback exploring how that magus's Gift first manifested, the chaos and misery that was caused by the spontaneous magical manifestations of their untrained Gift, and how eventually they were adopted as an apprentice and their life changed forever. Then cut back to the scene in the 'present day' with Jacobella worriedly describing the chaos descending upon the castle.



hors to report to the bishop. Now that the Church is involved it is likely a response will follow shortly, and many Cathar families have deemed it wise to leave town now, as have the wealthier citizens who can afford to just up and leave. Everyone else is scared and jumpy, and things are rapidly escalating out of control.

As the characters enter the gate they may recognize some old servants of the Comte among those fleeing. While they have loyally served the family for years, this is just too much for them, and they want to get out and as far away from their home as possible, preferring to become bandits or vagabonds rather than to stay and face an invisible enemy who shouts out their darkest secrets to anyone in ear shot. It may be possible with good Leadership ability to persuade them to return, but they can confirm that everything that Jacobella told the magi is true, and that indeed things have got worse since then.

Attempting to calm the townsfolk, prevent a mob gathering, and prevent more people fleeing could be a difficult task for magi who decide to address this

side of things first. It is probably better to try and resolve matters within the castle initially, especially given that reactions to The Gift are even worse than normal given the current unusual circumstances.

## The Haunted Castle

Within the castle, pandemonium reigns. As soon as the characters enter the gates the "spirit" cries their names, mixed with foul abuse and, if they can penetrate Parma Magica, even worse secrets. Embarrassing secrets, brutally honest evaluations of their personality flaws and failings, and sinful or criminal episodes from their past are broadcast loudly to all the characters and the handful of remaining guards and servants, and to Lady Gracia, who has come down to meet them. From within the castle loud crashes and thunderous knocking can be heard, and the sound of Nurse Mengarda, now a trusted retainer, swearing at the spirit and telling it where

to go in very loud and determined tones.

There are in fact eight faeries involved in the malicious haunting, and they are attracted by Lady Gracia, having a long standing dispute with her sidhe mother, Desdemona, a powerful faerie princess. (See Hork, below) They move through the castle, causing as much misery as possible, but never harming Lady Gracia, Valentin, or, strangely enough, Mengarda the Nurse. The magi may be suspicious of the latter fact, but the reality is simple. Mengarda, once roused, is simply too tempestuous and strong willed, irate and cantankerous for even a malicious faerie to wish to take on. They retreat before her righteous fury, and in fact are generally appalled and disconcerted if any mortal has the temerity to just shout at them, and tend to avoid harassing that individual for a while, just in case.

Lady Gracia, who possesses Second Sight, has glimpsed several of the host, although they do all they can to hide from her. She tries to hide what she has seen from the magi, as she does not want to acknowledge her faerie legacy. If she is made to confess, perhaps in desperation, she still has no idea as to how the end the haunting, but if she sees Hork she recognizes him as an enemy of her mother and knows that his role is to seek out and expose impostors, in this case young Valentin.

## The Bishop's Response

Unfortunately the bishop of Cahors responds heavy-handedly, and inappropriately. If the magi travel via Cahors they hear about his preparations to come and investigate. Otherwise, it is by now common knowledge in Montcuq he is on his way; within two days he will arrive with a group of monks, two more exorcists and a guard of a dozen crusader knights.

Rather than concentrating on the problem at the castle, he assumes it is the sins of the town that have caused the evil to fall upon the lady of the place, and begins a detailed inquiry into the sins of the townsfolk, setting arduous penances and perhaps having the Comte burn a few particularly stubborn heretics

## Resolving the Problem

The first problem is that, since Jorda the Exorcist fled back to Cahors yesterday, the characters have just two whole days from arriving at the castle to the Bishop's Response described above. While it is not essential to stop the faeries before then, things become much more difficult and dangerous once the Church arrives in force.

The haunting is caused by Hork the Hobgoblin, a malicious faerie. If any of the host, minor faeries, are destroyed, they are soon replaced, unless the west facing windows are shuttered, forbidding the faeries entry. If Hork is destroyed, it will take much longer for them to return, and if their vis is somehow harvested or their Might reduced to zero, they will not. If Hork can be sensed, by Second Sight or magic, it may be possible to attack, destroy or capture him via magic. Alternatively, swearing at the fairies vilely and with great determination can cow them in to at least temporarily leaving a character or room alone. They dislike being sworn at and retreat from it.

Various methods can be used to defeat the faeries. One of the simplest is to find some way to detect them, and then to employ Might stripping spells to destroy them. The problem is that the magi need to locate the faerie to attack it, or cast the spell upon a room or the whole castle (Target: Structure, +1 magnitude for larger size).

### Who is the Bishop of Cahors?

The bishop of Cahors of course varies with the date. From 1208 to 1235 it was the scholarly Guillem IV Cardaillac, he was replaced in 1235–36 by Pons d'Antejac, and from 1237 to 1250 the diocese is in the possession of Guerau V Barasc, until Bartomeu de Roux takes over until 1273. If you have set the story elsewhere this does not matter, and a suitable local bishop can take on the role. If the bishop in question is already a friend of the magi, one of his exorcists can be the intransigent clergyman who causes complications.

Wards can provide relief, but only if the faeries can either somehow be trapped in the ward, or trapped outside it. Theoretically an *Aegis of the Hearth* could be cast upon the castle, once the faeries are expelled, to prevent them returning. However if prevented from continuing their destructive rampage within the castle, the faeries simply continue it within the town, starting by tearing around the marketplace. As old secrets and bitter thoughts are revealed among the townsfolk, ancient feuds are resurrected; once one family is accused of having denounced a Cathar family's relatives to the Crusade, leading several of them to the stake, violence breaks out. Others are denounced for having betrayed Comte Baudouin (a former ruler of Montcuq; see Part 3 for his story), and as adultery, lies, and even murders are revealed the town descends into violent anarchy, as citizens fight and kill each other, and finally an angry mob lynches some Cathars (or Jews, or foreigners), and furious lynch mobs attempt to slay anyone Gifted or clearly magical, and storm the castle in a terrifying peasant uprising.

### Is this a Poltergeist?

Players may recognize the symptoms described above as typical of what we today would term a poltergeist case. In the thirteenth century they are often regarded as caused by witchcraft, demons or malicious faeries, but are rare enough to not be widely known. Characters with appropriate Realm Lores know how the phenomenon is usually explained in terms of that realm: for the Realm of Magic, it is witchcraft, though this does not seem to be the case here; for the Infernal Realm, a demon, but that does not sound quite correct either; and for the Faerie Realm, malicious fay, which fits the known facts well. (The Divine does not do this sort of thing.) This particular 'poltergeist infestation' is modeled upon the case of 1190 at Dagworth, Suffolk, England, in the home of Sir Osborne of Bradwell, detailed in Ralph of Coggeshall's *Chronicon Anglicanum*. The word 'poltergeist' is anachronistic for 1220, with 'hobgoblin' the contemporary term.

to start to set things right. The idea that the sins of the people can be visited upon a town or nation in some horrible form as a punishment by God, in this case as far as the bishop is concerned in the form of demons, is an Old Testament one, and he will argue Theology with anyone who disputes that these afflictions are caused by the people breaking their relationship with God.

If this has little visible effect upon events at the castle, he looks deeper, and magi come under particularly intense scrutiny, and may find themselves on trial for heresy, sorcery, or necromancy, unless they can persuade him of their orthodoxy. He is aware of the Order of Hermes, and regards most magi as learned scholars and perfectly acceptable, but he may come to believe a particular character (and by implication their covenant) has strayed into diabolism or sin.

The bishop is not an unreasonable man. He is determined to find the sin underlying the problem, and he may ask pointed questions about Valentin's birth, but he is unaware of the unusual circumstances of the conception unless it has become common knowledge or the magi inform him of it. If he does become aware of it, he will not harm the child, but will insist on administering the sacrament to the boy, and asking the exorcist to pray for any evil spirits afflicting the boy to leave.

The bishop is less reasonable when faced with Cathars. He is sure the heresy is allowing sin in to the town, and his presence chases away the Perfecti and many prominent Cathar citizens, who flee till he has left. If the game is set after 1232, he may well wish to call upon the Inquisition to root out the heresy in the town, and Comte Rogier and the magi must find a way to prevent this. Comte Rogier is appalled by the idea, and tries to convince the magi to assist him in persuading the bishop that it is not necessary. Perhaps discovering the bishop's own secret vices could give leverage? Comte Rogier has spent enough time in Rome to know that some senior churchmen have foibles they would prefer were not too public.

Another and slightly bizarre approach would be to find Galafre if he is still alive, and ask him to employ his magic to protect his son. Galafre has an extensive knowledge of Faerie Lore, and may well be able to work out the means needed to end the infestation. Alternatively, he could attempt to find his way to Arcadia, locate a path to the realm ruled by Lady Gracia's mother, and bargain with her to intervene. Such

an adventure is beyond the scope of this book, but may make for a very exciting story if the magi must accompany the treacherous and amoral Galafre deep within Faerie, and then trust him to negotiate on their behalf.

## Part III: Groweth Sed

Eighteen to twenty five years have passed since the first story, and Valentin is now a young man. The time has come for him to make his bid for glory, cast off those who love him and attempt to seize

### Hork the Hobgoblin

Hork is a hobgoblin, a noisy spirit that afflicts a family. His resentment toward Lady Gracia stems from her mother, a potent faerie who plays out stories involving rags to riches, and who made Gracia's father wealthy and smoothed the path for Lady Gracia's marriage into the minor nobility in the aftermath of the fall of Carcassonne. Hork is a faerie who reveals people who have pretended to be what they are not in order to cross class divisions, and his games involve persecuting people who have taken on a position not justified by birth, which is true of both both Lady Gracia and Valentin, for different reasons. Hork has a long term rivalry with Gracia's mother, the Faerie Queen Desdemona, who grants 'faerie titles' to the undeserving: Hork ensures that their past is revealed, and their sins become public knowledge.

**Faerie Might:** 35 (Imaginem)

**Characteristics:** Int -1, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +1, Str +7, Sta +1, Dex +2, Qik -2

**Size:** +2

**Virtues and Flaws:** Narrowly Cognizant;

Free Expression, Faerie Speech, Faerie Sight, Greater Powers x 2, Huge, Great Strength, Hybrid Form, Improved Characteristics x 2, Lesser Power, Lightning Reflexes, Premonitions, Reserves of Strength, Berserk, Fury, Incomprehensible, Intangible Flesh, Meddler, Monstrous Appearance, Nocturnal, Tainted With Evil, Traditional Ward (bent pins), Wrathful

**Personality Traits:** Wrathful +6, Meddlesome +3, Incoherent +3.

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init: -3, Attack -, Defense +2, Damage -

**Stone:** Init: -3, Attack +11, Defense +2,

Damage +12

**Soak:** +3

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

**Pretenses:** Awareness 5 (fragile items), Brawl 6 (dodge), Concentration 2 (focussed), Folk Ken 1 (children), Guile 2 (lying to mortals), Hunt 1 (people fleeing it), Intrigue 1 (causing arguments), Leadership 6 (the host), Legerdemain 3 (filching), Music 1 (eerie singing), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (malicious gossip), Premonitions 3 (disturbing insights), Thrown Weapon 6 (stone)

**Powers:**

*See the Guilty Secret*, 2 points, Init -4, Mentem: Silently ask the target what the deepest, darkest secret they are trying to hide is. (Base 15, +1 Touch, 20 levels)

*The Invisible Voice*, 1 points, Init -3, Imaginem. Allows a strange voice to come from Hork's current location, and talk for diameter duration. He uses this to reveal secrets or tell lies about who he is and what he wants, or to sing in an eerie and horrible manner. These, however, are horribly (and fortunately) garbled by Hork's Incomprehensible nature making them hard to understand. (Base 1, +1 Touch, +1 Diameter, +1 intelligible speech; 4 levels)

*Lift the Unwilling Victim*, 1 point, Init -3, Corpus. As Lift the Dangling Puppet, ArM5, page 134. (Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Concentration, Intricacy cost -1 15 levels)

*The Rush of Freezing Air* 1 point, Init -3 (Auram). Causes a freezing blast of cold air to rush forth from where Hork is standing, and howl around the building until it dissipates naturally. Mainly a cosmetic effect, but useful to scare people and break the

concentration of spell casters. (Base 2; Touch +1, Diameter +1; 4 levels.)

*The Creepy Cold*, 0 points, Init -3, Ignem. Chills a room to make it freezing cold. Anyone entering the room notices the icy cold. (Base 4, +1 Touch, +2 Room; Intricacy cost -2; 25 levels)

*The Terrible Weeping*, 0 points, Init -3, Imaginem. Weeping and sobbing seem to emanate from every surface of the room, mournful voices wailing in a cacophony of unsettling misery. (Base 1; +1 Touch, +1 Diameter, +2 Room; Intricacy cost -1; 10 levels)

*The Shadowy Chamber*, 0 points, Init -3, Ignem. A room is affected as by Gloom of Evening, ArM5 page 142 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Diameter, +2 Room; Intricacy cost -1; 15 levels)

*Eidolon*, 1 point, Init -4, Imaginem. Hork can use this power to create an illusory image of his true horrific form. He appears as an ugly muscular man with ragged moth's wings that wave constantly in a non-existent breeze, and a bunch of deadly nightshade where his head should be, with two burning coals for eyes. (Base 2; +2 move as directed, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 intricacy of effect, +1 Intricacy point to reduce cost. 25 levels, Lesser Power.)

**Traditional Ward:** Hork is a puncturer of false reputations. A bent pin harms him, and he can not pass a bent pin left in a doorway or shutter.

**Appearance:** As described under Eidolon. Most of the time Hork is invisible as an intangible entity, and he tries to stay out of sight of Lady Gracia, and anyone else who he suspects might be able to see him with Second Sight.

the heroic destiny that has been shaped for him from his very conception.

## What Has Transpired

The magi may have more important things to do than watch the Comte's fortunes closely, but his diplomatic and legal successes result in him establishing a small but well run holding, and regaining a few of the old rights of the Trencavel dynasty, and slowly becoming a respected elder statesman, with influence at court in both Paris and Toulouse. Well liked for his patience, gentle nature, and wisdom, he has outlived many of his relatives, and now is one of the very last of the Trencavels. In fact his son, Valentin, is generally accepted as the future heir to the title of Comte Trencavel, and head of the family, because of his youthful dash and energy.

While Comte Rogier has made his name through peaceful means, Valentin has turned out to be a man of action, and a truly amazing leader and warrior. He spends every spare moment he can now that he is of age participating in tournaments, bringing glory upon himself and winning valuable prizes, and, by his generosity with those rewards, winning even more valuable friends. Valentin is already sung of all over the region as a true chivalric hero, perhaps one of the greatest knights ever, and his name is often linked to that of the greatest knight of a previous generation, William the Marshal, though many say Valentin may grow to be greater, if not killed in one of his reckless acts of valor and audacity. He has not yet taken a wife, but he has amassed a fortune and a great reputation, and has strengthened the defenses of all of his father's castles, and it is said, cleared the roads of brigands.

The Comte succeeded in restoring the Trencavel fortunes to a considerable extent, and reclaimed many castles and lands that once belonged to the dynasty, from both the counts of Toulouse and the Crusaders, but he did so by tact, diplomacy, Papal support, and endless lawsuits rather than by force of arms. He has, however, also built up his forces and

strengthened many of the castles in his lands. Now a major power and greater noble, Rogier had achieved almost all of his goals when he set out to deal with one of his vassals, Sir Heliot of Lolmie, who had rebelled, as vassals so often do in the county of Toulouse. It should have been a largely symbolic conflict; Rogier would besiege the castle, burn some crops, and his vassal would surrender, at which point Rogier would grants concessions on the matter that sparked the rebellion. However on this occasion a crossbowman on the walls of the besieged castle shot the Comte as he was riding nearby, to the astonishment of all concerned, and he fell mortally wounded.

The Comte was carried from the field, and that night his wife Gracia appeared mad with grief. After a short conversation with a troubadour named Vital she left, apparently taking the Comte with her, and neither has been seen since. The Comte is presumed dead, and no one knows where Lady Gracia may be.

Now Valentin is about to come in to his inheritance, and intends to begin by ending the siege of Lolmie castle, hanging the defenders, and razing the fortification. He has assembled a sizable army, and seems to be planning to recapture the old Trencavel lands, and recover his lost inheritance. Furthermore, he has become firm friends with the king of France, and whereas his father always favored diplomatic channels and political and legal solutions to problems, Valentin appears to be a great warrior and is perhaps involved in the king's plans to once and for all defeat the rebellious counts of Toulouse, take their lands from them, and crush the Cathar heretics. Yet with his reputation, many men will follow Valentin anywhere, and some fear that his ambitions go far beyond simply retaking the family lands lost in the Crusade, vast as they were.

## Involving the Magi

In the previous two stories Lady Gracia has approached the covenant for assistance; at the start of this story she and the Comte are both missing. While

the characters may have heard some of the information in the previous section, they definitely hear it all when the gossipy Jacobella arrives in a tremendous state of excitement, having ridden directly from Montcuq. It is the morning after the Comte was shot, and she pleads with the magi to rush to Lolmie and save his life. She has stranger news too, for she met at the castle a troubadour, Sir Vital, whom she last saw many years ago in town around the time of the birth of Valentin, and he did not look a day older! (It is to be noted that Lady Gracia also looks no older than she did when the characters first met her, owing to her Strong Sidhe Blood. However, it is likely that the characters know the reason for that by now.) Sir Vital has taken Lady Gracia to the Comte, and she urges the characters to get there too.

## Arriving at Lolmie

The castle of Lolmie is built in to the cliffs overlooking the valley, and the church and village of St. Laurent below. High up a track the tower stands with a strong wall to defend it, and deep sandstone caves form the dungeons below. The characters arrive to find the area crawling with men: over a hundred knights, with a similar number of serjeants and some two hundred levy who have marched from all over the region following Valentin. In addition, a company of one hundred and fifty hardened mercenaries (Almogavars, see *Grogs*, page 90) are involved in supporting the work of engineers who are tunneling in to the cliff face below the dungeon, planning to make an assault through the caverns once they are breached. Sir Heliot, his six knights and ten soldiers realize that their position is hopeless, and have repeatedly offered surrender if their lives will be spared, but to no avail. Valentin is completely unwilling to listen, and is intent on avenging his father (whose body he believes to be within the castle) by hanging every last defender. Valentin is nowhere to be found; nor are Vital, Gracia or Comte Rogier.

When the characters arrival at Lol-

## The Faerie Host

The faerie host are similar to the Sluagh of Celtic mythology, and may be related to the spirits of the unbaptized dead. Beings of pure destructive mischief, they enter a building through west-facing doors and windows, and once inside wreak chaos. They act individually, but travel together, and each lairs in a separate room in a building, and torment and frighten those who enter. Normally they cause a great deal of destruction and then move swiftly on, but the host in the castle are obeying more powerful faeries who herd them to serve their needs. As faerie ghosts, spells and Magical Foci that affect either ghosts or spirits also work upon them, as do Memento effects if they can be detected to be targeted. If they manifest using their Eidolon power, their appearance is disturbing. All can speak in a loud croaking or hissing voice, but they rarely tell the truth, unless compelled. They are not, however, demonic and may be bargained with, tricked or persuaded to depart by appropriate measures. They are simple creatures and rather naïve and easily fooled.

**Characteristics:** Int -2, Per +1, Pre +1, Com +1, Str -10, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik +8

**Size:** -5

**Faerie Might:** 5 (Memento)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Greater Power x 2; Intangible, Lesser Power x 2; Little x 2; Incognizant, Traditional Ward x 2 (can only enter from the West; being sworn at)

**Personality Traits:** Destructive +3, Mischievous +2, Naïve +1.

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init: +0, Attack -, Defense +9, Damage -

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1), -3 (2), -5 (13), Incapacitated (4), Dead (5)

**Pretenses:** Brawl 7 (dodge), French 3 (threats), Latin 3 (ecclesiastical), Music 1 (creepy singing), Occitan 3 (insults), Penetration 1 (Terram)

**Powers:**

*The Invisible Hand*, 0 points, Init +7, Ter-

ram. An item made of wood, metal, stone, or animal products up to the size of a barrel is lifted into the air and moves at speed as if carried by the spirit, which moves with the item, touching it all the time. The item can be made to strike something for +0 damage. Often this is used for minor effects, like hiding small items, or rearranging furniture or causing candlesticks to float down corridors to scare witnesses. (Base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Concentration, +2 Requisites. Intricacy 2 points to reduce Initiative, 3 points to reduce Might cost. Greater Power: 50 levels.)

*Rapping and Knocking*, 1 point, Init +2, Imaginem. This power causes very loud and very intricate knocks to seem to echo from walls, ceilings and furniture, from any point the spirit is touching. The rapping can spell out long sequences of letters if need be by the "A is one, B is two, C is three knocks" code or similar, although "one knock for yes and two for no" is faster. The sound can be as loud as thunder, and highly distracting to spell casting attempts. (Base 1, +1 Touch, +1 Intricate Effect, +1 Very Loud, +1 Diameter. 3 Intricacy points to reduce Might Cost, 20 levels. Lesser Power.)

*Stench of Foulness*, 1 point, Init +6, Imaginem. Causes all within a room to smell an overwhelming disgusting sweet cloying smell of rotting flesh. Has no effect but to severely distress those who experience it. (Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Room, +1 Diameter, 5 levels, part of same Lesser Power as Rapping & Knocking above)

*Rain of Pebbles*, 0 points, Init +6, Terram. Causes ten pebbles per round to form on the ceiling and fall naturally, doing -5 damage (owing to small size) to all below for a period of two minutes. The pebbles vanish at the expiry of the effect. Causes a great deal of noise and distress, but surprisingly little damage. (Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 Group, +1 Diameter, 2 Intricacy points to reduce Might cost. 30 levels. Greater Power.)

*The Sudden Terror*, 1 point, Init +6, Memento. As *Panic of the Trembling Heart*, ArM5 page 148, but Range: Touch. (Base 4, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, 1 Intricacy point to reduce Might cost. 20 levels; part of same Greater Power as *Rain of Pebbles* above.)

*Eidolon*, 1 point, Init +7, Imaginem. The faerie can manifest an illusory form, always a horrific and deformed animal with human features, which can be seen and heard, and that can move and speak as directed by the faerie, until it has no further use for it, at which point it vanishes. Each of the seven faeries has a form in which it appears, which are described under Appearance. (Base 2, +2 move as directed, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 intricacy of effect, +1 Intricacy point to reduce cost. 25 levels, Lesser Power.)

**Traditional Wards:** The Host suffer from not one but two wards – the first is a restriction, in that they can only enter a building through a west-facing window or door. Once driven out of the castle it should be possible to keep them out by simply closing the shutters or doors; even though intangible, they cannot pass through a west-facing wall, closed door, or locked shutter. Secondly, swearing foully at them forces them to retreat and cower from the abuse. As they are invisible and intangible, this may not be clear to the characters, however.

**Appearance:** The host consists of seven faerie ghosts, each of which has the form of a deformed and horrible animal with vaguely human facial features. Normally insubstantial and invisible, they can appear via the *Eidolon* power above, and are visible to Second Sight as faeries. Each has a unique form: a white rabbit with pink swollen eyes; a black hare with a forked serpentine tongue; a green monkey dripping with pond weed; a black cockerel with two heads; a white owl that glows brightly; a black rat wearing a crown; and a white bird with a very long and razor sharp beak.

mie the situation is very confused, but it is clear that everyone is eager for battle, apart from the defenders, and the mercenaries who simply want to be paid and avoid being injured or killed. Even the levy, dragged from their farms, are intent on bloodshed, and the passion and anger they feel is apparent. Soon after the magi arrive, two things happen. Firstly, the gates are thrown open and the ten soldiers come out, having thrown down their weapons. The knights wait within, still unsure what to do. Then suddenly Valentin appears high above the castle on the cliff top. If the characters do not intervene, he makes an insanely dangerous climb across the cliffs, and then a tremendous leap on to the tower of the castle from a rock far above. Only momentarily stunned by his hard landing, he attacks Sir Heliot, who stands upon the roof calling out still to the besiegers for a truce.

Several things now happen all at once. The remaining knights panic, grab their horses and try to cut their way out, but are pushed back by the levy who charge in through the gates. If no one intervenes, dozens of the simple farmers will die, before Valentin's knights man-

## Rebellion!

Rebellion by a vassal against his liege is often a protest, claiming that ancient rights have been infringed, or that justice has not been done, or that the appropriate gifts and boons have not been offered. Often the act of besieging a castle and negotiating terms of surrender is largely symbolic in Provence, and the fighting when it does occur is not brutal. Burning your vassal's crops and despoiling his lands is generally a bad idea if he may well make peace after the rebellion, and you will have to help him survive the winter because of the devastation you wrought. The rebellion of Sir Heliot was of this type, and he expected it to be peacefully resolved when Comte Rogier arrived and laid token siege by his agreeing to surrender if Rogier listened to his grievances and offered justice. Of course, it all went tragically wrong.

age to surge in and cut down the desperate defenders, showing no mercy. Simultaneously, the fight between Heliot and Valentin on top of the tower leads to the two men balancing precariously on the crumbling battlements as they trade blows. If the characters do not intervene, Sir Heliot is eventually knocked back and falls to his death on the rocks far below. Valentin then rushes through the castle looking for his father's body and slaying anyone who offers any show of resistance. Finally, the mercenaries take custody of the ten surrendered soldiers, and with ruthless efficiency drag them off to hang them from trees down the rocky road, as per Valentin's orders that no mercy is to be shown.

The actions of the characters are likely to change the details, but the castle has almost certainly fallen, and Valentin's reputation grown. Even the mercenaries are impressed. Still, allow the characters to intervene at any stage and shape the outcome. They might be able to calm Valentin before the massacre occurs.

When Valentin finds the characters he will be exuberant at his success, and insist (unless placated) all the defenders (if any survive) must be hanged. This includes the noncombatants: Heliot's sons, the servants and other staff. He orders Heliot's wife and daughter and any other women folk to be thrown from the tower to their death on the rocks below.

Valentin demands this as justice for his father being shot dead from the walls by a crossbowman, persuading him to do otherwise will be difficult but not impossible. It is certainly not unprecedented to slaughter a garrison, and in fact it is quite normal for the garrison to be hanged if they did not surrender and for the knights to be ransomed, or hanged too if many died taking the castle. Valentin will argue that this is justice, but the garrison made repeated efforts to surrender, and while hanging the crossbowman may be considered reasonable, any survivors insist (truthfully) that there were no crossbowmen in the garrison. Several of the soldiers saw Comte Rogier fall, but none saw where the bolt came from.

