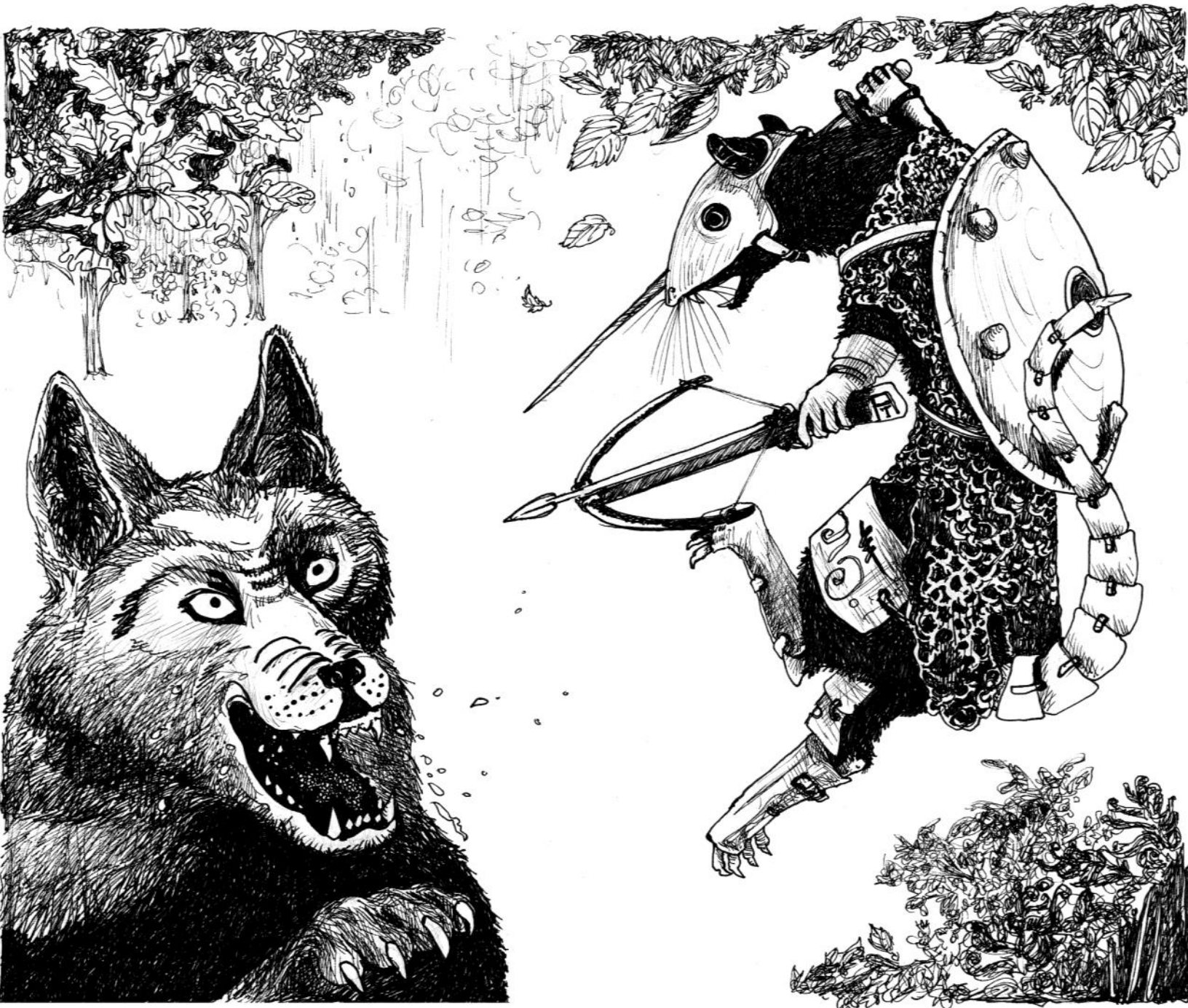


# SUB ROSA

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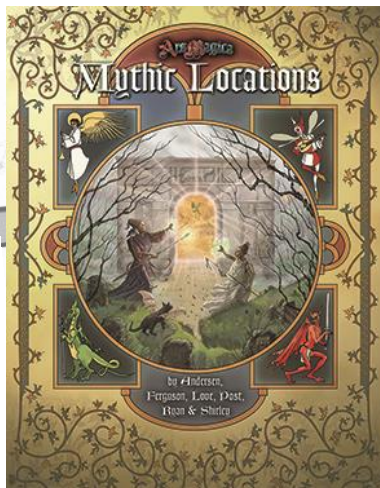


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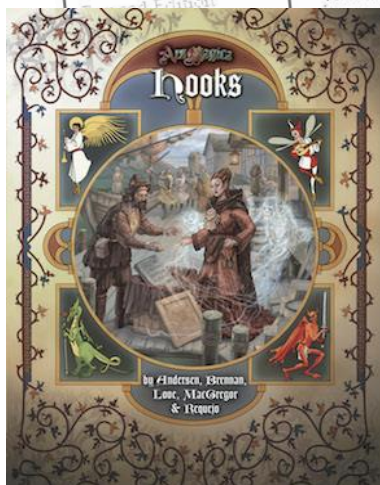
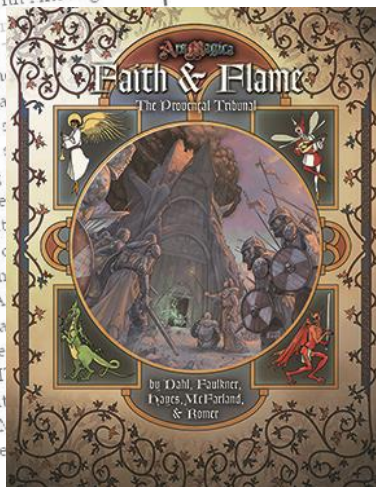
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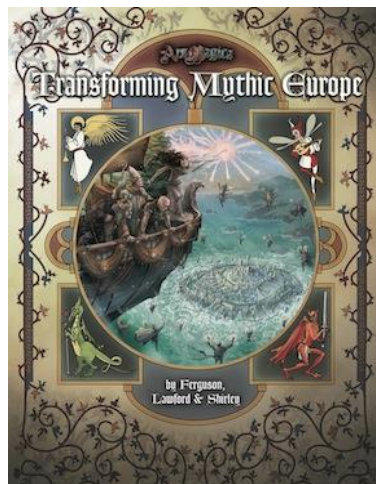
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It's taken a while, but once again, thanks to everyone who made this issue possible and also to our fantastic subscribers for being so patient



# UNDER THE ROSE

It feels like it's been a while since the last issue. About six months, actually, and there's a lot that's gone on.

*Transforming Mythic Europe* had just come out and gave us all ways in which to make our sagas bigger, bolder, and of more impact to our game world. Then the wonderful *Hooks* arrived that instantly taught us how to mine our precious libraries of **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** books for stories, the hooks that draw us into stories, and the threads that trail away and lead to others.

Of course, the star of the show for this year is the sublime *Faith & Flame*. It is no surprise that this Tribunal book has already, so soon after its release, generated so much excitement and positive feedback.

Quite rightly, in my view, each of the Tribunal books published under **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** has brought with them a unique play style. Each Tribunal is very different from the others and each reflects some aspect of the lands in which it is set. Normandy, for instance, as represented in *The Lion and the Lily*, reflects a chivalric society with a great tournament the centerpiece of Hermetic culture. The Thebes of *The Sundered Eagle* harks back to classical times with its citizenships and democracies and its direct connection with ancient patron spirits. And of course Hibernia's high-conflict setting in *The Contested Isle* sharply reflects the political and interpersonal turmoil of the period.

*Faith & Flame* provides yet another unique style of play; unique in that it attempts not to be so. Some commentators have described it as *default* or *vanilla*, and not unkindly either.

Provençal Hermetic society provides no barrier to starting magi or players at the beginning of their saga who want simply to create a covenant and start their journey. There's both beauty and utility in that simplicity and it's a line cleverly navigated.

There's another element in this Tribunal book that I did not get from the others, and that's demons. As someone who owes much of my own **Ars Magica** education to the old **Third Edition** I have to admit I have missed the overt presence of demons and their kind in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**. Even in Hibernia we took the conscious decision to keep the infernal very much at arm's length, to keep it subtle and hidden. There seems no such concern here.

While the book is confident to leverage the infernal, in keeping for a place in which so much turmoil has occurred, it is not gratuitous, which again shows the maturity of the piece. Outnumbered by magical and faerie beasts they may be but these demons are not tucked away, kept separate in their own chapter; they are instead front and center, there to be encountered, a threat overdue for some attention.

That little thrill at seeing demons dotted through the book is just one small part of what this Tribunal brings to some of us old-timers who still drag out the old **Third Edition** books from time to time. Seeing Mistrudge on the cover, finding Windgraven, Lariander, and Bellaquin all referenced between the covers, and even the basic premise of a Tribunal enduring a crusade on its own soil. All these things seem instantly familiar, comfortable, and completely in keeping with the game that many of us

started playing.

But *Faith & Flame* doesn't just ride on the coat tails of nostalgia. It would be an easy task to simply throw in a few knowing references and leave it that, but the truth is that *Faith & Flame* presents an immediately usable setting. Page after page there is content that can be directly applied to your saga, from the list of fallen covenants to be explored, to the lists of magi suitable as parentes for your player characters; from guidance on what the very next Tribunal meeting entails, to dozens of story seeds, characters, and supernatural locations.

Why wax so lyrical? Not simply because it's a superb book, but also as a strange and lengthy introduction to **Rats Magica** by Jason Tondro. Yes, this issue we're pleased to present something that is both quirky to the point of being niche and also strangely classic.

In **Rats Magica**, you play Gifted rats existing side-by-side with the Order of Hermes in a world suddenly so large that the politics and foibles of men seems oddly immaterial. **Rats Magica** does something incredibly clever; it distills the very essence of **Ars Magica** down to its core; you play magi making your way in a magical world filled with threats both to you and those you are sworn to protect. For all its quiriness, **Rats Magica** is **Ars Magica** boiled down to its fundamental components, a little bit like *Faith & Flame*.

So wherever you choose to set your stories, however you choose to play, and indeed whatever *characters* you choose to play, **Ars Magica** is a game that continues to reward year after year, book after book. Long may it continue.

# FROM THE LINE EDITOR

By DAVID CHART

This summer I attended Grand Tribunal UK, and met Mark Lawford. Fortunately, our esteemed editor refrained from putting any pressure on me to write these notes, so I was able to enjoy the Tribunal. And I have ended up writing this piece rather late. (Sorry, Mark!)

Grand Tribunal is a wonderful event, and so I must start by thanking CJ Romer and Andrew Oakley for organising it. It is true that it is held in a slightly shabby church hall just down the road from Cheltenham's Tesco, but the setting is not the point. In any case, Gas Green Community Centre is actually a great place for the convention: it has several rooms, meaning that it is rarely necessary to have more than one game in the same room. With Tesco five minutes' walk away, and a small kitchen in the community centre, it is easy to get lunch. Still, I do feel sorry for the people who were there on their first visit to England: Gas Green on a wet Saturday is not exactly the best that England has to offer. I hope the gaming made up for it.

There were a lot of attendees from abroad. I went from Japan, although I was also visiting family so I only half count, and the Viking contingent (from Norway and

Denmark) were there as ever. There were also attendees from France, Spain, and Germany, making "Grand Tribunal" an appropriate name. I got to play in an excellent freeform by Andrew Oakley, and in a fun tabletop game that he wrote. I also managed to save the Maid of Norway and get around a faerie curse, and try out a fan-made board game based on the Schism War. At the Line Editor's speech, I gave away lots of secrets about the future of the line, but that was a bonus for attendees, so I'm not going to repeat them here.

Spending a weekend with **Ars Magica** fans is great. It's particularly good for me, because it involves lots of people enjoying my work, and telling me how much they like it; I imagine it is the same for other writers. Because we write the game without any direct interaction with the fans, it is very encouraging to hear that they like it. However, I hope that it's also good for the other attendees: the chance to play with new people, and new styles of story.

I'm not sure when I'll next get to a Grand Tribunal, but there will be a next time.

Finally, I'd like to say a bit about **Mythic Locations**, our next release. **Mythic Locations** was inspired by the old second edition

**Mythic Places** books. It is a collection of places where troupes can find stories. Some of them are closely inspired by medieval legends, such as the entrance to Purgatory that can be found in Ireland, while others, such as the faerie toy market that can be entered from many cities, are more original. The locations are all designed so that they can be used more than once, and in a couple of cases they are designed so that troupes can found a covenant there, if they wish. Although almost all the locations are placed in a particular part of Mythic Europe, in most cases because that's where they really are, they also include notes on moving them to other Tribunals, to be nearer to your troupe's covenant.

The purpose of the book is to provide setting elements that you can just drop into a saga, ready for play, to add a strong mythic element to the area around your covenant. Combined with **Hooks** and **Tales of Mythic Europe**, we are steadily creating the books necessary to make a ready-to-play saga.



# THE STORYGUIDE'S HANDBOOK: THE CATTLE RAID AS A STORY

BY GERALD WYLIE

*Back then the messengers go till they arrive at Cruachan, the stronghold of Connacht. Medb asks their tidings, and macRoth makes known the same: that they had not brought his bull from Darè. "And the reason?" demanded Medb. MacRoth recounts to her how the dispute arose. "There is no need to polish knots over such affairs as that, macRoth; for it was known," said Medb, "if the Brown Bull of Cualnge would not be given with their will, he would be taken in their despite, and taken he shall be!"*

## Táin Bó Cúailnge

The world of Mythic Hibernia presented in *The Contested Isle: The Hibernian Tribunal* owes much to the ancient cycles of storytelling and the Tribunal has been designed to promote action and conflict. This conflict is not simply for action's sake, but to hold a mirror to those old poetic tales of cunning and valour. A significant part of both the old tales and life in Mythic Hibernia is the cattle raid.

Cattle raids are not only the stuff of story and legend, in 1220 they are very much a reality. So much so that it might be worth working out a way to model these events. At their heart, cattle raids are about far more than just the cattle. Anybody can rob another individual of their

possessions for profit, but in Irish folklore the relationships between the participants on both sides is important. In some stories, the cattle involved are almost a secondary concern. For instance in the Táin Bó Regamon, the cattle are taken along with the seven daughters of Regamon and they are subsequently returned to Regamon in the ensuing negotiations.

In this article we break down some of the common elements of a cattle raid story, presenting them as options for the storyguide, and even players, to draw upon when creating their own stories of high heroism.



## ANATOMY OF A CATTLE RAID

There is a clear difference between a theft or robbery and a cattle raid. As a story, there must be some kind of personal motivation behind the raid. That may be rooted in an animosity between the parties or, in cases like the Táin Bó Cúailnge, rooted in vanity and envy.

The parties on both sides likely know of the intention to raid and they likely have the opportunity to raise allies and prepare, turning the engagement into a series of skirmishes or battles.

The object of the raid is more often than not something other than the monetary value afforded by the cattle. This could be a particular beast, a source of political leverage, or even

## HERDS AS SOURCES OF INCOME

Given their value, it is fair enough to claim a large herd of cattle as a Standard source of income for a covenant and a small herd as a Minor source of income. A successful raid against a herd reduces the income from that herd for that year by half! It regains one step each year, so a herd raided once loses half its income in the year that it was raided but recovers fully by the end of the following year. A herd can be raided multiple times in the year and each raid reduces the income by half. A herd raided multiple times takes time to recover.

However, successfully raiding another herd completely replenishes a depleted herd regardless of relative sizes! You can also gain a Source of Income from raiding. A single raid is enough to create a Minor Source of Income and this can be increased to a Standard Source of

Income by a second raid. Why is raiding so profitable? Because this stacks the odds in favour of raiding, which is an inducement to story, which is really what we're after.

So how do we model a player character raid on another herd? First we work out where the cattle start out, how the characters intend to get in and then out, where they are being taken to, and what stands in the way of their escape. That gives us the physical journey that the player characters can expect. We then need to work out some incidentals; what time of day or night is the raid happening and what kind of guards do we have in the way. The players can probably determine the time of day they want to undertake the raid and they may well have information on who or what may be guarding the cattle.

The following lists of options are designed to help define new scenarios around the theme of a cattle raid. They are narrative tools rather than mechanical

ones, which means you have a lot of leeway in deciding what they mean for your saga in the particular story you are looking to tell. You don't need to be too methodical in picking something from each list but you should be able to quickly build different scenarios and challenges by mixing and matching from the lists. Of course, as storyguide you then flesh out the detail around the events, providing statistics for any opposition, how watchful the cow-herd is, how many defenders can be raised, deciding just how rickety the old bridge is, etc.

wives taken for the sons of the raiders.

So, the raid tends to have the following key events:

- **The Reason:** What is it that sparks the raid?
- **The Object or the Target:** What is it that the raiders are after and why?
- **Planning of the Raid:** Perhaps negotiations between the parties; perhaps the assembling of the attacking forces; perhaps the use of cunning to infiltrate the target household.
- **Learning of the Raid:** How the target learns of the threat, what allies the target raises to defend their cattle.
- **The Raid Itself:** Combat, cunning... this is where the heroes (or villains) get their

hands on the prize.

- **The Legacy:** What happens to the target of the raid? Is it a story of the futility of conflict in which neither side end up with the cattle? Or is it a story of reconciliation in which the parties right wrongs, the cattle are returned to their rightful place, and a peace is forged?

These are the narrative elements, the factors that help derive the actor's actions and responses, but in putting the action of the story together there are practical things to consider. The sections below look in a little more detail at these practical considerations.

## WHOSE CATTLE ARE THEY?

*Then it was that macRoth the messenger was summoned to Medb, and Medb strictly bade macRoth to learn where there might be found a bull of that likeness in any of the provinces of Erin. "Verily," said macRoth, "I know where the bull is that is best and better again, in the province of Ulster, in the hundred of Cualnge, in the house of Darè son of Fiachna; even Donn Cualnge ('the Brown Bull of Cualnge') he is called."*

### Táin Bó Cúailnge

In most cattle raid stories, the owner of the cattle is at least as important to the narrative as those who are taking the cattle. They usually have power, influence, and resources comparable to those seeking to steal the cattle and are usually in a position to sustain a feud over the affair.



In terms of individual power, we might expect magi to raid other magi as this would provide some kind of parity. However, the player characters may choose to raid against any level they like, taking advantage of those weaker than themselves or tempting mundane friction by stealing from men of influence or even the Church.

Some examples might be:

- An Irish Landowner
- An English Landowner
- The Church
- An Irish King
- An English Knight
- A Hedge Wizard
- Faeries of the Otherworld
- A Hermetic Magus
- A Hermetic Covenant

It is important to consider the reprisals that might be visited upon the player characters. Low-ranking land-owners may appeal to the king, who may or may not see value in taking up his defense; a member of the Tuatha De Danann on the other hand may move Heaven and Earth in order to gain revenge.

## THE QUARREL

*Flidais was the wife of Ailill Finn in the district of Kerry, but she loved Fergus the son of Róg on account of the glorious tales about him; and always there went messengers from her to him at the end of each week...*

*"If it were one of thy people who had the quarrel, he should stay with me until he had made his peace. But thou shalt not stay," said Ailill Finn, "for it has been told me that my wife loves thee!"*

*"We must have a gift of cows then," said Fergus, "for a great need lies on us, even the sustenance of the troop who have gone with me into exile."*

**Táin Bó Flidhais**

The best cattle raid stories are those where a quarrel exists between the parties. So as a storyguide looking to support cattle raid stories, you can highlight the disagreements that might exist between the player covenant and their external relationships. Make references to the disagreements now and then along with their root causes and any antagonistic actions taken by either side.

This quarrel often arises out of personal frailties, such as the intense lust of both Flidhais and Fergus mac Róich in the Táin Bó Flidhais.

You might also create others, perhaps of lesser power than the player characters, who also have disagreements with some of the same NPCs as the player characters do. Use these third parties in order to demonstrate the behaviour of their enemies, thereby building a justification for raiding them.

Those same disagreements might also provide fuel for others looking to raid the player characters.

## WHERE ARE THE CATTLE?

*They set out, seven times twenty heroes was the number, till they were in the south of Connaught, in the neighbourhood of the domain of Corcomroe in the land of Ninnus.*

### Táin Bó Regamon

Spend a little time determining where the cattle are, both in terms of whether the cattle are in friendly or enemy territory and also what the situation of their pasturing is. Some examples might be:

- Open Mountain Pastures
- Lowland Pastures
- Coastal/Cliffside Pastures
- Protected by a Rath

- A Regio
- The Magic or Faerie Realm

It is a very different proposition to steal cattle from a fortified rath than it is to drive them down from the mountain pastures. Having a clear idea of their starting situation helps the player characters plan their attack.

## HOW DO YOU GET TO THE CATTLE?

*South-east from Cruachan Ai, by Mag Cruimm,*

*over Tuaim Mona ('the Hill of Turf'),*

*by Turloch Teora Crich ('the Creek of three Lands'),*

*by Cul ('the Nook') of Silinne,*

*by Dubloch ('Black Lough'),*

*by Fid Dubh ('Black Woods'),*

*by Badbgna,*

*by Coltain,*

*by the Shannon,*

*by Glune Gabur,*

*by Mag Trega,*

*by Tethba in the north,*

*by Tethba in the south...*

### Táin Bó Cúailnge

Getting to the cattle is an important part of the narrative. Understanding how the raiders gather helps inform whether the defenders are aware of the raid in advance. For instance, a raiding force gather en-masse in the nearby town is a give-away, but assembling under the guise of merchants, traders, and teamsters on market day is likely to attract less overt attention.

- Across the hills
- Through the town
- Through the woods
- Sail up the river



- Along the coast
- By Magical Means

The longer the route, the more chance there is of being noticed, which gives opportunities for allies or enemies to be encountered.

## How Do You Get Them Out?

*"Come ye away," said Mani, "and bring your cattle with you. That will be a good deed. We shall assist you with our honour and our protection, O ye daughters of Regamon," said he.*

*The maidens drove together their cows and their swine, and their sheep, so that none observed them; and they secretly passed on till they came to the camp of their comrades. The maidens greeted the sons of Ailill and Medb, and they remained there standing together.*

### Táin Bó Regamon

It is likely that the first line of defense during a cattle raid is going to be slight but then the question becomes how to get the cattle out of their pastures or corrals and started on their journey. Examples might include:

- The Hidden Track
- Stampede Through the Town
- A Run Through the Woods
- Down the River
- With the Aid of Faeries
- By Magical Means

Cattle protected by a rath are more likely to be driven through a town, which provides a

different backdrop to having to run them through woodland. At this stage, we are more concerned about how easy it is to get the cattle away than finding difficulties for the journey – we'll cover that shortly.

## To Where Are They Being Taken?

*Fraech's mother came to him. "Thy cows have been stolen," she said, "and thy three sons, and thy wife, so that they are in the mountain of Elpa. Three cows of them are in Alba of the North with the Cruthnechi."*

### Táin Bó Fraech

The player characters might not

take the cattle back to their own covenant or lands. Depending on the nature of the story, the cattle could go anywhere, including being taken overseas. Examples might include:

- The Next Farm Over
- A Parish or More Distant
- Across the Border
- Straight to the Coast and Overseas
- The Magic Realm

The further the journey the more likely it is to include complications. For instance, if the characters have a ship waiting at port, what's to guarantee that the

captain hasn't double-crossed them? If the cattle are intended to cross the border to another province, how do they guarantee that the English knights and their forces are diverted to clear the route?