Valentin orders the castle filled with brushwood and fired, hoping to collapse the walls and raze it, and the engineers

are ordered to complete the undermining, and to break structural points to ensure that the castle collapses. Valentin's attitude toward the magi will depend on his previous relations with them; he is extremely polite, but he is disinclined to listen to anyone's advice. He has plans, and those plans require him to move fast. Strangely, once his demands for justice for his father have subsided he loses all interest in the question of where his mother and father actually are, and immediately returns to Montcuq to assume his title as Comte. Something is clearly wrong, and it is possible that the characters realize he is under the influence of Vital's *Guide* power, and break it by magic.

## TALKING TO VALENTIN'S TROOPS

If the characters spend some time talking to Valentin's troops they soon learn that the troops idolize him, and that his reputation is much greater than seems to be justified by his abilities as demonstrated up to the moment of his heroic leap. He has been a remarkably successful tournament knight, and is a brave young man, but somehow he is ranked in his men's eyes with Alexander, Roland, and other great captains of history. Indeed the stories about him that are being repeated by troubadours seem out of all proportion to his actual deeds. (This is because Sir Vital has established them among the troubadours over many years.) A test of Communication + Folk Ken against an Ease Factor of 12 reveals that many of them have heard that Sir Valentin is not the son of Comte Rogier, but was actually begotten upon his mother by the king's father, and may well be the rightful heir to the kingdom. Several of them, on a result of 15, admit that they would support his claim to the throne, and on an 18 state boldly they should march on the capital and put him on the throne! On a 21, however, the story changes, and it is the former count of Toulouse who is said to be Valentin's real father. This new story has yet to take firm hold, but after his heroics at Lomie it rapidly will.

The troops still say this even if the whole story makes no sense in terms of dates, succession, and other potential

heirs. Vital's Enchanting Music has been fuddled their senses, and Galafre, if alive, has supported it with Mentem magics.

If the characters do not talk to the troops, they eventually hear much the same from troubadours, minstrels and storytellers visiting the covenant, but several days may be lost, preventing the magi from intervening early, and making the final phase of this story a desperate race to prevent catastrophe.

### Finding Gracia

The magi may be deeply concerned about the fate of Lady Gracia and Comte Rogier. Talking to the few troops and handful of knights who were here when

#### Varying the Setting

The third story about Valentin sees him as an adult, finally fulfilling his faerie legacy as he tries to seize a throne or at least a county, and become a great king or emperor as his story dictates he should. In Provence, this means reclaiming his Tencavel patrimony, setting the king of France and the count of Toulouse against each other, and then betraying both in a naked grab for power. However, feudal politics are similar across Europe, and the same story can be told anywhere, with a change of cast.

#### If Everybody Died

These events can occur even if Sir Vital was slain in the first story (See Sir Vital's Lute, earlier). If, however, Valentin was raised by the magi and the Comte and Lady Gracia are dead, the story requires that Valentin has left the covenant and laid claim to the Tencavel lands, using intrigue and gold together with his exceptional charisma (and tourney successes) to claim that his mother was victim of a miscarriage of justice, and have the pope and king recognize his legitimacy. This process may well have involved the magi.

Rogier was shot, none of them saw the crossbowman on the walls, but all saw the Comte fall. A skilled physician found him pierced through the chest, the bolt having gone directly through his body and out the other side. (If anyone thinks to ask, no one has recovered, or indeed looked for the bolt, and it is nowhere to be found.) He was carried away from the castle, down to a small clearing in the woods half a mile away, and there made comfortable in his tent, but it was clear to all that the wound was mortal. Around sunset, Lady Gracia arrived, and she tended her husband's wound in deep distress until just after dark, when the tent went quiet. No one entered but Valentin's friend, the troubadour Sir Vital. At dawn Gracia was gone, and Vital said she had left for a nunnery. Of Rogier's body there was no sign.

What has really occurred is that Vital carried Rogier and led Gracia down a secret path, and entered a grotto, one of the many caves that honeycomb the region. Deep within the tunnels, walking in complete silence, Vital carried the dying Comte to a crystal cave, crossing from the Faerie aura 3 of the caves to a Faerie regio of aura 7. The cave is made of faceted crystals that reflect any light in startling prismatic displays, and is a place of unearthly beauty. Rogier is still just about alive, and Gracia waits with him; she does not yet realize that she can not find her way out of the regio without Vital.

Finding the missing couple is difficult. Clues exist: a trail of blood drops that can be followed with a Perception + Hunt against an Ease Factor of 9 leads to the cave, and clever plans such as using the Comte's blood, or even Valentin, as an Arcane Connection might also work.

It may be possible to find them by asking locals if they saw anything odd that night. A shepherd, seemingly unconcerned by the battle raging below him, tends his flocks at night on the ridge above. He saw the three enter the grotto, and even knows that it is locally called the "Cave of No Return," though he has no idea why.

If the magi can rescue Rogier, he is Incapacitated, but can be saved. If healed he now realizes something is terribly wrong, and even Lady Gracia begins to

wonder whether Vital can be trusted at all. Both insist on intervening in events. Valentin and Vital have no intention of allowing Comte Rogier to return and disrupt their plans. Valentin still loves his "father," and will stop sort of killing him, but allows Vital to try to force the Comte in to a monastery or any other plan that gets him out of the way. Vital for his part has no qualms about slaying Comte Rogier if necessary, but fears Valentin's response to such an act.

#### What Follows Lolmie

Over the next few days, more and more lords and mercenaries arrive at Montcuq, which takes on the character of a huge armed camp. Guards are posted to prevent any odd visitors, including the magi, from bothering Comte Valentin, although two nights after the battle at Lolmie a great feast given in honor of his succeeding to the title of Comte de Montcuq may provide an opportunity for the characters to approach him in the confusion. The feast is held in the market square, and curiously little mention is made of his dead father, or missing mother, though it is by now widely rumored that Lady Gracia has entered a nunnery on the death of her husband.

If the characters make inquiries about the political situation, they learn only that the king's supporters rejoice in the young Comte's victory (common knowledge) and that he remains as always a darling of the royal court. Furthermore tensions are once again increasing between the king and the count of Toulouse, Raimond VII, who is chafing under royal authority. A test of Communication + Intrigue against an Ease Factor of 15 reveals that many at the court believe that the count of Toulouse may soon rebel, in a desperate final attempt to recover what was lost in the Crusade, and that relations between the ancient enemies the Tencavels and Count Raimond of Toulouse are poorer than they have been for a long time. Only the Count's personal friendship with Comte Rogier was preventing an outbreak of the ancient Toulouse – Tencavel feud.

## Lolmie & Montcuq

The castle where Comte Rogier was shot by a crossbow bolt is just five miles from Montcuq. The castle of Lolmie lies south across two ridges on the southern slopes of a valley, about 8 miles east of the covenant of Jardin. The two castles have a complex history and are the setting for a very recent tragic recent story that will be known to many locals and covenfolk, and some local magi.

In 1214 Comte Baudouin, brother of Raimond VI the Count of Toulouse, set out from Montcuq to besiege the castle of Lolmie. Despite having long been an ally of his brother in the struggle against the Crusade, Baudouin had switched sides in 1213, and was granted the lordship of Montcuq. In 1214 while on his way back there he stayed at Lolmie, and the lord of Lolmie betrayed his presence to two of Raimond's knights. The garrison stood by, while the knights captured the naked Baudouin and took him to Montauban nearby, where he was immediately hanged while his brother watched. He was given no chance to do penance or receive the Final Sacrament, and he cursed the residents of Lolmie (see *Faith and Flame*, page 43.) As these events probably occurred thirty years before this story, the victims of the curse are all dead, but the story is well remembered.

Soon everyone hears that the king is traveling south, planning to meet with Raimond and remind him of the terms of the Treaty of Paris. Naturally, Vital and Valentin are going to attend, and given the facts known to the magi, they may well suspect that something terrible will occur, and they have good reason to intervene, and prevent Galafre's meddling from bringing ruin upon the kingdom.

## The Meeting in the Forest

The meeting between the king and Count Raimond is scheduled to take place at Sauzet, a small castle in the heavily wooded Lot valley just eight miles north of Montcuq. Sauzet is a tiny town with a small castle very similar to that at Montcuq, and is held by Sir Maynart, an enthusiastic vassal of Comte Rogier who was at the siege of Lolmie and has three knights. The plan is for the count and king, together with Alphonse, to meet up and spend three days hunting during the day in the great dark oak woods, then talk at night, and for the count to offer homage again for the county of Toulouse, ensuring a lasting peace. Comte Rogier had arranged this, and the rebellion at Lolmie was a minor distraction he felt it best to deal with immediately as it was embarrassing when he was involved in such important affairs of state. Now the young Comte Valentin hopes to receive the Tencavel estates back, and the title of Viscount Tencavel from the King. This is quite a realistic aim; however, if the count of Toulouse is shown to be a traitor, Valentin hopes for far more, and is willing to betray anyone to achieve his story outcome.

Even if his father has been found, Valentin is quite unable to break free of the evil influence of Sir Vital's *Guide* power, no matter how much he protests he will. In this case, Sir Rogier remains comte, but Valentin is still present and taking an important role as the son of the host of the peace negotiations.

### THE FIRST DAY

On the first day, Sir Vital cannot approach Sauzet. The reason is simple; etiquette demands that the church bell is rung repeatedly to announce the arrival of the king, and each of the other ranking nobles. (Vital's *Sovereign Ward* prevents him entering an area where church bells can be heard.)

Valentin arrives the night before at the castle, where all preparations have been made, and many houses have been prepared for the guests. Already tents and pavilions ring the town, while a huge bustle of folks with provisions, entertainers (high and low), and people who have simply heard the king is coming and come to gawp have arrived and fill the streets with noise and confusion.

The arrival of Valentin with his army from Lolmie adds to the chaos, and Gifted individuals find it extremely hard to get anywhere near the castle.

On the morning of the first day, word arrives that the king is just a few miles away, and preparations become frantic. At the arrival of the king and his brother Alphonse, with a small body of knights, at mid-morning the noise becomes fantastic, and the church bell is rung to announce the news to all for miles. A fair develops just outside the town, which is not walled, and people arrive from all over the region just to watch. Just after noon the count of Toulouse arrives, with thirty knights and a huge body of retainers, and as wine and bread is distributed throughout the town to the crowds a holiday atmosphere develops.

The count is lodged in a large house in the town, while the king and Alphonse are in the castle itself. Valentin discreetly lodges in a small hunting lodge just two miles to the west in the forest, but only his closest retainers know where he is. During the day he appears in town occasionally, playing the role of an efficient steward, but taking no public part in the formal meeting of the great men that occurs within the castle. The meeting between king and count is rumored to be cordial, though the king is described as somewhat quiet, and it appears that he spends much of the day in the local church deep in prayer. The evening meal goes on for hours, and the best way to gain entry is to pose as entertainers or kitchen staff, as the castle is extremely well guarded.

Raimond appears to be content and in an agreeable mood, and makes several assurances to the king that heresy is no longer tolerated in his lands. Alphonse is however noticeably tense, and the king, tired, retires long before the festivities conclude.

There is much gossip in town about the royal hunt tomorrow, when the count and king will chase fat stags in the woods of the Lot Valley. If the magi ask they may well be able to learn where the best hunting can be found, and guess that whatever Valentin and Vital plan, it will occur during the hunt.

### THE SECOND DAY: THE HUNT

Early in the morning the great nobles gather to take part in a day's hunting. Valentin is at the hunt breakfast, and, along with just nine of the closest companions of the notables, rides out in the early morning light to chase deer, although many beaters, hound handlers, and assorted servants carrying food set out before dawn to perform their duties. A grog who can make a Presence + Hunt test against an Ease Factor of 6 is hired to help out, and assigned some duties that places him in the woods. (You can play out the hunt using the rules in *Lords of Men* page 51 if you wish.) Some miles outside town the hunting party is joined by the troubadour, Sir Vital, who rides alongside Valentin.

During the morning Valentin and Vital soon (like many of the huntsmen) fall far behind the count of Toulouse and the king, who are more accomplished hunters, with several miles separating the different groups in the great oak woods of the valley.

### Who is the King?

This depends entirely upon your setting and the current date in your saga. In a Provençal setting, the saintly King Louis IX is king from 1226 to 1270, and likely still young (he was born in 1214). His mother, Blanche of Castile, acted as regent until 1234; his younger siblings are Robert (born 1216), John Tristan (born 1219), Alphonse (born 1220), Phillip (born 1222), Isabelle (born 1225) and Charles (born 1226). Given that the French monarchy descends by primogeniture and legitimate births only, Valentin, even if he had been fathered by the king, would have no claim to the throne. In fact that is not important, because the Prophecy of the Lion has a greater grip on men's hearts, and Valentin does not plan to usurp the king, but the title of count of Toulouse. He then plans to marry Isabelle, and with his good relations with the court carve out a huge personal fiefdom across the whole of Provence.

The terrain is rough, and the walls of the valley riddled with great caves, while streams, dense underbrush, and loose scree that give way suddenly to flowery meadows or little hills topped with shrines to the Blessed Virgin. Around noon the count of Toulouse discovers a great bear hiding in a cave, and after it is chased out by his huntsmen a pursuit begins, which ends when Raimond slays the bear in a tremendous struggle. Alphonse and the king come upon the scene as the bear's carcass is being prepared just after the kill. The sighting of an immense white stag then gives rise to a wild chase, and the three men ride slowly after their retainers, who rapidly outdistance them through their love of the chase. As the three pass through a small coppice, close to a woodsman's house, another deer appears, running directly between the men who are now strung out. Valentin and Sir Vital appear on a rise nearby, and then a fatal arrow is fired.

Afterward the situation is confused, but what appears to happen to a mundane observer is that Count Raimond notches an arrow and lets fly at the deer. The king turns his horse, and watches the deer, while Alphonse rides straight at it drawing his sword. Raimond's arrow perhaps glances off the deer, and appears to strike the king full in the face, yet miraculously he is unharmed. Then

### BUT MY SETTING HAS NO CLIFFS?

It is important that Valentin perform some reckless and successful act of valor; the details do not matter. The aim of this scene is to establish that Valentin has all the makings of a hero, but equally many flaws and poor judgement. While he appears consumed with rage at his father's death, he is in fact exuberant at being finally free to pursue his ambitions. The characters may attempt to temper his youthful passion, but it should become clear something is badly wrong. Valentin is required by his story to betray his family and friends, and the characters have taken on the role of friends by assisting his mother on two occasions.

Alphonse falls from his horse, wounded by an arrow. Ironically, he has been struck by Raimond's arrow as well, despite being nowhere near the king.

In fact, Sir Vital has warned Valentin that treachery is afoot, and that Raimond is planning to slay the king. As Valentin spurred his horse down the rise to the royal group, Vital used his *Unerring Arrow* power to kill the king; to his immense surprise it fails (all kings have Magic Resistance, and Louis also has True Faith and relics, and these are more than enough to stop the enchanted arrow.) Unfortunately for the "hunting accident" scenario Vital plans, Raimond's arrow really does miss the deer, and strikes Alphonse, seriously wounding him. However, given that the king saw an arrow come toward him, and Alphonse was struck by a second arrow, the confusion is immense.

The king cries "Treachery!" and spurs his horse for the woods. Raimond, aghast, leaps from his horse and runs to his brother in law Alphonse. There is little fondness between the men, but Raimond is genuinely contrite at what he sees as an accident. Alphonse misunderstands the situation, and calls out, and Valentin, lance couched, rides in intent on running the traitor Raimond through.

How the scene plays out now depends entirely upon the actions of the characters, assuming they have realized there is a problem and have followed the royal party. If they are not present or are unwilling to intervene, Valentin kills Raimond, and runs to assist Alphonse who is struck dead by another arrow, seemingly from nowhere. (Sir Vital, again). The king turns his horse and witnesses the death of his brother, and the heroic deeds of Valentin. He rides forward even as Raimond expires, and embraces Valentin, and in the heat of the moment promises him he will be not just Viscount Trencavel, but the count of Toulouse, for saving his life from the traitor. For a moment Sir Vital watches from the top of a rocky outcrop, before quietly slipping away, to plan another cuckoo's birth.

Unless of course the characters are in the right place to take action, and choose to do so. The climax may be the

battle of the characters against Sir Vital, while the misguided Valentin tries to save his friend.

## Resolving the Story

His appointment as count of Toulouse marks the beginning of the ascendancy of Valentin. Now Vital has left him, he is on his own, and his "borrowed" single weapon and leadership abilities have gone forever as the faerie loses interest in his story. The cuckoo has betrayed his father, his mother, and his lord, and has come in to his inheritance, and Vital has gained the vitality that making mortals play out his story always grants. For Provence and Normandy the implications are tragic and momentous, and your saga may well depart from history at this point. Of course, it is entirely possible that Valentin will swiftly fall from grace and lose his life now that he is left to his own devices, and nothing more than a young and rather shallow man whom people like and respect more



## The Treaty of Paris

Raimond VII came to the title on the death of his father in 1222. He successfully defeated Amaury de Montfort and regained control of most of his lands by 1224, but was excommunicated in 1225, and from then until the Treaty of Paris in January 1229 fought a series of engagements against the French king. By the treaty the Viscounty of Trencavel became a royal possession, and this was the key to Comte Rogier's plan: he knew that as the last great Trencavel he had more to gain by allying with the king. Meanwhile, Raimond's daughter Joan has been forced to marry Louis IX's brother Alphonse. If your saga follows history the county of Toulouse passes to Alphonse with Raimond's death in 1241, and then is incorporated in to France. The situation in this story assumes a date between 1229 and 1241, but it can be moved by changing the protagonists as required.

than his abilities justify.

It is very likely, however, that the characters realize that something is badly amiss, that Galafre's crime has severe repercussions, and that Valentin is being manipulated by a faerie. They are likely to be able to prevent the plot and events outlined above coming to fruition. Vital does all he can to prevent this, and uses all the means within his power to prevent the magi interfering. His influence over Valentin can easily turn him against the characters, and persuade the young man they are dangerous black magicians who should be denounced as heretics and hunted by his forces. Under Vital's influence, Valentin can forget his parents, and allow his quest for glory to lead him to ignore their fate, so how much easier to turn him against the magi whom he barely knows?

The issue is really, should the magi intervene? If Vital is stymied, he will make no secret of his intention to turn his full wrath against the Order of Hermes, gloating in any confrontation

that if they "molest the fey" he will see to it that they face justice, and that the Order brought about the whole affair through Galafre's hubris and lust. However, not interfering may equally result in disaster for the Order, if and when Vital's troubadours reveal the full story, perhaps after Valentin has perished in a bloody attempt to seize the throne.

## Dramatis Personae

The major characters from the first part of the story are collected here for convenience. Some of them are repeated in later parts, but altered by the ravages of age and blessings of experience, so be careful not to refer to the wrong section.

### LADY GRACIA ST. DAUNE

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 22 (22)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Gentlewoman; Educated, Strong Sidhe Blood, Temporal Influence, True Love, Wealthy; Ambitious, Driven (protect her child), Plagued by Supernatural Entity (Fairies); Envied Beauty.

**Personality Traits:** Loyal to husband +6, Ambitious +6, Fierce +3

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init: +0, Attack -, Defense +1, Damage -

*Fist:* Init: +0, Attack +2, Defense +1, Damage +0

*Kick:* Init: -1, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +3

**Soak:** -1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: County of Toulouse 4 (Nobles), Artes Liberales 3 (music), Athletics 2 (grace), Bargain 2 (favors), Brawl 1 (rough dances), Carouse 1 (staying sober), Charm 3 (subjects), Civil and Canon Law 1 (family law), Concentration 2 (resisting effects), Etiquette 4 (at court), Folk Ken 2 (servants), French 3 (noble), Guile 2 (lying to her maids), Hunt 3 (falconry), Intrigue 3 (Trencavel schemes), Latin 3 (Church), Leadership 4 (Castle Montcuq), Magic Lore 1 (legends), Music 1 (singing sad songs), Occitan 5 (poetry), Organization Lore: Church 2 (pro-Cathar churchmen), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (covenants), Organization Lore: Trencavel Domains 2 (dynamic

claims), Philosophiae 1 (natural philosophy), Ride 3 (gracefully), Stealth 1 (slipping silently across rooms)

**Equipment:** Anything she needs

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Despite her elfin features, the blonde hair of a queen, and a beautiful face, the most striking thing about the lady is her violet eyes. Other women can not but help be slightly annoyed and put out by her, even if they do not admit their jealousy of her. Men, however, find her utterly charming.

### LADY GRACIA ST. DAUNE, AGED 29 (APPEARS 22) (PART 2)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: County of Toulouse 4 (Nobles), Artes Liberales 3 (music), Athletics 2 (grace), Bargain 2 (favors), Brawl 1 (rough dances), Carouse 1 (staying sober), Charm 3 (subjects), Civil and Canon Law 2 (family law), Concentration 2 (resisting effects), Etiquette 4 (at court), Faerie Lore (curses) 1, Folk Ken 3 (servants), French 3 (noble), Guile 2 (lying to her maids), Hunt 3 (falconry), Intrigue 3 (Trencavel schemes), Latin 3 (Church), Leadership 4 (Castle Montcuq), Magic Lore 1 (legends), Music 1 (singing sad songs), Occitan 5 (poetry), Organization Lore: Church 2 (pro-Cathar churchmen), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (covenants), Organization Lore: Trencavel Domains 3 (dynamic claims), Philosophiae 1 (natural philosophy), Ride 4 (gracefully), Stealth 1 (slipping silently across rooms)

### LADY GRACIA ST. DAUNE, AGED 43 (APPEARS 22) (PART 3)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: County of Toulouse 5 (Nobles), Artes Liberales 3 (music), Athletics 2 (grace), Awareness 2 (faeries), Bargain 3 (favors), Brawl 1 (rough dances), Carouse 2 (staying sober), Charm 4 (subjects), Chirurgy 1 (sword wounds), Civil and Canon Law 2 (family law), Concentration 2 (resisting effects), Etiquette 5 (at court), Faerie Lore (curses) 4, Folk Ken 4 (servants),

French 4 (noble), Guile 3 (lying to her maids), Hunt 3 (falconry), Intrigue 4 (Trencavel schemes), Latin 3 (Church), Leadership 4 (Castle Montcuq), Magic Lore 2 (legends), Music 3 (singing sad songs), Occitan 5 (poetry), Organization Lore: Church 2 (pro-Cathar churchmen), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (covenants), Organization Lore: Trencavel Domains 3 (dynamic claims), Philosophiae 1 (natural philosophy), Ride 4 (gracefully), Stealth 1 (slipping silently across rooms)

### JACOBELLA THE REDCAP, AGED 30 (PART 2)

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

**Size:** -1

**Age:** 30 (30)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 2 (5)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Redcap; Well-Travelled, Enchanting Music, Linguist, Magic Items, Puissant Music, Self-Confident (Confidence: +1), Social Contacts (Nobility); Indiscreet, Meddler, Fragile Constitution, Small Frame, Weak Characteristics, Weak-Willed

**Personality Traits:** Indiscreet +3, Meddlesome +3, Cheerful +1

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init: +0, Attack -, Defense +2, Damage -

*Fist:* Init: +0, Attack +2, Defense +1, Damage +0

*Kick:* Init: -1, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +3

*Dagger:* Init: +0, Attack +4, Defense +1, Damage +3

*Sword, Short:* Init: +0, Attack +8, Defense +5, Damage +5

*Sling:* Init: -3, Attack +3, Defense +1, Damage +4

*Bow, Short:* Init: -2, Attack +7, Defense +3, Damage +6

**Soak:** 0

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Greater Alps Tri-

## Dramatis Personae (Cont'd)

bunal 1 (passes), Area Lore: Iberian Tribunal 1 (nobles), Area Lore: Normandy Tribunal 1 (personalities), Area Lore: Provence Tribunal 1 (geography), Area Lore: Tribunal of Rome 2 (geography), Art of Memory 1 (Latin messages), Artes Liberales 3 (music), Awareness 2 (alertness), Bargain 3 (vis deals), Bows 2 (short bow), Brawl 1 (dodge), Carouse 1 (gambling), Catalan 3 (Barcelona), Charm 1 (being witty), Code of Hermes 2 (mundane relations), Enchanting Music 2 (boosting morale), Etiquette 2 (Hermetic), French 4 (slang), German 3 (Alps), Intrigue 1 (Hermetic politics), Italian 5 (songs), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Music 3 (sing), Occitan 5 (Toulouse), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (covenants), Ride 2 (speed), Single Weapon 3 (short sword), Spanish 3 (Aragon), Survival 1 (camping), Thrown Weapon 1 (stone)

**Equipment:** Short sword, short bow, sling, quiver of arrows, horse, bedroll, camping gear, small harp.

**Encumbrance:** 2 (2)

**Appearance:** A very petite, fragile, boyish woman who could easily pass for a teenage boy, and often does. She never takes off her distinctive red cap, even when asleep, and dresses in men's clothes when on the road, but likes colorful dresses (if she can acquire them) to wear at covenants.

## JACOBELLA, AGED 44 (PART 3)

As above, but abilities improved as follows

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Greater Alps Tribunal 2 (passes), Area Lore: Iberian Tribunal, Area Lore: Normandy Tribunal 2 (personalities), Area Lore: Provence Tribunal 2 (geography), Area Lore: Tribunal of Rome 2 (geography), Art of Memory 1 (Latin messages), Artes Liberales 3 (music), Awareness 2 (alertness), Bargain 3 (vis deals), Bows 2 (short bow), Brawl 1 (dodge), Carouse 1 (gambling), Catalan 3 (Barcelona), Charm

1 (being witty), Code of Hermes 2 (mundane relations), Enchanting Music 2 (boosting morale), Etiquette 2 (Hermetic), French 4 (slang), German 3 (Alps), Intrigue 1 (Hermetic politics), Italian 5 (songs), Latin 4 (Hermetic usage), Music 3 (sing), Occitan 5 (Toulouse), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (covenants), Ride 2 (speed), Single Weapon 3 (short sword), Spanish 3 (Aragon), Survival 1 (camping), Thrown Weapon 1 (stone)

## VALENTIN ST DAUNE, AGED SEVEN (PART 2)

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per -6, Pre -1, Com -2, Str -3, Sta -3, Dex -3, Qik -4

**Size:** -2

**Age:** 7 (7)

**Decrepitude:** 0 (0)

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Strong Faerie Blood; Plagued by Supernatural Entity (Faeries)

**Personality Traits:** Amiable +3, Leader +2, Stubborn +1

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init: -4, Attack -, Defense +1, Damage -

**Fist:** Init: -4, Attack -3, Defense -4, Damage -3

**Kick:** Init: -5, Attack -3, Defense -5, Damage +0

**Soak:** -3

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-3), -3 (4-7), -5 (8-11), Incapacitated (12-15), Dead 16+

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Montcuq 2 (castle), Artes Liberales 1 (lessons), Athletics 2 (climbing), Etiquette 1 (at court), Folk Ken 2 (servants), Intrigue 1 (getting what he wants), Leadership 2 (local children), Occitan 5 (poetry), Stealth 1 (in castle)

**Equipment:** a wooden sword, wooden horse and paper crown.

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** A very handsome young boy with blonde curly hair and striking violet eyes.