## What Stands in the Way of Escape?

*The sons of Ailill had for the moment made burdles of white-thorn and black-thorn in the gut of the ford, as defence against Regamon and his people, so that they were unable to pass through the ford ere Ailill and his army came; so thence cometh the name Ath Cliath Medraidi (the Hurdle Ford of Medraide)*

### Táin Bó Regamon

You need something more than simply "you take the cattle" and putting a definite obstacle in the way



provides a check point, a point at which further action happens. The point of such an obstacle is to slow the escape, provide a scene shift into a different landscape, and allow other characters to come to the fore. Example obstacles might include:

- A Ravine or Valley
- A Deep Woodland
- A Bridge
- A River

A woodland, for instance, might present a number of challenges. There might be faeries or magical beasts in the woods that might try to pick off the stragglers or try to exact a toll for passing through their lands. A bridge might not take the weight of the herd, threatening to collapse before the herd is halfway across. And a river might be running higher and faster than anticipated.

## WHAT TIME DOES THE RAID TAKE PLACE?

*Then, while he was asleep, the Morrigan took the cow of Ner's son, and the Donn of Cualgne bulled her in the east in Cualgne.*

### The Adventures of Nera

Any detail about the story influences the kind of actions taken and the reactions they engender so it is worth making a point about the time of day in which the raid takes place. The actual events might even span several days, but it helps to know when the key events are going to happen as this allows you to set the tone appropriately.

- Dusk
- The Dead of Night
- Dawn
- Broad Daylight

## WHO IS PROTECTING THEM?

*Corp Liath, the son of Tassach, met them with seven times twenty warriors to oppose their march. A battle was fought, and in that place fell the sons of the kings of Connaught, together with the warriors who had gone with them, all except Orlam and eight others, who carried away with them the kine, even the forty milch-cows, and fifty heifers, so that they came into the land of Connaught*

### Táin Bó Dartada

Heroes are those characters with a little something special about them. They might be faeries, have faerie blood, or come from a Fir Bolg lineage, for instance. You can expect such a hero to have capabilities beyond a mortal man. For instance, take a look at The Clesrada in The Contested Isle: The Hibernian Tribunal, page 101, and Battle Transformations in page 120 of the same supplement. The hero might even lead their own warband of similarly powered individuals, setting the scene for heroic combat against the players' own heroes.

## A HERD CAN BE RAIDED MULTIPLE TIMES IN THE YEAR AND EACH RAID REDUCES THE INCOME BY HALF.

It is not unusual for the defense to at least be equivalent to the attacking force. This is particularly the case where the raid is anticipated and can be prepared for. The status of the cattle owner helps determine the kind of protection in place.

- Quite Unprotected
- Peasant Cow-herds
- Armed Guards
- A Skirmish Force
- A Hero Stands Guard
- Magical Protection

Covenants could certainly raise magical protection and even a young magus is likely to be able to destroy an attacking force or send them packing, but Irish kings could have their own druids and hedge wizards to call upon. In terms of military might, covenants tend to have a small turb while Irish kings can raise entire armies.

## HOW FAR WILL THEY GO?

*"I swear to the god that the Ulstermen swear by," said Cuchulain, "I will break thee against a green stone of the ford; and thou shalt have no healing from me, if thou leavest me not."*

*"I will in truth be a grey wolf against thee," said she, "and I will strip a stripe' from thee, from thy right (hand) till it extends to thy left."*

*"I will beat thee from me," said he, "with the spear, till thy left or thy right eye bursts from thy head, and thou shalt never have healing from me, if thou leavest me not."*

### Táin Bó Regamna

You've determined who is protecting the cattle, but how far will they go to prevent them being stolen? A lone cow-herd may still try to fight to the death to protect his charges from thieves.





# WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE CATTLE?

*These were counted and numbered and claimed, and were the same for both, equal in size, equal in number, except only there was an especial bull of the bawn of Ailill, and he was a calf of one of Medb's cows, and Finnbennach ('the Whitehorned') was his name. But he, deeming it no honour to be in a woman's possession, had left and gone over to the kine of the king. And it was the same to Medb as if she owned not a pennyworth, forasmuch as she had not a bull of his size amongst her cattle.*

## Táin Bó Cúailnge

The quality of the cattle has little bearing on their value as far as an income source is concerned, but it has narrative interest. However, you could decide that they are so old and past their best that the raid is a wasted opportunity. It's up to you.

- Old and Weak
- Hale and Healthy
- Prime Beef
- Something Supernatural

# THE WILDCARD

*It was there Cuchulain had doffed his tunic, and the deep snow was around him where he sat, up to his belt, and the snow had melted a cubit around him for the greatness of the heat of the hero. And Manè addressed him three times in like manner, whose man he was? "Conchobar's man, and do not provoke me. For if thou provokes me any longer I will strike thy head off thee as one strikes off the head of a blackbird!"*

## Táin Bó Cúailnge

You might want to throw a little complication into the mix, an extra element of drama that turns the story on its head at the last minute. This could be the final

- Let them go, we'll track them later (No real defense when they are taken)
- They're not worth risking your life over (Someone will try to prevent the cattle from being taken)
- To the Blood (Some kind of armed/combatative resistance)
- Protect Them with Your Life (Someone will defend the cattle with their life)



complication before the player characters get the cattle home and dry or it could be something early on that puts a different spin on the entire raid.

- They Knew We Were Coming
- No-One Said Anything about a Full Moon
- Wait... You're trying to steal them too?
- These Cattle are Sick
- Stubborn, Stubborn Beasts
- The Bridge... It's Gone
- The Tide's Coming In
- They're Not Giving Up!

## HOW LONG SHOULD THE RAID LAST?

*Then the bull calf and the Whitehorn meet in the plain of Cruachan. A night and a day they were there fighting, until at last the bull calf was beaten.*

### Táin Bó Aingen

You should work out what the final success or failure of the raid looks like. At what point will the pursuers give up? What kind of failure means that the player characters lose their cattle or are caught?

Ideally, you should be looking at three key events involving game mechanics. These are likely to be any resistance or complications around the theft itself, which could be down to combat or cunning; dealing with crossing any obstacles and/or fighting a running battle against the defenders; and then finally a wildcard, which could again be a heroic combat or dealing with the cattle themselves or even the elements.

Getting to the cattle should be roleplayed, as should sneaking them out past any guards, and any major complications along the way (such

as the missing bridge, the tide rushing in, the Hero Blocking the Way etc.).

## CONTROLLING THE CATTLE

Getting the cattle moving and keeping them going in the right direction is down to Presence + Animal-Handling rolls. These could

quietly makes the job harder (Ease Factor 10, 11, or 12) but decreases the chances of them being noticed (-1, -2, or -3 on Perception + Awareness rolls of any guards). Altering the Ease Factor by any number up or down also adds the same number of Botch Dice.

Magic used to help control the cattle provides a bonus to this roll equal to the magnitude of the effect used. In the case of multiple spells

## YOU CAN GAIN AN INCOME SOURCE THROUGH RAIDING. A SINGLE RAID IS ENOUGH TO CREATE A MINOR SOURCE OF INCOME

be rolled during any narrative event at an appropriate point in the narrative. These events might be when the raiders take the cattle from their pastures, when they attempt to cross the ravine, when they are set upon by defenders, or when they encounter a particular challenge along the way. Rolls are not required on a round-by-round basis.

An Animal-Handling check should be considered any time an event interrupts the escape. This could be when the guards give chase, when the player characters try to marshal the cattle across the river or down into the valley.

On a raid, these rolls are always rolled as stress dice and the Ease Factor starts at 9. The characters can choose a modifier to the Ease Factor to adjust it between 6 and 12 representing how gently they are working. Shouting and hollering at the cattle will get them moving (Ease Factor 6, 7, or 8) but increases the chances of them being noticed (+3, +2, or +1 to Perception + Awareness rolls of any guards). Trying to do things

or effects, only the largest bonus is applied.

Failure to control the cattle provides a penalty to actions within that scene equal to the number by which the roll failed to meet the Ease Factor. So a roll of 7 against Ease Factor 9 imposes a -2 penalty to all actions taken by the raiding characters for the duration of that scene.

A botch in such situations is potentially deadly. A botch imposes a penalty, as with a failure, of -3 to actions in that scene, but that is not the end of the threat. The scale of the botch, i.e. the number of zeroes rolled when checking for botches, can then be used by the storyguide to weight the events against the raiders. These can be applied as automatic rolls of 1 for those opposing the raid, allowing them to double their roll for a particular action, or imposed as a roll of 0 on a stress roll about to be taken by a raiding character, enforcing an immediate roll for botch.



## EXPERIENCE

### REWARDS FOR CATTLE RAID STORIES

There are a number of different rewards that can be gained through cattle raiding, from experience to raw vis.

#### EXPERIENCE

We know that experience rewards for Ars Magica scenarios tend to be either five or ten XP. As a rule of thumb, consider weighting the XP reward on the power or influence of the enemy. So a story in which the players are raided by or go raiding against a foe that is equal or lower to them in power you should consider a reward of five XP. If the enemy is greater in power then consider a reward of ten XP.

#### CONFIDENCE

Pulling off or defending against a cattle raid against a strong resistance is worth a Confidence Point in itself, let alone those awarded for any specific feats or tasks undertaken during the raid story.

#### REPUTATION

Cattle raids are the events upon which reputations are built. A character who incites or leads a cattle raid gains an appropriate Reputation of level 1 on the event of their first raid. Each subsequent raid incited or led gains an experience point towards increasing that reputation.

However, if the target of the successful raid has a reputation, in the same way that Finnbennach was a bull known throughout Ireland, then the inciting/leading character gains a reputation of an equal level.

#### Reputation Gained on First Successful Raid:

**New Reputation at Level 1  
OR Reputation Equal to the  
Reputation of the Raid's Target**

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#### Reputation Gained on Subsequent Successful Raid:

**1 Experience Point Towards a  
Reputation**

A character who undertakes a one-on-one or one-on-many combat of any kind either in pursuit or defense of a cattle raid gains an appropriate Reputation on the first raid and an experience point towards increasing that Reputation on each subsequent raid.

#### Reputation Gained for Heroic Combat Actions in First Raid:

**New Reputation at Level 1**

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#### Reputation Gained for Heroic Combat Actions in Subsequent Raids:

**1 Experience Point Towards a  
Reputation**

#### OTHER REWARDS

Successfully raiding cattle could provide political leverage instead of an income. The cattle can be ransomed back to their rightful owner, for instance, and in doing so the raiders demonstrate their superiority and right to demand some form of tribute but a willingness to be conciliatory. The raid could be done in revenge for a previous slight, righting a wrong for the benefit of others.

The cattle may in fact be a source of vis. In this case, treat the herd as a vis source rather than a source of income.

Finally, there may be a particular bull or cow within the herd with magical or faerie blood. Such an animal may make for a familiar. As

with a herd being used as a vis source, a herd containing a familiar-worthy beast does not function as a source of income.

#### CONCLUSION

So why would player characters choose to go cattle raiding? It's a way of building a reputation, albeit a source of infamy, it's a way of gaining an income source through story, and it is potentially a means of gaining and exerting leverage.

Importantly, in a land where history repeats itself, magi are simply continuing the tradition of cattle raiding, playing out the old storytelling cycles with new actors.

# COVENANT FINANCES: AN ALTERNATIVE

BY MARK SHIRLEY

*Covenants* introduced a financial system for **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**. While it did not quite involve tracking every Mythic Pound coming in and out of a covenant's coffers it came pretty close. Our saga is now fifty years old (in game time), and as storyguide I've been using that system for most of this. I've found that the system is not always stable over the long term. Relatively small changes to cost-saving can have large effects on cash flow, and I've had to tweak the system to account for this. Plus I have to use a spreadsheet. Whilst I have no objection to this in principle, it does reveal the level of complexity needed to easily update the covenant.

Some players enjoy the simulationist approach of finances in *Covenants*, and like to model their covenant's resources down to the last Mythic Pound. Others find the system too unwieldy, and prefer instead to concentrate on stories. Just recently I've been trialling a system that strikes a balance between the two: there is still some number-crunching (it is an economics system after all!), but the focus is very much on events and stories. The simplest system is accompanied by a number of options which add complexity but also (I believe) richness to the rule set. All options can be used together, or a troupe can pick and choose which they

prefer to use.

This system is broadly based on the Labor rules found in *City & Guild* (Chapter Two). It can be easily adapted for running any entity that has an income and expenses, and some notes have been provided for using the system to account for the finances of manors, religious houses, and guilds.

## BASIC CONCEPTS

**Resources:** A covenant's material wealth is tracked by seven (or nine, see below) Resources such as Covenfolk,





Purse, and Equipment. The rating of each of these is indicated on a 6 point Quality rating: Negligible, Shoddy, Average, Superior, Excellent, Legendary. Unless stated otherwise, these characteristics have a rating of Average.

**Inhabitant Points:** A means to rate the share of the income that each of the covenant's inhabitants consumes. A magus or nobleman is typically worth 5 Inhabitant Points, a Companion 3, a specialist 2, and grogs, servants, laborers, and horses 1. To calculate the minimum number of servants and laborers needed, add up the Inhabitant Points for all other characters. Add one servant for every 5 points (or fraction) of this total, and one laborer for every 10 points (or fraction). Add these individuals to the total count to get the overall Inhabitant Points for the covenant. Some covenants have more servants and laborers than this minimum; for example it is common to assign each magus a personal servant.

A quick rule of thumb is to allow 20 Inhabitant Points per magus at a covenant, broken down as follows: Magus (5) + Companion (3) + lab assistant/apprentice (2) + specialist (2) + 3 grogs (3) + 3 servants (3) + 2 laborers (2).

[*Note that the calculation of Inhabitant Points is slightly simplified from Covenants*]

**Labor Points:** an abstract concept introduced in *City & Guild* to represent effort spent maintaining a business. Labor Points approximate to money, although the value may be inherent in stored goods, favors, or credit rather than cold hard cash. A Poor covenant has to work harder than average to earn the same number of Labor Points, and a Wealthy one has more time on its hands.

**Autocrat:** an autocrat is the officer — usually mundane — left in charge by the magi to run the covenant's finances. In addition to overseeing the covenfolk, the autocrat must collect revenue from the income sources, manage the

harvests from the covenant's own fields, arrange payment of tithes, bribes, and fines, and perform countless other tasks to ensure the covenant runs smoothly. A good autocrat is often underappreciated by the magi because they only ever become aware of him when there is a problem. Managing a covenant is governed by the Profession: Autocrat Ability. Autocrats often have a staff of minions to assist him in his job, and therefore also benefit from the Leadership Ability.

**Stores:** Each covenant has a store that contains the surplus wealth generated by the covenant activities under his control. These stores rarely consist of money, rather they are comprised of excess consumables, stored food, owed favors, promised labor, and so forth. As a result, they are tracked in terms of Labor Points that are earned in excess of that needed to run the covenant. Stores can be spent to mitigate years of dearth, or to make improvements to the covenant. A good manager uses his stores and replaces the goods with fresh material each year, but there is inevitably some waste in spoilage, wear and tear, and migration or death of debtors.

## AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

A number of optional rules are offered in the following sections. In all cases these options sacrifice simplicity for detail, and the troupe should feel free to use none, any or all of the options presented here. None of the optional rules preclude the use of others, so the troupe can choose the level of complexity they desire. Many of the optional rules do not need to be consistently applied in every year. For example, in years where the stories come thick and fast and the troupe is intensely focused on a particular story arc, it might for example make sense to skip the Fluctuating Resources Option in order to focus the characters on the stories at hand. In other years, the troupe can go into more details.

## COVENANT INCOME

A covenant has a Typical income equal to 20 Mythic Pounds per magus per annum. Furthermore, it might have the Wealthy Boon or the Poor Hook. Example Income Sources can be found in Covenants, Chapter 5.

### OPTION: WEALTH LEVELS

Not all covenants have a steady income. Some are in charge of more lucrative sources of wealth, whereas others barely scrape through each year. Rather than having just enough to support its members, a covenant has one of the following income levels:

Income Source Table	
Rank	Income
Trivial	10
Minor	25
Lesser	50
Typical	100
Greater	250
Major	500
Mythic	1000

The income listed in the above table should be considered to be a guide; a covenant could bring in 80 or 150 Mythic Pounds per year and still be considered to have a Typical Income Source.

### OPTION: MULTIPLE SOURCES OF INCOME

Rather than having a single income source, a covenant might rely on two or more different businesses, enterprises, or revenue streams. This adds a certain amount of stability to covenants that are using one or more of the methods to vary income over time (principally the Random Events option, see later).

## COVENANT RESOURCES

The covenant's Resources are summed up by seven descriptors: Covenfolk, Equipment, Laboratories,

Provisions, Purse, Armaments, Defenses. These Resources can be rated as Negligible, Shoddy, Average, Superior, Excellent, or Legendary. Each one starts at Average. These Resources are described in more detail later.

### OPTION: THREE GROUPS OF COVENFOLK

The basic system treats all covenantfolk together. An alternative to this converts the Covenantfolk Resource into three separate Resources: Specialists, Servants, Soldiers. It stands to reason that a covenant could have superior soldiers but below-average craftsmen, for example.

### OPTION: NON-AVERAGE STARTING RESOURCES

**Spring:** The covenant starts with one Resource at Negligible or two at Shoddy.

**Summer:** The covenant starts with all Resources at Average.

**Autumn:** the covenant starts with one Resource at Excellent, or two at Superior

**Winter:** The covenant starts with one Resource at Legendary and one at Negligible; or two at Excellent and two at Shoddy.

The troupe may then make an optional adjustment to a single Resource. That Resource may be increased by one level by decreasing another by one level. Alternatively, the Resource may be increased two levels by either decreasing another Resource by two levels or else by decreasing two Resources by one level each. A Resource cannot be decreased below Negligible, and only Autumn and Winter covenants can raise a Resource to Legendary.

### INCOME MANAGEMENT

The autocrat is in charge of managing the covenant finances. He generates Labor Points during the

seasons he attends to covenant business (i.e. in the seasons he gains Exposure experience points). The number of points he accumulates is equal to:

$$\text{Labor Points Per Season:} \\ (\text{Intelligence} + \text{Profession: Autocrat}) \\ \times \text{Wealth Multiplier}$$

**Wealth Multiplier:**  $\times 2$  for a covenant with the Poor hook,  $\times 6$  for a covenant with the Wealthy Boon,  $\times 3$  for covenants with neither.

The autocrat must accumulate 36 Labor Points each year. On average the autocrat from a Poor covenant must work for 3 seasons a year, one from an average covenant must spend 2 seasons per year, and the lucky autocrat from a Wealthy covenant needs to labor just one season per year. This assumes that the autocrat has an (**Int + Profession: Autocrat**) of at least 6; covenants with less-experienced autocrats than this will struggle to keep the covenant afloat.

Assessment of the autocrat's success should be done once a year. The summer season is a good time to do this; a counterpoint to the aging and warping events that are usually performed in the winter season.

Note that without some of the options presented below, a covenant will always know if it is going to be able to meet its target of 36 Labor Points each year. This predictability might suit some troupes, but it does reduce the potential for stories to arise from wealth and poverty.

### OPTION: THREE OFFICERS

Many covenants do not have a single autocrat running every aspect of its daily affairs; rather they appoint three officers to divide the work between them. Each officer has three Resources under his purview (this option includes using the "Three Groups of Covenantfolk" option presented above):

- The steward's role is managing the day-to-day operation of a

covenant. It is his responsibility to maintain the fabric of the buildings and their contents, keep each room lit and heated according to its needs, and provide furniture and fittings. The steward is typically responsible for the specialists at the covenant, which includes the craftsmen, laboratory assistants, scribes, librarians, and all ancillary staff. The steward controls the Resources of Specialists, Equipment, and Laboratories

- The chamberlain is in charge of the treasury and the daily expenses. He marshals a host of servants and laborers who cook, clean, and toil for the covenant; he also oversees the covenant's lands, livestock, and food production in general. The chamberlain is responsible for maintaining the covenant's stores, larder and pantry. The chamberlain manages the Resources of Servants, Purse, and Provisions
- The marshal (or turb captain) maintains the defenses of the covenant. He heads the turb, and must ensure that all the soldiers are battle-ready. He is also responsible for the watch duties and sentries; and the physical defenses --- and by extension, the other buildings of the covenant. The marshal is also in charge of the covenant's horses and messengers. The marshal commands the Resources of Soldiers, Armaments, and Defenses

Each officer has to generate his own set of Labor Points each year, with the same target as an autocrat (usually 36). They each use their own Profession Ability for this task. Any modifiers to the target Labor Points (through the various options presented here) affect all officers' Labor Point target unless specifically mentioned otherwise (e.g. Random Events, see above). You will need to keep a separate record of the



store of each officer.

When Making a Profit (see later), each officer can improve one Resource each, so potentially three Resources can improve each year. However, the covenant also has three chances to Make a Loss (again, see later)

### OPTION: COST OF RESOURCES

A covenant with Average Quality of Resources incurs no extra running costs, but those that maintain Superior or Excellent Resources find themselves having to maintain a higher cost of living to afford the increased luxuries. Likewise, a covenant with below average Resources get by on a lower annual budget. For each Superior Resource, the autocrat must earn one extra Labor Point per year; for each

Excellent Resource the autocrat needs an additional three Labor Point. Each Shoddy Resource saves one Labor Point per year, and each Negligible Resource saves three Labor Points.

Legendary Resources cost variable amounts. Sometimes they are money-saving devices and can entirely replace that resource (saving four Labor Points per year). Other Legendary Resources have ridiculously high running costs (e.g. covenfolk that must be fed on gold), and may each cost at least four extra Labor Points per year. Each must be judged on a case-by-case basis.

If using the Three Officers Option, only the officer in charge of a non-Average Resource has to find the extra Labor Points.

### OPTION: OVER AND UNDER POPULATION

The covenant must bring in one Mythic Pound for every Inhabitant Point. If the covenant has too many inhabitants, then it cannot support its covenfolk. Alternatively, if the covenant is small, it might accumulate wealth more quickly.

If the covenant has more Inhabitant Points than Mythic Pounds per year, then it is overpopulated. It must work its resources harder to feed everyone. Add one third of the difference between Inhabitant Points and Annual Income (rounded up) to the Target Labor Points needed each year.

If the covenant has more Mythic Pounds in income than Inhabitant Points, then it has a surplus of resources



Random Events Table	
Simple die	Random event
3 or less	Roll on the Fluctuating Labor
4 – 8	No event
9 – 10	Roll on the Fluctuating Income

Fluctuating Income Source Table	
Simple die	Effect
2 or less	<b>Slump:</b> Decrease yield of Income Source by 10% of its value on the Income Source Table
3 – 5	<b>Stagnation:</b> Decrease yield of Income Source by 5% of its value on the Income Source Table
6 – 8	<b>Growth:</b> Increase yield of Income Source by 5% of its value on the Income Source Table
9 or more	<b>Boom:</b> Increase yield of Income Source by 10% of its value on the Income Source Table

every year. Subtract one third of the difference between Inhabitant Points and Annual Income (rounded up) from the Target Labor Points needed each year.

If using the Three Officers Option, the effects of Over and Under Population apply to the Target Labor Points of all officers.

### OPTION: RANDOM EVENTS

A covenant cannot necessarily rely upon either its income source or labor requirements remaining constant. This option allows fluctuations in the fortunes of the covenant to take place. Each year, roll a simple die and consult the Random Events table.