## VALENTIN SAINT DAUNE, AGED 22 (PART 3)

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 22 (22)

**Decrepitude:** 0 (0)

**Warping Score:** 0 (4)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Strong Faerie Blood, Wealthy; Ambitious, Plagued by Supernatural Entity (Faeries)

**Personality Traits:** Determined +3, Stubborn +2, Likable +1

**Combat:**

**Broadsword:** Init: +0, Attack +16, Defense +15, Damage +7

**Lance (mtd.):** Init: +0, Attack +17, Defense +15, Damage +6

**Dodge:** Init: -2, Attack -, Defense +4, Damage -

**Fist:** Init: -2, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +1

**Kick:** Init: -3, Attack +2, Defense +0, Damage +4

**Soak:** +7 (partial chain armor)

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Montcuq 2 (castle), Artes Liberales 1 (lessons), Athletics 2 (climbing), Brawl 3 (dodge), Etiquette 2 (at court), Folk Ken 2 (servants), Hunt (deer) 1, Intrigue 4 (plotting at court), Leadership 5 (knights), Occitan 5 (poetry), Organization Lore: Trencale Domains 3 (dynastic claims), Ride 4 (tournaments), Single Weapon 4 (sword), Stealth 1 (in castle)

**"Borrowed Abilities":** Leadership 11 (tourney), Single Weapon 12 (lance)

**Equipment:** Broadsword, lance, heater shield, partial chain.

**Encumbrance:** 2 (3)

**Appearance:** A very handsome youth with flowing blonde locks, a manly jaw and striking violet eyes, always dressed in the very latest fashions of the Paris court. He is a role model to young men throughout the region who admire his tournament skills, said to be the greatest seen since the death of William Marshal.

## Dramatis Personae (Cont'd)

**SIR VITAL, FAERIE  
TROUBADOUR (PARTS 1 AND 3)**

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** n/a (23)

**Faerie Might:** 35

**Virtues and Flaws:** External Vis Source, Improved Might +15, Improved Might +15, Faerie Instructor, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Highly Cognizant, Humanoid Faerie, Improved Characteristics, Infiltrator, Warrior, Ambitious, Pagan, Sovereign Ward: church bells, Prohibition (Never love a mortal woman).

**Combat:**

**Dodge:** Init: -2, Attack -, Defense +5, Damage -

**Fist:** Init: -2, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +0

**Kick:** Init: -3, Attack +4, Defense +3, Damage +3

**Morning Star & Heater Shield:** Init: +0, Attack +9, Defense +9, Damage +7

**Short bow:** Init: +1, Attack +7, Defense -, Damage +6

**Soak:** +9

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

**Pretenses:** Bargain 2 (Merinita magi),

Bows 2 (short bow), Brawl 3 (dodge), Carouse 1 (getting people drunk), Charm 4 (courtly love), Enchanting Music 5 +3 (lute), Etiquette 1 (ladies), Guile 3 (seduction), Hunt 1 (tracking), Music 5 (sing), Penetration 3 (Guide), Ride 2 (tricks), Single Weapon 4 (mace and chain), Stealth 2 (hide), Survival 1 (forest)

**"Borrowed abilities":** Area Lore: Local Region 5 (nobles), Craft: Armor 4 (chainmail), Legerdemain (cutpurse) 4, Profession Washerwoman 6 (bedlinen), Ride 5 (escapes)

**Powers:**

**Guide:** 3 points, Init -2, Mentem. Subtly influences the target's actions for up to one day, acting in a similar manner to the Common Sense Virtue but encouraging the victim to serve the faerie's agenda, though there is no compulsion to follow the 'advice'. (See *Realms of Power: Faerie* 59 for details). (30 levels)

**Unerring Arrow:** 3 points, Init +2, Herbam. Redirects an arrow in flight to strike whatever target Sir Vital intends. The arrow always strikes so as to ignore armor. (Base 10; +2 for Intricacy of Effect, +2 Intricacy for Initiative.)

**Equipment:** Full chain mail, lute containing 7 pawns Imaginem vis that provides the Minor Virtue Enchanting Music to user.

**Appearance:** A handsome young knight, dressed in the latest courtly fashions or full armor as would be appropriate to his current situation. Always impeccably dressed, with a cloak of forest green and a bright orange sash. His accent is always slightly foreign, no matter where he is and which language he is conversing in, in a manner that lends charm to his words. His Faerie Speech Virtue allows him to always converse in the last language he was addressed in, and only that tongue, but he understands all languages perfectly. He appears human and of noble birth because of his Infiltrator Virtue (even to those with Second Sight) and his faerie nature is concealed. Highly Cognizant means he is aware that creative mortals can change his story (see *Realms of Power: Faerie* for details) and that he draws Vitality from making humans play out the story he embodies.

Sir Vital's story is of The Cuckoo Hero: a man engendered upon a noblewoman by an impostor who rises to become the epitome of nobility and seizes greater glory than a true heir could have, before betraying the family that nurtured him. In a nutshell, that is the theme of these stories.

## Chapter Six

# The Traitor's Game

In these stories, the player characters witness — and hopefully stop — the return of a great evil. Damhan-Allaith (called The Spider) was defeated over four hundred years ago, but there have been persistent rumors that he somehow managed to overcome death itself. Now it appears that the Order of Hermes's worst nightmare is coming true and that the Spider once more spreads his insidious influence in Mythic Europe.

In the first story, a Redcap's disappearance leads the player characters to uncover the possible return of this ancient wizard. However, lacking both evidence and leads, there is little that they can do except hope that they are wrong. In the second story, the player characters have an opportunity to capture the perpetrator responsible for the atrocity uncovered in the first story. In the third story, Damhan-Allaith manipulates the player characters into helping him further his revenge against the Order.

## Background

The origins of this story goes back to the very early days of the Order. Pralix, trained by Tytalus himself, fought a war for a whole decade against Damhan-Allaith. The wizard was defeated but his spirit lived on and its desire for revenge burns as brightly as it did four hundred years ago.

### The Death of Damhan-Allaith

Damhan-Allaith's plan was to subvert his enemy from within, learning their secrets in the guise of one of their own. To achieve this he needed to complete three magical tasks. First, he had to suffer bodily death, freeing his spirit from its mortal shell. Second, he had to prepare a Gifted individual to become a vessel to receive his spirit by making it the container for his external soul. Third, he had to transfer himself into his vessel, consume its personality, and make the body his own. He allowed Pralix to complete the first of these tasks, choosing her own apprentice to be his vessel for the second ritual. However, something went wrong during the third ritual, and it failed. He couldn't complete his transfer into the child and he was left trapped as a disembodied spirit.

One of the requirements of the third rite was the severance of Damhan-Allaith from his former identity, which involved utterly destroying his body and every possession he had. Unbeknownst to him, a Redcap called Giaro removed a trophy from Damhan-Allaith's former body: a single claw wrested from his thumb. Rather than cheating death and wrecking his revenge on his slayer, Damhan-Allaith was trapped as an impotent spirit unable to influence the material world. He fled, vowing to see this through to the end.

Over the centuries the spirit, calling itself Atorcoppe, has made further attempts to achieve physical form. Every attempt failed because the first Ordeal remained incomplete. He made secret allies within the Order and set them to

the task of tracking down the legends of his final battle with Pralix. Finally, he learned of the legend of Giaro's Claw. The answer to his problem should be as simple as finding the claw and destroying it himself; this would clear the slate from his original botched ritual and allow him to start again.

The current owner of Giaro's Claw is Giaro's descendant, a Redcap called Rufus, and to get to Rufus, Atorcoppe plans to use another Redcap, Galera.

### Galera

Galera is contracted in marriage to Rufus. The House considers Galera and Rufus a good prospect to produce a Gifted child, since Galera herself was born with The Gift. Alas, at puberty, before she was formally apprenticed, her Gift guttered and died. She lost the special status she had been granted and the admiration of her family and peers. She trained as a Redcap instead and she took to the roads in service to those whose ranks she nearly joined. Yet envy made a nest within her heart. She resents those with The Gift for what they have and what she lost. She could have been one of them but instead she is expected to serve them. She has nursed this bitter envy in secret for many years. As an outlet for these feelings of magical inadequacy, Galera has taken to stealing minor enchantments from other Redcaps whenever she can. With one exception, a Crystal Ring (see Insert), she does not dare carry these with her for fear of discovery. Furthermore, she has borne an illicit child, one whom she has kept hidden from her House since she discovered he

## Damhan-Allaith, The Spider

The creature known as Damhan-Allaith began life some time in the mid-sixth century as a priest of Sluag, the Pictish god of the dead and of knowledge. These priests preserved wisdom for their tribe by reincarnating their souls into a new Gifted body before death. Damhan-Allaith has lived out the history of northern Britain by incarnating himself into the bodies of successive hedge magic traditions, taking a different name each time. His original Pictish name is unknown to history, and he keeps it a closely guarded secret. Copynnau was the name he took as a Brythonic elementalist; he later took over a Scottish druid and became Damhan-Allaith. It is this name that Pralix learned and passed onto the Order, although by the time they met he had inhabited a Saxon rune-magician under the name of Atorcoppe for several decades. All these names mean "spider" in their respective languages. These four magical traditions formed the coalition of magicians with which he tried to dominate the Isle of Britain; the reason that he clashed with Pralix.

His appearance is always that of the human body that he takes over, but as he ages he gradually assumes a hunchbacked form, with a completely hairless body that is emaciated to the point of being skeletal, but with a bloated abdomen. Each finger is tipped with a wickedly-curved claw, ebony black in color. As a spirit he looks like this final form, although he appears over ten feet tall and with six long arms rather than two.

The statistics of Damhan-Allaith are not provided here, but are left to the storyguide. A direct conflict with Damhan-Allaith at full strength is outside the scope of this chapter. However, some notes regarding the sort of magic that he might possess from each of the magical traditions he has learned are provided below.

### POWERS AS A SPIRIT

Damhan-Allaith's spirit form has a Magic Might of 40, aligned to Corpus. His principal power is that of Possession. The spirit of Damhan-Allaith also possesses an External Soul. This Virtue normally protects a person from dying (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 56), but it also prevents the dissipation of a spirit. Atorcoppe cannot be de-

stroyed by reducing his Magic Might score to zero. If this happens he instead acquires a Minor Magic Inferiority in return for restoring his Might score to 1. His Might then slowly regenerates back to its former level.

*Possession*, variable points, Init -(Might cost), Mentem: To initiate this power, Damhan-Allaith must spend 4 Might points and successfully Penetrate any Magic Resistance of the target. If successful, the spirit of Damhan-Allaith takes up residence within a being. When Damhan-Allaith is in direct control then the power can be detected with appropriate magic, and his spirit might be seen by characters with Second Sight; but at other times there is nothing to detect except a spell residue (*ArM5*, page 158). The inhabited body is not protected by Damhan-Allaith's Magic Resistance, but neither is it stopped by magical wards unless the spirit is in direct control. Damhan-Allaith can control his host's actions by spending Might points. For each attempt, roll a die for Damhan-Allaith and add the number of Might points he is spending (minimum 1). If the host resists the control, the Ease Factor is equal to applicable Personality Traits and bonuses for Virtues such as Strong-Willed, plus a bonus equal to the nature of the attempted action (use the same modifiers for Entrance, *ArM5* page 65). If the host does not resist, then the Ease Factor is 0. If Damhan-Allaith's roll is successful, then the host performs the desired action. While possessing a host, Damhan-Allaith can use any of his own powers and regenerate Might, but cannot access the powers or spells of the host. He can also talk directly into the mind of his host without spending Might points. He can end the possession at any time, and it also ends if he runs out of Might points. ReMe 40 (Base 15, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 constant, +1 flexibility of control). Greater Power (40 levels)

### PICTISH NECROMANCY

Sluag was the Keeper of Death's Kingdom in Pictish mythology. His priests were able to communicate with and summon the shades of the dead. In principle this worked like Canaanite Necromancy (*Ancient Magic* Chapter 3), but also involved other aspects of manipulating souls, including the mystery of the External Soul and the means by which

an individual can extend his life by becoming first a spirit and then a human again.

Using Pictish necromancy, Damhan-Allaith employed his most fearful weapon against Pralix: the *sluagh*. Named for their lord, this host of the unquiet spirits of the slaughtered Picts could literally scare people to death.

### BRYTHONIC ELEMENTALISM

The witches of Strathclyde taught a form of elementalism that summoned and controlled the natural elements, allowing them to command the weather, keep vermin out of the crops, and gather scattered livestock. Elementalism is described in Chapter Two of *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*.

Using elementalism, Damhan-Allaith can summon swarms of spiders, command magical beasts such as the monstrous spiders, control the weather, cause earthquakes and avalanches, and flood rivers.

### SCOTTISH DRUIDISM

The druids who accompanied the Scots upon their invasion from Ireland practiced a brand of magic very similar to that of the gruagachan (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition* Chapter Four).

Using druidic magic, Damhan-Allaith can give people Virtues and Flaws, shapeshift himself and others (typically choosing the shape of a spider, or a swarm of spiders); scry at a distance; create illusions; and summon prophetic visions.

### SAXON RUNE MAGIC

The Saxon rune-magicians were the same as the vitkir found in Scandinavia (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter Seven), except that they had nine extra runes at their disposal. All Saxon rune magicians were exterminated by Pralix's Ordo Miscellanea following the defeat of Damhan-Allaith.

Rune magic is perhaps the most flexible system of magic known to Damhan-Allaith, rivaling Hermetic magic in its scope. One of its key characteristics is that it can create spells of indefinite duration which cause natural changes rather than magical ones.

had The Gift, determined that he should not become a commodity to be traded.

The dreams began after she heard of her arranged betrothal several years ago. The man she met in her dreams promised to give her back what had been taken from her. He called himself Atorcoppe but she barely flinched when he revealed he had once been Damhan-Allaidh, the Order's ancient enemy. The nocturnal visitor promised her the revenge she so dearly sought against those who had belittled her and treated her as a second-class member of the Order. What's more, he claimed he could restore her Gift. All she had to do was to steal something from the fiancé she had yet to meet.

## Prequel: Introducing Rufus

The first story has more impact if the player characters are already acquainted with Rufus. In most tribunals each Redcap has an itinerary consisting of a few, geographically-close covenants that are visited in one trip. Rufus could be a new Redcap following the retirement of the covenant's regular messenger, or else he could be a temporary replacement for the incumbent, who could be recovering from an illness or seconded to a different task.

The storyguide may wish to run a short story involving Rufus in order to acquaint the player characters with him and develop an attachment to his friendly manner and cheerful demeanor. If he becomes friends with the player characters they may learn of his upcoming marriage to Galera (whom he is yet to meet).

Some example stories include:

- Upon arriving at the covenant (or a village near the covenant), Rufus sees a young girl playing and grabs her and starts shaking her, shouting all the time. He had a dream (that is, a vision) the last night that the girl was trapped in a stone box with

snakes and toads. He is convinced that the girl at the covenant is a faerie changeling and asks the player characters to exonerate his behavior by helping him uncover the truth. Rufus turns up at the covenant badly beaten. He was attacked by bandits close to the player characters' covenant and all of his belongings stolen, including his enchantments. He is most concerned about retrieving a medal bearing the likeness of his betrothed. The ale-wife of a nearby village has been informing an outlaw group about rich-looking travelers in exchange for a portion of any plunder.

- The player characters are in dire straits: outnumbered in a fight, trapped in a cave, or some other hopeless situation. Rufus arrives with just the help they need to save the day, following a vision he had about their predicament.
- Rufus enters a village contest hosted by the local lord and wins a side of bacon, a whole goose and a barrel of wine in a feat of endurance (helped by his innate resistance to pain). He offers a share of his winnings to the covenant's grogs if they will help him fetch it from the village. When they arrive, the villagers are unwilling to allow the prizes to go to a stranger. The grogs must help Rufus 'negotiate' (steal) his winnings from the villagers.

The point of these stories is to develop some sympathy for Rufus, motivating the characters to find him when he later goes missing. Introducing his Visions Flaw provides context for his later actions.



# Story I: A Tale of Two Redcaps

This story opens with a scheduled visit from Rufus. This only needs to be brought to the attention of the player characters if

they have some messages due or anything to dispatch. Rufus leaves after the customary three days to continue his rounds. The storyguide could employ one of the story seeds mentioned above if he wants to make the visit more memorable, or if more bonding between the player characters and Rufus is needed.

## Rufus's Vision

Unbeknown to the player characters, Rufus has a vision (from his Flaw of the same name) on his last night at the characters' covenant. It is centered around an heirloom that once belonged to his ancestor Giaro. In his vision, Rufus foresaw that if he should leave the covenant without his claw necklace then things would go very badly for himself; however, if he

## Galera, Redcap of House Mercere

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 26

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Redcap; Improved Characteristics, Latent Magical Ability, Magic Sensitivity, Privileged Upbringing, Puissant Bows, Well Traveled\*, Dark Secret, Envious, Careless with Bows\*\*, Compulsion (theft of magic)

\* House Virtue

\*\* Grogs, page 77 (a zero is automatically a botch when using Bows Ability; roll botch dice as normal)

**Personality Traits:** Jealous of The Gift +5, Impulsive +2, Loyal to Atorcoppe +1

**Combat:**

**Short sword & Buckler:** Init -2, Attack +11, Defense +6, Damage +6

**Short Bow:** Init -4, Attack +13, Defense +6, Damage +7

**Dagger:** Init -3, Attack +5, Defense -1, Damage +4

**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: Tribunal 4 (covenants), Area Lore: Neighboring Tribunal 2 (roads), Artes Liberales 2 (deciphering handwriting), Animal Handling 2 (horses), Athletics 2 (slippery conditions), Awareness 3 (emotional states), Bargain 2 (lodging), Bows 4+2 (short bow),

Chirurgy 1 (binding wounds), Folk Ken 2 (magi), Guile 4 (hiding feelings), Latin 4 (Hermetic), Legerde-main 4 (palming objects), Living Language 3 (local dialect), Magic Sensitivity 3 (enchantments), Magic Theory 1 (spells), Native Language 5 (local dialect), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (covenants), Ride 1 (long distance), Single Weapon 4 (buckler), Stealth 2 (woodland), Survival 2 (roadside)

**Equipment:** Partial heavy leather armor, short sword, short bow, buckler, enchantments listed below, traveling pack, narrow-bladed dagger

**Enchantments carried:**

*Mantle of Mundane Mien*, MuIm 12; Pen 0, 3/day: This short cape allows the wearer to change her appearance, voice and smell. Galera usually takes the form of an unassuming and wholly unremarkable man or woman in plain clothing (Base 3, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +5 item maintains concentration, +2 3/day)

*Shoe of Swift Flight*, ReCo(An,He,Te) 25; Pen 0, 24/day: A leather shoe with a wooden sole; it has a matching but non-magical partner. Allows the wearer to move at remarkable speeds to any point within 50 paces in a single round regardless of intervening terrain, although the destination must be visible from the wearer's starting position (Base 15, +1 Touch, free requisites, +5 24/day)

*Hunter's Crippling Arrow*, PeCo(An) 28; Pen 20, 6/day: Created using tethered magic (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 101), arrows shot from this enchanted bow deliver

crippling wounds to humans and animals. Damage is inflicted as normal but the part of the body struck (designated by the wielder) is left temporarily unusable. The target acquires a Minor Flaw such as Lame, Missing Hand, or Missing Eye. The Flaw disappears once the wound heals, or after one day if no damage was inflicted (PeCo 5, +1 Touch, +1 requisite, +10 Pen 20, +3 6/day, Tethered)

*Crystal Ring*, InVi 20; Pen 0, 1/day: This ring creates an effect identical to *The Invisible Eye Revealed*, allowing Galera to detect Intellego spells of Level 30 or less used against her, by the ring becoming icy cold. This enchantment was not given her by her House but was stolen from the effects of a deceased Redcap (Base effect, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +5 item maintains concentration)

**Encumbrance (combat):** 1 (2); (non combat): 3 (4)

**Vis:** none

**Appearance:** A sharp-featured athletic woman with short blonde hair. She wears a long blue overtunic; this is a little short for a woman's gown and her white hose can be seen beneath. On the road she dons a boiled leather cuirass. She has a short brown hooded cape that conceals the short sword at her side. She drops her pack and spare weapons when in combat, reducing her Encumbrance. Galera keeps her red cap in a pouch, donning it only when she greets magi. She tends to activate her *Crystal Ring* at the same time.

left wearing it as usual then things would go very badly for the Order of Hermes. Faced with a difficult decision, his loyalty to the Order won over concerns of his own personal safety and he decided to hide the necklace in the guest room in which he was staying. He has no idea of the significance of the object.

### Galera's Arrival

A season or two after the departure of Rufus — perhaps after the conclusion of an unrelated story — the covenant is visited by another Redcap, Rufus's fiancée Galera. It is unlikely that the characters have met Galera before; her route covers a different part of the Tribunal; maybe even a different Tribunal altogether.

Galera requests an audience with the covenant's magi and ask them about Rufus's visit. She then tells them that Rufus did not return home at the conclusion of his itinerary, and he is now several months late. Galera has been traveling his route in reverse and the characters' covenant is the first that she's visited who have seen Rufus — he must have disappeared sometime after leaving here. Player characters who have been friendly to Rufus may remember (on a Perception + Folk Ken roll against an Ease Factor of 9) that he seemed more somber and thoughtful than usual on the morning he

departed but when asked he attributed this to a poor night's sleep.

Galera expresses concern for Rufus's safety, but player characters succeeding a Perception + Folk Ken roll against an Ease Factor of 12 get the impression that she is acting like she should be concerned rather than actually being worried for him. This can be easily attributed to the lack of true affection between the two; after all, they have never met. Galera is careful to not display open hostility toward Hermetic magi, but neither does she bother to feign friendliness. The Gift often provokes such behavior, but in Galera's case it is spiked with envy.

While she is with the player characters, Galera attempts to gather Arcane Connections to them. She only does this if opportunities present themselves; she will not jeopardize her task to succeed here. For example, if a magus is wounded she offers her skills as a chirurgeon and then keeps a blood-soaked rag. She might steal clothes from the laundry while at the covenant, or even purchase a lesser enchantment from them with vis. She only succeeds in this if the player characters are careless.

### UNCOVERING GALERA'S PLAN

In truth, Galera knows exactly where Rufus is, murdered by her own hand in a

secret hideout several days' journey from the covenant. She hopes that his ghost might desire to give up the item to people he trusts, such as the player characters. Her plan is to accompany them to the hideout, sticking close to them so that when they find the claw she can get her hands on it.

Suspicious characters might distrust Galera and her motives. Her stated reasons for looking for Rufus are quite valid and unless they resort to magical methods (see Insert) they are unlikely to discover her true motives. However, if they are clever, paranoid, and prepared to break the Code they may be able to catch Galera's falsity (although she is an accomplished liar, she's not very bright). Her crystal ring should warn her of any attempts to scry on her, allowing her to make a getaway (see The Traitor's Fate, later). If she can preserve her cover, she raises formal charges against the characters, then attempts a pre-tribunal 'reconciliation' in order to return to the covenant and search for the claw again. However, it is not vital to the rest of the story to keep Galera's true motives from the characters at this point, although it will change the tone of the remaining story if they are able to uncover her betrayal this early on. Magical interrogation of Galera can lead the characters directly to Rufus's body and deliver the claw safely into their hands without any danger of Galera snatching it.

## Rufus, Redcap of House Mercere

Only partial statistics are given here, since all of his action occurs off-scene.

**Age:** 22

**Virtues and Flaws:** Redcap; Enduring Constitution, Strong-Willed; Visions

**Personality Traits:** Loyal to Order +3, Innocent +2, Cheerful +1

**Equipment:** A short sword, a brass medal depicting Galera, a glossy black claw on a thong, and the following enchantments:

**Oilcloth of Dry Nights;** ReAq 6; Pen 0, 24/day: This oilcloth is an Invested Item with two powers. It is eight feet long and five feet wide. This first effect causes it to repel all water. (Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 slightly unnatural control, +1 2/day)

**Oilcloth of Useful Shapes;** MuHe 12; Pen 0, 6/day: The above oilcloth can become as rigid as wood on command. Rufus can fold it into a shape such as a boat, tent, or plank for crossing streams before uttering the trigger. The cloth retains its shape until shaken vigorously. (Base 3, +1 Conc; +5 maintains concentration, +3 6/day)

**Bowl of Content Stomachs;** Crlg 11; Pen 0, 3/day: A bowl that warms anything placed within it and keeps it warm indefinitely (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc; +5 maintains concentration, +2 3/day)

**Soup Stone;** Mulfm 11; Pen 0, 3/day: A stone that, when placed in the bottom of a

cooking pot, improves the smell and taste of any food with which it comes into contact, making the even worst food delicious (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc; +5 maintains concentration, +2 3/day)

**Plate of Safe Night's Sleep;** ReAn 5; Pen 0, 1/day: A brass fireplate that, when a fire is lit upon it, protects the lighter of the fire from attacks by mundane animals. (Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 Sun)

**Appearance:** A young man in sturdy traveler's clothes; he tends to wear his red cap at all times. He has dark hair and a clean-shaven handsome face and is often mistaken for being much younger than he is.

If it helps the story, Atorcoppe could be present when the characters meet with Galera, assuming he is able to enter the *Aegis of the Hearth*. He can listen in on conversations and watch the characters' actions, and clue Galera in on any plans to her detriment.

## On The Redcap's Trail

Having resolved to find Rufus, the characters must come up with a means to track him down. They may search his room for some clue or Arcane Connection to Rufus they can use. It is also possible that the characters deliberately harvested an Arcane Connection from the Redcap, although they have no legitimate reason to have done so. If they do possess an Arcane Connection and have the appropriate spells to locate him using

### A Redcap's End

Alas, Rufus is not fated to return to the covenant alive. At Atorcoppe's instigation he is kidnapped by Galera wearing a magical disguise. When she discovered that he did not have the claw, she subjected him to grisly torture. Rufus's willpower and high tolerance to pain meant that he did not give up the location of the claw before his body gave out and he died under Galera's knife without ever realizing that it was his betrothed who had betrayed him. His death formed the sacrifice needed for Atorcoppe to Initiate the External Soul Virtue, which he placed inside the heart of Galera's son Simon. Neither Rufus nor Galera know about this Initiation. Simon does not feature in this story; the player characters first meet him at the end of story two.