The storyguide can apply an optional modifier to this die roll. If the covenant

has been drawing heavily on its income source, or if it is trying to improve that source, or if there is local instability that might affect covenant's profits, add 1 to 3 to the simple die. If they have been unusually profligate or mean in their spending, or else if the local economy shifts into a depression or boom due to external events, subtract 1 to 3 from the simple die. The storyguide can similarly add or subtract a modifier of 1 to 3 from the roll on either subtable; a negative modifier biases the roll towards a detrimental outcome; and a positive modifier biases the roll towards a beneficial outcome.

Alternatively, the storyguide could just choose a result that is appropriate to external events or character actions. For example, if war breaks out then grain prices rise; this could cause the immediate effects of inflation with respect to covenant provisions. A covenant that creates a permanent enchantment to keep its crops healthy might earn an automatic +10% to the yield from that income source, without need for a roll (see Magical Enhancements Option).

Note that all effects of random events are permanent; they do not just apply to one year, but all subsequent years. Over the long term, Income Sources tends to return to an equilibrium of their typical values. However, inflation results are more common than deflation so over time the covenant will need to find new income sources or work its autocrat or officers harder if it is to continue at the same level of spending.

If you are not using the Over and Underpopulation option, then changing the value of the Income Source has no practical effect; if these random events come up, roll on the Fluctuating Labor Points table instead. If you are not using the Three Officers option, then you can apply effects specific to the steward, chamberlain, or marshal directly to the autocrat's total instead.

If using the Multiple Sources of Income option, then determine random

Fluctuating Labor Points table	
Simple die	Effect
1 or less	Hyperinflation: Add 3 Labor Points to the annual target of the autocrat (or all three officers)
2 – 3	Inflation: Add 1 Labor Point to the annual target of the steward / autocrat
4 – 5	Inflation: Add 1 Labor Point to the annual target of the chamberlain / autocrat
6 – 7	Inflation: Add 1 Labor Point to the annual target of the marshal / autocrat
8	Deflation: Subtract 1 Labor Point from the annual target of the steward / autocrat
9	Deflation: Subtract 1 Labor Point from the annual target of the chamberlain / autocrat
10	Deflation: Subtract 1 Labor Point from the annual target of the marshal / autocrat
11 or more	Economic Relief: Subtract 3 Labor Points from the annual target of the autocrat (or all three officers)

events separately for each Income Source.

### MAKING A LOSS

If the autocrat fails to generate sufficient Labor Points this harms the Resources of the covenant. This might come about because the autocrat is neglectful of his duties, is overworked or inexperienced, or it maybe simply that the covenant is living beyond its means.

**Shortfall: Target Labor Points (36) – earned Labor Points**



For every five points (or fraction thereof) of the shortfall, one of the Resources of the covenant decreases by one level of quality. This reduction can only be applied to the same Resource a maximum of two times in a given year (i.e. reducing it by two levels of quality), and a Resource cannot be decreased beyond Negligible Quality. The mundane component of a Legendary Resource can be degraded as far as Negligible Quality without apparent effect on the covenant's actual standard of living; that is, the Resource remains Legendary (see Legendary Resources, later).

The player of the autocrat chooses which Resource is affected by the shortfall. If using the Three Officers option, then the officer/s responsible for the shortfall choose which Resource to degrade, which must be one of the three Resources under their purview.

Each reduction is accompanied by an event or a story hook that involves the reduction of that Resource. These need not be full-blown stories (although could be good hooks for such), but they draw the magi's attention to the shortfall. These decreases in quality are due to the failure of the autocrat to acquire sufficient Labor Points, and the event or story hook should take this into consideration. Is it that the autocrat has been shirking his duties? Or is it because the covenant is overpopulated? Perhaps a random event required more Labor Points this year, and that is the cause of the shortfall. As a result of this event, the magi might resolve to give the autocrat some help fulfilling his duties, or use magic to replace that Resource. Note that an event is merely a signifier of the problem; reversing it will not restore the lost level of Quality.

### EXAMPLE EVENTS

- A magus doesn't realize until too late that the grogs he has chosen to accompany him are only wearing piecemeal armor. They report that the covenant has not

been able to afford to maintain the wear and tear (Armaments)

- Fed up of the poor conditions, one (or more) servants run away. Magi might have to clean their own chambers (Covenfolk)
- A building collapses, revealing an unknown tunnel beneath. Has someone breached the covenant's defenses, or does the tunnel date to before the magi's occupation of the site? (Defenses)
- A magus finds that the stores do not have enough parchment, so the project he is working on will not have an accompanying Laboratory Text (Equipment)
- The covenant has switched to a cheaper supplier of laboratory reagents, but he is a swindler, and many of his products are cheap substitutes. One or more magi have to roll on the Experimentation Results Chart this season even if they are not experimenting. This roll is at  $\neg a - 2$  risk penalty, unless the character actually is experimenting, in which case there is a +1 bonus to the risk bonus used (Laboratories)
- The autocrat is unable to pay a customary bribe, meaning an important consignment that the magi are needing does not arrive (Purse)
- The magi are embarrassed to discover that they cannot serve their guest a fine wine; all that the cellars have is soured vintage or white wine (Provisions)

### OPTION: MITIGATING LOSSES

If the autocrat has been storing up excess Labor Points from previous years (see Making a Profit, later) then he can liquidate these stored points to partially or wholly compensate for this year's lack. Two stored Labor Points are worth one immediate Labor Point —

this reflects the general degradation of stored goods and old favors. Even if he cannot totally prevent a loss this year, he may be able to reduce the severity.

If using the Three Officers option, then an officer can donate some of his store to help mitigate the loss of another officer. However, because the stored materials and favors are unlikely to be a perfect match for that needed, the exchange rate is three stored Labor Points for one immediate Labor Point.

## MAKING A PROFIT

If the autocrat generates excess Labor Points in a year, he may accumulate the excess to make improvements to the covenant. Through hard work, diligence, prudence, and/or good fortune, the autocrat has managed to increase his stores this year, and may choose to spend some of this profit on improving the covenant.

### Profit: earned Labor Points – Target Labor Points (36)

The annual Profit gets added to the autocrat's stores. Once each year, the autocrat can elect to spend some of his stored profit to increase the quality of one of the covenant's Resources. He does not have to increase a quality if he (or his masters) do not wish it. The autocrat can only do this in a year that he has made a net profit, and only one Resource can be increased by a maximum of one point each year. A Resource cannot be raised beyond Excellent. Increasing the quality depletes the stores by the amount indicated in the Resource Improvement table:

Resource Improvement Table	
New Quality	To raise
Shoddy	20
Average	30
Superior	40
Excellent	50

The improvement of a Resource may take one to two seasons to come into effect as the autocrat arranges for the improvements to take place.

### OPTION: INITIAL STORES

A covenant might start play with some stores. If using the Three Officers Option, each officer has this store:

- **Spring Covenant:** 0 Labor Points in stores
- **Summer Covenant:** 20 Labor Points in stores
- **Autumn Covenant:** 30 Labor Points in stores
- **Winter Covenant:** 20 Labor Points in stores

### OPTION: INCREASING INCOME

A covenant's Income Source can fluctuate in size due to random events or character actions without actually increasing in rank (see Random Events option, earlier); however, improving the Income Source has a much larger and immediate effect on covenant finances. It is possible for a succession of Growth events to increase an Income Source to the level of the next rank, but the source is still considered to be at its former level. For example, if by extraordinary luck or hard work a Typical Income Source is raised to be producing 250 Mythic Pounds per year, it does not automatically become a Greater Source. Further Growth events continue to increase the income by 5 or 10% of the Typical Income, not the Greater Income.

A covenant can increase its income level by investing in improvements — spending Labor Points. Improving Income Sources should never be resolved with a simple expenditure of the requisite points; there should be one or more character-driven stories explaining what is being done to boost productivity. The covenant might need to acquire more land to grow crops, invest in more ships for their merchant's business, significantly extend

their silver mines, and so on.

It is costly to increase a Income Source, taking 360 Labor Points to increase the income source by one level on the Income Sources table. Most covenants have sufficient income to support their men and pay for any activities they desire, and do not consider it necessary to accumulate wealth beyond what is needed. Living within one's means is considered admirable behavior in Mythic Europe; constantly seeking to accumulate wealth is the sin of avarice. However, a covenant that has recruited or desires to recruit more magi often needs to expand its sources of income to support the new members.

If using the Three Officers option, all three officers must contribute Labor Points to increase income since all aspects of the covenant are affected; no officer can contribute less than one fifth (i.e. 72 Labor Points) of the total needed.

## MAGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

Magi will be motivated to create enchantments or cast spells that ease the economic situation of their covenant. These can have four principle effects on this system:

### REDUCTION IN LABOR POINTS

This is the most common effect of magical intervention in finances. This type of magic either replaces the need for part of a resource or reduces the effort needed to maintain the covenant. There are any number of ways in which costs can be cut with magic: magical heating or lighting; bedspreads created with a Sun duration; devices that repair damaged goods or buildings, cook food without fuel, or clean laboratories; and so on. All these multifarious magics cut the costs of the covenant, and therefore can save Labor Points.

As a rule of thumb, for each full 20 levels of effect constantly applied to the covenant, the Target Labor Points is reduced by 1. This is a one-off (i.e. Permanent) decrease in Labor Points, as long as the covenant has constant access to the magic. Note that the enchantment or power also actually needs to be capable of having an effect on one or more Resources. For simplicity, if using the Three Officers option, assume that the labor saving measures are defrayed across all budgets.

## NEW OR IMPROVED INCOME SOURCE

The second most common method of enchanting a covenant is to use magic to assist in the generation of income. Magic can make crops grow better and disease free, cause fish to swim into nets, help miners find and process silver more efficiently, and so on. If the storyguide judges that the item or spell can make an appreciable effect on an income source, then a 5% increase in yield from the base value is a reasonable bonus for every 20 full levels of effects. Depending on the nature of the effect, magic could be used to generate anything from a Trivial Income Source upwards; the bigger the income, the more obvious the magic is.

## GENERATION OF WEALTH

Magic can also be used to generate wealth de novo (directly or indirectly), although some tribunals have strict rules about the magical generation of wealth. Ritual spells can create precious metal directly, or else valuable goods which can be exchanged. Alternatively, it can create material that is cheap but in constant use, such as grain, beer, firewood, lamp oil, and so on. Each spell that creates wealth adds Labor Points to an officer's stores when cast, depending on what is created.

A 20th level spell that directly creates silver adds 100 Labor Points to the (chamberlain's) store, worth about



£100. If left as cash, use the excess Labor Points to buy the Purse Resource as high as it will go (e.g. from Average to Superior then Excellent, costing 90 Labor Points in total). This can then be liquidated at a later date (see descriptions of Resources, later). Other Hermetic Forms used to generate wealth have a lesser return; although they can create vast amounts of spices, pearls, furs, etc., there is a limited market for such resources. Spells that create perishable resources generally create a number of Labor Points for the store equal to their level.

A covenant cannot benefit equally from subsequent castings of the same spell — all they end up with is an excess of one commodity which can never be sold for its actual value, and potentially causing an economic glut which drives

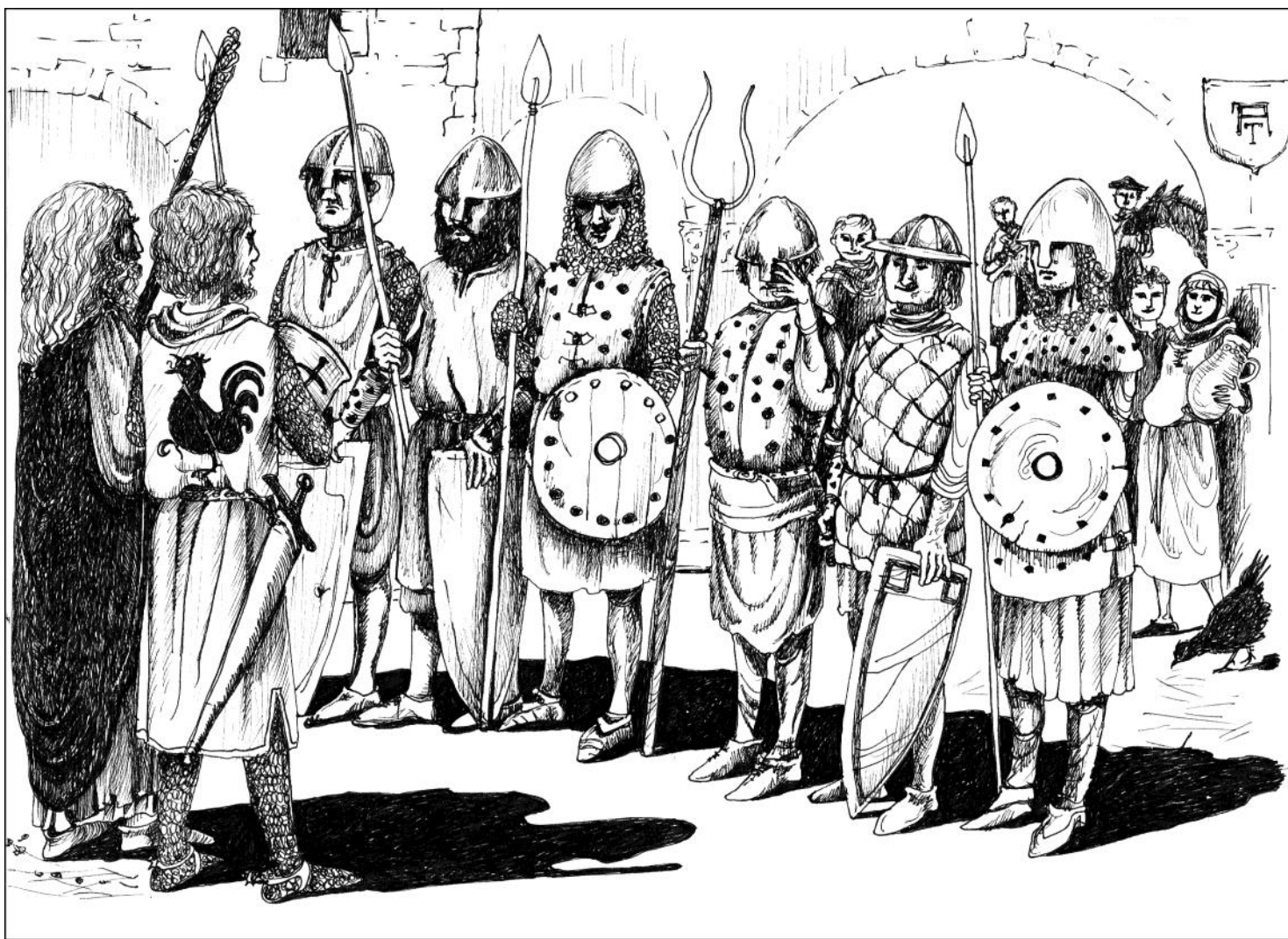
the selling price down even further. Repeated castings of the same spell yields half the Labor Points (rounded up) of the previous casting each time. A 20th level ritual spell cast six times to create grain yields 41 Labor Points ( $20+10+5+3+2+1$ ), not 120. The storyguide should determine when this glut has run its course; one year per 5–10 Labor Points generated is a good guide.

Note that tribunals may impose rules on the magical creation of wealth in an attempt to prevent destabilisation of the local economy. Such restrictions are beyond the scope of this article.

## LEGENDARY RESOURCES

A covenant might be able to replace a whole Resource entirely with magic.

The Legendary Resource Quality represents the existence of enchantments, supernatural beings, or other non-mundane means that entirely replaces or substantially alters a resource. No Resource may be raised to the Legendary Quality through the application of Labor Points. Instead, they result from Covenant Boons, seasonal activities, and/or stories. The Legendary Quality is not imparted by a single enchantment; as a rule, it requires a Major Boon, 50 levels of enchantments, or at least three seasons-worth of stories to acquire Legendary status in a single Resource. The components of the Legendary Quality must actually be capable of conferring the benefits on the covenant's inhabitants, and do so continuously without consuming covenant resources (money, favors, or labor). The troupe





should determine the overall effect using the mundane Qualities as a guide. The chief benefit is that Legendary Resources cannot decline due to neglect (i.e. insufficient Labor Points). For example, Legendary Provisions may only provide the same benefit as Superior Provisions; but the food always exists even if the autocrat fails to generate enough Labor Points in a year. However, a covenant could have Legendary Provisions that far surpass even an Excellent Resource, if they apply sufficient effort.

Because a covenant can have both mundane and magical resources, the Legendary Quality is in addition to a mundane Quality. Thus the Equipment Resource might be described as Legendary (Typical) if its mundane tools qualify for Typical Quality but its covenantfolk rely on the use of magical tools. It is important to note the mundane level as well as the magical one, since the supernatural elements can be nullified, stolen, or killed. If not specified, assume that the Resource is Typical. Covenants may deliberately allow the mundane side of a Legendary Resource degrade in years of dearth, relying on their magic instead. This can prove problematic if they are denied access to it due to story events. It behooves a storyguide to exploit such weaknesses.

## RESOURCES

### ARMAMENTS

**Negligible:** Soldiers are restricted to inexpensive weapons, and can only have inexpensive partial armor.

**Shoddy:** Either the armor or the weapons (or both) of each soldier must be inexpensive.

**Average:** All soldiers are armed with standard or inexpensive weapons, according to their preference. They can have any standard partial armor, or any inexpensive armor.

**Superior:** Each soldier can have

either expensive partial armor or an expensive weapon. Their equipment is otherwise standard or inexpensive according to preference; and they may choose standard full armor.

**Excellent:** Soldiers can have any arms or armor that they are capable of using.

**Legendary:** Soldiers are armed with magical weapons and/or armor.

### COVENFOLK

This Resource covers all aspects of covenantfolk not dealt with by other Resources (such as Provisions and Equipment). This includes quality of housing, level of overcrowding, wages, pension, personal freedom, and so forth. All these things translate directly into a level of satisfaction that the covenantfolk have in their masters. This is tracked by the Prevailing Loyalty score (as per *Covenants*, Chapter 3: Governance).

**Negligible:** The covenantfolk suffer a -2 penalty to the Prevailing Loyalty thanks to an ongoing situation that makes them surly and uncooperative.

**Shoddy:** The covenantfolk suffer a -1 penalty to the Prevailing Loyalty thanks to an ongoing situation that makes them unhappy.

**Average:** the Specialists have no penalties to their Prevailing Loyalty.

**Superior:** The covenantfolk suffer a +1 bonus to the Prevailing Loyalty thanks to an ongoing situation that makes them well-inclined towards the covenant's leaders.

**Excellent:** The covenantfolk suffer a +2 bonus to the Prevailing Loyalty thanks to an ongoing situation that makes them devoted towards the covenant's leaders.

**Legendary:** The covenantfolk are unaffected by The Gift and/or fanatically loyal to the magi. The covenant could be peopled by magical creatures with different needs to humans.

If the troupe is using the Three Groups of Covenfolk option, then the Resource level of the Servants, Specialists, and Soldiers are tracked separately. Any modifiers to Prevailing Loyalty only affect that group rather than the covenant as a whole.

### DEFENSES

The Defenses Resource is rated in a similar fashion to the Defenses of a castle in preparation for a siege (*Lords of Men*, page 111), and the quality directly translates to each section of wall.

**Negligible:** the covenant has no defenses to speak of.

**Shoddy:** the covenant has makeshift defenses

**Average:** the covenant has typical defenses of a fortified manor or small tower

**Superior:** the covenant has a shell keep or tower keep

**Excellent:** the covenant has a keep surrounded by curtain walls with mural towers, and probably a barbican and moat.

**Legendary:** The covenant relies on magical defenses, such as a regio boundary, invisible walls, instant ramparts, glass cliffs, and the like.

### EQUIPMENT

This category covers the basic tools that the covenant craftsmen use on a daily basis, but also raw materials for their trade and non-food consumables such as firewood, fresh straw for mattresses, oil for lamps, candles, and so on.

**Negligible:** The specialists of the covenant have to make do with the barest minimum of facilities; not only do they suffer a -1 to all Craft rolls and Workshop totals, they are restricted to projects that have an Ease Factor of 6 or less.

**Shoddy:** The specialists have substandard equipment and premises, resulting in a -1 to all Craft rolls and all



Workshop totals

**Average:** Specialists have all the tools, materials, and facilities they need for their craft.

**Superior:** Each specialist can expect to have at least one tool of Superior Quality, granting a +1 to all Craft Ability rolls and totals.

**Excellent:** Most of the tools at the covenant are of Superior Quality, and many specialists have an Excellent piece giving them a +3 to appropriate rolls and totals.

**Legendary:** the covenant's tools are Wondrous Items, Items of Quality or enchanted in some way.

## LABORATORIES

**Negligible:** The covenant's laboratories are in a deplorable state in one way or another; and all have a Minor Outfittings Flaw (*Covenants*, page 117) that is not balanced by a Virtue. No laboratory can have a positive Upkeep.

**Shoddy:** The covenant has poor supplies and materials for its laboratories. All laboratories have a Free Outfittings Flaw (*Covenants*, page 116–117). The sum of all Upkeep scores for the laboratories must be 0 or less.

**Average:** The covenant can maintain all its laboratories in a satisfactory manner. The sum of all Upkeep scores for the laboratories must be 0 or less.

**Superior:** The covenant can support a net of 4 points of Upkeep amongst its members: four labs with +1 Upkeep, two with +2 Upkeep and the rest zero, or any combination thereof.

**Excellent:** Every lab can have a Free Outfittings Virtue, and Upkeep scores of laboratories have no limits.

**Legendary:** The covenant has no restrictions at all as to the Upkeep of the laboratories thanks to a great wealth of magical artifacts. Every laboratory has at least one Minor Outfittings Virtue which does not have to be

balanced with a Flaw.

## PURSE

This Resource represents the coinage that the covenant has, as well as the luxuries in which it indulges. Note that much of this money is allocated each year to tithes, rents, feudal dues, and the like. Liquidizing the Purse results in a decrease in Resource Quality.

**Negligible:** The covenant exists on a hand-to-mouth basis; while it can meet its expenses, it cannot raise any spare cash for emergencies.

**Shoddy:** The covenant uses all of its income to make its financial commitments. It can raise one fifth of its yearly income in hard cash, but this drops this Resource to Negligible Quality.

**Average:** The covenant can afford most mundane expenses and the occasional luxury. It can raise one quarter of its yearly income in hard cash, but this drops this Resource to Shoddy Quality.

**Superior:** The covenant is affluent, and can afford every day luxuries like beeswax candles and perfumed soap. It can raise one third of its yearly income in hard cash, but this drops this Resource to Average Quality.

**Excellent:** The covenant displays ostentatious wealth; even the servants have tailored clothes, and the magi have ready access to gemstones and precious metals for enchantment. It can raise one half of its yearly income in hard cash, but this drops this Resource to Superior Quality.

**Legendary:** the covenant has a near-endless supply of magically created wealth, and lacks for nothing. It can spend extravagantly without fear of depleting its reserves, and the magi want for nothing.

## PROVISIONS

**Negligible:** Mundanes at the covenant get barely enough to eat,

resulting in a –2 Living Conditions modifier. The magi eat little better, resulting in –1.

**Shoddy:** Magi eat basic peasant fare, whereas the mundanes are restricted to poor quality food giving them a –1 Living Conditions modifier.

**Average:** The food is sufficiently good that magi have a +1 Living Conditions modifier.

**Superior:** Good food all round results in a +2 Living Conditions modifier for magi, and a +1 modifier for all mundanes.

**Excellent:** Both magi and mundanes eat like lords, and benefit from a +2 Living Conditions modifier.

**Legendary:** Food is either magically created (at the cost of vis), provided (such as magical trees that provide fruit all year round), or the covenfolk's nutritional requirements are somehow met without recourse to food.

## FINANCES FOR NON-COVENANTS

Other than the fact that only covenants tend to have Legendary Resources, the system described in this article can be used for any institution. This section has a few details on the three most common economically-active institutions in Mythic Europe: lordly manses, religious houses, and guild chapters

## CASTLES AND MANSES

The homes of barons and knights are the closest to covenants, in terms of finance. Only the Laboratories Resource is inappropriate, and should be ignored. The reputation of many lords derives in part from the apparent success of their manors, and they often go to pains to have ostentations that their Resources cannot actually afford.

A castle need not include its serfs, villeins, and freemen in its Inhabitant Points, only those peasants who

contribute directly to the upkeep of the lord's demesne.

## RELIGIOUS HOUSES

Churches and monasteries can be modeled using this system if their success is an important part of the saga. Such institutions do not have Laboratories, and they rarely have Defenses, Soldiers, or Armaments only. Under the Three Officers Option they can usually dispense with the position of marshal and his Resources altogether. Some religious houses at significant shrines maintain a small cadre of watchmen under the guise of lay brothers; and cathedrals are occasionally responsible for the safety of the citizens in one or more of its city's wards (and sometimes the entire city). In these cases a marshal and his Resources are warranted.

## GUILD HOUSES

Guild houses and the workshops of craftsmen can also be simulated using this system. Their income usually comes from their own production, so good Equipment is essential. City & Guild introduced the idea of bonuses to workshop totals based on Raw Materials and Innovation which map onto Provisions and Laboratories respectively. A guild house usually maintains a small cadre of warriors for maintaining discipline and enforcing guild law, but typically has lower than Average Quality in Soldiers, Defenses, and Armaments.

## EXAMPLE: THE COVENANT OF VIDUA VASTA

This large covenant in the Loch Leglean Tribunal has 8 magi, 1 noblewoman, 9 companions and apprentices, 6 specialists, 23 grogs, and 3 horses. This constitutes 110 Inhabitant Points, requiring 22 servants and 11 laborers, for a Inhabitant Point Total of 143. It has a Typical Source of Income (a herring fishery), one Lesser Source (a small farm), and one Minor Source (a stake in a merchant business), bringing in 175 Mythic Pounds per year.

The covenant is neither Wealthy nor Poor, so its autocrat generates 27 Labor Points per season (he has Int +2 and Profession: Autocrat 7).





Vidua Vasta is a Summer covenant, and its Resources are currently as follows:

<b>Covenfolk:</b>	Average
<b>Equipment:</b>	Average
<b>Laboratories:</b>	Superior
<b>Provisions:</b>	Average
<b>Purse:</b>	Shoddy
<b>Armaments:</b>	Average
<b>Defenses:</b>	Average

There are currently 23 Labor Points in the autocrat's stores.

The magi have created a few utilitarian magical devices. The covenant is heated magically through an enchanted hearthstone CrIg 25 (Base 2, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +3 Struct, +1 Size; +5 maintains concentration). It also possesses a spindle that generates linen bedsheets, saving on washing and repair. CrHe 20 (Base 1, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +2 processed and worked; +10 unlimited uses). Between them, these devices reduce the covenant's costs by 2 Labor Points.

Francis the Autocrat is severely overworked. He is expected to oversee a merchant business (the Lesser Source of Income) as well as teaching at the local grammar school. Consequently, he can only devote a single season to the running of the covenant each year. As noted above, he generates 27 Labor Points in this season.

His Target is normally 36, but fifty years of Inflation has raised this to 43 through Random Events. The covenant has one Shoddy Resource and one Superior Resource, which cancel each other out in terms of extra Labor Points. The covenant's enchantments save 2 Labor Points, and Underpopulation reduces the total by another 11 points (175 Mythic Pounds – 143 Inhabitant Points, divided by 3), resulting in a final Target of 30. Francis is a skilled autocrat, but he still has a deficit of 3 every year. He can rely on his store of Labor Points to negate the shortfall of 3, but this costs him 6

points of his store every year. He can only keep this up for three years before the covenant starts to suffer.

If, in one year he manages to spend two seasons putting the covenant straight, he can double his earned Labor Points to 54, giving him an excess of 24 to replenish the stores. This gives him another four years of scraping by before the covenant's Resources suffer. However, in doing this he is neglecting his other duties to his pupils and his staff. Nevertheless, the magi are pressuring him to find money for better equipment for the grogs, superior laboratories, and a break from herring twice a day.

The stress is too much for Francis. His pleas for help have fallen on deaf ears, and he decides to take measures into his own hands. Having exhausted his stored Labor Points, the covenant goes into deficit. The covenant requires 30 Labor Points, and Francis supplies only 27. He is forced to borrow from the servant's wages and pensions to meet the bills, and the Covenfolk Quality reduces from Average to Shoddy. Since Francis has made it clear to them who is to blame, the magi find their servants surly and uncooperative.

In the following year, Francis still earns 27 Labor Points and the covenant now needs 29 (since under the Cost of Resources option, the drop in Quality saves the covenant 1 Labor Point). This is still not enough, and Francis is unable to procure sufficient raw material for the armorer. The turb's Armaments declines to Shoddy, and the grogs are ill-equipped with poorly maintained armor.

By the third year, the covenant still needs 28 Labor Points and Francis can only provide 27. The magi finally take notice when Francis fails to pay the upkeep costs of their laboratories, and their former Superior Laboratories are now merely Average. Some of the laboratories lose the Virtues that incur an Upkeep cost to bring them in line with the new Quality level.

A crisis council meeting is held. There is much shouting and a few tears,

but Francis gets his way. He is released from his duties as autocrat; and instead concentrates on his other businesses. He recommends a steward and a chamberlain to share his previous role, and the turb captain steps up as marshal. The covenant is now operating the Three Officers option.

Although the Covenfolk Resource fell Shoddy Quality under Francis, only the chamberlain's Servants Resource is assumed to be at this level under the new regime. The Steward has to find 30 Labor Points each year: 36 (base) + 7 (Random Events) – 2 (Enchantments) – 11 (Underpopulation). The Chamberlain has to find two less since he has two Shoddy Resources (Purse and Servants). The marshal has to find one Labor Point less (only Armaments is Shoddy).

The steward and chamberlain generate 36 points each in their two seasons of work (Int+Profession of 6); the marshal is still learning his trade, and only generates 24 Labor Points (Int+Profession of 4) in his two seasons, so he works a third season to raise his Labor Points to 36. The covenant is stable financially. This year the new marshal receives three seasons of Exposure in Profession: Marshal, and also a season of Teaching, enough to raise his score of 2 (with the correct specialty) to 3. He'll only have to work two seasons next year.

Over the next few years, the turb captain steadily improves his Profession: Marshal Ability, and once more proficient with his new role, he no longer has to rely on aid from his fellow officers. Between them, the three officers build up a Labor Point store in order to buy back the covenant's former Quality, and perhaps, in the future even improve them further.

# FROM THE JOURNAL OF VULCANIS ARGENS

## From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:

The earth-moving device has finally been removed from my sanctum. There really was little room for a device that looked to all intents like some kind of siege engine. Indeed, for all I know that may be its ultimate purpose. In fact, it seems quite likely, given its ability to create tunnels under the ground. I destroyed any remaining arcane connection to myself as a precaution.

Running on four solid wheels, I constructed the with an array of shovels at its forward edge that were themselves set upon a shaft that rotated as the device is moved forward and back by its team of engineers. Where these shovels touched earth, clay, and even stone, so a quantity of that substance was

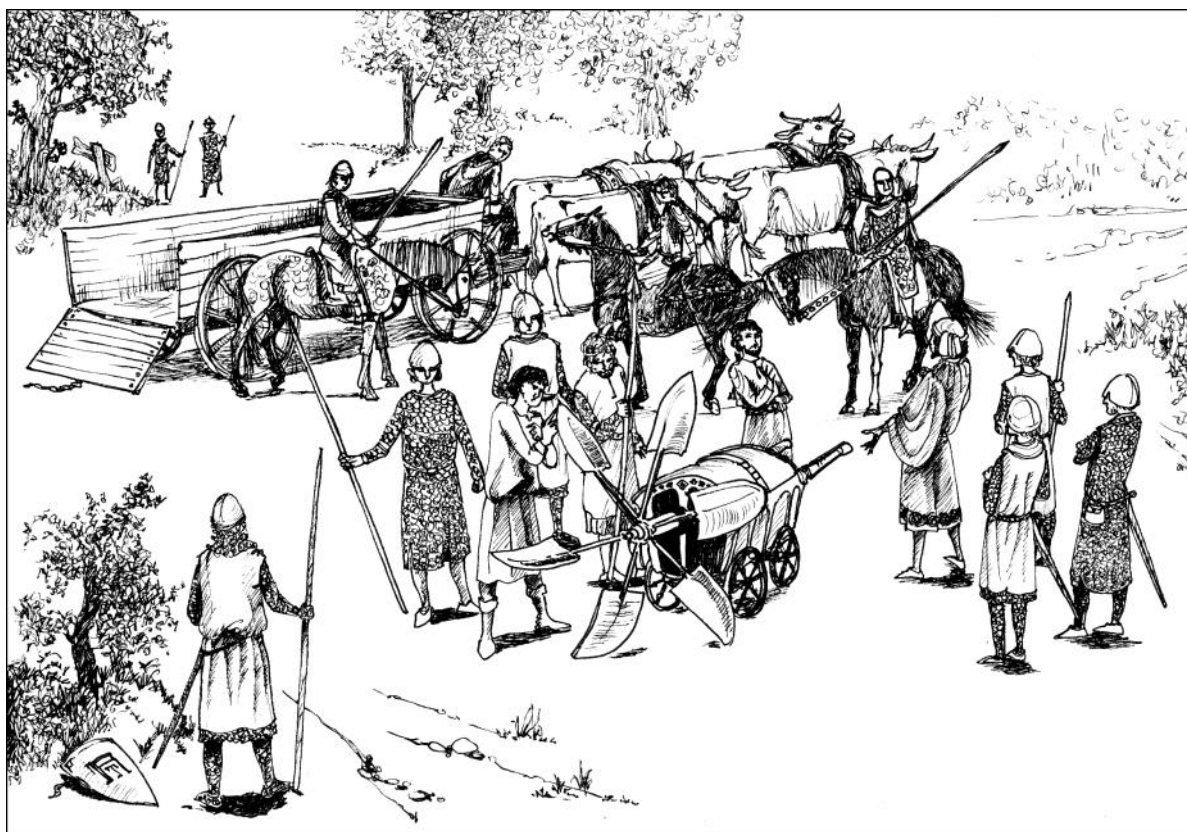
destroyed. The device is intricate enough that earth containing metal ores are spared, which makes the device an effective mining tool, an argument I aim to maintain should knowledge of the device somehow become widespread.

I am not foolish enough to believe that the covenant took no interest in my work of the past several seasons. My forge-companion Halbert told me on many occasions that he had been asked about the deliveries of timber and my unusual and sudden interest in carpentry; I reminded him that under no circumstances should he make eye-contact with magus Bellatorius and to stay entirely distant from maga Valeria.

When at last the device was completed, I spent a week in preparing my sanctum for the transportation of

the device. This was to be achieved through magic as the difficulty of spiriting the contraption away unseen through other means was scarcely achievable. Instead, I had Conrad fetch arcane connections from the point to which the device was to be delivered. I used these to remotely see that place and to draw in chalk upon the walls of my laboratory surrounding the device the scene as it would look were I standing there. I am well-versed in the preparation of casting spaces and the use of specific resonant items to assist with ceremonial casting, as all magi of my House should be.

As yesterday dawned, I started my spell-casting. I took my time. While I had practiced the magic in the week before, casting spontaneously is not the





same as when calling upon a set formula. The time of the day, the day of the week, the phase of the moon, the presence or not of witnesses to the magic... These must all be accounted for during the spontaneous casting. The complexities involved give me a respect for Magic Theory and its ability to transmute time spent in designing a formula into the ease of casting. I imagine it like a balance; on one side there is study and on the other the ease of casting. One side is always full and the other always empty. As an idle thought, I wonder whether there is way of making the balance more even. I think that may be something best left to followers of House Bonisagus.

At the concluding of a most tiring ceremony, the great wooden frame disappeared from my sanctum and, as I checked with a spell to view the site remotely, appeared alongside Conrad and the grogs that accompanied him. I watched as long as it took for Conrad to receive payment from those sent to collect the device.

#### **From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:**

Conrad returned last evening, bringing with him the prize; in excess of forty pawns of vis.

#### **From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:**

An alarm has been raised and I am called from my bed to the council chamber by Publius, Chamberlain to Charonicus. The messenger said only that a maid from the lower village has gone missing. I am confident the matter can be quickly resolved.

#### **From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:**

The missing woman is Octavia, a girl I know in passing, though more from Halbert's description of the going's on in the covenant. Coming from the lower village and afflicted with the

unfortunate warping that assaults many from that part of the covenant, she most frequently attends Charonicus in his sanctum in the bowels of the tower.

The mundanes searched for her for a time before raising the matter with the magi. Benedic has confirmed that she is not in the woods and both Bellatorius and I have confirmed that she is not within the Aegis. I have returned to my sanctum to fetch vis, casting tools, and a book of astrological tables that I often find useful during ceremonial magic.

I am certain the woman will make herself known, but her proximity to Charonicus and the access she has to the deepest levels of the tower are a concern.

#### **From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:**

Octavia is found, though no spell of our devising found her either living or dead, on our island or off. We attempted to cast words into her mind to inform her that we were looking for her and that she was to make herself known by some means. Again, this was fruitless.

Eventually, Legalitus summoned us to his chambers at the top of the tower. There, he commanded one of his spirits to appear and to tell us what it saw. The airy spirit told how he heard Octavia scream and then the sound of running. By the time the spirit found her basket of washing rolling upon the ground, she was gone.

The spirit was certain that the voice was Octavia's. Asked where this had taken place, the spirit seemed abashed until prompted by its master.

Following the spirit's story, we descended to confront Charonicus. It was clear from the outset that he knew more than he first wanted to reveal, but given that the evidence led to him he acquiesced. He had heard the scream but he was not its architect. Reluctantly, he revealed a chart that purported to show a number of variable regio entrances. He claimed that they rose

and fell likely with some regularity, though he had not yet divined it. He believed that she had either fallen into one such regio or had been taken into it.

By using his chart and my book of astrological tables we were able to find some correlation between the two. Finding the regio entrance, we found a series of caves far larger than we anticipated. It was clear from some simple magics that the caves were formed of multiple unstable regiones. Treading carefully, we found Octavia. She had indeed been snatched by jealous ghosts of the covenant's past. What they sought to do with her beyond torment her was not clear. Perhaps that is all these desperate creatures had in mind. Nevertheless, once Bellatorius unleashed his magic the motivations of these spirits hardly mattered.

We returned Octavia to her family.

#### **From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:**

I wrote before of wishing Quaesitor Valeria well in her search for an apprentice. Those words now seem ill-considered. She has her apprentice and there seems little any of us can do about it.

Having been away visiting friends elsewhere, much of what I write here is based on reports from the other magi of the covenant, but I have no cause to consider any of this incorrect.

It seems that the story started some years ago when Quaesitor Valeria was sent to investigate reports of a covenant that had once been thought lost but was apparently still thriving, although outside the Order's intentions. I remember the season well as she took Benedic with her, with neither of them considering it sensible to inform me of his leaving. This covenant was by all accounts occupied by two magi, both of whom knew the Arts and some common spells, but had never sworn themselves to the Order. Worse, they both knew Parma Magica. While both

claimed to be descended from certain Houses, Flambeau and Jerbiton if memory serves, they had no connection to or knowledge of them.

Valeria soon unravelled the mystery. The covenant, on the Isle of Wight, had been a rarity from the days of the Schism War; it was home to magi of different Houses, including a maga of House Diedne. I find it hard to comprehend, but these magi were more than simply members of a covenant; they apparently felt genuine friendship towards each other. It is an intriguing notion. I am myself not without feelings approaching friendship of course; I find Benedic occasionally agreeable and Bellatorius has a superb grasp on Magic Theory that must truly be admired. I am known to smile politely, even, from time to time.

This covenant of long ago, however, chose to declare itself fallen at the hands of this Diedne maga and then to declare her killed in the assault. They sacrificed their covenant for the sake of providing cover for this one maga who was by this time considered an enemy of the Order. Astonishing, quite astonishing. Should

the Order come to its senses and rid itself of House Guernicus at some time in the near future, I doubt I would risk one yard of Donum Chanuti's ground over any maga of that House who happened to call the covenant home.

But to the matter. In the ensuing years, the descendants of those magi closed themselves off from the Order and hid their presence. Generations later, the magi were startled by the sudden appearance of a standing stone in the grounds of their hall. Knowing little else to do, they wrote for assistance, a task that was assigned to Valeria. The standing stone was, so it seemed, enchanted through magic unknown to provide a means for this Diedne maga to lay dormant. Soon after Valeria and Benedic arrived, the stone cracked and the maga escaped from its magic.

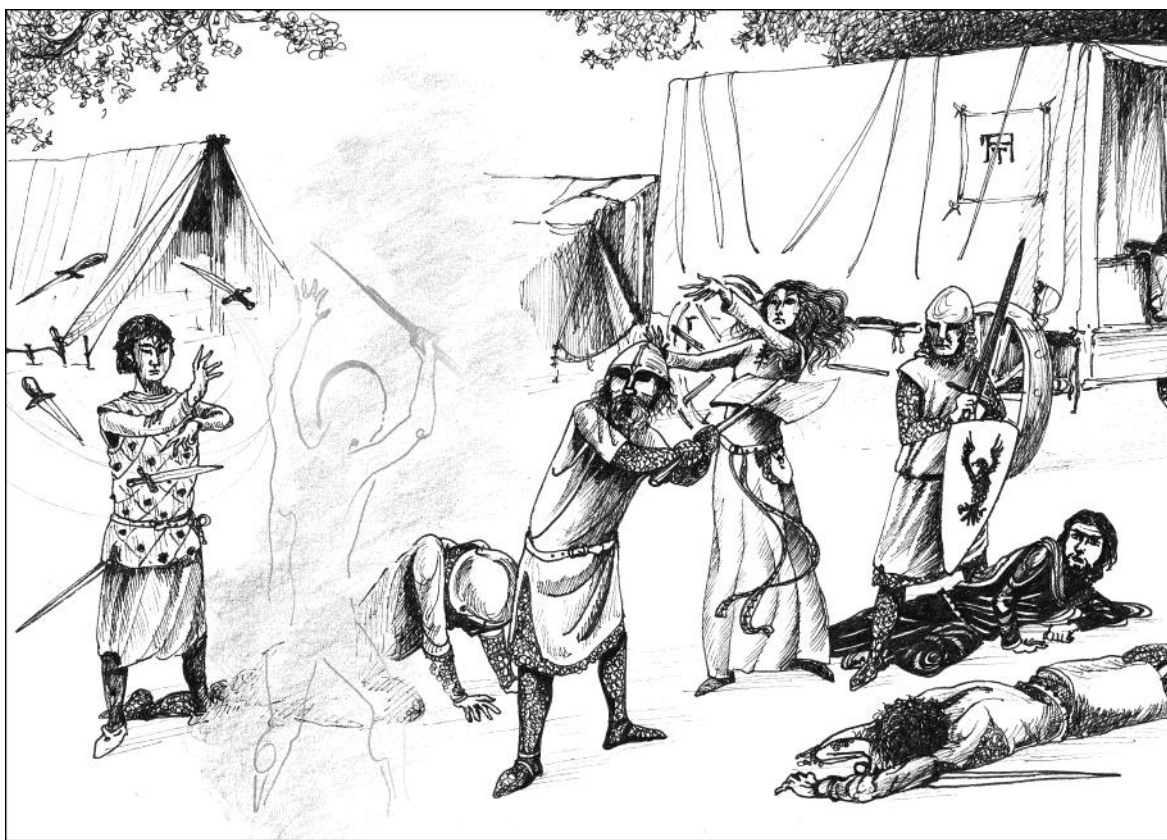
We must presume that the magic had the ability to transform the very body of the maga into stone. According to Valeria, there were no regiones involved and the standing stone itself had risen from the ground rather than simply appeared from nowhere. The

transformation was likely a means of confounding Intellego Corpus spells aimed at locating the errant maga.

Tracking this self-proclaimed Diedne, Valeria confronted her with the history of the Order since her flight from the world. For reasons that I am sure have some grounding in good Quaesitorial practice, Valeria let the woman go. Perhaps neither she nor Benedic possessed the power to stop her, but to hear Benedic tell it, Valeria concluded that as House Diedne did not exist, this woman could not be of that House. As there was no evidence of her possessing the Parma Magica, Valeria considered her a hedge wizard and let her about her business. As to the two unwitting magi of the Isle of Wight, she had Benedic adopt them into House Ex Miscellanea forthwith.

Here the story might have ended; as an ill-conceived display of clemency. That was indeed how it seemed. Until years later and the attack on Wheostan the Old.

Wheostan is a friend to Donum Chanuti, as he is to most across





Stonehenge. The first we knew of the attack was when his familiar, the hound Brodrik, came to the covenant. He took Bellatorius, Valeria, and Benedic to Wheostan's camp, where they found him dreadfully wounded, cut down on the threshold to his wagon.

This was not all. Bellatorius fell first. The blade bit into him from behind, the assailant quick and unseen. Benedic was the second target, but the enchanted cuirass I had made for him turned aside the blade. Two grogs fell in quick succession and Valeria cast her magic to try to find the attacker. Tostig, who I had left behind, called upon the magi to raise up a mist within the camp. They did so and he used it to find their invisible attacker. Making out her trail in the mist, Tostig swung his axe and caught her a deep blow to the side.

It was a pity he did not kill her outright. The wound dispelled the

enchantment about her and she was revealed to be little more than a child.

Magically binding her wounds, they brought her back here, where Valeria took charge of the prisoner. By the time I returned, Wheostan's wagon had also been brought back, Wheostan himself was in deep twilight, and Brodrik stood guard over him. This girl, Godrun, is Gifted, apparently taken by this Diedne soon after her return. Her Hermetic training had already started. I made clear to Valeria that so too had her indoctrination into the ideologies of House Diedne, whatever they might be. It was certain that this maga and now her apprentice were a danger.

Valeria though has adopted Godrun as her apprentice. Bellatorius is understandably furious, as am I. Valeria simply says that it is a quaesitorial matter and not a covenant one. She will come unstuck. The best thing we can do

is to hand the girl over to more senior quaesitors and let them decide the repercussions to those involved.

### From the Journal of Vulcanis Argens:

Valeria brought her apprentice down to the hall to dine with us tonight. She had the nerve to seat her at the table with the magi. Not only are we harbouring the offspring of House Diedne under our very roof, but we are now expected to eat at the same table as an apprentice. We are being expected to treat this dangerous cuckoo in the nest as a maga of good standing.

If I did not fear the sudden and overwhelming influx of Houses Guernicus, Tremere, and Flambeau to our little island I should report every pertinent fact of the matter at the next Tribunal.