Rufus's torments did not end with his death. Atorcoppe summoned his ghost and subjected it to further torture, but still he did not break. Atorcoppe's plan is to allow the player characters to find the body of the murdered Redcap. Hopefully, Rufus's ghost will give up his secrets to them before moving on and Galera can swoop in and claim the claw for herself.

it, they can speed their search and bypass some of the distractions and false leads in this section. They could determine his direction, distance and that he is already dead. *The Inexorable Search* will fail, but its variant *Tracing the Trail of Death's Stench* brings them to the village near the abandoned fort (see *Caught (Kid-)Napping*, below), since maps probably aren't good enough to be more precise.

Failing magical means, the characters must resort to tried and tested mundane methods for tracking someone down. This task may be delegated to grogs and companions, or else might involve the player magi taking a direct hand.

### SEARCHING THE ROOM

It is unlikely that anything in the room in which Rufus stayed while at the covenant still retains an active Arcane Connection to him; indeed it may have been reused since his departure. A careful search of the room and a successful Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 12, reveals signs of concealment a wobbly flagstone or a loose brick in the wall. The claw is about six inches long and deeply curved. It has the texture of polished horn and is a glossy black in color. It is attached to a leather thong to be worn as a necklace. It is over 400 years old and an expired Arcane Connection; magical investigation can reveal little more. Despite the fact he has carried it for several years, like his ancestors, the claw has not become an Arcane Connection to Rufus, which is curious but not unlikely.

Finding the claw will not help the characters find Rufus. If they surmise that Rufus hid it, they may suspect him of wrongdoing. This just gives the characters more reason to find him. If the characters find the claw at this stage and share this discovery with Galera, go straight to Galera's Gambit (later). If she manages to secure the claw Galera exits this part of the story since she now has no need to track Rufus down. She'll find some pretense to leave the search party and won't be seen again. The player characters might still want to find Rufus, out of concern or suspicion.

### ENCOUNTERS ON THE ROAD

Assuming that the characters are not able to trace Rufus with magic, they have to retrace Rufus's steps physically. It can be assumed that he used roads and stayed in towns and wayside inns on the route to the next covenant. Depending on the locations of the two covenants (the characters' and their neighbors'), there may be multiple routes available; Rufus took the quickest route, but this might vary according to season, something a character with an appropriate Area Lore will know. An Intelligence + Area Lore roll against an Ease Factor of 9 allows a character to pick the opti-

### Magical Investigations

Rufus is a magus of the Order and magical attempts to find him are scrying, even if this is justified in the interests of his safety. Investigation immunity (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 62) does not apply here since Rufus is not under investigation for any crime. Claiming concern for a magus's life in order to scry is not a defense, else any magus could use this excuse to bypass the Code. Nevertheless, the player characters might feel they have a strong defense since genuine concern for his wellbeing has been raised by a third party. However, there is precious little they can do without an Arcane Connection.

Player characters, even players of Quaesitor characters, have no right to submit Galera to questioning with magical verification even if they somehow have suspicions about her. Even asking her to do so is a grave insult. Her distrust of the characters can be attributed to their Gifts and her refusal to submit to magical questioning is supported by the Code of Hermes. Nevertheless, if she refuses then they may refuse to help. In this case, Galera leaves. The characters will receive a visit from a more senior Redcap a season later wanting to know what happened to Rufus and why they refused to help Galera.

## Thrice-Told Tales

mal route for the right time of year that matches that traveled by Rufus. Otherwise, the characters might have to investigate multiple leads before finding word of Rufus's passing.

Once the most likely route (or routes) have been determined, the characters need to visit each way point on the route and search for witnesses to Rufus's journey. They get a definite sighting on the first settlement from the characters' covenant; a tavern here is commonly used by Redcaps slaking their thirst after a long journey, or else staying the night before making the last leg to the covenant.

The storyguide can make as much or as little of this stage of the story as desired. Some example events along the way are listed below; these should be interspersed with mundane sights associated with travel. Some of these are genuine sightings of Rufus and allow the characters to narrow down the place where he disappeared. Others are false leads and red herrings.

- A poacher shared a campsite with Rufus a few days out from the characters' covenant; it was a stormy night and the man kindly shared his oilcloth with the trapper while the latter shared some meat for the pot. He remembers that the oilcloth was wondrously good at repelling the heavy rain. When the storm cleared, they parted company.
- An innkeeper claims that a man matching Rufus's description absconded without paying the shilling for a week's stay. He can give them the names of several of his patrons who spoke to him, but not before the outstanding bill is paid. The characters could spend a fair bit of time chasing down the leads before realizing that they are not tracking down Rufus at all; the innkeeper was just trying to recoup the losses incurred by another guest.
- A leper hobbles down the road, ringing his wooden bell to warn the living of his approach. A character might notice he has a pair of turn-shoes of the sort favored by Rufus (he carried several spare sets since they wear out so frequently). The

leper is telling the truth when he tells them that they were donated to him by a charitable young man. However, the leper has now worn them too long for them to retain an Arcane Connection to Rufus.

Galera, assuming she is accompanying the characters, may have to prompt the characters if they go too far off track. This might be done in a ham-fisted way (since she lacks the intelligence for subtlety), raising suspicion amongst the player characters that there is more going on here. For example, she might fake a sighting of Rufus from a man in the market but the witness is mysteriously unavailable for questioning if the player characters want more information.

## Caught (Kid-)Napping

After following a mixture of genuine and false leads, the characters eventually get to the end of the trail: a village close to the last positive sighting of Rufus. Characters led by magic come to the same village. Several villagers remember the Redcap since he replenished his supplies of food and drink here, buying bread, cheese, ale, and bacon, as well as leeks and a sack of last year's peas. The villagers say that they warned Rufus about robbers on the road ahead, who have been known to kidnap travelers and ransom them back to their relatives.

Tracking down the robbers shouldn't be too hard. Occasionally, men whom the villagers suspect of being part of this robber band come into the village in search of ale or supplies. The villagers do not inform on the ruffians unless it appears that the player characters are capable of defeating them; they don't want to have to deal with any retribution once the characters have moved on. The villagers suspect that they are camped out at a shepherd's hut which overlooks the road to the east.

## Cob's Band

The robbers, lead by a ruffian called Cob, have been hired by Galera in order to lead the characters to the hideout. She used her enchanted sleeve to take the appearance of a man in all dealings with Cob and his men. She never supplied them with a name; but she paid them handsomely for every traveler they brought to an abandoned fort deep in the woods. These captives — irrelevant except for maintaining the presence of the kidnappers — were eaten by the monstrous spiders who occupy the fort (see *A Web-Shrouded Ruin*, later).

When the bandits are encountered, Galera reminds the characters (if necessary) to leave at least one alive for questioning. Sufficient force or magical inducement can make the ruffians reveal the following information:

- They are paid to take captives. Their employer told them that he ransoms the captives back to their relatives and the ruffians get a cut of the profits. They haven't captured anyone recently, nor have they seen their employer since he paid them for their last victim. They can identify Rufus's description as the last victim they took.
- Their employer lives in a ruined fort in the woods, about ten miles south of the village. This is where they delivered their captives. They were told not to enter the fort; if there was no-one to meet them they should just leave the captive tied up amongst the trees. Their employer would normally turn up with their share a few weeks later.
- Their employer has an entirely unremarkable appearance. He's well spoken, probably educated, but is of average height and weight, with brown hair and gray eyes. Cob, who spoke to him most, was of the impression that this man was merely a lackey for another.

The villagers know the ruin in question and can give directions to it if the player characters don't trust taking one of the ruffians with them.

If the player characters fail to get an-



swers from the ruffians, then they might have to have the gaps filled in by the villagers. A shepherd in the village has seen them in the past heading south with a captive and a search in the area reveals the ruined fort after a few days' searching.

#### THE TRAIL TO THE LAIR

The trail to the lair enters a tangled woodland filled with thick undergrowth. The canopy is thick and little light filters down to the forest floor. There are no game trails and few birds, a fact noted as unnatural by anyone succeeding in an Intelligence + Hunt roll against an Ease Factor of 9. All the game has been eaten by the monstrous spiders that guard the lair and the characters may come across the corpse of an unfortunate animal sucked dry of its vital fluids.

#### A Grisly Fate

The ruined fort has been the hideout for Galera and Atorcoppe. Galera brought Rufus here and tortured him, when he failed to give up the location of his claw necklace she ritually murdered him and Atorcoppe tortured his ghost. Still Rufus held out on them, but he has been broken by his ordeal and his spirit is much diminished. At no time did Galera reveal who she was; she and her fiancée had never met in person, and she used her disguise (nearly) all the time.

#### A WEB-SHROUDED RUIN

Atorcoppe and Galera made their lair in a forgotten ruin in a particularly dark part of the forest, where there is a Magic aura of 3. The entire aura has much deeper shadows than would be expected given the light sources; even during bright daylight, the trees around the fort provide heavy concealment (equivalent to a moonless night, *Lords of*

*Men* page 130). Sources of light do not seem to penetrate deep into the darkness and improve visibility only slightly within one to five paces, depending on the brightness of the light.

The exterior of the ruin and the trees around it are the home of a number of monstrous spiders summoned by Atorcoppe. The spiders are extremely sensitive to approaching game, and as they detect creatures approaching they silently move into ambush positions, relying on their camouflage and the darkness to conceal them.

The storyguide should decide how many spiders are involved in the attack against the characters; more than one per character constitutes a serious challenge. Due to the darkness, the spiders — who are not affected by it — receive a +6 to Attack Totals and +9 to Defense Totals against opponents who are hampered by the darkness. The spiders initiate their attacks from ambush. All characters must make a Perception + Awareness roll; the Ease Factor could be as high as 19 (for the spider's Dexterity + Stealth +3 (for camouflage) +9 (for darkness)) if the characters are still affected by the heavy concealment. All characters who fail are successfully ambushed by the spiders as they drop into combat as an untrained

#### Cob's Band

Cob's ruffians should be treated as Standard Soldiers (ArM5, page 22), except that they are wearing metal reinforced leather armor and so have a Soak of +4 (in partial armor) or +6 (in full armor) and their Encumbrance is 0 (or 1 in full armor). There are seven men in all, who divide into two Trained Groups in combat: Cob (who has a Leadership of 3) leads one group and his brother Talbot (Leadership 2) leads the other.

The ruffians may resort to dirty tricks such as trying to trip, disarm, or grapple opponents; see ArM5 page 175 or *Lords of Men* page 133 – 134 for more details. They have practiced using these tricks when fighting as a Trained Group and can use their Group Bonus to assist any of these special effects.

group. Their first attack is a grapple, trying to incapacitate as many opponents as possible. A spider does not continue to attack an opponent once he is swathed in webs but tries to escape with its prize or eliminate another opponent. If faced with severe opposition, a spider retreats into the trees if it has managed to bite or envenom its prey; it can then use its *Still the Wriggling Fly* power from a safe distance and retrieve its meal later. The spiders do not distinguish between human and animal targets, and spread their

attacks amongst the characters and any horses or large familiars.

In the fight against the spiders, Galera employs her enchanted bow to precisely place arrows to help out hard-pressed characters (its Penetration is sufficiently high to damage the spiders). While she knows this place and what it conceals, she desires to be seen helping the characters in order to allay suspicion. If the player characters were lead here by a captive ruffian, he is equally targeted by the spiders.

## BENEATH THE RUIN

The keep is little more than a shell swathed in spiders' webs. None of its exterior walls are complete and all internal structures are entirely absent. There is a set of stone stairs leading down from what was the kitchen into the cellar, notable because the stairs are relatively free from the sheets of cobwebs that shroud the rest of the fort. The keep used natural caves beneath the hill to store food and keep it cool; these pas-

## Monstrous Spider

**Magic Might:** 16 (Animal)  
**Season:** Spring  
**Characteristics:** Cun +2, Per 0, Pre -6, Com -5, Str +4, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik -2  
**Size:** +2  
**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Animal, Magical Monster, Essential Virtue, Large, Lesser Immunity (spider webs), Perfect Balance, Puissant Athletics, Fear (fire), Hatred (minor)  
**Mundane Qualities:** Ambush Predator, Camouflage, Grappler, Loathsome Appearance, Skilled Climber, Shell, Venomous  
**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Gigantic x 4, Greater Powers x 2, Improved Abilities x 2, Improved Characteristics, Improved Powers, Improved Soak, Lesser Powers, Minor Flaw (Restricted Power), Reduced Might x 3, Susceptible to Deprivation  
**Personality Traits:** Hateful +3, Sensitive to Vibrations (Perception)\* +3, Hungry +2, Spider\* +3, Brave -2

\* Essential Trait

### Combat:

**Bite:** Init -2, Attack +13, Defense +7, Damage +8

**Grapple:** Init -2, Attack +9, Defense +4, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +10

**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 1 (ambush points), Athletics 4+2 (climbing), Awareness 3 (sense of touch), Brawl 5 (grapple), Hunt 3 (setting snares), Stealth 3 (ambush)

**Powers:**  
**Venomous Bite** (non magical): When the spider attacks, compare its Attack Advantage to the victim's armor Protection (not his Soak). If the spider's advantage is higher, the victim is envenomed; make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 9 or suffer a Medium Wound. An opponent can be envenomed even if they take no wound from the bite itself. Spider bites suffer a -3 penalty to Wound Recovery rolls.  
*Still the Wriggling Fly*, 1 point, Init -3, Corpus or Animal: Only those bitten by the spider (those who have taken a wound from either the bite or the venom) can be affected by this power, due to the Restricted Power Flaw. The power may be used at any time subsequent to the bite when the target is within Range, until all inflicted wounds have healed. If the effect Penetrates Magic Resistance, the target is immobilized, unable to move any part of his body. Rego Corpus (Animal) 30 (Level 5, +2 Voice, +2 Sun, +1 requisite) Greater Power (30 levels, -2 Might cost, +2 Init)

**Arachne's Child**, 0 points, Init -12, Animal: With this power, the spider can create all manner of threads, ropes and nets. Each use of this power can create a rope strong enough to support the creature's weight, or webbing that requires a Strength roll of Ease Factor 9 (or a sharp implement) to escape. CrAn 25 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 flexibility) Lesser Power (25 levels, -5 Might cost from Improved Powers)  
*Weave the Silken Shroud*, 2 points, Init -2,

Animal: as *The Weaver's Trap of Webs* (ArM5 page 117) but Range: Touch. Creo Animal 30 (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +2 Group) Greater Power (30 levels, -1 Might cost, +3 Init)

**Vis:** 4 pawns of Animal, in fangs

**Appearance:** A spider the size of a horse, with a swollen abdomen marked with rune-like figures hidden amongst its cryptic coloration. It has several large glossy eyes that look in all directions without blinking. An oversized pair of polished black fangs quiver in anticipation of a meal.

A spider has a +3 bonus to all rolls involving climbing and a +3 bonus to Stealth rolls when it is motionless, thanks to its coloration. If it has successfully crept up on its prey, it automatically wins Initiative and has a +3 to Attack Totals for the first round of combat only; this attack is usually a grapple. It may attempt to grapple any creature of Size +3 or less and can add its grapple strength to any bite Attack Totals made against a grappled opponent. It may immobilize any grappled opponents with silk using one of its powers. Due to its Lesser Immunity Virtue, a monstrous spider is immune to ensnarement by its own or another's webs.

The monstrous spiders are also capable of generating natural webbing, which, unlike that created with their *Arachne's Child* power, is not hampered by Magic Resistance. This webbing takes minutes or hours to produce and so is useless in combat, but does not have the limited duration of their magical webs.

sages have subsequently been widened and connected to larger caves.

From the back of the cellar cave, several passages lead deeper into the hillside. Some of these passages are the haunt of spiders and are shrouded with sticky webs to capture intruding animals. Others are apparently clear, suggesting recent use, but these passages have near-invisible threads hanging from the ceiling and covered in blobs of sticky glue laid by smaller cousins of the spiders outside. Anyone who does not spot the threads (this requires a Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 9 even in the best light; add three to the Ease Factor if carrying open flames rather than lanterns) is immediately caught and tangled up in neighboring threads. A struggling character serves only to entangle herself further; the Ease Factor for the Strength stress roll to escape is initially 6 but increases by three

for every failed roll. It takes one round per 3 points of the current Ease Factor to cut someone free with a blade. There may be more monstrous spiders lurking in the cavern beyond, waiting to attack anyone captured in this trap. Only the entrapped character and perhaps one other character can face the spider due to the restricted space in the tunnel.

Most of these passages lead ultimately to a large cavern carved out by an underground stream. The stream flows through a deep ravine over ten paces wide, although the ravine is crossed by three thick ropes of spider silk and cobweb sheeting slung between them. The ropes are thick enough to support the weight of the monstrous spiders, so are certainly strong enough to bear a human's weight. A Dexterity + Athletics – Encumbrance stress roll against an Ease Factor of 12 is required to cross the ravine, but characters can reduce the Ease Factor by three if they take twice as long and do it on their hands and knees. On a failure, the character tumbles from the thread onto the cobwebs below; on a botch the thread breaks, preventing anyone else from using it.

Even if a character does fall, the thick cobweb sheets slow his descent into the ravine and possibly even arrest his fall. Roll a simple die and add the character's Burden. If the result is six or more, then the cobwebs break and the character plummets to the ravine floor. The same roll is needed to clamber across the cobwebs to either side of the ravine, although the character only falls on a nine or more when walking on the webs rather than falling upon them. If the character does fall through the cobwebs, it is fifteen paces to the floor of the ravine; however the slowing effects of the cobwebs counts as a soft surface, halving the damage to +12. Magi may have other means at their disposal to cross the ravine safely. There are more transparent sticky threads hanging from the ceiling to entrap birds, bats and flying characters.

As mentioned before, there may be more monstrous spiders in this chamber; they tend to wait until characters are entrapped in the sticky threads or midway crossing the spidersilk bridge before showing themselves. Note that spiders'

webs are only barely flammable and cannot be easily set on fire. Flames inflicting +10 damage or more are needed to do the job. Furthermore, most of these webs are natural creations of the spiders rather than created using their *Arachne's Child* power.

### A REDCAP'S GHOST

On the far side of the ravine is just one passageway, which leads into a web-lined chamber. Hanging by its ankle on a thread of spider silk is the desiccated corpse of Rufus. The body shows clear signs of being heavily beaten and cut and is covered in countless spider bites, many of them surrounded by black tissue. Close inspection also reveals he has been stabbed in the heart with a narrow blade. The desiccation is not natural, but was caused by the feeding of many spiders; this has also preserved the corpse.

Attempts to use *Whispers Through the Black Gate* on Rufus's body will fail, since Rufus's spirit has been summoned from his corpse as a ghost. However, the ghost manifests a visible illusion once it notices the presence of the characters, which may take the spirit several minutes in his current state. Rufus was tortured prior to his death and then magically wracked as a spirit, and only the thinnest thread of his personality remains. His memories are shattered and he is barely able to maintain this illusory form, which keeps fading whenever his concentration wavers. With the appropriate encouragement, Rufus can haltingly recount what happened to him. He does not recall Galera's role in his abduction or her presence at Atorcoppe's side; his memory is too fragmentary and she was wearing her illusory form, which he has never seen. Characters already suspicious of Galera may notice her subtle release of breath when it becomes clear there are convenient gaps in his recollection.

He can tell the characters that he was tortured by a plain-looking man with a nondescript face. He will also describe his torturer as a horrifically tall man with a hunched back, who was clothed in a dark cloak that rippled obscenely like there was something unwholesome beneath it. He constantly confuses the

## Expanding the Caves

The caverns beneath the abandoned fort are part of an old mine, and there are miles of interconnecting tunnels. This part of the story could easily be expanded into an exploratory foray into the depths. There are a number of perils in the mine: maze-like tunnels in which it is easy to get lost; collapsing pit shafts; underground waterfalls; flooded caves; and possibly trapdoor spiders, mine faeries, and earth elementals.

Galera has a hidden lair within the mines where she stashes her stolen magical items and other treasures; this is featured in the third story in this chapter. If she is accompanying the characters she discourages exploration, asking them to concentrate on finding Rufus. If, by some miracle, they manage to discover Galera's hidey-hole at this point, then they discover Galera's secret early and she takes steps to eliminate them, such as causing a cave-in. Furthermore, in the third story Damhan-Allaiddh will need a different pretext to get the characters to take Simon out of the covenant and to the stone circle.

two; these are his torturers before and after his death, respectively. The ghost has a good recollection of what both of his torturers wanted; it is the memory of this question that has formed an anchor for his drifting spirit. However, he only agrees to tell the characters if they get him elsewhere; he doesn't feel comfortable mentioning it in the room where he died to keep this very secret.

Magical investigation might be able to reveal things that Rufus can not. His ghost was formed from his departing spirit by Atorcoppe's Pictish necromancy with an effect of seventh magnitude, and remnants of that magic may linger. Atorcoppe's sigil lingers on the body, a sensation like a keen knife blade.

The characters have to retrieve Rufus's body if they want to move his ghost; he is currently tied to haunting his own mortal remains. This means somehow ferrying the corpse safely across the ravine, negotiating any remaining spiders. Once well away from the ruined fort, Rufus can reveal that his torturers wanted his claw and how he hid it at the covenant.

## Galera's Gambit

When the characters return to their covenant and retrieve the claw from its hiding place, Galera is on the verge of success; all she needs to do is get it away from the characters. Her eagerness this close to her triumph might well prove to be her undoing.

What move she makes next depends very much on the circumstances with which the player characters present her; some possible gambits are given below and she might try several of these. Whenever in the presence of the claw, her emotions may betray her and characters can make a Perception + Folk Ken roll against an Ease Factor of 12 to divine that she seems unduly eager to get her hands on it.

- Galera suggests that she should take it to a suitable specialist in the Order for identification and as quickly as possible. She may even propose leaving immediately, before perhaps they have even decided to whom to take it.
- She counsels against destroying it;

it could be disastrous, she says, to do so before finding out what it is. If the characters suggest that it could be cursed or bear a baneful enchantment, she will volunteer to take it to an expert forthwith. She believes that the claw is Atorcoppe's external soul and that destroying it will kill her mentor. This is not true but a ruse used by Atorcoppe as insurance in case Galera is compromised (see *The Fate of Galera*, later.)

- If the characters are adamant in keeping it, she looks for an opportunity to steal the claw and escape into the night. She'll make sure she knows where they are keeping it and attempt to filch it later on.
- Failing all this, Galera may simply try to snatch the claw right in front of the characters. She is both desperate and borderline insane, so she does not wait for a sensible time to do this. She is relies on the element of surprise to make her escape; she is neither a magus nor a warrior. If the characters have an *Aegis of the Hearth* and have not given Galera a token to allow her to use her enchantments, then they may have a chance to catch her before she can use her shoe to escape.

If the characters have no reason to distrust Galera, there is every chance she escapes with the claw.

### THE TRAITOR'S FATE

The storyguide should make every reasonable effort to allow Galera to escape from the player characters, with or without the claw. She may not have magical abilities of her own, but she understands Hermetic magic and its capabilities. She is careful not to leave behind Arcane Connections, for example, and knows that she cannot be targeted if she cannot be sensed.

However, player characters should not be denied a victory over her if they have anticipated her actions or displayed ingenuity in finding her. Galera's actions clearly indicate that she has forsaken the Oath of Hermes and a Tribunal doubtless will declare a Wizard's March against her, freeing the player characters from any

consequences of slaying her.

If they fight Galera, the characters may take pains to capture rather than kill her, wanting to interrogate the traitor or subject her to the justice of the Order of Hermes. With the right magic, she can be interrogated after death as well. She boasts of her actions and expound upon her motives. She believes she was serving Damhan-Allaidh (although she can also supply the name Atorcoppe), but has no actual proof that this is the case. He promised to give her The Gift, setting right the cruel twist of fate of her youth. Galera cannot give up the location of Atorcoppe, since she doesn't know where he goes when he is not with her. She also believes that the tiniest scratch on Giaro's Claw will kill Atorcoppe.

If she is handed into the custody of the Order in preparation for a trial, the storyguide might decide on an off-stage jailbreak perpetrated by Atorcoppe, perhaps assisted covertly by further agents within the Order.

Of course, Galera could just walk away with the claw and the player characters never discover her villainy. She continues to work as a Redcap, but she neglects her duties and is reprimanded by her Primus; soon after she abandons the Order altogether.

## Interval One

The preceding story may end in an unsatisfactory manner for the characters if Galera escapes with the claw. However, there are no immediate repercussions: Galera has nursed her jealousy for ten years and she can wait longer still if needed. Nevertheless, the five year gap between now and when the player characters next encounter Galera is not uneventful. As well as participating in further unrelated stories, the characters may decide to do some research.

The proposed gap of five years can be lengthened if necessary, but should not be shortened. The only repercussion of more than five years is that Galera will be further along in her studies, her plans will be more advanced, and her son will be older (he was around five years old at the time of the previous story).

## Research

There are some questions that the player characters may be interested in answering. First and foremost, what is this claw that was of sufficient importance to drive one Redcap to murder another? Rufus's vision concerning the claw proved true; things did indeed go very badly for him. Rufus's ghost can name his torturer as "Atorcoppe" and he may have also heard the name "Damhan-Allaith" in the ruined fort. Galera, if she was captured, can provide similar information.

### GIARO'S CLAW

The first order of business should be to find out more about Rufus's heirloom. His ghost, if available, knows its history. It belonged to his ancestor Giaro, who was one of the first Redcaps and a boon companion of Pralix. He was her aide-de-camp during her war with Damhan-Allaith, and the claw was wrested from the corpse of Damhan-Allaith after Pralix had slain him. As far as he knows, it has no special properties.

### DAMHAN-ALLAIDH

All apprentices are taught the basic history of Damhan-Allaith, as recounted in ArM5, page 10. To learn more, characters may have to consult specialists, or research among annals of the history of the Order of Hermes. A detailed history of Damhan-Allaith, such as that that can be revealed through a dedicated search, is provided as an appendix.

## Actions of the Antagonists

The actions of Atorcoppe and Galera depend upon their level of success in the first part of the story. The options below are arranged in order of decreasing advantage to Atorcoppe's plans.

### THE FATE OF GIARO'S CLAW

#### Atorcoppe is now in possession of Giaro's Claw

After receiving the Claw from Galera, Atorcoppe destroys it himself, completing the pending Initiation he began over 400 years ago. This has no immediate effect, since the girl he had intended to possess is long dead, but Atorcoppe is confident that he will now be able to recommence his stalled plans for reincarnation by using Simon instead. Since he has now finally shed his Anglo-Saxon persona, he returns to the name by which he is most famous: Damhan-Allaith.

#### The player characters destroyed Giaro's Claw

When the characters destroy the Claw, Atorcoppe's age-old Initiation attempt fails. This has much the same effect as the previous outcome, except that Atorcoppe accepts a penalty for the failure: one in every eight magical effects he attempts (determined randomly) fails.

#### Giaro's Claw still exists

Until he can destroy it himself or ar-

range for it to be destroyed, Atorcoppe cannot proceed with his plans. He makes further attempts to discover the Claw's current location and regain it or destroy it, with or without Galera's help.