# RATS MAGICA

By JASON TONDRO

Willhardt of Bjornaer was a Rhine magus with a plan. Using his House's mystery of Sensory Magic, he enchanted a flute with the power to summon all children who heard its tune. A further enchantment allowed him to give commands through the flute's music that only Gifted children would hear. The flute had a very specific use: finding potential apprentices. Once it was complete, Willhardt set out to test the flute on an unsuspecting village.

Unfortunately for Willhardt, there was a terrible accident, and the magic of the flute went wild. Instead of

summoning children, he summoned rats and mice by the thousands. Willhardt ran for it, terrified, when he saw hordes of rats coming at him from all directions. They would not stop chasing him, and eventually he was forced to throw the flute into the River Weser. Most of the rats followed the flute and drowned, but a very small proportion, about a hundred rats and a few of the largest mice, managed to save themselves and crawl ashore, sputtering, wet, and forever transformed.

The potent and uncontrolled magic of Willhardt's Enchanted Flute had

warped the rats, replacing their animal Cunning with human Intelligence. Confused and afraid, they huddled together in the shadow of a large stone and began to speak to each other as they never had before. Some of the rats remembered ("What a strange thing," they admitted, "to suddenly remember!") the secluded grove where Willhardt and his fellow wizards dwelt. They resolved to go there, but because some were afraid that Willhardt would kill them if he were to find out they still lived, they resolved also to hide from





the sight of the wizards and keep their true nature a secret.

It was miles to Willhardt's covenant, and the journey there was perilous, taking many days. A few rats perished on the way, but through their new intelligence and the wisdom of their leaders, most of the rats reached their destination. Because they were only warped animals, and not creatures with Magic Might, they were able to enter the Aegis. Moving in small groups to avoid notice, they found temporary homes in the huts and cottages of the covenfolk; this meant they often had to exterminate the mundane rodents and other pests which already lived there. The rats call this conflict The Great War, and they consider it a tragic, but necessary, evil.

This was a small covenant, really only a Fengheld chapter house; aside from Willhardt there were only two other magi: an ancient Bonisagus named Tancred, French by birth, who had fled the chaos of Normandy a century ago, and his final apprentice, Marjery, now newly Gauntleted. Each of the magi had a private tower hidden among the trees of the grove. While the two younger magi busied themselves with the politics of the Tribunal, the rats settled in to their new home. Because of their great number, some moved into the towers of the magi, and there they began to witness magical activities such as laboratory work and the casting of spells.

A few of the rats were more intelligent and curious than the others, though their ideas were seen as dangerous and they themselves were constantly under suspicion. The leader of these rats, who had taken the name Socrates, broke the laws of his people after many long nights of observation and revealed himself to the old Bonisagus in whose tower he lived. Amused and intrigued by the intelligent rodent, Tancred spent a season conducting various tests and experiments upon his new friend, and in the end made a startling discovery: Socrates was not just intelligent, he was

Gifted!

Suddenly, the rat infestation in the covenant took on new importance. Increasingly obsessed, the old magus took it upon himself to try and open the Arts for Socrates, and he succeeded. But although a rat could now work spontaneous magic, something was wrong. Perhaps because of his tiny size or his brief lifespan, all the magic Socrates wielded was reduced in scale and potency. Even so, it was a remarkable discovery. Socrates poured over his master's books and lab, learning everything in much less time than an ordinary apprentice. At the end of a year's instruction, he was as knowledgeable as any newly-Gauntleted magus. With his last words, Tancred made the rat swear the Oath and gave him the name "Aux Gernon," ("with mustache", in Tancred's native French, and a joke on the rat's prodigious whiskers). Then, he faded into Twilight.

Socrates was held in suspicion by his fellow rats, but he wielded his new powers for good even as he continued to study and refine his Gift. He identified a handful of other Gifted rats, opened their Arts, and taught what he could. Meanwhile, the chapter house was falling apart. Willhardt's continued meddling in mundane affairs got him killed, leaving only Marjery. Unwilling to carry on the covenant by herself, she dismissed the covenfolk, packed as many books as she could carry, activated the covenant's defenses, and returned to Fengheld, locking the gates behind her. The rats were alone.

Soon after the departure of the magi and covenfolk, the rats gathered together openly for the first time since their escape from the Weser. They named this gathering the Second Great Council, retroactively marking that frightened meeting under the shadow of a stone as their First Great Council. Over days the rats debated their future until finally Tobias, one of their leaders and a close friend of Socrates, managed to persuade them that this place could be made into an ideal home.

With the help of many rats and the equipment left behind by the departing magi, Socrates was able to invent a Creo Herbam spell to grow a mighty oak tree in a single day and, moreover, to fill that oak with chambers, stairs, and halls. This became the new home of the rats, and they named it Oakhollow. Socrates and his fellow magi Aux Gernon became the de facto leaders of the rat community, though they seldom gave instructions directly, instead operating through mundane rat intermediaries such as an autocrat and other custos. The rest of the community was also organized along covenant lines, with a Turb of Groggs and covenfolk toiling to produce food, tools, and other crafted goods.

Over a decade has passed. Socrates has now grown very old indeed, and would have died years ago if not for the power of his Longevity Ratual. Even so, he has grown weak and feeble, and will soon pass from the world forever. The Rats of Oakhollow are filled with doubt and fear over the future. What will become of them, when Socrates is gone? When will the magi of the Order return to collect the remaining treasures left behind in Tancred's old covenant? What will they, the rats, do when this happens? Perhaps they should move, and make a new home somewhere the Order will never look for them. But where? And how?

## THE RATS OF OAKHOLLOW

To a casual inspection, the Rats of Oakhollow look like perfectly normal, uninteresting, black rats. They have slender bodies, large eyes and ears, pointed noses, and long tails. However, a closer look reveals a strange intelligence in their eyes, almost as if they know something. While the rats seldom wear clothing over their bodies (which are after all covered in fur), they do use gloves, boots, and tools, and carry their belongings in satchels, bags and packs. They sometimes wrap their

## NEW VIRTUE: GIFTED RAT (SPECIAL VIRTUE)

You are a rat or mouse without Might but with the power to work magic, the result of a freakish accident of Warping which has continued to appear in the rat and mouse population of Mythic Europe. Amongst the Rats of Oakhollow, roughly one Gifted Rat is born every year. Technically, you are a Transformed Animal (see *Realms of Power: Magic*) but you use special rules for character creation governed by your brief lifespan and heightened rate of activity.

You suffer all the penalties of the Gift, though this is less noticeable when you interact with human beings, who will already consider a talking rat strange and untrustworthy. Animals with Intelligence react to you with suspicion and mistrust, as human beings react to Gifted magi. Animals with Cunning treat you as they would human magi. While an animal with cunning will often flee Gifted people, you are small and weak, and so predatory animals such as dogs and cats are much more likely to attack you out of instinctual hatred. The Gentle or Blatant Gift modifies these reactions as normal.

You can learn Supernatural Abilities without the corresponding Virtues, and may be taught Hermetic magic. If you do learn Hermetic magic, you have the same difficulty learning Supernatural Abilities that Hermetic magi do. Your Hermetic magic works on a much smaller scale than it does for human beings; amongst your fellow rodents this effect is imperceptible, but when you interact with human magi you suffer a serious handicap. See **The Lineage of Aux Gernon** for the specific mechanical restrictions on your spells.

tails for warmth or protection; hats are considered fashionable and a useful marker of status. These objects, and others, can sometimes be found on their person.

Most rats are Size -7. (**ArM5** assigns rats Size -8, but this is corrected to -7 in subsequent books.) However, larger

(Size -6) and especially smaller (Size -8) examples are not uncommon. There is also a mouse minority living in Oakhollow, descendants from the handful who survived the river ten years ago. They suffer a social stigma due to their size and physical weakness; represent this with the Dwarf Flaw. They are Size -9. A rat with Giant Blood would be a freak among his kind, as large as a rabbit (Size -5) and probably the Infernal spawn of a large rat and a small herbivore like a badger.

The Rats of Oakhollow can speak. All know Rat with a Score of 2. They can speak to other rodents with a Language Score of 1. However, the language of rats is too limited for the Rats of Oakhollow, and they have adopted Latin, learning it from immersion in the covenant when the human magi were active. Latin is now passed down as the living language of everyday speech. A few rats have experimented with a new form of Rat Language using invented vocabulary and complex syntax, but it hasn't caught on. Note that, because the Rats of Oakhollow have Intelligence, Animal Ken does not work on them.

Rats of Oakhollow age very rapidly, at a rate roughly 13 times faster than a man. This has significant consequences for them, both mechanically and magically. A Rat of Oakhollow is a mature adult at the age of one year; at that time it has acquired the characteristics, abilities, and other features of a Typical Rat of Oakhollow (see below). They begin making aging rolls after three years, rolling once a month. When calculating a rat's Aging Total (**ArM5**, page 168), use the rat's actual age instead of (age/10).

Rats of Oakhollow can perform a seasonal activity in a single week; this specifically includes methods of advancement such as Practice, Training, or Teaching. While a typical NPC gets 15 XP a year (30 for magi, academics, or other special cases), a Rat of Oakhollow gets 15 XP (30 for rat magi) every four weeks, or 195 XP in one year! (390 for rat magi.) This is balanced by the fact

that Rats of Oakhollow are usually dead by the age of 5. Rat magi can extend their lives through magic, but accumulate warping at a quickened rate and still roll aging rolls every month, ensuring they live only a fraction of the span afforded a typical Hermetic magus.

A rat can use a Profession skill to craft objects using the rules detailed in Craft & Guild, and can do so in weeks instead of seasons, but the objects are all rat-sized.

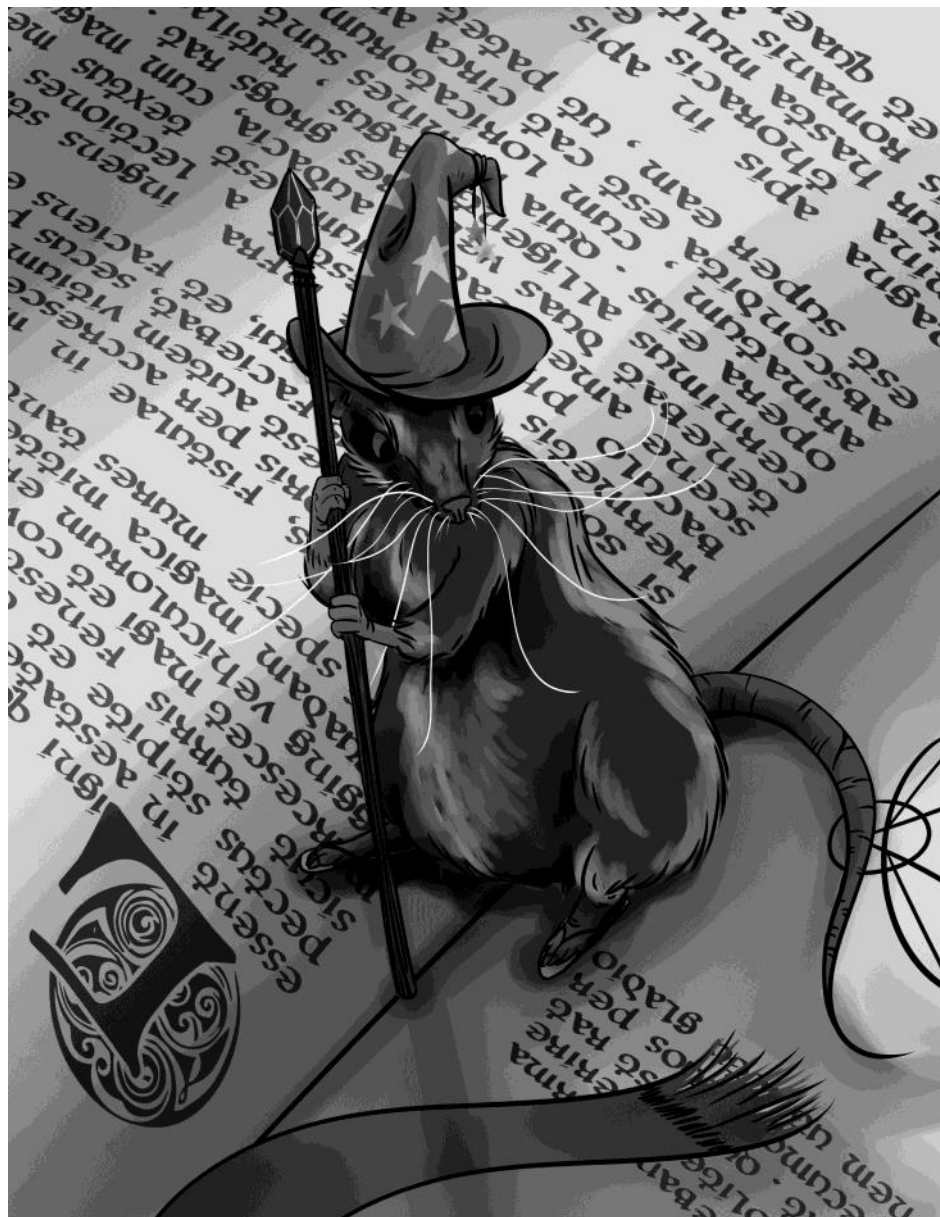
## THE LINEAGE OF AUX GERNON

Rat magi can do anything a human magus can do but on a much smaller scale. They possess the free Virtue, "Gifted Rat," which is described in the nearby sidebar. There have been about a dozen Gifted rats in the history of Oakhollow, but not all have survived.

The rules for rat magi are guided by a single principle: if a troupe was to make a covenant of rat magi and play entirely on the scale of such animals, they could use the rules for *Ars Magica* and Hermetic magic entirely as written. See the later section entitled *A Rats Magica Saga* for more on this principle. When rat magi interact with human magi, however, the following rules and guidelines apply:

- The rat's damaging spells have a penalty of -7. For example, *Pilum of Fire* cast by a rat magus has a damage bonus of only +8.
- The base target for rat Hermetic magic is seven steps smaller than an ordinary base target. For example, an Animal spell targeting an individual has a base target of an animal of Size -6 or smaller, or about the size of a thrush.
- An Aegis of the Hearth created by a rat magus inflicts a casting penalty seven less than it





normally would. For example, a level 20 Aegis would normally inflict a -10 penalty to casting totals, but a human magus in an Aegis created by a rat would have only a -3 penalty. A rat magus would suffer the full -10 penalty.

- A rat magus engaged in Certamen against a human magus has a -7 penalty to his Penetration total.
- In other cases, the target has a +7 bonus to Magic Resistance against the rat's spell. Do not apply this penalty if one of the other penalties has already

applied.

Scale also affects the way in which rat magi use vis. One standard pawn of vis is an enormous treasure for a rat, who uses only a tiny fraction of a pawn at a time. A single pawn of vis is worth 300 rat-pawns. Rat magi use rat-pawns exactly as if they were regular pawns, and are limited in their use of rat-pawns by their Magic Theory score.

Like other Rats of Oakhollow, rat magi can perform a seasonal activity, such as lab work, in a single week. When calculating advancement for a rat magus, he gains 30 XP every four weeks. Apprenticeship among rat magi

lasts for one year. A rat magus can make a Talisman or any other enchanted object using rat-pawns, but such an object is always scaled for rat-size.

Rats can use Animal instead of Corpus to extend their lifespan, creating what are known as Longevity *Ratuals*. They acquire Warping from these *Ratuals* every month, instead of every year. Rats can also bind familiars, but the base Size for computing the vis cost and bonding level is -7 instead of 0. So, for example, a rat needs 4 rat-pawns to bond a (non-magical) toad, 3 to bond a bat, 2 to bond a minnow, and 1 to bond anything of Size -11 or smaller,

### RATS AS FAMILIARS

Gifted rats may be the ideal familiar for a Hermetic magus. Intelligent and capable of assisting in the laboratory, they do not have Might and can continue to learn from experience.

Rat magi that might be laughed out of the Order, enslaved by pitiless human magi, or wiped out as a threat to the Order instead earn a protected status under the Code, becoming magical assets of their magi. To steal or injure them becomes a Hermetic crime. The status of familiars is greater than that of mere apprentices, more of a lifetime partnership, and therefore not insulting to a rat's dignity.

But a rat magus who is a familiar is also at risk: the loss of a familiar is a standard punishment for certain Hermetic crimes, and a rat magus could find himself sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. It was, instead, committed by his magus!

Binding a rat magus as a familiar slows down his rate of learning and activity, along with his aging. The rat familiar now performs seasonal activities in a season instead of a week, and gains 30 XP every year, instead of every 4 weeks. A rat magus who is currently bound to a familiar cannot, in turn, be bound. In principle, the rat's bond with his familiar could be severed to permit bonding with a human magus, but no sane rat magus would ever consent to such a thing.

including insects.

Rats can study from books, but most human books are too large and heavy for a rat to comfortably read. A rat treats all human books as if they were Huge, according to the guidelines in *Covenants*. Several rats can simultaneously study from such a book, but if they have a way to easily open it, close it, and turn pages. (The Rats of Oakhollow have developed spells to do exactly this.) The exact number of readers depends on the size of the book, but since there are so few rat magi, it is probably safe to say that a human book can accommodate as many rat magi as wish to study from it.

A rat can study a human book at the same time a human magus is reading it, but this takes an entire season. Most rats cannot afford to use three months for such an activity, so this is something of a last resort. Conversely, rat books are too small for a human magus to use unless he is willing to shrink himself to Size -5 or smaller. Even then, a human

magus would need a season to profitably study from such a book.

## OAKHOLLOW

The Covenant of Oakhollow is housed within a large oak tree situated on the bank of a stream. The tree was created through ritual magic by Socrates Aux Gernon of Bonisagus, the greatest of the rat magi, and is a young Summer covenant, growing in power but facing dangerous external threats. Half a dozen magi live on the upper floors, within the trunk. The middle of the tree is for social gatherings and is the living quarters of the covenant's custos; many of the covenant's specialist facilities, including the hospital and a few chambers for domesticated insects, are here. Most of the rats live on the ground floors, and a waterwheel constructed by the rats dips into the stream and provides motive power for a number of mechanical innovations including a pulley system, grain mill, and

clock. Winding staircases work their way in and around the tree's roots to storage and additional living chambers underneath the tree. A warren is kept for domesticated rabbits used as draft animals. Because of the danger of fire, the covenant's smithy and workshops are beneath ground, some distance from the tree, vented with carefully-hidden smoke holes. More tunnels, storage chambers, and living quarters are always being hollowed out beneath the tree, carefully designed to avoid weakening the tree's structure. The dirt is removed from the tunnels in small carts which are hauled from underground through the pulley system powered by the water wheel. The entire tree is protected by an Aegis of the Hearth cast at the sixth magnitude (inflicting a penalty of -8 upon human magi who might try to cast spells upon or inside it), and the grand doors to the covenant, located on the ground floor, are clearly marked with the Order's sign for a wizard's sanctum. (Technically, the entire interior of the

### NEW SPELLS

Note that because the base target for objects scales up faster than the Size of creatures, the 7 point difference between rats and human beings can generally be overcome by a 2 magnitude increase in the spell level.

#### There is Life Yet In You

CrAn 30

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

All wounds on the target animal immediately improve by one level of severity; an Incapacitating Wound becomes a Heavy Wound, a Heavy Wound becomes a Medium Wound, and so forth. Light Wounds are healed instantly. When a rat magus uses it, it affects animals of Size -6 or smaller.

(Base 25, +1 Touch)

#### A Spell For Turning Pages

ReAn 4

R: Touch, T: Part, D: Mom

Casting this spell turns one page in a book of up to Huge size. (For a rat magus, that means the spell works on ordinary human books.) Socrates developed it in order to safely use books in Tancred's laboratory. If the book's pages are paper (or some other more unusual material) instead of parchment, the spell gains an appropriate requisite.

Rats are nearsighted and typically walk on the page in order to read it. Magi benefiting from spells which enhance their vision might learn a variant of this spell with Range Voice.

(Base 1, +1 Touch, +1 Part, +1 Size)

#### The Levitating Laboratory

ReTe 30

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Room

This spell animates the tools and equipment in a laboratory so that it answers to the spoken commands of the magus. Two magnitudes are added for size, allowing a rat magus to use the lab of a human magus. Finesse rolls will be required for delicate work.

This spell has additional requisites based on the materials used in the lab.

Base 3, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +2 Room, +2 Size

#### Conjuring the Oaken Home

CrHe 45

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind, Ritual

Socrates' greatest triumph was to grow a mighty oak tree in a single day, filling it with chambers, halls, and stairs according to his own design. If this spell were devised by a human magus, it would be reduced 2 magnitudes.

Base 15, +1 Touch, +2 Size, +3 elaborate design



## ENEMIES AND THREATS

The Rats of Oakhollow have been at peace for years, but peace makes for boring stories. Here are a few adversaries and threats they are most likely to face:

### PRIDE OF THE BEE KING

The Bee King within Oakhollow is young and aggressive, eager to make a name for himself. Accordingly, he is building up his forces to make war on the rats, convincing his subjects that they are vicious intruders touched by the devil and wielding infernal powers. To a human, a bee is an inconsequential threat. To a rat, however, a well-armed and arrayed army of flying soldiers - even small ones - must be taken seriously. If rat PCs are Size 0, an individual bee is Size -4.

## DOGS AND CATS

The natural predator upon rats is the dog and the cat, and rat magi are sure to come into conflict with these animals. The local farmer may have hounds to guard his home, a terrier may keep the local baroness company, and stray cats and dogs are ubiquitous in town. Hermetic magi often take dogs (Tytalus) and cats (Jerbiton) as familiars, and these creatures sometimes outlive their masters, as is the case with Tancred's familiar in Oakhollow. See *Realms of Power: Magic* for the Lineage of Cats and examples of other magical animals. *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* can be useful for determining the game statistics for additional animals.

## THE RATCATCHER

The ultimate non-magical threat to a covenant of rats is the ratcatcher. Medieval ratcatchers use traps, terriers, and poison. Intelligent rats will not fall for most of a ratcatcher's tricks or behave in a way he can predict, but he will pose a tremendous physical challenge, especially if he has the company of a pack of trained dogs. He will be so big that no spell cast by a rat magus will affect him, and his enormous Wound Levels will make him all but invulnerable. A ratcatcher who realizes he is outmatched might resort to magic of his own, including a rat-summoning flute such as that wielded by the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

tree is Socrates's sanctum, though the other rat magi also have private sanctums within it. No human magus would risk living permanently inside another magi's sanctum, but Socrates is trusted beyond doubt.)

The rats know the grounds of the abandoned human covenant well, having explored virtually every corner of it in the last ten years. They have plundered it for tools, trinkets, and raw materials, but their needs are so small that even after a decade their theft can easily go unnoticed. Marjery's Tower is almost completely empty, as she had few personal belongings beyond those she carried away with her when she left. The rats seldom have need to travel there. Willhardt's Tower is the only place the rats have yet to enter; he protected it with a ring ward against vermin and, while the rats have long debated how to break the ring, they're not entirely sure they want to.

Tancred's Tower is a trove of treasures, including Tancred's old laboratory and personal library. The equipment and books are too heavy for the rats to move; in the past, when a rat magus wished to use the lab or consult

Tancred's books, a large group of rats accompanied him and, working together, manipulated the equipment. This is risky and accidents were inevitable; some rats died in such lab work and Solomon eventually invented a spell allowing him to manipulate the lab and its contents through magic. Unfortunately, Tancred's old familiar still lurks within the tower and she blames Socrates and the other rats for her master's passing. The rats tried for years to come to a peaceful understanding with the cat, but the beast is so forlorn and melancholy over the loss of her master that her grief has become an obsessive need for vengeance, and now the rats can only avoid her. Using Tancred's lab remains a desperate last resort.