### THE FATE OF GALERA

#### Galera escaped from the player characters

If he is reborn, Damhan-Allaith honors his promise to Galera and guides her through the rite of Odin's Sacrifice (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 124), which endows her with The Gift. He spends some time tutoring her in magic. However, she has outlived her usefulness and he soon grows bored of her. Damhan-Allaith has one more task for her (see The Tangled Web).

#### Galera was killed

Galera's role in Story Two is taken by another servant of Damhan-Allaith. This individual is a Gifted non-Hermetic wizard who has good reason to hate the Order of Hermes. He may come from a tradition that has been traditionally persecuted by the Order, or perhaps the ha-

## Spiders in Mythic Europe

Spiders are vermin, classed as worms of the air since they are nourished by the air that they draw down to themselves on their webs. They are considered to have the keenest sense of touch of all animals and are used to symbolize that sense.

There are a few types of spider in Mythic Europe that can inflict a painful bite. Species are not distinguished with any accuracy but for modern readers, the following are all capable of a painful bite: widow and false widow spiders (including the infamous malmignatte); yellow sac spiders; black lace-weavers; mouse spiders; woodlouse-eating spiders; and wolf spiders. A spider bite requires a Stamina roll of Ease Factor 3 to avoid a Light Wound from the venom. The Ease Factor is 0 for the less venomous woodlouse-eating spiders and wolf spiders, but 6 for the malmignatte. Be-

ing bitten is painful enough to require a Concentration roll for casting or maintaining a spell, even if it does not result in a wound.

All spider bites are notoriously slow to heal and those suffering a wound from the venom take a -3 penalty to Wound Recovery Rolls for that wound only. Supernatural spiders might carry more serious venom or other consequences; for example, certain faerie spiders can inflict tarantism, a disease causing an irresistible urge to dance (*City & Guild*, page 27). Spider venom is treated using the Medicine Ability; if using the optional rules for Diagnosis and Prognosis from *Art & Academe* (pages 57-58), the severity of the spider venom is equal to 3 + the Ease Factor of the Stamina roll to resist the venom (this includes any increases to the Ease Factor for multiple bites, see later).

tered has more recent basis. The Order is known for policing magically-capable folk in some areas, and family members could have fallen beneath its wrath. It is even possible that the player characters took a leading role in this story, which could take place any time before, or soon after, the first story. This hedge wizard is accompanied by Simon, whom he is intending to make his apprentice, although he has not yet Opened his Gift.

### Galera was captured and imprisoned

Under magical interrogation, Galera reveals that Giaro's Claw is Atorcoppe's external soul and that even a scratch on it will dissipate him forever. This is truly what she believes; Atorcoppe told her this just in case this very scenario came about. Atorcoppe makes no attempt to rescue her unless the Claw was not destroyed and there is a real chance that she will be able to get it for him. If the claw is gone, then he has no need to save her, since he is already in possession of Simon. The second story should be adapted as in the case where Galera was killed.

## Story II: The Tangled Web

In the second story of this chapter, Damhan-Allaiddh recommences his plan for the infiltration and eventual destruction of the Order of Hermes. He is saddled with a minion of limited potential. Galera is not cunning, subtle, or powerful enough to make her valuable to Damhan-Allaiddh; she was merely a means by which he could get hold of Giaro's Claw. Her son Simon is a different matter, however. He was born with The Gift, and at the age of seven he is ripe for apprenticeship. Rather than training Simon himself, Damhan-Allaiddh has a different task in mind for him. He has made Simon's heart into his external soul and plans to have him apprenticed to a magus of the Order of Hermes. Once he has been Opened to the Arts, Damhan-Allaiddh will take over his body. Galera is wholly ignorant of this plan.

While Damhan-Allaiddh plans the downfall of the Order, he permits Galera to exercise her own revenge. Her vindictive nature finds the prospect appealing, and it is an excellent opportunity for her to practice her newly-learned powers. Damhan-Allaiddh doesn't care how clumsy she is; he actually anticipates that she will be killed by Hermetic magi in a Wizard's March. The Tribunal has probably already dismissed any fears the player characters may have had about Damhan-Allaiddh's return, so he's not worried that she may be captured and interrogated; it's more important to him that her Gifted son is

discovered and adopted as an apprentice.

Galera's plan is to attack the characters' food supply, and then wreck any relationship they have with the nobility. She was planning more, but fell foul of her own schemes and is currently imprisoned.

## The Swarm

Two young boys arrive at the covenant. They are tired from the run to the covenant and between them carry a bundle of mud-splattered rags. At the

### Rufus, a Redcap's Shade

**Magic Might:** 5 (Corpus)

**Season:** Spring

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

**Size:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Spirit, Magical Covenfolk, Enduring Constitution, Strong-Willed

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:**

Greater Powers, Major Flaw (Enfeeble), Major Flaw (Low Self Esteem), Temporary Might

**Personality Traits:** Devoid of Hope +3, Forgetful +3, Wracked with Pain +3

**Combat:**

*Fist*\*: Init +1, Attack +1, Defense +1, Damage 0

\* against immaterial targets only

**Soak:** +2

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Tribunal 3 (inns), Code of Hermes 2 (Redcaps), Folk Ken 2 (magi), Latin 4 (Hermetic), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 3 (House Mercere), Profession: Storyteller 3 (children's stories)

**Powers:**

*Eidolon*, 0 points, Init +1, *Imaginem*: Creates an illusionary form that is visible and audible to material beings. This form appears as Rufus did in life but haggard, bruised, and in intense pain. The image can move and speak as directed by Rufus's

shade and lasts until he has no further need for it. Crlm 15 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +2 move at command, +1 intricacy) Greater Power (15 levels, +2 Init, -2 Might cost)

Vis: 1 pawn Rego, in ghostly red cap

**Appearance:** As he did in life, but contorted with great pain and bearing the same scars as his corpse.

These statistics represent the shade of Rufus's spirit, a broken mess left from his physical, mental, and magical torture. Given appropriate rehabilitation, Rufus's shade could join the characters' covenant as an unusual grog or even a companion character. He cannot stray more than 100 paces from his red cap, a symbol of the loyalty to the Order that keeps him on earth. Giving him a church burial does not dismiss his ghost (this only prevents the formation of ghosts and Rufus's shade is already present), but it could prove inconvenient if he hasn't yet shifted his tether to his red cap.

A restored Rufus loses the three Major Magic Inferiorities representing his current condition upon recovery and may regain some of the Virtues, Flaws and Personality Traits he had in life. He is a freshly sprung ghost and has not yet developed all powers or Magic Qualities that he could. He has 15 levels from the Greater Powers Magic Quality left unspent, and could purchase two more points of Magic Qualities without needing to take any Magical Inferiorities.



## Spider Swarms

Even the largest mundane spiders are Size -15. A swarm is a mass of creatures of Size -3 or smaller with a combined Size of +1 or more. Given the almost fluid makeup of a swarm, it is all but impossible to stop one in its tracks. Apply the following rules:

- Swarms ignore defenders and can always reach their intended target.
- Swarms may attack a number of targets equal to the swarm's Size each round.
- At the storyguide's discretion, swarms may have an immunity or resistance to regular weapons; a blade passing harmlessly through a swarm of insects, for instance. On the other hand, they may be vulnerable to buckets of water or a broom (which might do damage as if it were fire).
- Being made up of many smaller individuals, a swarm is hard to destroy. Unless a swarm is destroyed outright, it can disengage and return at full strength after a number of rounds equal to its single highest Wound penalty.
- A swarm of venomous creatures bites or stings numerous times each round. Make one Stamina

roll to resist the venom of all bites received in the same round, but increase the severity of the wound inflicted by one step for each two points of Size above +1. Increase the Ease Factor for the Stamina roll by 1 for each consecutive round of combat to represent the cumulative effect of many hundreds of bites.

- Swarms can combine to form larger swarms. Two swarms combine to increase Size by 1. Five swarms increase Size by 2. Ten swarms increase Size by 3. As well as increasing venom potency due to the increase in Size, add 2 points of Strength and subtract 1 point of Quickness for each point of Size and adjust wound ranges accordingly.

### SPIDER SWARM

**Characteristics:** Cun -1, Per -2, Pre -5, Com -6, Str +2, Sta 0, Dex +2, Qik +4

**Size:** +1

**Virtues and Flaws:** Lightning Reflexes, Infamous

**Mundane Qualities:** Skilled Climber,

Venomous

**Personality Traits:** Spider +5

**Reputations:** Deadly (Local) 4

**Combat:**

**Bite:** Init +8, Attack +9, Defense +3, Damage +3

**Soak:** +0

**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 4 (ambushes), Athletics (running) 5, Awareness 2 (prey), Brawl 4 (bite), Hunt 4 (insects), Stealth 4 (stalking prey), Survival 3 (caves)

**Appearance:** A silent, scuttling mass of glossy bodies and spindly legs.

Spiders are venomous: compare the Attack Advantage to the victim's Protection (not Soak). If the creature's advantage is higher, then the victim suffers the effect of the venom, regardless of whether the bite inflicts an actual wound. See earlier for the effects of the venom. Armor protects as normal against the physical damage of a bite.

covenant gates, likely just as grogs reach them, one of the boys trips and drops one of the object they are carrying. The clay amphora cracks open as it hits the ground, and thousands of spiders pour from within and swarm on every surface. As they climb up people, they bite. The pain might cause the boys to drop the second jar, releasing a second swarm. Statistics for spider swarms are found in a nearby insert; each amphora contains a swarm of Size +1, or both might combine to form a swarm of Size +2.

Once the plague of spiders has been dealt with, one of the grogs can identify the boys; they are brothers from a nearby village that supplies most of the covenant's wheat (or other suitable food-stuff). If the boys survive, or are interrogated *post mortem* with magic, they can tell the characters that they were sent here for information: the amphorae, along with others, had been found buried in a field. The village might assume that

## The Jars of Galera

Inspired by the myth of Pandora, Galera designed the containers for her spider swarms as Greek-style amphorae, which she had made especially so that they would break easily. The spiders were summoned with her new powers of philosophic elementalism, spiders being vermin of the air. Summoning and Controlling a swarm of Size +3 is a 20th level effect for an elementalist; and once summoned she commanded them into several vessels that would hold their tightly-packed bodies; each vessel contains a swarm of Size +1. Each spider has a mark like an asterisk, which is Galera's sigil. The amphorae are not magical, they are just vessels to hold the creatures once summoned. The spiders are natural creatures and are not controlled subsequent to them being sealed inside the amphorae, and do not need to Penetrate Magic Resistance. More information about elementalists can be found in *Hedge Magic Revised Edition* Chapter Two, but sufficient details are provided here to use this story without that source.

these are a consequence or requirement of any magic the player covenant uses to enchant the crops; otherwise it is a case of simple curiosity. In any case, the boys can relate that the villagers were about to start plowing. Clearly it is important to get to the village before the feet of the oxen and the action of the plow break open the delicate jars. Depending on the player characters' actions and the wishes of the storyguide, there are two outcomes from this scene: the characters arrive in time, or the characters arrive too late.

### OPTION ONE: AVERTING THE PLAGUE

When the characters arrive in the village, most of the villagers are out in the fields for plowing, preparing the ground for next year's crops. Those who are not guiding the team of oxen are removing rocks, raking down the tops of the furrows, restoring plot markers, and so on; plowing is an event in which nearly the whole village gets involved.

The fragile Jars of Galera are half-buried in the soil and are clearly intended to be trampled under the feet of the plow-team or field workers. By the time the player characters arrive, plowing has already started. If the characters have acted with great haste in getting here then they may arrive before this happens. It is up to the storyguide how many Jars there are in the field, and how many will activate effectively. However, once one is broken, as afflicted characters flail about the chances that more will be broken rises considerably.

This scene could consist of carefully excavating the Jars from the field or else driving off the spiders once some have broken. Carelessness could easily cause the former to become the latter.

### OPTION TWO: VILLAGE OF THE DEAD

If the storyguide wishes, the player characters may arrive in the village too late to avert disaster. This may also happen if they decide not to visit the home village of the boys immediately despite the obvious danger to its inhabitants.

They may instead be drawn to the village upon hearing about it from a visitor, or investigate when their supplies fail to arrive and hunger threatens.

Under this option, the player characters are confronted with a scene of devastation. Dead and dying peasants lie in their homes, in the streets, and in the fields, their skins cracked and rotting even on the living. Even the team of oxen lie felled amongst the furrows of the field. The sour stench of death hangs heavy in the air. Delicate cobwebs cover the buildings, trees and hedges, although most of the spiders that spun them have dispersed into the surrounding countryside. Those that remain hide in the eaves of the buildings or high in the trees, guarding their webs jealously with fangs and venom. The field still contains unbroken Jars of Galera, and the characters may risk another swarm by entering it without due care.

Many of the dead are still in the field, although some were crawling back to the village to get away from the spiders and worsened their condition through the exertion. The cause of death is probably obvious to anyone who was at the covenant when the boys arrived, but characters who make a Perception + Medicine roll against an Ease Factor of 9 can confirm that the villagers have received massive doses of spider venom. The foul smell of death is a danger to health; all characters spending an hour or more around so many dead bodies must make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 9, or else contract the morbid ague (see Insert). Magi may add their Corpus Form Bonus to the disease avoidance roll; characters realizing the danger can hold a cloth in front of the face and gain a +1 bonus, or a strong-scented posy for a +3 bonus.

There are some survivors, who were near or inside buildings when the plague boiled up, and were able to barricade themselves into a stone building like the chapel or a granary. If the covenant's magi are known to the village, these survivors may blame them for the disaster, thanks to The Gift.

## Caught Red-Handed

Galera has sent a boy to local lord (here called "Lord Abel," but substitute a suitable individual). This boy is not from the village, and the message is that the village has been slaughtered by sorcery. Lord Abel arrives in the village while the characters are there. If there is no local liege, substitute a justice, magistrate, archdeacon, or other official as appropriate. Lord Abel rides amongst armed men. If he arrives amidst dead villagers he holds a cloth across his face to guard himself from the smell. This may alert the characters to the risk of disease but they have probably already been exposed. Now might be a good time to ask for the Disease Avoidance rolls!

Whilst hardly caught in the act, finding the player characters in the midst of a village of beleaguered or dead peasants is highly suspicious, especially if one or more characters have The Gift. Even if the characters have a friendly relationship with the liege lord it will be difficult to explain the situation away, especially with his mesnie knights as witnesses. The opinions of the peasants — assuming that some speak up for the characters given the presence of The Gift — matters little; he pays little attention to his serfs. Lord Abel seems particularly poorly inclined toward those characters: if he was previously an ally then he will be re-served and cool; if he was neutral before he is positively hostile. This is a result of Galera's meddling with Lord Abel's humors through medicinal elementalism.

The circumstances dictate the accusations leveled at the player characters. Thanks to Galera's message, Lord Abel is expecting slaughter. Even if there are no deaths or injuries, this is interpreted as the lord arriving just in time to prevent disaster. Failing all else, the characters are interfering with his serfs' manorial duty. He has his men examine any Jars of Galera removed from the field — possibly leading to an accidental or deliberate breakage and ensuing swarm.

At worst, the magi may need to fight their way free or face summary judgment. At best Lord Abel "asks" them to accompany him back to his court for a formal inquiry. If the characters submit to a judi-

cial investigation, they are escorted back to Lord Abel's seat of power. Nothing is decided immediately; the lord is keen to gather witnesses and hear evidence, especially if he knows that magi are involved. He may not be well-inclined toward the characters, but he is not going to anger the Order of Hermes by not following proper procedure. He may even know that the Order has its own judges, and be planning to contact a Quaesitor. If the characters go peacefully and are known to Lord Abel they are left at liberty. If they are strangers and no one can swear to arraign them at court, then they are unlikely to be offered parole.

### A BATTLE IN THE VILLAGE

If the characters provoke a fight, the lord's men enter combat to protect their liege. His protectors consist of one or more knights (use the Companion Template from *ArM5*, page 22); the exact number depends on the importance of the lord. A landed knight may be attended by one or two knights banneret; a baron may have four or more. These are supplemented by men-at-arms (use the Grog Template for the Standard Soldier from *ArM5*, page 21). Either side may take advantage of the setting during this battle; there are plenty of places in which to hide or provide cover amongst the huts and livestock sheds.

Lord Abel's men are ordered to bring the player characters in alive if possible; assuming that the characters hear this instruction, they have an advantage over their opponents. The lord's men begin by concentrating on non-lethal combat and try to separate out the most dangerous-looking opponent and overwhelming him while another group keeps the rest of the characters occupied. Once one of their number suffers serious injury, or in the face of magical opposition, the men abandon deliberate attempts to preserve lives and do their best to defeat their opponents in the shortest time. It will be down to the lord's chirurgeon to ensure that there is someone left for questioning. Any captives will be imprisoned for at least a week before Lord Abel tries them for their crimes.

## Lord Abel's Castle

The involvement of Lord Abel means that the characters are all but certain to visit his castle.

### GALERA UNDER LOCK AND KEY

Unfortunately for Galera, she has run afoul of her own schemes. She herself has been arrested by Lord Abel's men. She had stayed briefly in the targeted village whilst placing the Jars and was traveling back to her local base of operations when she was accused by one of Lord Abel's subjects. If there is a local troublemaker who has caused problems for the characters in the past then this is an excellent accuser of Galera, and her crime should be chosen to match the circumstances. Most likely she is guilty of some petty act of revenge against a real or imagined slight, which, exacerbated by her Gift, led to a hue and cry and her capture. Typical acts include: burning a crop; emptying a well; or inflict-

## The Morbid Ague

A disease caused by corruption of the sanguine humor by the stench of rotting bodies and the sour smell of spider venom. Characters contracting the disease begin to display symptoms after a few days. They suffer a continuous fever and discolored blemishes on the skin with radiating lines that vaguely resemble spiders; these itch dreadfully. Should the character perform an action that risks worsening their symptoms (*ArM5* page 179; equivalent to a Wound Penalty of -3), they must also make a Stamina + Concentration roll of Ease Factor 6 to avoid fainting.

These symptoms amount to a Serious Disease Penalty (equivalent to a Medium Wound). Characters can make Disease Recovery Rolls every week: a result of 15 or better results in improvement, a 9 is required to remain stable. If using the rules for diseases from *Art & Academe*, the Morbid Ague has a Severity of 11.

ing rage, lust, or depression. Lord Abel has not yet had the time to hold a manor court, and since Galera is not a local, has no one to vouch for her and is a decidedly suspicious individual, she has been imprisoned awaiting the lord's justice. Her crime probably involved use of her magic against those who slighted her. Although witchcraft is not a crime in most parts of Mythic Europe, if the result of a spell is a crime it is treated as if it had been accomplished mundanely and tried accordingly. Witchcraft often is considered sinful, so the leading local clergyman takes an interest in Galera's case.

The storyguide should take pains to ensure that the player characters hear of Galera's arrest. It is best to introduce this in several ways in order to pique the interest of the player characters and get them to investigate further. Some methods include:

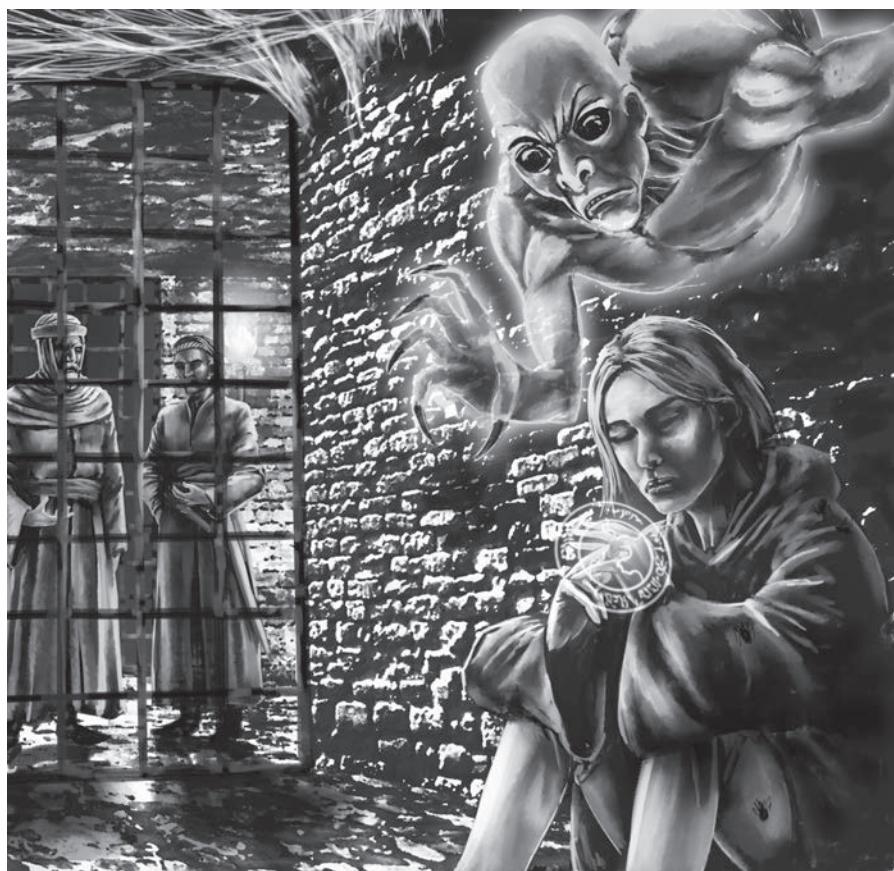
- When they encounter Lord Abel's men, if the characters show apparent or actual magic use one of them exclaims "Another witch! There's a plague of them!"
- The player characters could encounter Lord Abel's marshal, who is gathering evidence regarding Galera's apparent crime.
- If some of the player characters are arrested, they are placed in a cell next to Galera. While she will remain out of sight, the gaoler will make some comment about her.

Galera languishes in a cell, biding her time. She lost her magical shoe in the scuffle that preceded her capture (a gaoler saw the opportunity to get some new footwear while she was held down), else she would have escaped already. She has a selection of her enchantments with her but has yet to use them to secure an escape.

If the characters attempt to gain access to Galera once they discover where she is, see Galera's End, later.

### FORMAL INQUIRIES

Lord Abel hears Galera's case first and then that of the player characters. In most parts of Mythic Europe, a lord re-



tains right of justice over any crime committed on his lands, although regional variations do exist. An ecclesiastical lord can only judge crimes against morality or people who claim privilege of clergy, and may call upon a royal official or local nobleman to act as the judge. Laws and legal procedure vary greatly by region; in England, for example, trial by combat can be requested. Key to any formal legal process is testimony, which can be delivered in person, by proxy, or by written statement. Juries may be appointed to investigate and gather testimony, and the characters or their representatives may be free to do the same. Testimony establishes the factual issues of the case and includes hearsay, rumor, and omens as "facts".

Depending upon their current status, the characters may be free to attend Galera's hearing and might even present testimony or enter a plea that she be turned over to the Order of Hermes to receive justice for past crimes. They may wish to accuse her of the crime for which they themselves have been accused, but it is

physically impossible for her to have been present in the village at the time of the deaths since she was committing the act of witchcraft for which she was arrested. Informing the court of the capabilities of wizards to lay enchantments or affect places without being present may not be a wise move for the player characters; the Order likes to keep the nobility ignorant of the precise powers of its members in order to avoid a widespread panic (see *Lords of Men* page 40 for more information).

Galera's case is unlikely to go well. Within most of Christendom, a woman is not allowed to speak at court unless granted permission by her husband or father; Galera has neither, nor does she have witnesses who can speak in her defense. With no contrary evidence presented, she is probably sentenced to corporal punishment of some degree, which is carried out immediately.

Following Galera's case, Lord Abel turns his attention to that of the player characters. There is no actual evidence against the characters. However, they

were discovered in suspicious (or possibly heinous) circumstances. Couple this with testimony offered from dire omens and negative character witnesses provoked by The Gift, and the lack of evidence is of little concern.

Even if they fail to achieve a legal victory, a fair lord is more likely to punish the characters rather than execute them in the absence of proof of culpability. This punishment will be focused on making up the lost revenue from the village to the lord, such as supplying more serfs to repopulate the village, or pay a levy in silver or grain every year for three years. Only if they fail to defend themselves at all, or fail to successfully refute any of the evidence against them, will they actually be convicted of killing the villagers. Conviction typically means death, which might be the point for other player characters to stage a daring rescue.

Whether the characters win or lose the case, they should receive experience points in a relevant Reputation, or else

gain a new Reputation, with the lord or in the local area.

### Galera's End

Whether it happens at Lord Abel's Castle or at her local hideout, the player characters get to have a showdown with the renegade Redcap. Wherever she is faced, Galera fights vigorously to avoid capture but in the face of overwhelming odds she surrenders in order to plead for the safety of her son, Simon. In doing this she is playing directly into the hands of Damhan-Allaidh. Bear in mind she may still be wounded from whatever punishment Lord Abel meted out. She pauses only to collect her belongings, and retrieve her shoes from the gaoler who stole them.

#### AT THE CASTLE

The player characters probably cannot easily get access to Galera without

magic. Asking Lord Abel for permission to speak with her, given that she is a suspected witch, is a good way to enhance their own suspicious reputations with Lord Abel and may damage their own case. If they are really determined, a forceful group of magi could abduct or murder Galera from Lord Abel's custody, and this can be allowed without doing damage to the following story, as long as the characters later encounter Simon. However, such actions should not be free from repercussions, not least with the Order for interfering with a local noble.

If the player characters choose this route, their biggest challenge is likely to be Lord Abel's guards rather than anything that Galera can bring to the fight. In addition to his mesnie knights, Lord Abel has access to a small number of men-at-arms (use the statistics for Standard Soldiers (ArM5 page 22) and plenty of thick stone walls and heavy oaken doors.

While divested of her bow and anything that looks like a weapon, Galera still has a selection of enchantments at

### A Lord in the Covenant's Pocket

It is not uncommon for a covenant's landlord to be a companion to the magi, in which case "Lord Abel" could be a player character. In this situation, the first part of the story should be altered. Make the story instead a contest of the strength of the companion's standing in the local area. Have a different lord - let's call him Lord Bertram - be witness to the events in the village, even though it lies on Abel's land. If Abel refuses to prosecute the magi for their apparent crimes, then Bertram makes sure that Abel is made to look weak, which could easily damage his reputation, sour local alliances, or even provoke an attempted usurpation. Bertram could even be Abel's liege, making it politically difficult for Abel to protect the magi. Galera would be a prisoner of Lord Bertram, and have already provided him with interesting 'evidence' that Abel is being manipulated by witches.

### Running the Court Case

A simple mechanic for resolving success is for the players to suggest tactics to introduce each piece of evidence they have of their innocence and to combat each piece of evidence presented of their guilt. Each of these tactics is represented by a pair of rolls, one made for the characters and one for the lord; whoever rolls highest wins. Legal proceedings in Mythic Europe can be as much theater as they are law, and player characters may call upon all manner of Abilities in the pursuit of their case. For example, if they offer an oath of their innocence — a very important piece of testimony — they could make a Communication roll aided by Folk Ken to sound sincere, Organization Lore: Church to find a suitably pious expression, Leadership to threaten, Charm to cajole, and so on. Each roll is opposed by a roll made on behalf of Lord Abel (or his representative); this need not necessarily use the same Abilities. For example, Abel could make a Perception + Folk Ken to spot insincerity, Communication + Artes Liberales to find a

rhetorical retort, or Intelligence + Civil & Canon Law to remember a legal refutation of an argument. All of the player characters' rolls should be affected by the social penalty of The Gift, if applicable. All rolls made on behalf of Lord Abel should be modified by his Suspicious (or similar) Personality Trait; a highly skeptical or untrusting lord is less willing to accept an argument and so his roll should be positively influenced; likewise if he is gullible, then his roll should be penalized. Don't allow dice to replace good roleplaying; you could give a bonus for a particularly impassioned speech, or just allow it to be an automatic success.

The victory conditions for the court should be decided before the debate begins, although the players need not know what they are. A suitable condition might be that the characters must win more opposed rolls than their opponent, with a minimum of three. This condition may be made more severe if they have a bad reputation with the lord already.

her disposal (see nearby insert for her updated character sheet). She can use the *Innocuous Blade* to destroy a lock or bar on a gaol cell and the *Oil for the Eager Wick* and *Prometheus's Gift* to start a fire as a distraction. If you prefer you can have her escape, and face the characters at her hideout instead.

## AT THE HIDEOUT

If the player characters do not interfere with Galera while she is in Lord Abel's custody, they may trace her back to her local hideout once Lord Abel has finished with

them. They may have had other characters watching her on their behalf when she departed from Lord Abel's castle, otherwise they have to track her the hard way. This should not be made too onerous a task: Galera is rushing in order to avoid capture by the characters and is not taking all due care to remain undetected. Her biggest concern — and her major vulnerability — is her desire to protect her son, and in her care for him she has become reckless.

Galera's hideout is outside Lord Abel's lands, but not far. It is on the same road as the destroyed village, close to the characters' covenant and the village in which Galera was arrested; characters

could trace her simply by heading down the road and asking for travelers fitting her description or that of her magical disguise. Her hideout is an abandoned tavern at the edge of a town; it is partially burnt and generally considered a deathtrap. She has been employing a group of bandits and ne'er-do-wells (perhaps the remnants of Cob's Band) who have amongst their duties the care of Simon, who waits for her at the tavern.

If she believes the characters are in hot pursuit she stages her defense here on home territory, exploiting her knowledge of the treacherous terrain to give herself an advantage.

## Galera After Five Years

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift; Elementalist; Arcane Lore, Improved Characteristics, Medicinal Controlling, Privileged Upbringing, Puissant Bows, Second Sight, Well Traveled\*; Dark Secret, Envious, Careless with Bows, Reckless; (former) House Virtue

**Personality Traits:** Increase Loyalty to Atorcoppe to +3, add Willing to Do Anything to Save Simon +3

**Abilities:** all previous Abilities, plus Magic Lore 2 (spiders)

**Arts:** Philosophical Summoning 6, Philosophical and Medicinal Controlling 4; Elementalist Air 3, Elementalist Earth 1, Elementalist Fire 2, Elementalist Water 1

**Enchantments carried:** All those mentioned earlier, plus *Locket of the Proximate Presence*, Relm 18; Pen 0, 6/day: This small mirrored locket, when opened, creates an effect similar to The Wizard's Side-step (ArM5 page 147) on the wearer (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 changing image, +1 moved image matches change; +5 item maintains concentration, +3 6/day)

*Staff of Puissant Parries*, ReTe(He) 15, Pen 0, unlimited uses per day: This short staff effortlessly deflects one blow from a melee weapon each time it is triggered. It can only be used once each round. (Base 2, +1 Touch, +2 affect metal, free requisite; +10 unlimited per day)

*Falling Leaves*, ReCo 10, Pen 0, 1/day: These leather tiles (Galera has two) are cun-

ningly crafted to resemble autumn leaves. Anyone touching them when the command word is said loses control of their legs, causing them to fall prone. Since they are made with Tethered magic (Houses of Hermes: True Lineages, page 101) they trigger automatically when somebody steps on them within the duration of the effect. (Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Diam, Tethered)

*Oil for the Eager Wick*, CrAq 13, Pen 0, 6/day: This vial has a sprinkler in the bung. It is filled with mundane oil, which then becomes a carrier for the effect through Tethered magic. When the liquid touches a porous surface it creates flammable oil just like Creeping Oil (ArM5, page 121), enough to soak a person's clothes or cover an area two paces in diameter. If ignited, the oil burns with non-magical flames for three rounds, inflicting +6 damage on the first round, +3 in the second round, and +0 in the third. If used on a person's clothes, the flames inflict +12, +6, and +0 damage instead. (Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +3 6/day, Tethered)

*Prometheus's Gift*, CrIg 18, Pen 0, 6/day: When struck against any metal, this flint rod creates a shower of sparks that ignite anything flammable within range. (Base 5, +2 Voice, +3 6/day)

*The Innocuous Blade*, PeHe(Te) 27, Pen 0, 3/day: This slim ivory knife is blunt, typical of a letter opener and useless as a weapon. It can cut through met-

al, stone, and wood (but not animal products) by destroying whatever it touches. With a single continuous hatching motion each use can destroy up to one cubic foot in size (Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Part, +2 affect metal, +1 requisite; +2 3/day)

**Jars of Galera:** As described earlier, Galera can have as many as feasible, but is unlikely to be carrying them.

Galera's Gift has been Opened by Damhan-Allaiddh, and she has been taught an ancient British form of elementalism known to that ancient sorcerer. Philosophical Summoning allows her to summon the raw elements and natural animals associated with them. Philosophical Controlling allows her to command elements and animals. Medicinal Controlling allows her to manipulate the humors of a person to influence their Personality traits. Summoning is little use in a direct confrontation due to the time it takes, but Galera can perform simple manipulations of fire and air in a single round. If you lack *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, use her Presence + Controlling + Elemental (Form) + Aura modifiers + stress die as a Casting Total, with Ease Factors equivalent to the level of a Hermetic spell.

Her Compulsion to steal magic items has been lost now that she has magic of her own, but she has become Reckless now that she has power. The enchantments listed here represent the rest of her stolen cache of items.

- Galera activates the *Locket of Proximate Presence* as soon as danger threatens.
- She anoints waxed cords with drops of *Oil for the Ready Wick* across the main entrance. When someone brushes against the threads they transfer the oil to their clothing, which then starts to spread (assuming that the character does not have Magic Resistance). She saves one charge to treat the wooden floor of the taproom. She uses *Prometheus's Gift* to ignite the oil as she retreats into the kitchen, using her elementalism if necessary to control the flames.
- She scatters her two *Falling Leaves* by the entrance to the kitchen behind her and triggers them. If someone steps on one within the Diameter Duration, they suffer the effects. Her men, who wait in ambush, have been warned about these items, and will not attack until characters have succumbed or gone past them.
- The kitchen has no ceiling due to the general dilapidation of the building; bare joists are all that separate it from the room directly above. This room contains Galera's store of *Jars of Galera*. She can get up here using her *Shoe of Swift Flight* and may use the joists as an archer's perch for firing her magical bow into combat, or dropping *Jars* on her enemies. She employs the *Shoe* to move to vantage points where she cannot be seen if magi begin spellcasting, in order to remove herself as a target. She does not need to see the battlefield to bomb the area with *Jars of Galera*.
- Her magical bow is best used for crippling the vanguard, or, if she thinks it will Penetrate, hampering a magus's spellcasting by crippling an arm or eye. If characters close to melee combat, she'll discard it in favor of the *Staff of Puissant Parries*.
- Simon has been ordered to hide in the root cellar but to reveal himself once the fighting stops. Galera has told him to throw himself on the mercy of the Order if she is killed and to state clearly that he is kin to Mercere the Founder.

## SURRENDER

Galera does not fight to the death; she knows that she is no match for even one magus. She is under no illusions as to her fate should she surrender, but she believes she has a bargaining chit. She has spent time with Damhan-Allaith and claims to have important information on his plans for revenge. She'll offer this in return for safety for herself and her son. Galera is stalling; she believes that Damhan-Allaith will stage a rescue for her and she hopes to keep herself and Simon alive long enough to give him the chance. Over time — assuming she has it — she'll realize that she has been abandoned and turn coat one more time. She may even attempt to argue that her actions were intended all along to gather information about the enemy, but this is clearly a lie given her deeds.

If her surrender is accepted, she demands to deal only with a local senior magus, naming a magus she knows to be trustworthy and fair. She wants her trial to be public, knowing that a show of contrition is her only real hope of survival amongst the more merciful members of the tribunal. The Order is unlikely to concede to her terms; the best she can hope for is to save Simon's life. In fact, despite her claims of vital knowledge, Damhan-Allaith was always planning to sacrifice her to the Order, so kept any key strategic information from her. Galera will be interrogated for what little information she has and then tried before the Order, found guilty and Marched. One thing she can tell them is that Damhan-Allaith is indestructible as long as his external soul is unblemished, but a mere scratch on his soul object can obliterate him. Soul objects are typically made of stone or metal, and well-hidden; she cannot tell them what form Damhan-Allaith's takes.

Simon's fate is less uncertain than Galera's. House Mercere is extremely unlikely to allow a second Gifted member of Mercere's lineage to be executed, particularly one so young. They argue strongly for his rehabilitation as an apprentice, preferably within their own House. Ideally for the rest of the story Simon is apprenticed at a covenant that is not too far from the player covenant, with a magus of House Mercere moving into a neighboring covenant if no suitable master exists.

## Interval Two

As far as the player characters are concerned, the story is over. The villainous Galera is defeated, and her testimony that she was working with Damhan-Allaith is passed off as the insane rambling of a murderous oath-breaker, even if she sincerely believes it. The Order of Hermes doesn't want to believe that Damhan-Allaith still lives. Nevertheless, it is so; his cuckoo has been planted within the Order, and he just needs to wait for the right time for it to hatch.

## Simon Runs Away

A couple of years after commencing his Hermetic apprenticeship, Simon runs away from home. This is not uncommon for children of his age, and apprentices have an even harder time at puberty. Depending upon the circumstances of his training, this may be a story that involves the player characters. Naturally, if a player magus is Simon's master, then a story is necessary. If the player covenant is close to Simon's master, then they may be asked to help find him; the magus thinks that the player characters might have some insight as to where the boy may have run. Otherwise, they may simply hear about his temporary abscondment from the local Redcap, who knows that they have a history with Simon.

From the outside, this story appears to be nothing more than a troubled teenager running away from home and getting into trouble. If the characters investigate, suspecting something more sinister because of Simon's past, then they are disappointed. Possibilities for stories include the following.

- Simon flees to a nearby town. His purloined money is soon spent, and he falls in with a gang of street urchins. He impresses them with his simple magical tricks, and becomes their leader.
- Simon joins up with some traveling players. However, they are faeries in disguise, and the troupe leader is

cognizant of the role of creativity over glamour. He plans to use Simon to alter their story and acquire more vitality in the process.

- Simon heads for the wilderness, and falls into a crevasse. He is trapped, injured, and pretty sure there is something in here with him, stalking him. This should not be a particularly troubling story, and be easily resolved. Simon's master

### Simon Spidersoul

At the end of the second part of this story, Simon is an innocent. He knows nothing about Damhan-Allaith's plans, or indeed, that he harbors that creature's soul within his heart. He has a fear of the Order of Hermes thanks to his mother's indoctrination, but this is nothing that cannot be unlearned. He is likely to be thoroughly investigated by House Guernicus, and they find nothing more than a Gifted child grieving for his traitor mother. Even the external soul wrapped up in his heart is hidden by his Gift.

Simon will be a short-lived celebrity in the Order; the claim that he has met The Spider will give him a modicum of fame, although he never saw the spirit to which his mother talked and cannot corroborate its existence. He commences an apprenticeship, most likely under a member of House Mercere, and is forgotten by the Order as a whole. A player character may be able to present a strong enough case to claim him as an apprentice themselves, particularly if they are of House Mercere. The characters could instead extract a substantial "reward" (i.e. price) from House Mercere, which might be more useful in the long run.

Simon is about ten years old at the end of the second story, having been born about five years prior to the first story. If the first interval was longer than the suggested five years, then remember to advance Simon's age.

might possess an Arcane Connection to his apprentice, allowing him to be found easily. Simon has only superficial knowledge of Hermetic magic, and he has no true desire to escape from his master. This is just an escapade of a normal adolescent.

Apart from this single glitch, nothing about the rest of Simon's apprenticeship stands out. He is intelligent and eager to learn, and appears to harbor no resentment against the Order for its treatment of his mother. His master has noticed that he has become a little more withdrawn as he ages, but nothing that one wouldn't expect of a teenager.

### The Dark Passenger

Unbeknownst to everybody – initially Simon included – Damhan-Allaith used the opportunity when Simon ran away to possess the apprentice, taking up residence within the boy's body. He couldn't do so beforehand because of the protection of the *Aegis of the Hearth* and his master's Parma Magica. While he is not actively controlling Simon, the boy is not under any active magical effect that can be detected, and the spirit is not excluded by warding magic or an *Aegis*. Damhan-Allaith cannot immediately control Simon within the covenant's *Aegis*, but apprentices are commonly given casting tokens to the *Aegis* in order to help with their master's laboratory work, and once he gains more control over his magic Simon will be invited to participate in the ritual spell.

Damhan-Allaith remains covertly hidden within Simon. He knows everything that the apprentice knows, and over time begins to exert subtle control over the apprentice as he prepares to take control of his body and complete his transformation to corporeality. The spirit is less subtle when Simon is sent on errands away from the covenant, and Damhan-Allaith has the opportunity to meet with allies.

Simon first noticed the gaps in his memory about two years ago. Subtle investigation on his part has revealed to him that he has had unexplained absences from the covenant that he does not remember (the grogs think he has a girlfriend in a nearby village). His suspicions regarding what was

wrong with him were confirmed when the spirit with whom he shared a head decided to speak with him directly. Damhan-Allaith gloated over the boy's predicament, telling him that he could do nothing to stop the transformation, and that he might as well accept his fate. Damhan-Allaith's control renders Simon incapable of telling his master what is happening, so for now, he has been forced to watch, and wait.

### Story III: The Captured Fly

In this final part of the story, Simon plots to free himself from Damhan-Allaith's influence. He knows that the ancient spirit is planning to steal his body, but is incapable of stopping it by himself. He therefore gets the player characters involved, hoping that they will work out for themselves what is happening and put an end to Damhan-Allaith's dastardly plans. Damhan-Allaith allows this to take place, since he has always planned to deal with the player characters in retribution for imperiling his schemes, and now is as good a time as any.

Damhan-Allaith plans to become human by acquiring the Transformed Human Virtue (*Realms of Power: Magic* page 47). He does this through an Initiation Script. *The Mysteries Revised Edition* Chapter Two has more information on Initiations, but all that is necessary to know is that Damhan-Allaith has to be at a particular place at a certain time. The script also requires a Gifted individual whose heart is the initiate's external soul: the Initiation requires the sacrifice of both the person and the External Soul Virtue, and the Initiate acquires the body of the sacrifice.

### A Stalking Killer

In order to complete his scheme to take over Simon's body, Damhan-Allaith must get the boy to a particular place at



a certain time. Since Simon is the apprentice of a Hermetic magus, Damhan-Allaith is forced to take a circuitous route to secure this. He decides to involve the player characters, and clear up a loose end at the same time. When he gets a moment to himself away from his covenant, Damhan-Allaith summons a magical assassin, and gives it a list of names of people to kill. This includes the names of all the player characters who thwarted him directly in previous stories, plus the names of any storyguide characters who got in his way. Included in the list is Simon's name, a deliberate ploy by Damhan-Allaith to bring the characters to him.

There are several ways in which the player characters can get involved. In the first, the characters are attacked when they are away from the covenant on an unrelated issue, such as gathering vis or traveling to Tribunal. The second method is that the player characters hear of the death of one of their allies, and are themselves attacked when they investigate the matter. A harsher variant of this option is that one of the covenant grogs is caught alone and murdered by the assassin and the rest of the characters get involved when she does not return home.

The assassin is a spider-giant hybrid called an inspiderwiht. Although naturally twenty feet tall, an inspiderwiht can shrink itself to the size of a mouse, and subtracts its Size from all stealth

rolls. Furthermore, they are capable of perfect silence, which grants another +6 bonus. It is therefore likely that the inspiderwiht is able to successfully creep up on the characters. It has orders to only kill those on the list of names it has been given, and constantly mutters that list of names over and over once battle is enjoined. Once it locates someone on its list using the *Know the Name* power, it attacks with great ferocity. Note that due to Magic Resistance, it is unlikely to identify magi as its targets, although if it hears another character use a name on its list it switches targets immediately. Characters should be in battle with it long enough to hear it recite the full list a few times, and note the inclusion of 'Simon son of Galera' amongst the names.

### REUNION WITH SIMON

Hopefully, the player characters realize that Simon is in danger. There could be more of these monsters out there, and they clearly want him dead for a reason. This should be sufficient impetus to contact Simon's master or travel to his covenant. They will learn, either in a return letter or from Simon himself, that Simon has been beset by bad dreams harking back to the time he was with his mother. He has questions for the player characters about the ruined fort in which they found Rufus: he can describe it perfectly despite

not remembering ever being there. He was about five years old at the time of the first story, and staying alone at one of the many houses rented by his mother.

If the characters use spells to improve Simon's memory, they find them ineffective. They might assume that the memories have been deliberately removed, but in this case it is the influence of Damhan-Allaith's mind control. He asks if the characters could take him to the ruined fort, to see if anything there manages to prompt his memory. His master is in favor of this; he can spare Simon for a season, and would rather the boy resolves any issues of his murky past.

## Return to the Ruined Fort

On the road to the ruined fort, the player characters have the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with Simon. When they last saw him he was a frightened boy; now he is a young man of surprising intelligence with a confident manner. He has an inquiring mind, and engages any player magus willing to debate with him in a discussion on almost any subject other than his mother. He already knows the basics – that she tortured and murdered another redcap, and tried to ruin the player characters – but Damhan-Allaith has been whispering sordid details about his mother's life into his head for over two years, in an attempt to demoral-

## Thrice-Told Tales

ize the boy and break his spirit.

The ruined fort is much as the player characters remember it. Gloom hangs over the stones like a funeral shroud, and light fails to penetrate its murky shadows. There is no evidence of any monstrous spiders here; the only arachnids that remain are normal sized. However, their presence might make players paranoid and characters nervous, so the storyguide should mention them at every opportunity.

Simon feels that he has been here before, and leads the characters confidently to the large cavern containing the ravine. He knows that a chamber lies beyond, and asks the player characters to help him cross. The absence of the monstrous spiders has left the ravine without a bridge. It is ten paces wide and fifteen paces deep. Prepared characters may have had their grogs carry ropes and grappnels, or else they may have to rely upon magic.

The chamber where Rufus died is just as the characters left it, although Simon can describe exactly what it looked like when the characters first came here. If the player characters did not resolve matters with Rufus's ghost (for example, if he doesn't know that Galera is dead) then he still haunts this chamber, and has become a vengeful spirit bitter with his betrayal by both his fiancée and the player characters.

Having inspected every inch of the chamber, Simon then suggests following the river at the bottom of the ravine upstream. It is unlikely that the player characters explored here when they were here last, and Simon is not sure why he wants to do so now. Climbing to the bottom of the ravine and struggling against the icy torrent of water in cramped conditions and pitch darkness may be challenge enough, but there are further perils here.

- There are no riverbanks, and the characters must slog upstream along the stream bed. The water is two to three feet deep in most places, and icy cold. The player characters must make Deprivation rolls with an interval of three hours to fight off exhaustion and hypothermia from the cold water. Since all characters are partially submerged in the water, they suffer a -3 penalty to these rolls. If characters become soaked through they suffer a -6 penal-

ty instead. Due to the slippery conditions, rolls involving physical activity have three extra botch dice.

Unseen beneath the foaming water are deep potholes cut out by stones caught in the swirling current. The lead character is certain to fall into the first of these; whether she is followed in depends on the reactions of those following. Characters submerged in a pothole must make a Strength + Swim roll against an Ease Factor of 6 to fight the strong current sufficiently to catch a breath, else they begin to drown. The character's Burden, rather than Encumbrance, acts as a penalty on this roll.

- The characters find themselves at the base of a subterranean waterfall. It rises fifteen paces over a horizontal distance of ten paces. Climbing over the slippery

rocks while water cascades over the top is physically demanding, requiring a Strength + Athletics roll against an Ease Factor of 12. If the characters have ropes then once one is in place subsequent characters have a +3 bonus to the climbing roll. A character can be hauled up by other characters: this requires a total Strength of +3, and the dragged character suffers +0 damage from the bumps and scrapes he receives.

The channel through which the stream runs narrows dramatically. Make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, with an Ease Factor of  $6 + (3 \times \text{Size})$  to get through the gap. Failure indicates the character cannot get through without help, a botch indicates the character has become wedged tight. Help can be provided from lamp oil or similar, which allows the character a +3

## Simon

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 15 (15)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence Score:** 2 (5)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Free Expression, Great Intelligence, Self-Confident, Strong-Willed; Plagued by Supernatural Entity, Unpredictable Magic

**Personality Traits:** Preoccupied +2, Independent +1, Likable +1

**Reputations:** Son of a Marched Redcap 1 (Hermetic)

**Combat:**

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

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Local 2 (roads), Artes Liberales 1 (deciphering handwriting), Athletics 1 (slippery conditions), Awareness 1 (spiders), Brawl 1 (dodge), Concentration 1 (5) (Muto), Finesse 2 (Creo), Folk Ken 1 (adults), Latin 3 (5) (Hermetic), Magic Lore 2 (spiders), Magic The-

ory 2 (10) (Muto), Music 2 (peasant reels), Native Language\* 5 (local dialect), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (5) (House Mercere), Stealth 1 (woodland)

\* Note that this should be the same language and dialect as spoken by Galera

**Arts:** Cr 2, In 0, Mu 5, Pe 0, Re 3; An 0, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 3, He 0, Ig 0, Im 2(2), Me 0, Te 2(2), Vi 0

**Twilight Scars:** none

**Equipment:** Good quality clothes, secret keepsake of his mother

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Spells Known:** none yet

**Appearance:** For those who knew Galera, Simon bears a strong resemblance to his mother, with the same sharp features and blond hair. His intelligence is evident since he is a confident speaker, especially when talking about magic. He loves to sing, and does so frequently when he thinks he is alone.

Simon has been designed with four points of Virtues and Flaws. He should be finished with further Virtues and Flaws appropriate to his parents and eventual House, and his free House Virtue. If he has been trained by a player character, then his Abilities and Arts should be calculated in the usual way rather than using those here.

to the roll. A character pulling or pushing another can also add +3 to the stuck character's roll, but the character in the gap suffers +3 damage from abrasion and bruising. A wedged character might be able to be pulled free by a strong character, although the damage taken increases by the puller's Strength.

In addition to these natural hazards, there may be some denizens of the long-abandoned mines and subterranean tun-

nels that do not appreciate the intrusion into their home. Examples of such creatures include an elemental that has rarefied from an untapped seam of silver or the ghosts of a trapped mine team.

## GALERA'S HIDEY-HOLE

Simon eventually spots a side tunnel leading from the stream, situated about ten feet from the water's surface. This

would be easy to miss: it is only because Simon somehow knew it was there that he managed to find it. After a few twists and turns the tunnel leads to a small chamber, clearly a natural cave that has been enlarged and had the floor leveled. A niche holds the remnants of a straw mattress, and an escritoire (traveler's writing desk) sits on the floor. This contains an inkstone, some scraps of parchment, and other materials used by scribes. There is a crude box containing the decade-old remains of

# Inspiderwiht

**Magic Might:** 28 (Corpus)

**Season:** Summer

**Characteristics:** Int -3, Per +1, Pre 0, Com -3, Str +12, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik 0

**Size:** +5

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Human; Magical Monster; Great Quickness x2, Improved Characteristics, Perfect Balance, Tough, Warrior; Monstrous Appearance\*, Oath of Fealty (to Damhan-Allaith)

\* free with Magic Human

**Magic Qualities and Inferiorities:** Gigantic x4, Greater Powers; Corpus Resistance, Improved Might x3, Improved Powers, Improved Soak x3, Lesser Power, Personal Powers

**Personality Traits:** Loyal to Damhan-Allaith +3, Gullible +2, Expressionless +1

**Combat:**

**Rope:** Init -1, Attack +15, Defense +5, Damage n/a\*\*

**Thrown Stone:** Init -1, Attack +10, Defense +4, Damage +14

**Claw:** Init -1, Attack +7, Defense +1, Damage +15

\*\* see below

**Soak:** +14

**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:** Athletics 5 (climbing), Awareness 3 (targets), Brawl 4 (claws), Corpus Resistance 5 (Perdo), Leadership 2 (intimidation), Living Language 4 (local dialect), Stealth 2 (stalking), Thrown Weapon 6 (rope)

### Powers:

*Gift of the Spider*, nonmagical: The inspiderwiht each have six arms. This grants a +6 bonus to certain Dexterity tasks such as climbing, and to contests of Strength. If fighting singly, they can strike three times in melee combat (or potentially wield three sets of weapons in combat). If fighting as a group, each counts as three opponents for the purpose of wounds inflicted.

*Minute Size of the Webwalker*, 1 point, Init -4, Corpus: The inspiderwiht can shrink itself to Size -10; with its eight limbs it appears as a mouse-sized spider. The creature can end this power at any time, taking a round to return to full size. MuCo 35 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +2 Size, +2 reduce Size to -10, +1 affect equipment) Greater Power (35 levels, -3 Might cost)

*Walk Silently*, 0 points, constant effect, *Imaginem*: Inspiderwihten are eerily silent when they move; despite their huge size even their footfalls make no sound. This grants at least a +6 bonus to Stealth rolls. PeIm 15 (Base 3, +2 Sun, +1 changing image, +1 constant effect) Personal Power (15 levels, -2 Might cost)

*Know the Name*, 0 points, Init -9, Mentem: Only some inspiderwihten have this power. It reveals the name of anyone who makes eye contact with the creature. InMe 20 (Base 15, +1 Eye) Lesser Power (20 levels, -5 Might cost, +1 Init with 5 mastery points from Improved Powers)

**Equipment:** Three ropes of knotted crude silk covered in a sticky coating. Each is 40 feet long

**Vis:** 6 Corpus in six of its limbs

**Appearance:** This horrid hybrid of human and spider is equally at home on two, four, six, or all eight of its legs. When standing upright, its head bobs twenty feet above the ground from a foreshortened and hunch-backed body. Their faces are a terrifying amalgam of spider and human. All of its limbs end in a clawed hand. An inspiderwiht can walk on walls and even ceilings if the space is big enough. Their skin is glossy black, with solitary hairs a finger's width thick scattered sparsely over their bodies. They seldom talk, leaving the impression they are mute.