The covenant as a whole is surrounded by an eight foot iron fence broken by a single main gate which is locked. The Aegis cast by the human magi has long since faded, but some protective spells on the gate remain. The first time each day that someone touches the gate, a face appears on its surface and shouts a warning: "Who dares intrude upon this chapter house

of Fengheld Covenant? Begone, lest deadly curses fall upon you! You have been warned!"

If someone touches the gate and the first warning spell has already been activated, a second spell activates. It targets the touching individual and his Group, if there is one, with a Penetration +30 Mentem effect. If the spell penetrates the target's Magic Resistance, the victim runs wild in the forest, stripping off his clothes and behaving like an animal until dusk or dawn, whichever comes first.

If the gate is touched and both the first and second ward have been activated, the gate's final defense activates: the gate itself transforms back into its true shape, a towering elemental made of pure iron. Without directions from a magus, the elemental attacks anything bearing metal or stone, which is all it can sense. If it senses nothing to attack, it wanders randomly.

## STORIES

The Rats of Oakhollow can be used to tell many different kinds of stories,

from straight up combat to diplomacy, intrigue, or exploration.

## THE ABANDONED COVENANT

The default use of the Rats of Oakhollow is to place them, and the abandoned human covenant site in which they dwell, near enough to the PCs that the players choose to explore it. Although they are ostensibly located in the Rhine, the rats are easily moved to virtually any Tribunal. The PCs may be on an official recovery mission from a powerful covenant (likely in well-established Tribunals like Normandy, Transylvania, the Greater Alps or

Rhine), or they may be exploring on their own in an effort to gather books, vis, and enchanted items for their own Spring covenant (more suitable to border Tribunals like Hibernia, Levant, or Novgorod). In addition to all the standard dangers found in an abandoned covenant site -- magical traps, local Faeries or demons, ghosts of dead magi -- the PCs also have to decide what to do about the rats and their magi.

As Storyguide, tailor the reception given by the rats in order to create the kind of story you and your players want to tell. If you want a battle in the Lilliputian style, vast numbers of rats have prepared mechanical and magical

## RAT MAGI AND ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The rat magi have no unique magical secrets; there's nothing they know which is not known to the Order at large, save for a few spells which are useful only to rats. However, there is something Magi Aux Gernon could do better than any human magus: original research.

Rat magi can perform a seasonal activity in a week. They don't live very long, but a Magus Aux Gernon willing to dedicate his life to the task could develop a minor breakthrough in a year, a major breakthrough in a year and a half, and a Hermetic breakthrough in two years (assuming the breakthrough is even possible). These are averages, of course, and there is a lot of variability in original research, but the benefit of a rat's accelerated lifespan is clear.

This could prove a powerful incentive for a Hermetic magus, especially a Bonisagus, to gather the Magi Aux Gernon and force them to conduct research on his personal interest. This also exacerbates tension between the rats and the Order, because rats who become familiars to a Hermetic magi lose the ability to rapidly perform seasonal tasks, and cannot be exploited in this way. If, as a Storyteller, you don't want to worry about the impact of original research conducted by the rat magi, presume that any breakthrough made by a rat magus is also governed by the small scale of rat magic; this might make it useless to human magi.



traps for human intruders, ranging from simple pits and net traps to rat-sized catapults and ballista fashioned out of crossbows left behind by the human Turb. A combat oriented story is something of an uphill battle, however, because the rats are inherently weak and puny; defeating them isn't much to boast about. Instead, consider an approach that emphasizes diplomacy, communication, and an exchange of ideas. After all, the Magi Aux Gernon have sworn to the Code and, while they have never been officially recognized as



magi or as belonging to a House, they believe in the Order and would gladly join it if given the opportunity. Another kind of story might emphasize liberation and providing aid: perhaps the rats have already been discovered by an unscrupulous magus who arrived before the PCs and who has bullied the rats into servitude. The PCs have an opportunity to free the rats from bondage, but they'll have to defeat the magus and his allies, which might include Groggs, a familiar, and supernatural aid such as ghosts, magical spirits, faeries or demons.

## SECRET NEIGHBORS

Alternately, place the rats inside the PC covenant! While their oak tree makes a fine refuge, they could live almost anywhere, including inside castle walls or deep within underground catacombs. The rats might have come recently to the covenant and be seeking

a new home, or they may have been here all along, predating the PCs arrival. This makes for excellent Covenant Boons and Hooks, such as Resident Nuisance, Dark Secret, Inhuman Covenfolk, or Mystical Allies.

Covenfolk probably notice the rat infestation before the magi do, and the first season might be spent just trying to catch and trap the rats. Strangely, the traps never work, forcing the covenfolk to escalate to predatory animals like cats or terriers or the hiring of a professional ratcatcher, probably with the assistance of the covenant's autocrat. It's not until inarguable evidence of magic is discovered that the magi are told about the problem, though it is possible a magus may already be wondering why a rat is sometimes found in his lab or sitting upon an opened tractatus.

It would not be too difficult for magi to exterminate the rats en masse, provided one of them is willing to put

the time and effort into inventing a spell for poisonous air. But the rats will also attempt to befriend at least one of the magi in the hope of gaining an ally and spokesman who can help protect them or, at the very least, provide an escape.

## MAGI AUX GERNON AND THE ORDER

In sagas which emphasize Hermetic politics, the rat magi may petition to join the Order within House Ex Miscellanea. There are basically two ways to do this, either of which might happen during another story. For example, while the magi are investigating the strange rat infestation within their castle, Socrates and his fellow magi are trying to get into the Order as a way of gaining protection against the PCs.

The first form of this story is an up-front and honest one: the rats, probably



already discovered by the PCs, travel to Cad Gadu and ask to join the House. If there is a Tribunal looming, the rats send an embassy and intend to register Oakhollow as a covenant. Even if Ex Miscellanea agrees to accept them, their membership is likely to be challenged at Tribunal, probably by a Tylalus magus who seeks to use the case as a way to establish precedent. Can a non-human being join the Order? Quaesitors might investigate, probably using size-changing magic to enter Oakhollow. Redcaps need a way to reach the covenant and might expect the Rats to offer them hospitality. Human magi might seek to replicate the accident that

gave the rats the Gift, or might try to dominate the rats and use them for personal gain.

A second approach is for the rats to attempt to join the Order without their true nature being known. If they can manage to be accepted as magi and register their covenant through a proxy -- a magus ally, a hired Redcap, or simple correspondence -- they can then reveal their true nature and use the Code as a defense against aggressive Hermetic magi. For this strategy to work, the rats need to slowly build their own reputation, writing to various magi in the Tribunal, introducing themselves and offering to exchange spells and

books. Offers to meet are reluctantly and politely declined, citing a reclusive nature, nocturnal habits, and lab experiments that cannot be interrupted. These letters are, in fact, written by rat magi using spells to operate human-sized quills. They sign their names as magi Ex Miscellanea, trusting that House's lackadaisical records to make their claim plausible, and are especially interested in building alliance against out-of-control Wizard's War. Wizard's War poses the greatest risk to this strategy since, even if the rats manage to trick their way into the Order, nothing protects them from an angry magus who decides to take out his frustration on the rats and their kind. The PCs would make excellent defenders in this case, provided the rats could come up with some form of compensation, but the rats have limited time to achieve their goal before the PCs become too suspicious of these mysterious magi and come to Oakhollow to investigate in person.

The logical compromise is for the Magi Aux Gernon to become familiars to Hermetic magi. Even one human magus, if properly powerful and influential, could be enough to provide the rats a safe haven. But this does not grant the rats actual membership in the Order, and poses new risks. See the nearby sidebar for more on Gifted Rat familiars.

## A RATS MAGICA SAGA

Rather than interacting with the rats as unusual NPCs, players can make rat characters! Mechanically, this actually simplifies things enormously. Use the regular rules for *Ars Magica* and Hermetic magic, treating rats as Size 0 and men as Size +7. Ignore all the magic guidelines listed under The Lineage of Aux Gernon; rat magi have no penalty to damage, Certamen, or anything else. Most foes, however, will be enormous and deadly; spells will have to be designed with extra magnitudes just to affect them.

At their heart, rat sagas are about the





contrast between the Small and the Great. On one hand, rat heroes are tiny, fragile, and clever, surrounded by a world both vast and deadly; they are the ultimate underdog. On the other hand, a rat magus is possessed of incredible power far beyond his physical proportions. Stories true to these themes will highlight both the advantages and liabilities of being small and weak. For example, rat characters may get swept up in events of great historical import, and find themselves in the company of famous historical figures... who don't know they exist. A rat's greatest strength is his ability to hide and avoid notice, and a rat who has attracted the attention of the great and powerful has almost certainly done something wrong. A rat Aux Gernon wields Hermetic magic and is an individual to be feared, but the world is full of beings aligned with the divine, infernal, faerie and magical realms, and most of them are not Size -7.

In **Rats Magica**, a human Hermetic magus is both the ultimate resource and an apocalyptic threat; his library and laboratory offer knowledge and wealth beyond all imagination, but if the rat magi are detected, it will mean the end of their way of life, and possibly mass extinction.

Because even a rat magus will be dead or in Twilight within fifteen years, a **Rats Magica** saga is ideal for exploring a very narrow time frame in great depth. In an ordinary **Ars Magica** saga, the Sixth Crusade comes and goes in a few sessions, but for rats who perform seasonal activities every week, it is the basis for an entire campaign. The relatively short-lived reign of a local lord might bracket an entire rat saga, or a saga might be set within a specific historical event, such as the siege of Constantinople, King John's tour of Hibernia, or the Albigenian Crusade.



## THE RATS OF OAKHOLLOW

All of the game statistics provided here are designed for interaction with human characters. If you are playing in a Rats Magica Saga, add +7 to Size and +14 to Str, but subtract 7 from Qik. Increase Wound Levels to account for the new Size. Combat numbers will need to be recalculated; note that the Dodge and Evasion numbers listed here include a bonus for the small Size of the rats. This bonus will need to be removed in a Rats Magica Saga.

### TYPICAL RAT OF OAKHOLLOW

**Characteristics:** Int +1, Per +1, Pre -3, Com 0, Str -12, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik +5

**Age:** 1 year

**Size:** -7

**Confidence Score:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Lightning Reflexes, Sharp Ears; Poor Eyesight

**Qualities:** Crafty, Keen Sense of Smell, Skilled Climber, Timid

**Personality Traits:** Opportunistic +2, Timid +1

**Reputations:** Vermin 1 (among humans)

**Combat:**

*Teeth:* Init +5, Atk +10, Def +10, Dmg -11

*Dodge:* Init +5, Def +15. Includes a +7 Defense bonus from Size.

**Natural Weapons:** A rat's bite has Init 0, Atk +3, Def +1, Dmg +1

**Soak:** +1

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

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

**Abilities:** Athletics 3 (food), Awareness 4 (people), Brawl 3 (bite), Latin 5, Profession 5, Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (covenants)

**Vis:** None (named Rats have 1 pawn of Vim vis in their tails)

**Appearance:** A black rat with a satchel on a strap over its back, tiny gloves on its hands and boots on its feet, wearing a green cap and with its tail wrapped in wool and tied with yellow thread.

The typical Rat of Oakhollow has a relatively happy and contented life. He is part of a small but growing family and has practiced his trade all his life, having learned it from his father and his grandfather. There is plenty of food, the magi keep the tree safe, and there is satisfaction in work which benefits the entire community.

Rats have comparatively poor eyesight, but they see perfectly fine at the usual tiny scale at which they live. Ignore the penalty

for Poor Eyesight when a rat must see something which it can touch or handle, such as its own melee attacks. However, the rat does suffer the penalty when it tries to defend against attacks from man-sized enemies, or against any ranged attacks. Rats who are members of the Turb replace their Profession ability with Single Weapon, Great Weapon, or Bow. Blacksmiths, carpenters, and the like replace Profession with an appropriate Craft.

### BENJAMIN, CAPTAIN OF THE TURB

**Characteristics:** Int 0, Per +1, Pre -3, Com -1, Str -10, Sta +3, Dex +5, Qik +5

**Size:** -6

**Age:** 5 years, 7 months (-5 to aging rolls thanks to longevity ratual)

**Warping Score:** 3 (3)

**Confidence Score:** 0

**Virtues and Flaws:** Large, Lightning Reflexes, Sharp Ears, Tough, Warrior; Careless with Carouse, Jinxed, Night Terrors, Poor Eyesight, Weakness: Gambling, Temperate

**Qualities:** Crafty, Keen Sense of Smell, Skilled Climber, Timid

**Personality Traits:** Brave +3, Loyal +3, Principled +2

**Reputations:** Reliable 3 (in Oakhollow), Sucker 2 (among gamblers), Vermin 1 (among humans)

**Combat:**

*Longsword and Infantry Shield:* Init +7, Atk +15, Def +16, Dmg -4 (add +5 Dmg for Blade of Virulent Flame and +2 for Edge of the Razor when they apply, for a maximum final Dmg of +3).

*Teeth:* Init +5, Atk +12, Def +10, Dmg -11

*Dodge:* Init +5, Def +20. This includes Shield bonus and a +6 modifier for Size.

**Soak:** +17 (Sta 3 + Tough 3 + Full Enchanted Chain 11)

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

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

**Abilities:** Animal Handling 3 (rabbits), Area Lore: Oakhollow 3 (Grog), Artes Liberales 1 (mathematics), Athletics 4 (jumping), Awareness 4 (people), Bow 5 (crossbow), Brawl 4 (dodge), Carouse 2 (gambling), Etiquette 1 (magi), Folk Ken 2 (lies), Great Weapon 5 (pole axe), Latin 5, Leadership 3 (rats), Ride 3 (rabbits), Single Weapon 5 (long sword), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (covenants), Swim 2 (in gear), Thrown Weapon 5 (spear)

**Vis:** Benjamin has 1 pawn of Vim Vis in his tail.

**Equipment:** Benjamin carries a long sword, the hilt of which is enchanted to cast Edge of the Razor and Blade of Virulent Flame once per day. He bears an infantry shield which has



been enchanted with a constant Shriek of the Impending Shaft effect. He wears a full coat of mail enchanted to have no weight and a higher Protection bonus.

**Appearance:** A big big, black rat with a brooch-sized shield strapped over its back and, beneath it, a sword the size of a needle and a matching crossbow. It is wearing a coat of tiny mail rings, its hands, feet, and tail are protected by leather, and its head is covered in a rat-sized steel helmet.

Benjamin - a big, black rat - is something of a legend among the Rats of Oakhollow, ever since he saved a foraging party from a wolf. He is the Turb Captain and senior Shield Grog, always accompanying Socrates whenever the old Rat leaves the covenant. Indeed, he takes his job so seriously that on those rare occasions that Socrates leaves the lab and does not want Benjamin's company, the proud captain presumes he has done something wrong and becomes inconsolable. He rides a rabbit named Bucephalus, and his tiny mail coat, shield, and sword are all enchanted.

Benjamin benefits from a longevity potion crafted by Socrates, so that he can continue to guard his enfeebled master until the end of his days. He has become a jinx through warping, but only the other magi recognize this fact. Recently, Benjamin has also become afflicted with Night Terrors, again as a result of warping, and he describes himself as feeling "stretched thin." He wonders if his extended lifespan is right and proper, or somehow a crime against nature.

## MISTRESS JENNY GOODMOUSE, AUTOCRAT

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per +2, Pre 0, Com +1, Str -14, Sta 0, Dex +3, Qik +5

**Size:** -9

**Age:** 3 years, 1 month (-7 to aging rolls thanks to longevity ratual)

**Warping Score:** 0 (1)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Autocrat; Cautious with Leadership, Clear Thinker, Good Characteristics, Lightning Reflexes, Puissant Leadership, Sharp Ears, Strong-Willed; Dwarf, Difficult Underlings, Dutybound, Pessimistic, Poor Eyesight

**Qualities:** Keen Sense of Smell, Skilled Climber, Timid

**Personality Traits:** Organized +3, Cautious +2, Pessimistic +1

**Reputations:** Good at her Job 5 (Oakhollow), Uppity Mouse 2 (Rats), Vermin 1 (among humans)

**Combat:**

**Teeth:** Init +5, Atk +10, Def +10, Dmg -13

**Dodge:** Init +5, Def +19. Includes a +9 Defense bonus from Size.

**Soak:** 0

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Surrounding Woods 3 (threats), Area Lore: Oakhollow 3 (Mice), Artes Liberales 1 (rhetoric), Athletics 4 (running), Awareness 4 (people), Bargain 3 (politicking), Brawl 4 (dodge), Church Lore 2, Civil and Canon Law 2 (settling disputes), Etiquette 3 (Rats), Faerie Lore 2, Folk Ken 5 (Rats), Guile 2 (Rats), Intrigue 5 (spies), Latin 5, Leadership 5+2 (autocrat), Magic Lore 2 (Magical Beasts), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (nearby magi), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (covenants)

**Natural Weapons:** A mouse's bite has Init 0, Atk +3, Def +1, Dmg +1

**Vis:** 1 pawn Rego in tail

**Appearance:** A light gray mouse wearing black boots on her rear legs and black mittens on her front. Over her shoulders a red mantle has been draped, clasped with a tiny diamond in a gold setting.

Jenny Goodmouse is the current autocrat of Oakhollow, and is responsible for the daily operation of the covenant. She is the first mouse to ever hold the position, but has a natural talent for administration and is (largely) respected. Some of the Turb and male craftsmen, like the blacksmith, quietly grumble about taking orders from a mouse, but these complaints are considered rude and unfit for public discourse. Very recently, on her third birthday, she agreed to take a longevity potion crafted for her by Socrates.

While she is very grateful for the protection of the magi, Jenny considers Socrates and his fellow wizards to be myopic hermits who don't understand the many dangers which threaten the covenant. She has built a large and active network of scouts and spies who regularly leave the forest grove to collect information on the outside world, and in this way has come to learn much about the Order, the church, and the affairs of men. She is tracking the activities of local faeries as best she is able, and is very concerned about the local Bee King, who is making bellicose pronouncements to his people about the need for more territory. In preparation for potential war, Jenny has ordered Oakhollow's craftsmen to build a stockpile of weapons and she has initiated regular archery drills.

## ARCHMAGUS SOCRATES AUX GERON FILIUS

### TANCRED, SCHOLAE BONISAGI

**Characteristics:** Int +5, Per +1, Pre -2, Com 0, Str -15, Sta -1, Dex +2, Qik +4

**Size:** -7

**Age:** 13 years, 1 month (-15 to aging rolls thanks to longevity ratual)

**Decrepitude:** 3

**Warping Score:** 5 (100)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Gifted Rat; Adept Laboratory Student, Book Learner, Cautious Sorcerer, Flexible Formulaic Magic, Good Teacher, Great Intelligence x2, Inventive Genius, Lightning Reflexes, Puissant Magic Theory, Sharp Ears; Compassionate, Enfeebled, Higher Purpose: To Protect the Rats of Oakhollow, Poor Eyesight, Waster of Vis

**Qualities:** Crafty, Keen Sense of Smell, Skilled Climber, Timid

**Personality Traits:** Patient +3, Kind +3, Generous +2

**Reputations:** Respected 5 (Rats of Oakhollow), Mighty 3 (Rat magi), Vermin 1 (among humans)

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init +4, Def +17 (includes a +7 bonus for Size)

*Bite:* Init +4, Atk +11, Def +8, Dmg -14

**Soak:** -1

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Oakhollow 5 (hidden chambers), Animal Handling 1 (insects), Artes Liberales 5 (ritual magic), Athletics 3 (grace), Awareness 4 (people), Brawl 3 (dodge), Code of Hermes 3, Concentration 5 (spells), Finesse 5 (Herbam), Latin 5 (Hermetic), Leadership 8 (rats), Magic Lore 5 (magical beasts), Magic Theory 8+2 (Animal), Medicine 5 (physician), Order of Hermes Lore 3, Parma Magica 5 (Ignem), Penetration 3 (Animal), Philosophiae 5 (ritual magic), Profession: Scribe 5 (Hermetic), Ride 3 (raven), Stealth 4 (hiding), Survival 3 (covenants), Teaching 8 (rats)

**Arts:** Cr 35, In 28, Mu 15, Pe 15, Re 30; An 15, Aq 12, Au 11, Co 6, He 40, Ig 13, Im 13, Me 14, Te 6, Vi 10

**Twilight Scars:** Socrates' eyes glow with golden yellow light. His hat always stays on his head unless he chooses to take it off. Cobwebs congeal onto his body out of the air, and form themselves into a cloak. His whiskers regrow within moments when plucked. His tail

moves with a life of its own.

**Equipment:** Staff Talisman, many rat-pawns of vis covering various Arts, pointy hat.

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Vis:** 1 pawn of Vim Vis in tail

**Spells Known:** Casting totals with a T indicate a Talisman bonus of +2-5; R includes a +12 bonus for ritual magic.

*True Rest of the Injured Brute* +52T (CrAn 20)

*There is Life Yet In You* +64TR (CrAn 30, Ritual)

*Weaver's Trap of Webs* +52T (CrAn 35)

*Opening the Tome of the Animal's Mind* +45T (InAn 25)

*Beast of Outlandish Size* +32T (MuAn 15)

*Doublet of Impenetrable Silk* +32T (MuAn 15)

*Beast of Miniscule Proportions* +32T (MuAn 20)

*Blunt the Viper's Fangs* +32T (PeAn 15)

*The Falcon's Hood* +32T (PeAn 25)

*A Spell For Turning Pages* +48T (ReAn 4)

*Ward Against Beasts of Legend* +47T (ReAn 20)

*The Gentle Beast* +48T (ReAn 25) This spell works on animals of Size -3 or smaller.

*Mastering the Unruly Beast* +48T (ReAn 25) This spell works on animals of Size -3 or smaller.

*Mighty Torrent of Water* +46 (CrAq 20)

*Enchantment of the Scrying Pool* +39 (InAq 30)

*Lungs of the Fish* +26 (MuAq 20)

*Push of the Gentle Wave* +41 (ReAq 15)

*Tower of Whirling Water* +45T (ReAq 35)

*Circling Winds of Protection* +48T (CrAu 20) Mastery 1: Fast-cast

*Sailor's Foretaste of the Morrow* +38 (InAu 20)

*Eyes of the Bat* +38 (InAu 25)

*Trap of the Entwining Vines* +75 (CrHe 15) Mastery 1: Multiple Casting

*Wall of Thorns* +74 (CrHe 20)

*Conjuring the Oaken Home* +91R (CrHe 45, Ritual)

*Intuition of the Forest* +67 (InHe 10)

*Converse with Plant and Tree* +67 (InHe 25)

*Tangle of Wood and Thorns* +69 (ReHe 15)

*Ward Against Faeries of the Wood* +71T (ReHe 30)

*Lamp Without Flame* +47 (CrIg 10)

*Pilum of Fire* +50T (CrIg 20)

*Ball of Abyssal Flame* +50T (CrIg 35)



*Circle of Encompassing Flames* +47 (CrIg 35)

*Soothe the Raging Flames* +27 (PeIg 20)

*Phantasmal Animal* +42 (CrIm 20)

*Haunt of the Living Ghost* +42 (Cr[In]Im 35)

*Eyes of the Eagle* +40 (InIm 25)

*Summoning the Distant Image* +40 (InIm 25)

*Veil of Invisibility* +28 (PeIm 20) Mastery 1: Fast-cast

*Mind of the Beast* +33T (MuMe 30)

*Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit* +33T (PeMe 10)

*Loss of But a Moment's Memory* +33T (PeMe 15)

*Ring of Warding Against Spirits* +48T (ReMe 20)

*The Unseen Porter* +39T (ReTe 10) This spell has an effective Str of -9. Quite strong for a rat!