The inspiderwihten are a clan of giants who were allies of Damhan-Allaith during his war with Pralix. They still honor an ancient bond of fealty to the sorcerer.

Inspiderwihten throw weighted sticky ropes in combat, which coil around body parts and grip tight. If a rope hits with an Attack Advantage of 6, then it manages to catch a limb in the coils of the rope, preventing the character from using one hand, denying him either his weapon or his shield, or limiting spellcasting gestures. If the Attack Advantage is 9 or more, then the rope has caught the opponent around the neck (begin making deprivation rolls) or torso (pinning arms to sides and preventing attacks, defenses, or spellcasting gestures). The ropes may be cut with edged weapons by rolling a stress die and adding the Weapon Damage modifier; this is opposed against a stress roll plus the rope's Soak of 8. Success means that the rope has been cut, failure means the rope's Soak has been reduced by 1.

food, and a few other personal effects such as children's toys. The walls of the cave are plastered with parchment. Some have been nailed in place, others pasted there.

Everything in the room is coated with black mold, which releases clouds of black spores when disturbed, which can cause choking (make a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 6 or else lose a Fatigue level). The spores are also flammable, and make open flames flare. The mold has left the writing on the parchment illegible in places. It is up to the storyguide how much of the information below has been lost, and how difficult it is to interpret the rest.

Simon remembers being here as a child: the toys are his, and he recalls playing with them while his mother worked. He also remembers something traumatic happening to him here; his mother was not present and he remembers calling for her. The detail escapes him, however. This is where Galera tried to make sense of Damhan-Allaiddh's plans. Bear in mind that not all (or indeed any) of this information needs to be true — Galera was prone to fantasies, and some of this is how she intended to help her master, but written as if he had already agreed to it. This is an excellent opportunity for the player characters to learn plot points that they may have missed, or to glean more details on the hidden history of Damhan-Allaiddh. Other information here could include:

- Pages from a Scottish magus Bonisagus called Domhnall Beg who has made a study of ancient Pictish magician-priests and their gods;
- Reports from a Hibernian magus regarding external souls amongst heathen Cruithnigh magicians;
- Diary entries from Galera recording her joy when Atorcoppe referred to her son as "a precious boy";
- Details of a stone circle with an unusual alignment scouted out by Galera.

Galera had all the information she needed to piece together her master's true plan, but never managed to work out the threat to her son since her unstable intellect was clouded by devotion to her master. However, Damhan-Allaiddh can see it laid out here on the walls, and must take steps to remove it. He takes control of Simon, and contrives

an accident, such as tripping over something on the floor and dropping a lantern, spreading burning oil everywhere. Alternatively he might destroy key information while ostensibly trying to get it off the wall. After this 'accident', the player characters might be suspicious of Simon, but the boy (now back in control) can truthfully say he didn't do it, while unable to say that it was due to his unwelcome passenger.

If they haven't already planned to do so, Simon suggests to the player characters that they investigate the stone circle mentioned in Galera's notes since it is not too far from here. Once again, this is Damhan-Allaiddh in control. If they need an extra push, 'Simon' might mention that perhaps they will find Damhan-Allaiddh's external soul at this ancient monument.

## At the Stones

Damhan-Allaiddh requires an ancient stone monument as the setting for his ritual, which must take place at moonrise of a waning gibbous moon. The distance between the old fort and the stone circle should be appropriate to the time that the characters leave the fort; they should arrive there just before the waning gibbous moon rises, which is about three hours after sunset. This moon phase lasts four days. If the characters arrange to arrive at a different time, then 'Simon' tries to manipulate matters so that they are still around at the requisite time, such as suggesting that they explore the circle.

The monument consists of eight stones arranged in an ellipse whose long axis runs east-west. Six of the stones are about five feet high and three feet wide. Two stones that flank the western apex of the ellipse are taller than the other stones (about seven feet high), making a clear gateway into the monument. Perceptive characters (Perception + Awareness roll against an Ease Factor of 9, or more if lighting conditions are poor) might notice that one of these 'gate stones' is stained and dark on one side, indicating that until recently it had been recumbent and half buried. There is a tumulus toward the eastern end of the ellipse, which has a deep depression in front of it marking the location of the entrance to the burial chamber. The

whole monument has a Magic aura of 5.

Despite appearances, the stone monument is not deserted. There are inspiderwihten here, enough to pose a significant challenge to the player characters. They lurk in minute form, hidden in various places including in the hollow before the tumulus.

## INSIDE THE TUMULUS

The tumulus looks like a likely place to explore. The mound is twenty paces long and stands five paces high, but the subterranean entrance adds another two paces to the interior height. The door is formed from two upright stones with a third slab as a lintel, and it is filled with earth. Beyond the blocked doorway, a narrow and cramped passage takes a crooked path to the center of the hill, which contains a single chamber. There is a central bier that is surrounded by sealed jars, moldering piles of coins and trinkets, and age-old armor and weapons. The bier bears what at first glance is a body, but is actually a recumbent statue made of a glassy red stone. Close inspection reveals that the face of the statue is marred, almost as if the original face had been clumsily removed and another carved in its place. There is also a small hole above the heart, and within is a stone arrowhead, although the shaft of the arrow has long since rotted away.

## THE RITUAL BEGINS

If the characters explore the tumulus, "Simon" elects to remain outside "to keep out of the way." As the moon rises, Damhan-Allaiddh begins a Pictish chant to Sluag, god of the dead. He has a curved knife in hand — provided by one of the inspiderwihten — and he is making shallow cuts on his bared chest. If any characters have remained outside, they are engaged by the inspiderwihten who emerge from hiding. As the sounds draw the remaining characters out of the tumulus, they see Simon, clearly possessed, about to plunge the knife into his chest, and yet struggling against his own actions. This struggle lasts long enough for the player characters to fight their way to him. He is exhausted by his internal struggle, and looks at the char-



acter with whom he has had the best rapport. "Stab me in the heart!" shouts Simon. "Cut off my head!" yells Damhan-Allaithd.

## On the Horns of Dilemma

The characters have moments to act. The inspiderwihthen impose a time pressure, and Damhan-Allaithd will eventually be able to overcome Simon's will and complete the ritual. Ideally, he wants to complete his ritual and cut out Simon's heart,

### What if Simon's Master is a Player Character?

Obviously, the hook to this story is dependent on Simon's master being willing to let him go free for a season. If that master is a player character, then it should be established prior to the beginning of this story that Simon suffers from night terrors which leave him exhausted and lacking in concentration on the following day. These dreams occur frequently enough that it occasionally interferes with the help that Simon provides in lab activities. The master should therefore be keen to discover the origin of these nightmares and maybe end them for good.

and is prepared to spend a significant portion of his Might pool on his *Possession* power to ensure this. However, if the player characters are going to stop him, he wants them to cut off Simon's head, preserving his external soul. Simon on the other hand is prepared to sacrifice himself to kill Damhan-Allaithd for good. It is difficult to distinguish who is speaking because Damhan-Allaithd's Magic Might makes

Penetration of any truth-telling spell a significant challenge. Arcane and Sympathetic Connections to Simon do not help Penetrate the spirit's Magic Resistance.

The player characters must make a decision, and make it quickly. Both personalities within Simon's body continue to exhort the characters to act. If they prevaricate, then Damhan-Allaithd has the opportunity to complete his ritual before they can stop him (see *The Characters Fail*). If they cut off Simon's head, they kill Simon and defeat — but not destroy — Damhan-Allaithd (see *The Characters Kill Simon*). If they go for Simon's heart, then they can damage the external soul (see *The Characters Kill Damhan-Allaithd*).

The player characters could decide to do

### The Origin of the Tumulus

If the saga is appropriately located (in the British Isles, for example), then the stone circle is a monument to Damhan-Allaithd, erected by his followers upon his defeat. In this case, the statue is an effigy of the ancient sorcerer. This makes the site highly appropriate to be the site of his resurrection ritual. In other Tribunals, the tumulus is the grave of an important pre-Hermetic wizard.

Either way, there are grave goods that are of interest to player characters, either as enchantments or as sources of insight into non-Hermetic magic. There could also be a stockpile of vis, and possibly ancient magical traps or curses with which to contend. The tumulus contains the player characters' rewards for this story, and should be tailored to contain objects of significant interest or value.

### Is Damhan-Allaithd Truly Dead?

At the option of the storyguide, defeating Damhan-Allaithd through the destruction of his external soul may not be the end of the sorcerer. An opponent this old and powerful may have arranged some sort of back-up plan that preserves his essential being in some dark recess of the Magic Realm. It may be a lifetime or more before he gathers enough power to project himself back to the mundane realm and resume his plans to destroy the Order.

both: decapitating Simon and stabbing him in the heart. This will have the desired effect of killing Damhan-Allaith, although they might later learn that Simon's death was preventable, since only the tiniest scratch to his heart is necessary to kill Damhan-Allaith.

### THE CHARACTERS FAIL

The characters fail to stop Damhan-Allaith if he manages to cut out Simon's intact heart from his own body. The player characters will be treated to a show of light and sound as the mystical forces align and Damhan-Allaith returns to the world. There is a cry like several voices shouting at once, and a shimmering curtain of shifting light and shadow descends from the heavens and funnels into the gaping wound in Simon's chest. The heart in his hand crystallizes into a translucent heart-shaped red stone containing the remnants of Damhan-Allaith's Magic Might in the form of 8 pawns of Corpus vis. His Magic Might is now zero, and he has lost the External Soul Virtue: damaging the stone heart will no longer harm him.

Damhan-Allaith is now fully incarnate as a mortal sorcerer. Opened to the Hermetic Arts, as well as possessing the powers of a puissant magician of four other traditions of magic. His first concern is escape. His Hermetic Arts are un-

derdeveloped, but he has other powers upon which to draw. While any remaining inspiderwiten occupy the player characters he flees. A typical escape scenario has him grant himself the shape of a swarm of spiders and scatter in all directions; he might first curse his opponents with druidic magic, enhance his speed of movement with rune spells, or create an earthquake with elementalism.

### THE CHARACTERS KILL SIMON

Characters who kill Simon by decapitation or some other means that leaves his heart intact do not manage to kill Damhan-Allaith. He is greatly inconvenienced by the death of his vessel, but he can recover from this. He hopes that the characters fail to recognize the significance of Simon's heart. Certainly, it will appear as if Simon committed a great act of sacrifice to prevent Damhan-Allaith from returning to the world, and this should accord his corpse a measure of respect.

Damhan-Allaith must still arrange for the heart to be removed intact from Simon's corpse, and then repeat his earlier Initiation to migrate his external soul into another Gifted person's heart. He probably will not choose a member of the Order of Hermes second time around, and will be a lot more cautious with his approach, having tasted failure so close to his triumph. It may be

many years before he returns to the flesh and recommences his plans to destroy the Order.

### THE CHARACTERS KILL DAMHAN-ALLAITH

If the characters damage or destroy Simon's heart then Damhan-Allaith is destroyed. A character specifically targeting Simon's heart in combat must state he is doing so, and inflict a Heavy Wound on him with a piercing weapon. In general a spell that is not specifically designed to damage the heart, or not deployed in a manner that would do so, will not accidentally cause this sort of damage. Destroying Simon's body after death also destroys Damhan-Allaith's spirit. It is possible to destroy Damhan-Allaith's external soul without killing Simon: the merest scratch on his heart is enough. However, such an operation must be conducted with the utmost delicacy, and magical healing via a Creo Corpus ritual spell is pretty much essential to avoid Simon suffering long-term consequences of such medieval heart surgery, such as the Enfeebled Flaw.

The death of Damhan-Allaith's spirit should be accompanied by suitably dramatic special effects, involving spectral winds, flashing lights, and a howl of utter despair that haunts the dreams for months to come. Those with Second Sight (or other capacity to see spirits) are treated to the full show.



# The Spider War

The following account can be gleaned from careful research about Damhan-Allaith and Pralix. Much of this information derives from or has been extrapolated from a number of sources for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*, including *Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, *Houses of Hermes: Societates, Realms of Power: the Infernal and Ancient Magic*. For ease of reading, references for individual facts have not been provided.

## The Isle of the Mighty

In the late eighth century, a group of Saxon rune wizards allied with a select group of Pictish and British magicians in order to keep foreign wizards from the island of Britain. This coalition opposed the Order of Hermes, the viking

rune wizards from Scandinavia, and the Irish druids. The leader of this group is known to the Order by the name "Damhan-Allaith," meaning "Spider" in Gaelic (and pronounced "DAV-un alli"), although it seems that this was a title, since it had been borne by an archdruid (or perhaps more than one) for a century beforehand. Hermetic annals record the name 'Atorcoppe', which may have been his personal name.

Damhan-Allaith had established a series of fiefs in the north of Britain. The Saxon rune magicians ruled the north and east coast of England, while the British elementalists guarded the west and northwest. The Scottish druids took central Scotland and the Pictish priests occupied the north and the islands. All magicians paid tribute to local aldermen, who in turn paid their dues to Damhan-Allaith. In return, the al-

men adjudicated disputes and provided protection from both supernatural and human threats. The aldermen brokered the magical services of their subjects to the various petty kings of Britain, although this amounted to little more than extortion: a key tenet was that magic could not be used against another alderman, requiring that both sides in any conflict had to employ a magician to neutralize the magician employed by the other. Membership of Damhan-Allaith's coalition was mandatory for any wizard wanting to make a living out of their Art, and enforced through threat of repercussions. Some wizards fled Britain rather than live under the yoke of Damhan-Allaith.

Damhan-Allaith considered foreign wizards to be a threat to his hegemony. There were vitkir accompanying the Viking raiders, and Irish druids and coruguinecht amongst the raiders from the west. Further, rumors reached Britain that a group of Roman wizards had formed a new alliance in the Black Forest. The aldermen were therefore charged with closing the borders of Britain to all incoming wizards. Although he claimed to protect the whole of Britain, in reality Damhan-Allaith's control was less than complete and he had virtually no influence over many of England's kingdoms other than Northumbria and Mercia. Nevertheless, the aldermen aggressively pursued any rumor of foreign wizards wherever they were, and made several successful expeditions into the southern kingdoms.

## Giaro of Mercere

Giaro was the adopted son of Mercere and one of the first Redcaps. He joined Pralix in Northumbria after the Battle of Bowland Forest and served as her *aide-de-camp* throughout the war against Damhan-Allaith. Like his more famous 'sister' Belin, he was the epitome of diligence and bravery, serving Pralix loyally throughout the campaign. His exploits in Pralix's service are a matter of legend. He tricked oafish giants when carrying battle plans through hostile territory by telling them that he was one of their own, just further away than he seemed. He escaped imprisonment by rune wizards with nothing more than a magical straw and a cupful of oats.

He quested in the far north to obtain a piece of the unbreakable chain made by the dwarfs to fetter the titan-wolf Fenrir. These and other stories are the pride of his line.

It was only at the very end when his devotion to Pralix faltered. Once the enemy was defeated and Pralix revealed her plans for the Ordo Miscellanea, Giaro felt that he could not in good conscience be part of a group that opposed the Order of Hermes and with regret he abandoned her in Britain and returned to the continent with his father. He did not see her again, even following the formation of House Ex Miscellanea.

## FIRST CONTACT

Damhan-Allaith and the Order of Hermes became aware of each other at about the same time. The Order first heard of Damhan-Allaith from Diedne the Founder, who had adopted into her House wizards who had fled his brutal regime. Magi of the Order had ventured into Britain, but the aldermen they encountered demanded that they swore oaths of fealty to them and to Damhan-Allaith. Furthermore, they would be required to sell their services to local kings and noblemen, something forbidden by the Code of Hermes.

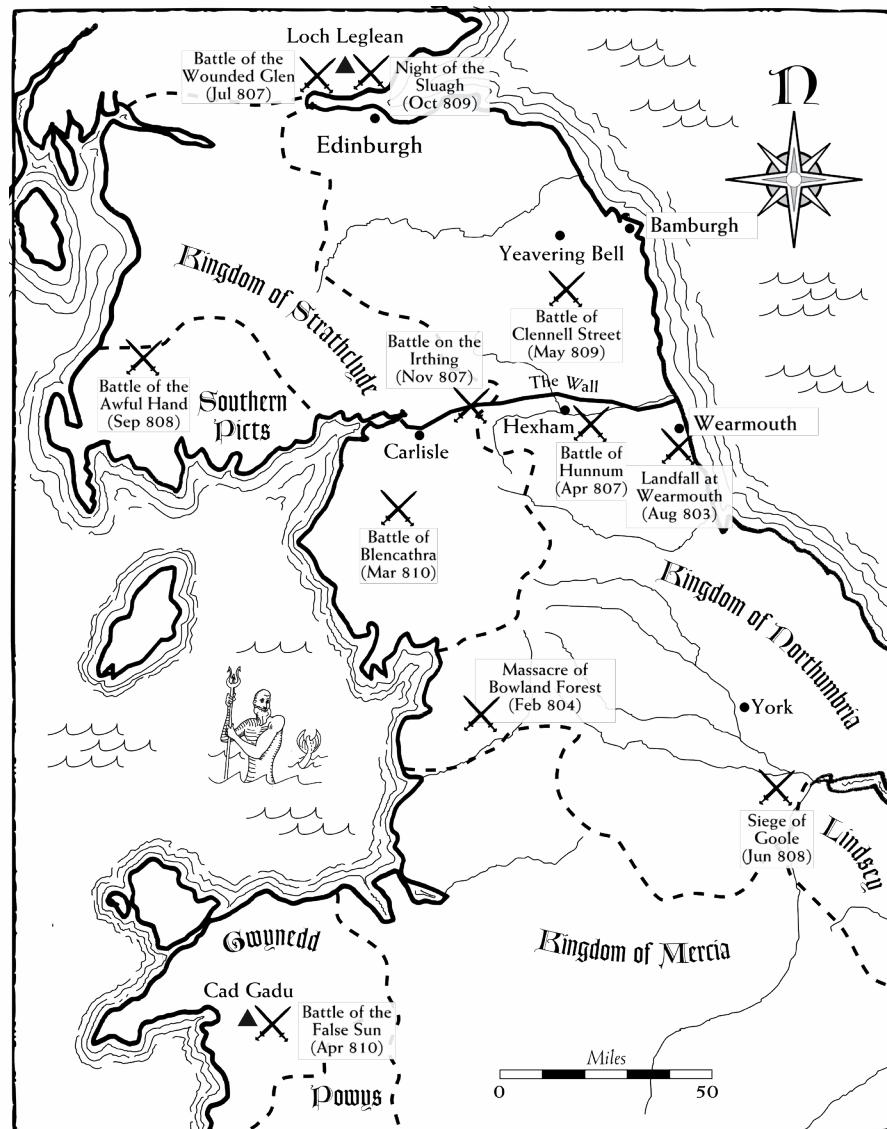
The first confrontation began in Brittany, when a magus of House Tytalus aggravated Damhan-Allaith by kidnapping one of his trusted aldermen. The sorcerer didn't even waste time negotiating; he simply caused the stones of Carnac to crush his impudent foe and his three companions. Damhan-Allaith made it clear to the sole survivor that the Order of Hermes would not have a foothold in Britain. If he'd known more about the Order of Hermes, Damhan-Allaith would never have uttered such words within earshot of Fudarus, and Pralix won the right, as eldest filia of the Founder, to accept the challenge he had unwittingly set.

## Early Battles

Damhan-Allaith was declared an enemy of the Order by the Tribunal of 799 following the slaughter of the four magi at Carnac. Pralix *filia* Tytalus arrived at Wearmouth in the Kingdom of Northumbria in 803 with seven magi and a half-hundred of grogs. At the time, the Kingdom of Northumbria covered most of southern Scotland and northern England, and was believed to be the seat of Damhan-Allaith's power.

### THE MASSACRE IN BOWLAND FOREST

The Hermetic army first clashed with Damhan-Allaith's forces in the following year in the Forest of Bowland.



This was an utter disaster for the Order, resulting in the death of all five of the junior magi, leaving just Pralix and Ignes Nefastus of House Flambeau still alive. The two magi retreated south and were offered succor by a group of native magicians called swynwyr. These magicians had an impregnable stronghold in North Wales that had resisted Damhan-Allaith for many decades, for the swynwyr were experts in warding magics.

Using the swynwyr's island fortress as a base, Pralix spent three years gathering together wizards from the British Isles who, like the swynwyr, had suffered the tyranny of Damhan-Allaith and his allies. Many of these came from the midlands and southern kingdoms where

the influence of his aldermen had yet to spread. Her recruits included beast-masters, cunning men and women, craft magicians, weather witches, and a Pictish sorcerer called Damhagh-Duidas. This latter claimed to know Damhan-Allaith of old, and Pralix began to rely on him as a source of information about the enemy. Ignes Nefastus expressed his reservations about this sorcerer, and his letters back to the Primus of Flambeau reflect his growing unease about the influence that Damhagh-Duidas had over her.

Each recruit was trained by Pralix and Ignes Nefastus as to the best use of their magic in battle. Many of these wizards were magically weak and many of them lacked The Gift; nevertheless Pralix per-

severed rather than following Ignes's advice to ask for more volunteers from the Order. Pralix felt that these native magicians were fighting to defend their home and their way of life, and had more at stake than what amounted to mercenaries from the Order of Hermes. The only help she accepted from the Order was a redcap by the name of Giaro.

During this period, Pralix visited Ireland in order to gain recruits to the cause against Damhan-Allaith. Here she met with Diedne on the shores of Loch Cuan in 806. Diedne refused to allow her to enlist Irish magicians; she was insistent that any druids must join the Order of Hermes or else die. Diedne was further incensed when Pralix laughed at her and called her stupid and petty. The two magae fought an illegal Wizard's War there and then, but both survived the encounter (although a local monastery did not) and neither brought charges against the other at Tribunal. It is notable that after the war with Damhan-Allaith, Diedne was one of the most vocal detractors of Pralix and insisted that she be Marched for her crimes. Despite this encounter at Loch Cuan, Pralix still returned to Britain with

a cadre of Irish druids who were prepared to oppose their Scottish counterparts.

### THE BATTLE OF HUNNUM

In 807, Pralix decided her army was ready. She tracked Damhan-Allaith down using shape-shifted scouts and flying witches, then met him in battle on the Roman Wall, at an abandoned fort called Hunnum. Rather than being alone as she had hoped, Damhan-Allaith was accompanied by several magicians, a force of Northumbrian soldiers, and two giants. It seemed that he had been warned of Pralix's approach. The Battle of Hunnum ended in another defeat for Pralix, but this time her retreat was orderly and her casualties manageable. She withdrew to a camp to the north called Loch Leglean, and regrouped. Damhadh-Duidas ventured that their opponent had seers at his command who could see the future; Ignes Nefastus considered a spy amongst them to be the more likely option, and his aspersion on the loyalty of Damhadh-Duidas was not missed.

### THE BATTLE OF THE WOUNDED GLEN

At Loch Leglean, Pralix gathered her council to discuss tactics. She proposed teaching the Gifted members of their army the Parma Magica; it was the only way to gain an advantage over the enemy. Ignes Nefastus vehemently disagreed, and accused her of wanting to betray the Order's secrets. The two had an almighty row that nearly came to blows, although Giaro managed to avert actual violence.

Ignes Nefastus stormed out from camp vowing to have nothing more to do with Pralix, and walked straight into the path of Damhan-Allaith himself. The sorcerer had been spying on Loch Leglean, and an immense magical battle was joined. The hills rocked with the power of their magic. Ignes Nefastus flung flames at his opponent, only to have them turned back upon him. None of his spells seemed to get any purchase upon The Spider, but likewise the Flambeau magus's Parma Magica protected him from the worst of his opponent's spells. This duel became known as the Battle of the Wounded Glen because of

## Who was Damhan-Allaith?

**NOTE:** This section contains information that is known only to Damhan-Allaith, and is suitable only for storyguides. Players should stop reading here.

The creature known as Damhan-Allaith was born to a tribe of Southern Picts in Galloway (southwest Scotland) at the beginning of the sixth century. While they had been formerly converted to Christianity by St. Ninian, the Southern Picts had sunk into apostasy, and the pagan faith had never been stronger. As a Gifted child, Damhan-Allaith (his Pictish name is unknown) entered the priesthood and became a devotee of Sluag, the god of the dead and of knowledge. The priests of Sluag were experts in matters of spirits and the soul. It was they who taught the Pictish priests the mystery of the External Soul, and were able to transmigrate their essence from one body to another

as a means to escape death. This was achieved by first transforming oneself into a Magic Spirit and then taking over the body of a child. The priests of Sluag typically reincarnated into an apprentice of their tradition, thus ensuring continuity of beliefs and practice.

Throughout much of Damhan-Allaith's life, the southern Picts were at war with the Britons, and he lived to see his people defeated by the forces of Coel Hen ("Old King Cole"). Damhan-Allaith had gradually warped into a monstrous, hunchbacked form, and he deemed it time to move on to a fresh young body. Rather than moving his soul into a member of his own doomed race, he chose the apprentice of a Strathclyde witch. Now calling himself Copynnau ("spider" in Brythonic), he learned a magical tradition which is similar to philosophic elementalism, concentrating on the manipulation of

raw material and natural animals tied to the elements. The Strathclyde witches used these powers equally for weal and woe. Beneficial members gathered scattered livestock, drove vermin out of the crops, redirected storms, and quenched fires. Baneful witches did the opposite.

After five decades masquerading as a Briton, his body had warped again into the hideous form he wore as a Pict. He cast his eye around and discovered the new race of Scots who had entered Scotland from Ireland, and were busy conquering territory in the north and east. With them they had brought druids, and the sorcerer identified a suitable lad into whom he transferred his soul once more. Taught the secrets of druidry over a long apprenticeship, the sorcerer now adopted the name for which he was most famous: Damhan-Allaith ("spider" in Gaelic). Druidic magic consisted of laying curses and blessings, giving and

the damage that it inflicted on the local environment. It ended with the death of Ignes Nefastus, his mutilated body thrown over the walls of Loch Leglean. Spectators noticed that Damhan-Allaith fled the battlefield sorely wounded.

## Three Years of War

With Ignes Nefastus gone, Damhadh-Duidas became Pralix's chief adviser. They proceeded with the plan to share the Parma Magica and drilled the hedge magicians in its use. Each winter Pralix retreated to Wales to plan and in the summer she campaigned in the kingdom of Northumbria using Loch Leglean as her base.