*Hands of the Grasping Earth* +39T (ReTe 15)

*The Levitating Laboratory* +39T (ReTe 30)

*Piercing the Magical Veil* +37 (InVi 20)

*Demon's Eternal Oblivion* +24 (PeVi 10)

*Wizard's Communion* +39 (ReVi 15)

*Aegis of the Hearth* +53T (ReVi 30, Ritual)

*Circular Ward Against Demons* +41T (ReVi 20)

*Maintaining the Demanding Spell* +39 (ReVi 20)

*Opening the Intangible Tunnel* +40 (ReVi 15) Mastery 1: Magic Resistance

*Gather the Essence of the Beast* +41T (ReVi 15)

**Appearance:** A black rat whose fur is streaking white and whose droopy whiskers are very long. He wears tiny sandals and walks slowly on his rear legs, supporting himself with a staff. Atop his head is a pointy wizard's hat, decorated with stars.

**Talisman:** Socrates has enchanted his staff as his Talisman. Its chief material is a splinter of cedar wood, but it is capped with magnetite. It grants the following bonuses: +5 on anything with a Mentem or Herbam requisite, +3 Animal, +4 to control things at a distance, +3 to project a bolt or missile, and +2 to repel things. It is enchanted with a constant Wizard's Sidestep effect, a Ward Against Heat and Flames, and a self-sustaining effect similar to Endurance of the Berserkers, but using Animal instead of Corpus.

**Familiar:** Socrates' familiar is a loyal raven named Munin. He is Size -4 and Socrates can ride him, though he has not done so in some time. Socrates always knows Munin's location and can sense his thoughts, but Munin cannot do this to Socrates. Munin lives in the branches of Oakhollow and is usually the first to spot trouble.

Socrates Aux Gernon is the intellectual and spiritual leader of the Rats of Oakhollow. Unlike traditional Hermetic magi, who think of themselves as among the most powerful people in existence, Socrates has never forgotten his humility and the fragility of life. He has dedicated himself to serving others and is generous to a fault. None of this, however, blunts the effect of his Gift, and although his fellow rats are grateful for his protection, they also fear him and generally like to stay as far from him as possible. With few friends and colleagues, Socrates is an insular creature who keeps his thoughts to himself and gives explanations only at the last possible moment, after much prompting.

As the senior magus of Oakhollow, Socrates has trained three apprentices among the rats and tried to instill in them both humility and a respect for life. These magi went on to train others; no Gifted rat goes without training. No matter how dull, clumsy or boorish a Gifted rat might be, Socrates considers their training to be a duty and he believes that everyone can contribute somehow, often in unexpected ways at the most surprising moment. He especially loves children, and is both kind and respectful to the mice of Oakhollow. It was Socrates who nominated Jenny for her role as Autocrat, though she does not know this.

# THE SECOND LINEAGE: EXPLORERS OF TIME AND SPACE

By MARK BAKER

This is the second stage of my collection of Bonisagus lineages. Each of the following wizards are a collection of old and new Bonisagus magi who can be placed as NPC's in your campaign, and involve a basic story seed for each, or at least an amusing role-playing opportunity that will take up a little time.

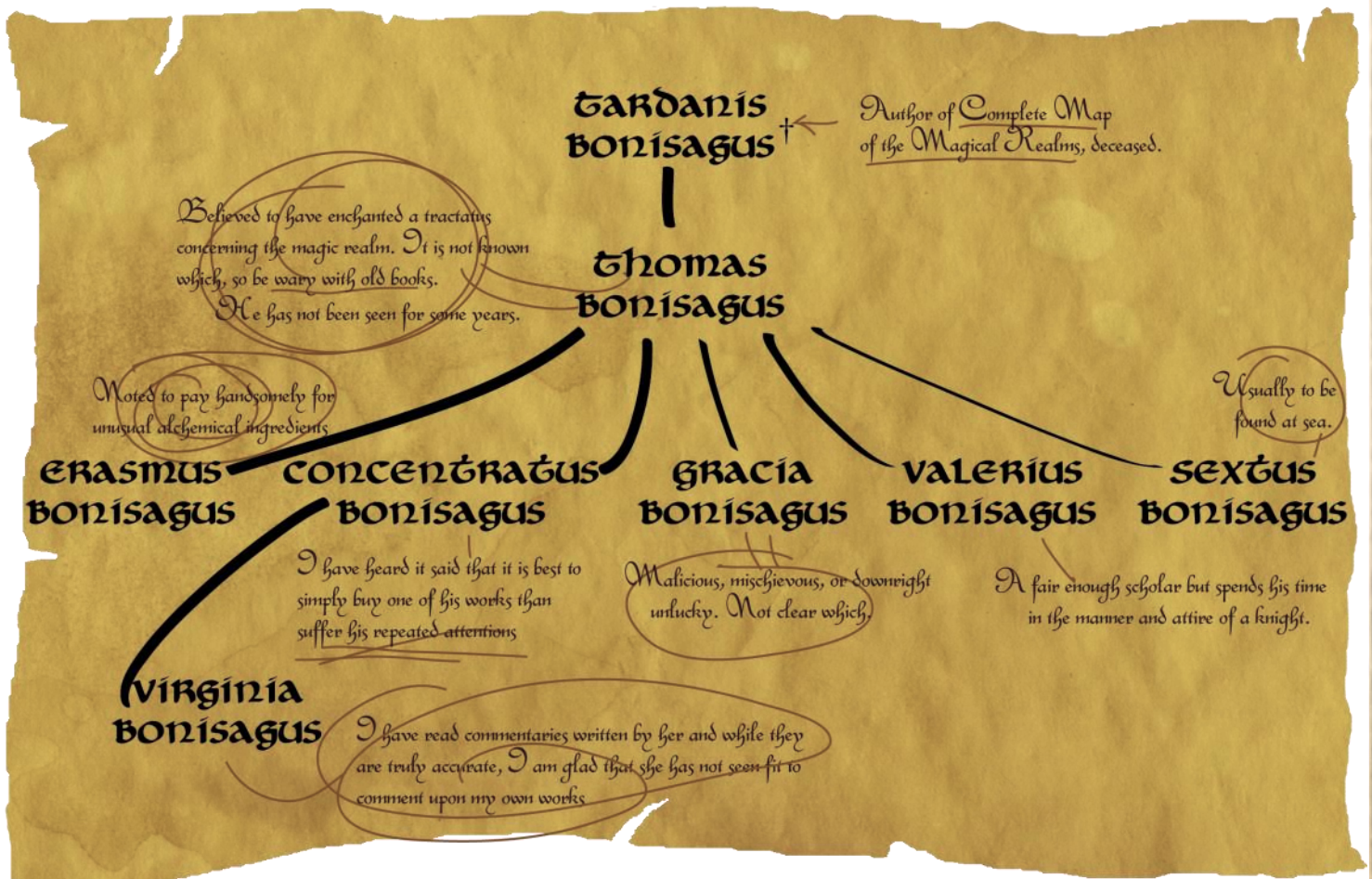
While the ages indicated are guidelines to power, the power of your saga may vary, so simply take their age as a guideline to power if you need further statistics for them.

This lineage follows on from one of

the apprentices of Bonisagus, Tardanus, a critical opponent of Criamon's magic and the twilight techniques that all wizards in the order look into. Tardanus was well known for his ability to travel through odd and mysterious places, and his famous lost work, the *Complete Map of the Magical Realms*.

The Bonisagi who follow this line tend to focus on and be skilled in travel through regiones and the Magic Realm, though tend to have high amounts of warping for their troubles. Being travellers in the magical realms, they often can disappear for long periods

before coming back with incredible tales. Wizards of this line may believe that Twilight that Criamon integrated into Hermetic Theory is a very incomplete technique, as well as being highly dangerous. This line often have the Magic Realm Magic discovery integrated into their magic as part of their apprenticeship, and House Bonisagus find it difficult to keep a track of the research they give back to the order.



SUB ROSA



## THOMAS BONISAGUS

**Age:** 175 (150 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Sailor on the Twilight Sea

**Quote:** "Is that the Spirit of the Earth's Wrath? I believe it could be. Does it look particularly angry to you? I suggest we run."

**Master:** Tardanus Bonisagus

**Description:** Thomas wears a collection of wild robes of another colour, has wild frizzy hair and moves

as if constantly on a mission. He is rarely far from his large cart that can travel through the magic realms at will. He is often known to phase into reality with a mission, grab a half dozen people, and phase out again. Sometimes they are even seen again. He seems to have access to regiones which warp time, and his apprentices appear to come out fully fledged in record time. Thomas has been referred to but never attended Grand Tribunals since at least 1050, where he was theoretically declared Orbus for never giving in his research, though the description given

was exactly the same description as what he bears in 1220. Given he appears to have no Tribunal he is in for more than a season or so, it is difficult to breach him for vagrancy.

**Personality Traits:** Urgent +2, Curious +3, Optimistic +2

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Magic Realm Magic

**Story Seed:** An ancient tractatus has lain hidden within another tractatus for years in the covenant library. Picking it up triggers an ancient spell that summons Thomas, or a spectacular botch or Story on the Experimentation Table might also bring him. He arrives in the middle of the library in his magic-realm travelling wagon. He is also followed by a collection of spirits of the elements that are locked into an endless battle with each other. He is apologetic for the destruction these great creatures cause, and asks why in the local area the spirits of Earth are particularly mad. He can contain the spirits, but the PC's must investigate locally; what could be stirring the normally passive spirits of earth so badly? Could an elementalist have a grudge, or is there something even worse afoot?

**Item of Note:** Thomas has written a tractatus on Magic Lore that involves his Magic Realm Magic breakthrough (Quality 10). Thomas is also very cautious about who he gives such power to, and so has put enchantments on them so he knows who and where they are being read.

## ERASMUS BONISAGUS

**Age:** 130 (100 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Alchemist

**Quote:** "I apologise, but I have about ten diameters of the sun before my beakers overflow. My standard vis rates I have posted over on the board yonder..."

**Master:** Thomas of Bonisagus





**Description:** Erasmus of Bonisagus is a Hermetic researcher who is engaging in an interesting pursuit – to learn everything possible about Alchemy by investigating all known sources of it, and combining it with Hermetic Theory with a series of Major breakthroughs. Erasmus has ventured into the Magical realms with his master, but did not enjoy the process, preferring instead the calm and somewhat explosive life of the alchemist to the life and death stakes of spirits powerful enough to destroy the earth.

Erasmus is usually dressed in

scholar's robes and is usually not far from his laboratory and very busy refining vis or attempting some form of hermetic discovery. If he isn't working in his lab, he is on 'holiday' – attending conferences on alchemy, travelling to far lands and meeting distant wizards in an attempt to learn anything more about alchemy.

When young, he needed to move a castle to appease a spirit of air. He spent some time researching an appropriate spell and attempted to replace the castle in an area he thought was safe; on the edge of a fairly solid cliff.

Unfortunately, he dropped it, giving him something of a reputation in the Order as a moron.

**Personality Traits:** Driven (Combine Alchemy with Hermetic Theory) +3, Compassionate +3 Reputation (Clumsy) +1,

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Driven, Dark Secret (Has Magic Realm Magic)

**Story Seed:** Erasmus often needs unusual ingredients from faraway creatures in difficult locations. He can pay excellent vis rates for others to retrieve such things for him, as he really isn't known for being much of an adventurer. Technically he can pass on Magic Realm Magic, but his master has requested he never do so; and Erasmus, having met a spirit who could destroy the entire earth in the blink of an eye, and found it easily made angry, agreed to not let the order in on this knowledge.

## CONCENTRATUS OF BONISAGUS

**Age:** 80 (65 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Talentless Author

**Master:** Thomas of Bonisagus

**Quote:** "Oh! What did you think about "Thoughts About Thoughts Upon Thoughts Within Thoughts?" I know I sent you a copy.

**Description:** Concentratus has an unfortunate tale, in that his greatest wish is to become famous for creating works of art through writing prose and useful instructional texts to the rest of the order. In some ways he has already achieved this, as he is practically a household name in the entire order – though not for his skill, but rather his lack of it.

Concentratus is a decent magus and could have made something of himself if he hadn't picked up an unfortunate curse during apprenticeship he's never





realised he had; after accidentally insulting a faerie queen deep in Arcadia he was cursed to never have talent. He continued, however, making summae after summae and tractatus after tractatus on anything and everything he possibly could. Concentratus learns more only so he can write about it, have it copied en-mass, and disseminated to the entire order.

Concentratus has spent fortunes publishing his sizeable but horrible collection of works, and fortunes more making sure every known covenant has

works such as “How the Parma is like a Butterfly Making a Cocoon” and “Ignem for Idiots.”

People often underestimate him, but his inability to write does not mean he doesn't have a fairly professional knowledge in anything from swordsmanship to seamanship, the Parma to Penetration.

Concentratus was used by Thomas more as a scribe than an adventuring companion, so Thomas never taught him Magic Realm Magic, especially knowing Concentratus desire to publish

everything he knows.

**Personality Traits:** Boundless Misdirected Creative Energy +4, Wants you to read his book + 5

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Delusion (Will one day write the greatest book of all time.) Malediction (All created books or art will be horrible.)

**Story Seed:** Concentratus is going on what he calls a ‘Book Signing’. He goes from covenant to covenant handing out execrable books and staying at the covenant, making himself a nuisance until people spend a season reading them and giving him ‘constructive criticism.’

## GRACIA BONISAGUS

**Age:** 25 (3 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Hopeless Romantic

**Quote:** “Thomas!? Thomas! I'll find you one day!”

**Master:** Thomas of Bonisagus

**Description:** Gracia Bonisagus is determined to find her master, who was trapped in a dimension of time eating fungi after completing her Gauntlet.

Gracia's problem is that Thomas isn't nearly so lost as she thinks he is, nor is he half in love with her as she is with him. They always seem to miss each other by seconds. This doesn't stop her from following in her beloved mentors footsteps into wild adventures into different dimensions.

Despite her knowledge of Magic Realm Magic, Gracia is not particularly powerful enough to truly use it effectively yet, and has found herself in deep strife in the magic realms as a result. She is looking to temporarily stay in a covenant for a few years to increase her power before she goes looking for her master again.

One of Gracia's trips to the Magic Realm brought back with her an annoying demon spirit which regularly



interferes with her life. The spirit causes all those around it to grow stronger and organises minor inconveniences to be taken care of until the 'important' parts of the story, where it will do its best to make them just fail. It is usually invisible, but when showing itself appears to be a red faced, frustrated child with overly long fingers that endlessly click and snap.

**Personality Traits:** Driven +3, Sad +1, Frustrated +3

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Driven (Research Magic Realm Magic), Lost Love (Thomas of Bonisagus), Plagued by Supernatural Entity

**Story Seed:** If Gracia is in attendance, small annoying things just keep happening, causing a loss of work and increased frustration, such as causing loss of days of work, and if long enough a dip in the covenants finances. Will the magi clue in that all of them are having an amazing amount of breakages around the lab at critical moments, that the blacksmiths iron deliveries are late at the worst possible time, that their clients, customers and those who rely on them are being disappointed... aren't their own fault?

## VIRGINIA BONISAGUS

**Age:** 40 (20 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Critic

**Quote:** "Bellia Bonisagus? Her theories are outdated and unrealistic, failing to compensate for commonly accepted Hermetic theory discovered a hundred years ago. Not to say she doesn't have some merit... her discussion on Auram in 1027 is still taught to apprentices, after all, but I fear age may have dulled her capacity for truly breakthrough research..."

**Master:** Concentratus Bonisagus

**Description:** Virginia is extremely literate and well-learned, but not inherently a researcher herself. Instead,

she has found a niche writing commentaries on any and all research she is privileged to see. Virginia is a prolific writer and corresponds with almost every researcher of note, though some do not particularly care to correspond with her due to her vicious attacks.

Virginia has received a number of threats of wizard war and has been found guilty of ignoring Certamen results for insulting the wrong wizards. She is relatively young still, and has had many warnings from older magi about curbing the tone of her letters, but Virginia gains personal pleasure from

the way she writes. When magi speak of her, they are usually angered by what she has written about themselves or friends, or of the opinion she is soon to be stomped flat by an angry wizard.

Some believe she is yet to be stomped due to the fact that many of the glosses and commentaries she writes often have harsh truths about them, rather than the inherent patience of those she write about.

**Personality Traits:** Critic +3, Acerbic +2

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Busybody, Good Teacher





**Story Seed:** A glossed tractatus comes to the covenant, which involves a scathing criticism of one of the PC's written works by Virginia, which mentions that she has sent her criticism to all nearby covenants (And likely affected the PC's reputation). How will the PC's deal with this out of the blue attack?

## VALERIUS BONISAGUS

**Age:** 35 (10 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Chaste Knight and Scholar

**Quote:** "Don't worry, fair maiden. Your virtue is safe with me."

**Master:** Thomas of Bonisagus

**Description:** Valerius Bonisagus sticks out from his Bonisagi brethren like a sore thumb. Serving as a squire before being trained a traditional Bonisagus, he wouldn't be out of place in house Tylalus or Flambeau. Despite this, he is still a scholar of note despite his odd fascination with mundane martial endeavors, and has a good reputation amongst his house for his research into Ignem.

Valerius always wondered why other men had such weakness for women and spent so much time talking about such matters. As an adolescent he struggled with his sexual orientation for years, but the patient and understanding (And somewhat unaware of the real world) Thomas of Bonisagus helped him to

come to grips with himself and become a great knight and scholar.

Being very pretty, Valerius is very favored by women everywhere, and finds it odd that he is always rescuing maidens from unlikely situations who throw themselves on him.

He has yet to find a partner that he truly loves, and is romantic enough to believe it will happen. While the Order of Hermes is somewhat open to his sexual practices, Valerius is often dealing with mundanes and mundane society, spending a lot of time with lords and knights.

**Personality Traits:** Brave + 3, Honest + 3, Good +3

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Gentle Gift, Warrior, Major Magical Focus (Beasts), Dark Secret (Homosexual), Curse of Venus

## SEXTUS BONISAGUS

**Age:** 50 (25 years out of apprenticeship)

**Theme:** Sailor on Far Seas

**Quote:** "Yeeeeearrggghhhhhh, thar be a regio I see aport!"

**Master:** Thomas of Bonisagus

**Description:** Sextus wears common sailors clothing (a blue smock) and has permanently browned skin and a large, floppy hat. Sextus sails wherever the trade routes take him, and regularly

investigates faraway places and regiones, talking to any salty dog he finds about magical or other auras they may have come across.

Sextus has a crew of experienced, salty sailors that have long since got used to Sextus' gift and appreciate his weather and water magics, having saved the ship a dozen times at least in the few years since Sextus' Gauntlet.

Slightly unusual in his way, Sextus doesn't research Hermetic theory though he does regularly report on regiones, vis sources and so forth. Sextus has just tried a few trips into the Magical Realm in his ship and sails far seas in search of trade, adventure and booty, and realises he needs to spend a few more years before trying again.

Sextus speaks in a broad Welsh accent.

**Personality Traits:** Wanderer +3, Arr, have a pint +2

**Virtues/Flaws of Note:** Major Magical Focus (Weather)

**Items of Note:** Sextus has been given a small brass telescope by Thomas of Bonisagus which appears to be a set of finely crafted lenses in a tube, allowing one to not only see far away but to see magical regiones. He is the owner of a small cog, which he hopes to have enchanted when he earns enough Vis.

# NEW HERESIES: FIXED ARTS

By XAVIER REQUEJO

## WHAT WAS HERETIC'S CORNER?

Back in the Hermes Portal (<http://styren.pagesperso-orange.fr/hermesportal/hermes1.htm>) ezine days, there was a section by Michaël de Verteuil dedicated to house rules and ways to change **Ars Magica** following alternative paths. The section was called **Heretic's Corner**. Since I think it is a fitting name and the concept remains the same, I am recovering the name for **Sub Rosa**. I strongly believe that **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** is the best edition of the game so far, but it is not void of areas that could use some rethinking. In this section there will be suggestions to do just that.

## FIXED ARTS: REASONS

One of the mid-term difficulties for a saga is to prevent a good book ruining a perfectly good player character.

Say, we have a Corpus Summa of Level 15 and Quality 15. Not such a rare book. 8 seasons to read, and you end up being quite accomplished in Corpus. Your season by season level evolution (starting at 0) would be

Season One: Level 5

Season Two: Level 7

Season Three: Level 9





<b>Season Four:</b>	Level 10
<b>Season Five:</b>	Level 11
<b>Season Six:</b>	Level 12
<b>Season Seven:</b>	Level 14
<b>Season Eight:</b>	Level 15

To achieve a score of 10 in a single year of study represents fairly fast development. Level 10-14 is the available level for a starting magus that specializes in that field.

That means that a player that selected to be a Corpus specialist can have his specialization in Corpus equaled by a non-specialist (or a specialist in another field) just reading a book for a year and a half of downtime.

Granted, he is likely to have some tricks up his sleeve (spells and Virtues) that make him more of a specialist in the field, but he can be equaled by say, the Ignem specialist in 2 years' time. After 6 years, it is quite likely that all the magi in the covenant could have a score of 12-15 in Corpus, while the specialist has managed to increase his score to perhaps 18. That's not such a big difference, really.

Suddenly, the character who started out as the specialist is no specialist anymore. This is a Bad Thing™.

This can be very frustrating for the player concerned. His character build and unique area of expertise in the *metagame* of the troupe has been suppressed by a single book that at first was a very positive addition to the covenant. And he has not even been able to get a lot out of that book, as his Corpus score was already fairly similar to the upper limit of the book.

What do we do then? Do we refuse or limit access to high level books in order to prevent player frustration? That does not represent a good option either. Good books are cool in themselves, and make for good features of a covenant. Meddling with the

## MODIFIED VIRTUES AND FLAWS

**Skilled Parens:** You have an additional Art at +5. You have 30 extra spell levels and 30 experience points to spend on abilities.

**Weak Parens:** You have just 60 experience points to spend on abilities and 90 spell levels. Suppress a +5 bonus from your Arts:

Reduce a +15 to +10

Reduce a +10 to +5

Or Reduce a +5 to 0.

Other Virtues and Flaws that affect the Arts remain the same. So you might have a +18 on a particular Art, choosing the option of +15 to Art and a Puissant bonus for it.

experience and book level rules falls out of the scope of this article as well, and they are fairly solid anyway (specially the experience rules).

However, what we can easily change is **character creation**. This is perhaps much easier than it sounds, and a simple test has shown that it speeds up character generation by a large margin. Character creation in **Ars Magica** is not especially easy or fast, so simplifying the process sounds positive. We'll see it in action, but first the rules.

## FIXED ARTS: RULES

According to the official rules a magus has 240 experience points that he has acquired through apprenticeship.

These 240 points can be invested in Abilities and Arts, and they suggest splitting them in a 50/50 basis between the two. We propose the following alternative system:

When you create a wizard, you have 120 XP to invest in abilities.

All Arts start at level 0 and you cannot invest experience in them during character creation.

Instead of dividing points between the various Arts of the magus, we

choose one of these options:

**Focused:** One Art at +15

**Specialist:** Two Arts at +10

**Generalist:** Eight Arts at +5

These bonuses work exactly like a Puissant Art with the difference that the bonus counts as part of your effective knowledge of the Art for everything except study.