Damhan-Allaith's wizards harried the hedge wizards with magical traps and ambushes, rarely meeting them on an open field of battle but rather conducting guerrilla warfare from the shadows. A second, more subtle approach was to turn the local populace away from Pralix's allies with lies and rumors, giving them a poor reputation that was somehow enhanced with spells. A handful of Pralix's band were slain in local uprisings; the

rest found themselves shunned even by their own families, and found it difficult to resupply when no one would sell them provisions. They were forced to turn to thievery and banditry in order to eat, which further muddied their reputations.

A few battles stand out in this period; their names are part of Hermetic legend. With the notable exception of the Night of the Sluagh, these battles ended inconclusively. Damhan-Allaith himself was never seen and no great victories were won.

### THE BATTLE ON THE IRTHING

Late in 807 as Pralix and her band were traveling from Loch Leglean back to Wales, they were ambushed as they crossed the River Irthing in Cumbria. The waters of the river suddenly swelled, and a crashing wave of water swept several magicians away. Their drowned bodies were later recovered, with marks like hands around their throats. The wizard conjuring the flood was soon identified and torn apart by wild animals commanded by beast masters. From

the other direction came shape-shifted gruagachan, who were countered by a summoning from Damhan-Duidas. Pralix herself took on hideous spider-giant hybrids that climbed down from the trees, by hurling massive boulders she rent from the fabric of the Roman Wall which overlooked the battle site. The attackers were eventually driven off with no more casualties on Pralix's side.

### THE SIEGE OF GOOLE

In June of 808 a group of Pralix's magicians sailed into the estuary of the River Humber. At the small port of Goole they encountered a blockade across the river, which was manned by a rune magician called Centwine. This single wizard managed to hold up the magicians for three days by harrying them with his magic. The ship was somehow stuck onto the blockade, unable to retreat or break through. The sea swelled violently and landing boats were swept away. The ship's inhabitants were struck with a raging thirst, and the river water retreated from their lowered buckets.

## Who was Damhan-Allaith? (Cont'd)

taking shapes, and the summoning of visions (basically the same powers as gained by the Pictish priests of Gruagach). Damhan-Allaith reveled in his new powers, keeping secret his knowledge of Pictish necromancy and British elementalism. It was at this time that Damhan-Allaith began to exert control over the magical communities of Britain. He fought his way into the position of arch-druid, and made formal alliances between the druids of Alba and the witches of Strathclyde. He also made covert contacts amongst the remaining Pictish priesthoods, revealing his native magic in order to convince them that he was one of their own. His aim was to establish a chiefdom of magicians, where protection was traded for tributes of vis, but it was never quite realized in his lifetime. While able to hide his growing deformity with his ability to shapeshift, Damhan-Allaith's secret was threatened

by one of the last remaining priests of Sluagh. This tradition had lost many of its secrets since Damhan-Allaith's day due to the persecution of Picts and of pagans; significantly they were no longer able to transmigrate their souls into new bodies. To compensate for their losses, the priests of Sluagh had turned to chthonic powers and supplemented their magic with malice and evil acts. Unwilling to be blackmailed, Damhan-Allaith and the priest fought. Damhan-Allaith was clearly the stronger, but the battle only ended in a marginal victory for him. His opponent escaped alive, vowing revenge (indeed, he returned years later calling himself Damhadh-Duidas). Damhan-Allaith decided that, after sixty years as a druid and his identity nearly revealed, it was time he moved on to a new body.

Following the pattern of his last two incarnations, Damhan-Allaith latched onto yet another magical tradition. It

was now 774, and the Saxons had extended their kingdom of Northumbria from the Firth of Forth in the north to the Humber and the Mersey in the south. The Saxon rune magicians resembled those amongst the Norse, but knew an extended rune row with nine extra runes. Damhan-Allaith became Atorcoppe ("spider" in Old English), and learned Woden's runes. The lieutenants of Damhan-Allaith had attempted to keep the alliance strong, but without his leadership the structure had begun to crumble. As soon as his apprenticeship as a rune magician was done, Atorcoppe identified himself to his cronies using passwords established before his resurrection, and began to weld his fiefdom together with a combination of violence and threats until he had control of it once again.

All of their food turned to maggots and beetles. Even the locals of Goole joined in by hurling flaming rags and sticky tar at the beleaguered ship. At the end of the three days, Centwine was joined by his allies, and the boat was boarded and the occupants killed.

## THE BATTLE OF THE AWFUL HAND

In September 808 an elementalist raised the Grey Man of the Merrick, the genius loci of the mountain range known as The Awful Hand (because of its five spurs) in Galloway. He lay in ambush for Pralix and her warband, but the ambush

### Æc Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect on actions requiring speed and swift reactions; this includes Initiative, and Athletics rolls involving running fast.

**General:** Increase the running speed of the target by four paces per magnitude of this effect. Humans can normally run at  $4 \times (10 + \text{Qik} - \text{Encumbrance})$  paces per round.

**Level 10:** Causes the next thunderstorm that occurs within three miles to peal with thunder, and flash lightning between clouds. The display continues until the rune script is defaced, or the storm dissipates or moves out of range.

**Level 10:** Summon a rumble of thunder from still air. This rune script is often drawn in rainwater and lasts just a few rounds

**Level 15:** Summon a deafening clap of thunder, requiring a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 9 to avoid temporarily losing one's hearing.

**Level 20:** Summon a bolt of lightning from the next thunderstorm that occurs within three miles. If no target is designated by another rune, it strikes the rune script; if someone is holding or touching the script then they share the full effects of the strike.

was spotted and battle joined. The tide turned in Pralix's favor when the mountain spirit realized it was being used as a weapon in a petty human battle, and abandoned the field of war.

## THE BATTLE OF CLENNELL STREET

In 809 Pralix fought the war on two fronts, with herself in command of one force in the south and Damhagh-Duidas commanding the other in the north. In May, Giaro was running messages between the two forces when he came across an expeditionary force of druids and giants quite by chance in Redesdale (on the current Anglo-Scottish border). They were clearly trying to outflank Pralix's forces by taking a shortcut. Realizing that he had no time to warn Pralix, Giaro went amongst the wild border clans of Redesdale, famous for their banditry and lawlessness. He convinced them through subterfuge and bravado to stage an ambush against the interlopers and successfully drove them back, killing two giants in the process. Redesdale men still find favor in the turbs of magi who know their history.

## THE NIGHT OF THE SLUAGH

On All Hallow's Eve 809, Pralix's forces were delayed in Loch Leglean by bad weather. They should have set out for Wales a month earlier, but the snow was blocking all passes through the Southern Uplands. As the moon set, there was an unearthly howl, and a truly dreadful host fell upon Loch Leglean. It was the *sluagh*, a vast horde of angry ghosts raised by dark magics from the kingdom of Sluag (the Pictish god of death). They swarmed over the camp, killing indiscriminately. Less than a dozen magicians were killed that night, but it was still the greatest single loss suffered by Pralix's army since she taught them the *Parma Magica*. Many more were left insane, gibbering at the horrors they had seen and unable to sleep for the rest of their lives.

## The Battle of Blencathra

Finally, Pralix and Damhagh-Duidas got lucky in discovering the whereabouts of Damhan-Allaith, and arranged an ambush. All of the preceding battles had provided vital information to Pralix; she had ruthlessly quizzed combatants about the capacities of their foes, and made extensive use of shapeshifted spies. She was therefore aware of the importance of the spoken word in gruagach magic, and prepared her attack carefully.

In March 810, Pralix and Damhagh-Duidas together faced The Spider at Blencathra in Cumbria. His gruagachan allies had gathered with hundreds of their kin-folk to perform some mighty ritual working, and it was the perfect time for what she had planned. Pralix reached into her pre-Hermetic training to summon and release Lethe, a mighty spirit of forgetfulness. Lethe plucked the memory of the Pictish language from Damhan-Allaith's gruagachan. Without knowledge of their magical language, the gruagachan were left powerless, unable to cast the simplest spell. With the gruagachan neutralized, Pralix's soldiers fell on the Picts, while her magicians provided magical support. It was the largest battle fought so far, and the most decisive victory achieved by Pralix. To Pralix's great anger, Damhan-Allaith escaped her clutches once again. In fury and frustration she blamed Damhagh-Duidas for this failure, accusing him of colluding with the enemy. The maga and the sorcerer fought, first with words, then with spells. Damhagh-Duidas was driven away by Pralix's assault and was not seen again.

Pralix's mighty working of magic nearly obliterated the entire magical tradition of the gruagachan. The few Pictish magicians not present at the Battle of Blencathra were able to hold on to the fading threads of their magic, but they never truly recovered. Having no memory of what happened at Blencathra, the surviving gruagachan were at a loss to explain what had happened to them. Blame eventually settled on the shoulders of House Diedne, who had long been enemies of the gruagachan.

While Damhagh-Duidas took no further part in the history of the Order, his name later resurfaced many years later

amongst a tradition of hedge wizards who claimed to have been taught by him following his break with Pralix. Ironically, these "Damhadh-Duidsan" ended up joining House Ex Miscellanea.

## The Battle of the False Sun

Some claim that the vengeful Damhadh-Duidas betrayed the location of Pralix's winter camp in Wales to The Spider; others say that Damhan-Allaith simply followed Pralix back from Blencathra. Whatever the truth, the final clash between Pralix and Damhan-Allaith occurred just a month after Blencathra, on the shores of the lake outside the camp. Damhan-Allaith came with everything he had, and he was faced by nearly all of Pralix's remaining magicians.

As the sun dropped, Pictish priests began to summon the *sluagh*, while multi-armed giants hurled rocks and a ram-headed serpent dragon plowed through the ranks of warriors. In response, Pralix's wizards summoned a massive ball of fire as bright as the sun, driving the ghosts back into the night. Her elementalists summoned whirlwinds of fire and earth elementals who dragged the giants under the ground. Beast masters led phalanxes of bears, wolves and stags against the dragon. Pralix herself was in the midst of battle, sword in one hand and spear in the other, as she fought her way through to Damhan-Allaith's redoubt. She had prepared for the moment that she would face him. The mage-smiths amongst her people had made her an unbreakable magic chain, forged from obscure ingredients and strange magics collected over several years. Upon facing Damhan-Allaith at last, she shackled herself to her opponent with the chain, ensuring that the conflict could only end with one of their deaths. Hermetic magic prevailed against Damhan-Allaith's spellcraft and the wizard was finally slain.

## REPERCUSSIONS

After the Battle of the False Sun (as it became known), Damhan-Allaith's body was laid out for cremation but it disappeared overnight and the guards set over the pyre were killed in a gruesome manner. No amount of divination revealed what had happened to it. Convinced that Damhan-Allaith's magical allies were to blame, Pralix had her magicians scouring every inch of Britain for everyone who had supported Damhan-Allaith. Each one was brought to her and their secrets ripped from their minds before they were put them to death. During this action every single member of the Saxon tradition of rune magic was exterminated, and the Scottish druids were diminished so badly that they guttered and faded a generation later. Despite this, Pralix never discovered what had happened to Damhan-Allaith's body.

## The Ordo Miscellanea

The years following the vanquish of Damhan-Allaith were tense for both the Order and for Britain. Pralix was initially lauded by the Order, and Mercere the Founder himself came to Britain to escort her home. However, Pralix declined the offer to return, and Mercere was refused entrance to her winter camp. She instead announced to him from the walls that she renounced both her House and the Order, and declared the foundation of a new order, the Ordo Miscellanea, which would accept all wizards no matter what their tradition.

This action incensed the Order of Hermes. Many called for her head, but the prima of House Tytulus spoke passionately in her defense, and her voice was joined by others, not least of whom was Trianoma. It took the Order of Hermes until 817 to come to a settlement with Pralix, by which time the Ordo Miscellanea had swollen to many times its original size. When the Ordo Miscellanea became House Ex Miscellanea, the size of the Order of Hermes was doubled.

Pralix never rejoined the Order. She

remained in Cad Gadu — the new name for her winter camp in North Wales — and ruled the house in all but name. On her advice, seven covenants were established in the former territory of Damhan-Allaith. These became known as the *Praesides Septentrionales*, the "Bastions of the North," and their mission was to watch for the return of Damhan-Allaith. While there were several false alarms, particularly in the early days, there were no further confirmed signs of The Spider, and one by one these covenants abandoned their tireless watch, faltered and died out. One site was reoccupied, but the new magi did not adopt the same mission and did not take up the name of bastion. Several were lost in the Schism War, and the last *Praesides Septentrionalis* failed just after in 1025.

## The Saxon Runes

Damhan-Allaith is the last surviving rune wizard who has knowledge of the Saxon runes. Knowledge of these runes was lost when the Ordo Miscellanea exterminated every last Saxon rune wizard in Britain. Any vitki Damhan-Allaith trains is Opened to all the Runes he himself knows; he can also perform a minor initiation into the Saxon runes for vitkir who already know the 24 runes of the Elder Futhark.

Note that Saxon vitkir had their own names for the Elder Futhark (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, page 139), but the standard names are used here for ease of reference.

### A, Ac, "Oak"

Ac is the rune of Thor's hammer Mjolnir, represented by the lightning bolt. Oak trees are particularly prone to being struck by lightning, and as such they are considered sacred to devotees of the Thunderer. Excessive use of this rune (such as a long-lasting rune script that summons thunder) might draw the ire of the Thunderer. Ac is

also a rune governing speed.

As a target, Ac represents thunder and lightning. Combined with Algiz, for example, a rune script can prevent a character from being hit by lightning. It can also represent those things struck by lightning.

### SAMPLE AC RUNE SPELLS

#### (The runemaster) Brings Thor's Hammer on the Head of this Man

Ac (Mannaz) 20, Method II

The designated target is struck by a bolt of lightning the next time he is within three miles of a storm. The rune script must remain

### Æsc Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect when resisting another's forceful actions, such as stopping a charging opponent, or thwarting intimidation. This includes adding to the Defense bonus of a shield (but not a weapon), and to a stress check to avoid breakage (*City & Guild*, page 77.)

**General:** The target (which can be a person or an object) receives the Immovable Object Magic Defense against Mentem or Corpus spells, equal to the magnitude of this effect. When affected by a spell of the appropriate Form which attempts to control the target, roll the target's Strength + Magic Defense – magnitude of incoming spell + simple die, against an Ease Factor of 9. Success resists the attacking spell for a round.

**General:** The target (which must be an inanimate object) gains supernatural resilience; subtract half the level of the rune script from the Casting Total of any spell designed to directly weaken or destroy it. If no Casting Total is involved (such as from an enchantment), then only effects of a level greater than half the level of the rune script can take effect.

**Level 10:** Makes the target object into a Wondrous Item for the purpose of making Stress Checks and determining Damage Levels (*City & Guild*, page 77.)

**Level 10:** Wards a target object from natural degradation such as rust and erosion, although it can still be deliberately damaged.

within 10 paces of the target. The lightning strike must Penetrate Magic Resistance and inflicts +30 damage. The rune script is always destroyed by the lightning bolt.

### Æ, Æsc, "Ash"

Æsc is the rune of stubborn resistance. Ash wood is commonly used to make shields and palisade walls; it is both strong and flexible, and refuses to yield.

As a target, Æsc can be used to represent a wall, shield, or other defensive structure.

### SAMPLE ÆSC RUNE SPELLS

#### (The runemaster) Shields Her Son's Ship

Æsc (Raido) 10, Method II

Carved on the prow of a ship, this rune script raises the Damage Levels of a ship or

### Yr Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect on rolls to do with aiming; this includes Attack rolls made with missiles and thrown weapons, and Aiming rolls for spellcasters.

**General:** Increase the range between a rune script and its target from ten paces to a hundred paces. This effect can only affect spells of the level of this spell or less, and this rune script must include the runes of the extended spell as well as Yr.

**Level 5:** Increase the range increment of any missile or thrown object by half.

**Level 10:** Double the range increment of any missile or thrown object.

**Level 15:** Causes the targeted missile to strike a particular part of the target.

**Level 20:** Guides a missile upon which this rune script is carved unfailingly to its intended target. The attacker generates an Attack Total as normal, but the target's Defense Total is zero. The missile only misses if the attacker botches his attack.

boat from 6 (for a standard boat of Size +5) to 15. Furthermore, any Stress Checks have a +5 bonus to avoid damage. A similar rune spell could be carved on all manner of objects, with the target rune changed appropriately. For example, a weapon would probably use Tiwaz, whereas a house might be Ingwaz.

### Yr, Yr, "Arrow"

Yr is the rune of skill and precision. It shares some of its nature with Ihwaz, both being runes of yew trees and bows, although Yr is more strictly an arrow rune rather than a bow rune. Yr may be used to extend the range of another spell.

As a target, Yr stands for any thrown object, or any missile shot from a bow or sling. To affect the weapon rather than the missile, use Ihwaz.

### Ear Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect on rolls regarding concealment or keeping hidden. This bonus or penalty can add to the Ease Factor required to spot an object upon which the rune script is drawn.

**Level 5:** Rot perishable targets like leather, cloth, meat, or wool.

**Level 5:** Reduce the amount of light within 10 paces of the rune script to that experienced in heavy fog.

**Level 5:** Prevent a trivial memory from being recalled by the target.

**Level 10:** Degrade strong targets like wood and bone

**Level 10:** Reduce the amount of light within 10 paces of the rune script to that experienced in faint moonlight.

**Level 10:** Prevent a minor memory from being recalled by the target.

**Level 15:** Extinguish all light within 10 paces of the rune script.

**Level 15:** Prevent a significant memory from being recalled by the target.

**Level 20:** Erode or rust durable targets like metal, stone, and magically-strengthened objects.

**Level 20:** Prevent a major memory from being recalled by the target.

## SAMPLE YR RUNE SPELLS

## I, (the runemaster), Emulate Egil's Arrow Feat

Yr 15, Method I

The caster designates a specific target such as a body part as she inscribes this rune on a missile. When shot, she rolls to attack as normal, but if her Attack Total exceeds the Defense Total of her target then she has hit the designated organ. The wound inflicted is accompanied by an appropriate Minor Flaw such as Missing Eye or Lame. This Flaw disappears when the wound heals; if the missile did not penetrate the target's Soak then the Flaw lasts just one round. The same rune spell can be used for trick-shooting, and Egil the Archer is reputed to have shot an apple from the head of his son.

## Gar Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect when suffering injury or sacrificing something personal in order to achieve a greater purpose; this includes rolls for which the target spends a Confidence point.

**General:** At the cost of a Light Wound inflicted when scribing this script, add +5 to the Penetration Total of another rune spell no greater than the level of this effect. The spell must include the runes for the bound effect as well as Gar.

**General:** At the cost of a Medium Wound inflicted when scribing this script, add +10 to the Penetration Total of another rune spell no greater than the level of this effect. The spell must include the runes for the bound effect as well as Gar.

**General:** At the cost of a Heavy Wound inflicted when scribing this script, add +20 to the Penetration Total of another rune spell no greater than the level of this effect. The spell must include the runes for the bound effect as well as Gar.

## Ea, Ear, "Grave"

Ear is the rune of dust, oblivion, darkness, and concealment. It can be used to degrade a non-living object by inscribing the rune script on the object; the item decays or erodes at a hundred times the usual speed. Naturally this eventually destroys the rune script as well, but it is usually the last to go. The grave-rune can also erode memories, although these return naturally over time (taking about half as long to heal as the target was under the effect).

As a target, Ear can affect graves, grave-goods, and corpses, as well as darkness.

## SAMPLE EAR RUNE SPELLS

## I, (the runemaster), Erode the Smith's Work

Ear 20, Method II

Drawn onto any metal object, this

## Calc Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect when attempting to remember something, or when trying to recover information that has been lost.

**General:** Increases a preexisting Reputation of a target by an amount equal to half the magnitude of this effect, rounded up. This Reputation fades to its former level if the target does nothing to reinforce it.

**Level 5:** Create a trivial memory in the mind of the target, equivalent to a few minutes of speech.

**Level 10:** Create a minor memory in the mind of the target, equivalent to a few hours of speech.

**Level 10:** Creates a Reputation for a target, positive or negative, at a score of 1. People may believe they have heard of the person even if he has done nothing to earn this. The Reputation fades if it is not reinforced through deeds.

**Level 20:** Create a significant repository of lore filled and studied like a tractatus.

**Level 30:** Create a major repository of lore filled and studied like a summa

rune script causes it to become covered in rust. After a day the metal begins to flake and is in danger of breaking. After a week it is completely destroyed.

## G, Gar, "Spear"

Gar represents Odin's spear Gungnir, which gave victory but usually at a cost. More generally, Gar is the spear used to dispatch sacrifices, and grants power through blood.

Rune scripts using Gar must be drawn in the caster's own blood, and grant an additional +1 to the Penetration modifier granted by the rune script against the caster.

As a target, Gar represents any object

## Cweorth Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect when inventing something new, or when creating a new thing from an old one (such as forging a sword into a plowshare).

**General:** Increase one Characteristic by an amount equal to the magnitude of this effect, while simultaneously decreasing another Characteristic by the same amount.

**Level 5:** Alter one's facial features to resemble anything remotely human.

**Level 10:** Rearrange body parts, such as moving an eye to the end of a finger, or twisting the head to face backwards. This does no harm, but can be uncomfortable.

**Level 15:** Duplicates a preexisting body part, for example, to grant a new pair of eyes or arms.

**Level 20:** Grow new body parts that are not part of a human body, such as horns or wings.

**Level 25:** Releases the soul from the body to wander freely as a spirit. This temporarily grants the Night-walker Major Virtue (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 9). The caster must make arrangements for the rune script to be deleted after a time, else he can never return to his body.

given as a sacrifice. It can also be used to target someone to whom the vitki owes a debt, in this case it might be considered a Mentem effect. It can also be used to represent blood.

## SAMPLE GAR RUNE SPELLS

### (The runemaster) Sacrifices Power for Pain

Gar (Kauno) General, Method II

The rune magician draws this rune script in his own blood, taking a Medium wound, then draws another rune script he knows next to it that uses the Kauno rune. That Kauno rune spell has +10 Penetration to harm its target with fire or disease.

## K, Calc, "Chalk"

Calc is the rune of remembrance. Its shape represents a chalice used to toast heroes and lords. This rune can be used in a rune script to create a repository of knowledge on a subject governed by the target rune. Thus Calc (Raido) could act as a repository on Area Lore, and Calc (Perth) could store Magic Lore or even Rune Magic. Once the repository has been created it must be filled by the caster; this process is identical to a character writing a summa or tractatus (ArM5, page 165), including the time taken. A tractatus written in this manner counts toward the maximum number of tractatus that an author can write. The completed runescipt looks no different to any other at first glance, but if studied reveals the presence of hidden depths, unfolding in the mind as if staring into murky water. Anyone in possession of the repository can study the knowledge contained therein, as if it were a text of the appropriate type, as long as they are capable of reading runes. Calc rune scripts can also be used to preserve smaller amounts of knowledge, such as a hero's story imparted to anyone touching his grave marker.

As a target, Calc can represent any repository of knowledge, including memories, books, poems, and gravestones.

## SAMPLE CALC RUNE SPELLS

### (The runemaster) Commemorates the Dead

Calc (Ear) General, Method II

The deeds of the deceased are sharpened in the mind of anyone who walks within 10 paces of the gravemarker on which this rune script is carved. One Reputation is increased by half the Magnitude of this spell.

### (The runemaster) Defames the Miscreant

Calc (Mannaz) 10, Method II

Usually carved onto a person's house, or occasionally on a horse's skull erected on a pole on the person's property, this rune script gives the target a negative local Reputation at a score of 1. This is typically used to shame a person who refuses to admit a crime.

## Q, Cweorth, "Fire-twirl"

Cweorth represents the climbing, swirling flames of the ritual fire, and is associated with alteration and transformation. As the rune of the funeral pyre it represents the transformation of body to spirit, but it can be used to represent alteration to make something new. For such transformations, the runescipt must be carved or tattooed into flesh.

As a target Cweorth can represent something that has never been used before.

## Lor Guidelines

**General:** The target receives a bonus or penalty equal to the magnitude of this effect when resisting the effects of poison or venom. This includes Recovery rolls to restore a wound caused by poison, but not other sources of damage.

**Level 5:** Summon a single vermin animal such as beetle, snake, rat, toad, or eel.

**Level 10:** Change the toxicity of a substance so that it now causes a Light Wound. This can make a non-toxic substance mildly poisonous, or weaken a stronger poison.

**Level 15:** Induce fear or disgust for a specified target.

**Level 15:** Summon vermin whose mass totals that of an animal of Size +1.

**Level 15:** Change the toxicity of a substance so that it now causes a Medium Wound.

**Level 15:** Induce incapacitating terror or revulsion for a specified target.

**Level 20:** Change the toxicity of a substance so that it now causes a Heavy Wound.

**Level 25:** Change the toxicity of a substance so that it now causes an Incapacitating Wound.

**Level 30:** Change the toxicity of a substance so that it now causes a Fatal Wound.

## SAMPLE CWEORTH RUNE SPELLS

**I, (the runemaster), Exchange Elfin Grace for Troll Thews**

Cweorth General, Method I

The caster's Presence drops by an amount equal to the magnitude of the rune spell, and his Strength grows by the same amount. In appearance he becomes more troll-like.

**I, (the runemaster), Assume Freyja's Falcon Cloak**

Cweorth 20, Method I

The rune magician inscribes this rune script on a cloak or else his arms, and grows a pair of wings. His Athletics Ability determines how well he can fly, and rolls may be needed in a strong wind or where speed is an issue.

St, Stan, "Stone"

Stan is the rune of solidity and weight represented by stone. Poetically called "the bones of Ymir," Stan is principally the rune of obstacles, hindrances, and barriers, or the overcoming of such.

As a target, Stan represents stone or objects made of stone; more generally it can be used for any obstacle such as a door or wall.

## SAMPLE STAN RUNE SPELLS

**(The runemaster) Relieves the Weight of the Byrnie**

Stan (Othila) 10, Method II

Inscribed upon a chainmail shirt (half chainmail armor), the Load is reduced from 4 to 3.

Or, Ior, "Water monster"

The rune of monstrosity. It has mastery over creatures that induce disgust and fear, such as snakes, toads, spiders, and scorpions. It also has charge of fear and all manner of noxious substances.

As a target, Ior represents any vermin or poison.

## SAMPLE IOR RUNE SPELLS

**I, (the runemaster), Summon Death by Two Million Legs**

Ior 15, Method I

This spell summons 200,000 spiders (Size -15) from the air, who drift down and start to crawl over any surface, climbing upwards as high as they can. They bite flesh if they find it, and are mildly venomous. A similar rune spell could summon 50,000 worms (Size -13) or 5,000 mice (Size -10) from damp soil, 2,000 toads (Size -9) from stagnant water, or 500 rats (Size -7) from food waste.

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