So a +10 in Ignem allows you to write 2 tractatus, adds +2 to your soak for fire damage, and doubles if you cast a Pilum of Fire and you have a focus in flames.

However, when the magus uses a level 5 summa, he can still learn from it: his knowledge is visceral, intuitive, primeval, but not formal and structured and can still benefit from it since his Ignem score is 0.

This makes our sample focused wizard (Corpus) remain as the Corpus master in the covenant no matter what (or almost). All the magi start at Corpus 0, so he can learn as much from the Corpus summa as everybody else, with the added benefit that he will have a +15 on top of that.

None of his fellow magi will be able to reach the same level in corpus

without investing a lot more time and effort in acquiring the necessary experience to offset his +15 bonus.

As such, he can easily maintain his leading position in his field despite the efforts of other magi.

With this system of **Fixed Arts** magi will be more powerful in their area of expertise than under the standard system. It also makes magi develop somewhat faster in their area of expertise and makes the area of expertise of a magus remain constant throughout the saga (unless he does something radical like undergoing a major mystery cult initiation). The differences between magi remain throughout the saga even if they have access to exactly the same sources of experience points. This is the objective of this system and I think it can be a substantial improvement on the *metagame*.

Character creation also becomes much simpler, as it saves all the calculations to see if an extra Art point in X or Y can give you access to a certain spell. Now it tends to be more black or white: you either have the ability or do not, without the severe number crunching taking place. My gaming group despises this (even if it does it; talk about conflicted preferences) but I think it is better if the abilities of a magus and his access to a certain power level is clear cut. This tends to speed up the process of character creation as well and tends to create more focused wizards instead of the "yes, my mage is an Aquam specialist, but I have 10 spells from other Forms" syndrome.

Anyone that has not done this before or seen it in their gaming table can rise his hand and I will congratulate him. Now, magi are specialists or not, but do not become specialists-generalists at the same time: they now have a much clearer hermetic design.

## LIBRARY DESIGN

Another derivative of this approach is that it allows you to design a library without it being a Major ordeal.

Library design is one of the main drawbacks in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** in my opinion: according to the **Ars Magica** supplements, it is extremely rare for a covenant to have several books on a subject, or the 15

creating a situation where low level books (level 4-7) are useful to everybody, specialists included.

This improves the usefulness of a library. By giving breath to your specialists in their own Art, you can diversify the library a little with books of lower level. Everybody can use those books, and the magi will still walk in different directions in their studies. A level 7 Summa is suddenly very useful

**WITH THIS SYSTEM OF FIXED ARTS MAGI WILL  
BE MORE POWERFUL IN THEIR AREA OF  
EXPERTISE THAN UNDER THE STANDARD SYSTEM**

hermetic Arts covered by its library without investing massively in it. Even a covenant with 50 to 100 years of history behind itself has these issues. I can understand them not having *good* scores in a lot of subjects, but most presented covenants do not cover the full range of Hermetic magic.

This is strange since the training of apprentices requires a broad knowledge base and magi would be sure to have the resources to do that. Library construction as written (with some awesome books and a lot of subjects to be covered) has always seemed really weird to me. This is caused by the pricing of books at covenant creation (I consider this an OK feature, by the way) but when you invest in a good book for the specialists (like the sample Level 15 Quality 15 summa of our opening example) suddenly you are running out of points as well as affecting your own specialists negatively. Or even acquiring good specialist books that your specialists cannot use!

By starting all characters with a base of 0 in all Arts, you are effectively

for a specialist, while under the official system it would be useless to him. This system re-values the low and medium range books, something that can be positive.

The magical interests of the magi should remain more or less fixed over time, even with access to the same study materials. It makes magi develop faster and increases the power level slightly, but since **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** already has over-the-top power levels for magi, that is not a major issue; this is not really a new problem but rather a feature that is slightly increased. The advantages of this system are greater differentiation between magi and a faster character creation process based on a particular concept. I think it's a significant improvement of the official system without touching anything fundamental.

I hope you have enjoyed this first heresy and I have given pause. Cheers and until next time.



# THE BODY IN THE BOG

By DAVID AGNEW

Had the magi never wondered at the fine and fair weather their covenant enjoyed, or the fertility of their fields? Now that the body in the bog has been disturbed, they are about to discover the uncomfortable truth behind their good fortune.

This story is designed with a young covenant in mind, one that is only just starting to explore the area around them. It is nominally set in Hibernia, but the events can be transported to any Tribunal where preserved bog-bodies are likely to be found.

## PRÉCIS

While about their daily chores, the covenant labourers uncover a body in the boggy land just outside the covenant. Investigating, it becomes clear that the man was ritually murdered centuries ago.

Now disturbed, Ibor, the spirit of the murdered man rises. Enslaved in service to the people of his ancient lands, he has acted as an intermediary for the spirits of fertility, weather, good fortune, and strength in battle for all those years. Finding his people gone and his servitude all for nothing, he is enraged and breaks his bargains with the spirits he had bound through his sacrifice.

Reclaiming his body, the spirit stalks the covenant while outside a storm raised by the angered spirits damages the covenant to its foundations.

If the magi have already destroyed the body or its ghost, then the spirits that it was charged with controlling become the main focus of the story. Now freed from its control, they seek

revenge on those who bound them and the covenant's lands, people, and livestock are placed under threat.

The magi must find a way to quiet the spirits, either holding them to their original promises, or to defeat them somehow and convince them of the power of the new owners of the land.

## BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, without the protection of the Dominion, ancient peoples made sacrifices to the spirits in return for favour. These sacrifices



sometimes took the form of people ritually murdered at liminal places, places where the mundane world met the spirit world.

These human sacrifices were often unwilling prisoners, but there were cases of high-value willing sacrifices being made; individuals for whom being part of a bargain with the spirits or the gods was a duty and a responsibility.

Such sacrifices would often undergo multiple deaths, i.e. they would be symbolically killed in a number of ways, including being strangled, stabbed, drowned, and beaten. That individual would then be able to intercede with the spirits on behalf of his people, securing their aid.

It was not always people that would be sacrificed, of course. Food, drink, and livestock were frequently offered as were master-worked objects of beauty and value. Swords, other weapons, and jewellery were offered too, almost always also ritually killed in some way. A sword may have its blade bent, and a shield might be split before being buried or cast into the water.

The kinds of spirits that could be controlled or influenced in this way might be spirits to make the rain fall, spirits to grant a long growing season, spirits to ward off ill-health, and spirits to make the villagers strong in battle.

## IBOR, WILLING SACRIFICE

Ibor was a man of value and brother to his chief. His people, the *O'Dierma*, sacrificed one of their own once in a generation in order to secure favour from spirits of weather, health, fortune, and strength in battle. For more generations than their own counting, the spirits kept their side of the bargain — the sacrifice mediated and spirits provided.

Then the spirit of strength in battle was swayed by a druid of the *MacColl*. It broke the bargain and withheld its favour. The *O'Dierma* suffered an attack they could not resist and they were driven off their lands. The

*MacColl*, taking those lands, did not continue the sacrifice. Ibor, as the last of them, still waits to serve, unaware that his people are gone and he has endured centuries of pointless servitude.

Unaware of the prior betrayal, only when his resting place is disturbed do the spirits now consider the bargain broken.

## PROLOGUE: INTRODUCE THE LIBRARY

This scene is a reminder of the covenant's library and assumes that the covenant owns or has recently acquired one or more books on Infernal Lore. As written, it also assumes a librarian personality, although you can of course change to suit your own covenant. Later in the story there is the possibility of damage to these books in the library so it makes sense to foreshadow its involvement from the outset.

The librarian tries to catch the attention of one of the magi before explaining his concern over some of the books he has been cataloguing.

*"But I don't mind the other books," he explains, "because I don't understand them. They talk of philosophies that I can only wonder at, but I understand the meaning behind these books and I do not like them. They talk of unholy things, curses and demons, and the like. They should be removed, I tell you."*

When his pleas to have the infernal volumes removed fall on deaf ears, he departs shaking his head and insisting that, *"No good will come of it, meddling in things that man has no right to meddle in."*

If your saga has not yet defined its librarian, you can go ahead and use Gillespie. He is a young clerk of just twenty and selected by the covenant as he can both read and write Latin.

**Gillespie:** Age 24, Worrisome +3, Pious +2, Helpful +1

## SCENE 1: THE BODY IS FOUND

Start with the covenant's grogs: Some labourers are digging a new latrine away from the covenant buildings on instruction from one of the magi as the smell from the last carried too strongly near his sanctum for comfort. One of the players takes the role of poor dim Tully, while another one or two take the roles of grogs set to stand guard and make sure they get their work done. If you have any female grogs, then please do use them in this scene. The storyguide should take the role of Teague, a philosophical and lazy labourer who believes the world owes him far more than he is currently granted.

While Tully dutifully digs his ditch, Teague complains bitterly:

*"If these were such fine and educated wizards, why then do they not command the earth itself to open up for them? Or perhaps ask the spirits or the people who live under the ground to open a hole? I have seen nothing that tells me of their magic, not when they must instruct poor overworked honest men such as I and thee to pitch about with shovel and bucket. Instruct me? Instruct the good neighbours, I say, then might I see something in the line of magic."*

This labourer is a man called Teague. Not often ones to feature in stories, the roles of the lowly more often filled by grogs who tend to wear armour and carry weapons for a living, Teague and his colleague Tully represent the everyman who toil at the behest of magi who by rights should be able to do more with their magic than they do.

*"If I had magic then not a man would work a day in his life, as God is my witness. Not a man except those as can read, for those as can read do claim they work but in truth they simply scribble and record and other such pastimes that make no*



*demands upon the body. But for all men that toil in sacking, that must lift and carry, dig and drag, then all those shall be free from their burdens, and you may hold me to my word."*

If confronted on his views that if men shall not work then what about women, he replies:

*"Nay, not women. Women shall work, for do we not hear dawn to dusk and round again how a woman's work is never done? That is the natural order of things and I would not, upon my oath, interfere with the natural order of things."*

When ordered to keep his mind to his work and be back about it, he orders Tully onward while he has one further outburst:

*"Two days we have been about this work. And what thanks have we received for it? Not a one such word as 'how goodly and straight a ditch you do dig', not a one, not when he might say instead, 'what, not done yet?' or 'put your back into it' while he does observe from a cart-length distant."*

**Teague:** Age 30, Lazy +3, Philosophical +2, Outspoken +1

**Tully:** Age 24, Easily-Led +3, Slow-witted +3, Hardworking +2

Tully digs on into the peat until his shovel strikes something that isn't peat. It is less giving and stops the wooden shovel in its tracks.

Teague immediately takes that as a sign that the latrine is deep enough, **"Then we have dug as far as can dig and that means the day's labour is done. Pick up your tools and retire."**

But there's something under there. Scraping at it with the shovel clears away some residual peat to reveal some decayed cloth. It tears easily under the shovel to reveal what looks like old tanned leather.

As storyguide, don't feel obliged to read the Teague's dialogue word-for-word, but consider its content – Teague

## MALLON THE DRUID

Mallon found the spirits that the *O'Dierma* had bargained with and he approached the Spirit of Fortune in Battle, offering it some other sacrifice if the spirit withheld its favors from the *O'Dierma*. The greedy spirit agreed, but Mallon was a trickster. With the battle decided in the *MacColl's* favor, Mallon reneged on his deal. Unable to reveal that

is complaining at his lot and musing about what he would do if he had the power to do it, which is ultimately... not very much. The idea is to build some character here. Along with dull-witted Tully, expect Teague to be mentioned in more than passing by the players when the notion of human sacrifice is mentioned later in the story.

## SCENE 2: INVESTIGATING THE BODY

It is easy enough to uncover the body. If the magi come to the ditch, a simple Rego Terram Sight, Momentary, Part, level 10 spell (base 2, +3, +1) is all that is needed to uncover the body. Either that or another hour spent by the labourers.

The body is dressed in some kind of armour; leather covered with bronze rings. Much of the soft tissue has rotted away, leaving a naturally tanned hide. The skin has split here and there to reveal the bones beneath.

There is also a rope or cord around his neck.

Once the body is uncovered, the excavators find more grave goods buried along with the unfortunate man:

**A Bent Sword:** With a blade made of iron and a handle wound with bronze wire, the sword looks to be a masterwork.

**Broken Shield:** A wooden round shield with a central boss of bronze. It is wielded with a handle formed from the back of the central boss. One edge has been struck from it.

it had betrayed the *O'Dierma*, the spirit of Fortune in Battle remained silent for all these centuries.

However, it was no accident that Mallon himself was killed in battle, struck in the throat by an arrow loosed by one of his own people and apparently turned aside by the wind.

**A Golden Torc:** Perfectly preserved and not broken in any way, although the twisted golden rope is slightly dented as a result of being under ground for so long.

None of the items are inherently magical.

Closer examination of the body once out of the ground shows that he suffered a gruesome death, likely inflicted over some time. Firstly, there is the cord. It would once have been tight around his throat. Then there is the knife wound to his neck. He has also been struck across the head, breaking his skull. Lastly, there is the stab wound to his ribs, a wound that goes all the way through to his heart.

The four wounds and so the four deaths placate the four spirits that feature later in the story.

## WHAT DO THEY DO WITH THE BODY NOW?

A Christian burial is, frankly, too late; it has already been in the ground for centuries.

They may bring the body inside the covenant while they work out their next steps, or they may rebury it pretty much straight away (in which case Scene 5, below, does not take place).

## CAN THE MAGI TALK TO HIM?

You might want to adjudicate that the body is too decayed for *Whispers through the Black Gate*, although that is a

spell that even were the magi not to know between them they are likely to be able to achieve through Ceremonial Magic. However, the body can be used as an Arcane Connection to summon the man's spirit.

If they do manage to speak with either the body or the spirit, then they learn much of the back story straight away. They certainly learn the man's name, that he was a willing sacrifice, that he is one of the **O'Dierma**, that he bound the spirits to bring fortune to his people.

### SCENE 3: INVESTIGATING THE OLD WAYS

Assuming that the magi are not ultimately local to the area that they have settled in, they might ask some of the locals for their stories or remembrances of old events. Doing so is potentially quite enlightening.

They manage to find a couple of old -timers, probably fishing or just sitting out in the open quenching their day-long thirsts. These are Gharvin and Keefe, both in excess of 60 years. Gharvin is more prepared to talk about the old stories, while Keefe is more reticent. Treat them as though they both have Local Area Lore (History) of at least 6.

They say that the whole area used to be **O'Dierma** land, before the **MacColl** drove them out. They say it happened long ago, far before anyone alive could remember it, although the **O'Dierma** do bring it up from time to time (a reference to the generations-old blood feud that still defines **O'Dierma-MacColl** relations). Gharvin and Keefe are, of course, **MacColl** by lineage.

If asked directly about the sacrifice, then Gharvin says that there are all sorts of stories about it, but he is quite defensive on the part of the **MacColl** stating that they are all goodly Christian folk. Of course, it wasn't always that way. Back in the day, a **MacColl** druid named Mallon discovered the secret to

### IBOR, THE O'DIERMA SACRIFICE

**Magic Might:** 20 (Me)

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

**Size:** 0

**Season:** Autumn

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Magic Spirit; Magic Monster; Wealthy; Improved Characteristics (x2), Tough, Warrior; Magical Air, Oath of Fealty; Baneful Circumstances (day)

**Magical Qualities and Inferiorities:** No Fatigue; Improved Might x5, Improved Powers x3, Improved Soak, Lesser Power x3 (Claiming the Mortal Coil, Donning the Corporeal Veil, Invisibility)

**Personality Traits:** Angry +3, Brave +3, Vengeful +3

**Reputations:** Angry spirit in the swamp 2 (local)

**Combat:**

*Fist:* Init +3, Attack +4, Defense +7, Damage +2

*Longsword:* Init +5, Attack +10, Defense +12, Damage +8

*Shortbow:* Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +8, Damage +8

*Thrown Dagger:* Init +3, Attack +6, Defense +8, Damage +4

**Soak:** +12 (chain mail shirts, or fuller leather armor)

**Fatigue Levels:** None.

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11+) (no incapacitating or kill wounds)

**Abilities:** Athletics 4 (sprinting), Awareness 4 (the living), Area Lore: Hibernia 4 (farmlands), Bows 4 (shortbow), Brawl 4 (dodge), Bargain 4 (spirits), Carouse 3 (jokes), Dead Language: Gaelic 5 (commands), Dead Language: Latin 3 (commands), Etiquette 3 (spirits), Faerie Lore 5 (creatures), Folk Ken 3 (spirits), Guile 3 (nonverbal), Hunt 3 (deer), Leadership 3 (maintaining a household), Single Weapon 5 (longsword), Stealth 3 (keeping hidden), Thrown Weapon 4 (dagger)

**Powers:**

*Invisibility*, 0 points, Init -7, Imaginem

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

Ibor becomes invisible when he wishes, but can still be seen by Second Sight. PeIm 15 (Base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 moving image): Lesser Power (25 levels, -5 Might

cost)

*Claiming the Mortal Coil*, 0 points, Init -7, Corpus

R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

Ibor can animate a corpse and cause it to look like him. ReCo 25 (Base 10, +1 Touch, +2 Sun); Lesser Power (25 Levels, -5 Might cost)

*Donning the Corporeal Veil*, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus

See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102

Ibor can assume material form. Lesser Power; Improved Power (-5 Might cost)

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Vis:** There are four pawns of Mentem in Ibor's strangulating cord, but only when he's destroyed.

**Appearance:** Ibor manifests as a ghostly pale man in the prime of his strength, although one who has been wounded terribly. He has a cord wound tight around his neck, just above a vicious slash from left to right, a visible stab wound over his heart, and his hair on the back of his head is matted with blood. None of these wounds seems to impair him, though.

**Design Notes:** Ibor is built as a base shade with 15 Might, adjusted through his Qualities and Inferiorities. If the SG wishes to make Ibor weaken with each body he animates, then increase the Might cost of Claiming the Mortal Coil and Donning the Corporeal Veil. For each point the powers cost, increase the power's initiative modifier by 1. If the combined powers are increased a total of 5 points, then do not increase initiative, but give Ibor the Improved Soak quality again and increase his soak to +14.

**Notes:** If any of the scenes above are searched, then the players find a bronze ring from his armour, likely torn from him in the fight or his flight.



the *O'Dierma's* good fortune. He made a deal with one of the spirits that they had bound through blood, breaking the *O'Dierma's* sacrifice.

They don't know what became of Mallon. As to the *O'Dierma*... They were driven off the land by the *MacColl* following a battle.

If this event takes place after the downpour (described below), then the old-timers ask about that frightful rain. It seems not to have overly bothered the village, but the storm seemed to be fierce enough.

## SCENE 4: THE DOWNPOUR

As the sun goes down, a deluge opens up. The rain falls so hard that it actually starts to damage crops. Before long, the ground is sodden and the covenant is at risk from flooding. The following vignettes can be thrown in:

**Crops:** One of the farmers calls out that the fields are being washed clean

**Livestock:** Livestock breaking loose from their pens - they are being frightened by the storm

**Covenant buildings:** The roofs letting in water, servants rushing with pans to catch it

**The library:** As it is on the ground floor, there is a risk of damage to the books. The librarian makes the danger known and calls for help in protecting the books, likely referencing those infernal texts he was so concerned about.

Remember, the rain itself is natural, but observation of the skies sees that clouds from all around are being drawn towards the covenant. Something is causing the clouds to behave unnaturally.

## SCENE 5: THE SPIRIT OF IBOR RETURNS

Whether the body is removed or not, the act of disturbing the body has awoken Ibor's spirit. Unless already

summoned and bound within a circle or some other ward, Ibor appears within the covenant at the site of his body, using the body as a means to cross through.

The scene ends with his recapture, his body's destruction, or his escape.

There are three set-pieces to this scene:

## THE ESCAPE FROM THE CHAMBER

Who is set to guard the body? Whoever it is, they are guarding the room and then they hear something move. Looking around, they realize that the body is missing. However, it is still in the room with them. Ibor attacks, pushing one into the other and attempting to make his escape. He needs to successfully break from the combat in order to escape. This means, the first round is his (ambush) attack, and the next he decides to go all-out defense.

## THE ESCAPE IN THE COURTYARD

He manages to reach the courtyard, his leathery skin and old bones surprisingly swift. Have another one or two grogs outside. There are some barrels stacked against the wall. If the storm is still in full swing, any grogs or magi present may be focused on the damaging rain. However, they see him! He intends to evade again, so with grogs behind and others ahead, he takes to the barrels and up to the roof. He needs one round to leap to the barrels, another to leap to the roof, and another to run clear over and outside the covenant. To prevent him, the players need to confound him somehow. This might be charging either him or the barrels before he gets to them, trying to grab him before he gets on the roof, or catching him before he leaves the roof.

Players need to make increasingly difficult Dexterity + Athletics rolls in order to stop him: 12+, 15+, 18+

## FLEEING THE COVENANT

As Ibor makes it over the roof, there is a crash of thunder overhead, accompanied by a spear of lightning that strikes in the courtyard. Any present needs to roll D10. On a 1-3 they are within the blast area and they are thrown from their feet.

Those who follow over the roof (make a Dexterity + Athletics vs 9+) see Ibor heading away from the covenant and up the hillside.

## SCENE 6: FALLING ILL

In the morning after the deluge, some of the covenfolk have fallen ill with pneumonia (see below).

If the covenant is not fully protected by an Aegis, then this includes grogs and servants that attend on the magi.

### Pneumonia

Serious Phlegmatic Disease, Severity 9

**Stable:** 6, **Improve:** 12, **Interval:** Week

This inflammation of the lungs is diagnosed by the presence of blood or choler in the sputum. It is caused by polluted air (Contra-Natural). Pneumonia has a tendency to exhibit a Crisis on the seventh day. Treatment is typically bleeding to reduce the excess fluid, and drying compresses applied to the chest.

**Symptoms:** Acute pain in the chest, quotidian fever. The afflicted character is also reduced to the Winded Fatigue level until he improves. At the Major stage of the disease, the victim suffers from the Enfeebled Flaw in place of the Disease Penalty

Magi should make Disease Avoidance Rolls versus 6+

### Disease Avoidance roll:

**Stamina + Living Conditions**  
**Modifier +**

**(Corpus/5) + Wound Penalty + stress die**



## SCENE 7: POOR FORTUNE

In the evening following on from the sickness being discovered, the librarian reports a blight creeping into the books. If using his introduction scene as presented above, he blames the infernal books mentioned earlier.

There is no damage now as far as book Level or Quality are concerned, but every week that passes without the spirit being appeased means that a book chosen at random from the library loses a point of Quality. In the event of a Laboratory Text, impose a five-level penalty to it.

## SCENE 8: ARGUMENTS

The morning following on from the poor fortune with the books, against Penetration +15, individuals are affected with rampant opinions or emotions that make them quarrelsome, causing arguments and even fights.

The magi first notice a commotion out in the courtyard.

Unless dealt with, the arguments turn into fist fights. Only those who have entered from outside the Aegis are affected, however.

## SCENE 9: THE CAPTURED IBOR

If the covenant captures Ibor, they can interrogate this living bog-body to find out what's going on.

Now that Ibor is free from his servitude, he wants his revenge on those who left him so long. His service was for a generation but he has been under the ground for centuries. He wants to be free. But he does admit that he was a willing sacrifice, murdered so that he could control the spirits and ensure the prosperity of his people. The spirits will not be placated until the sacrifice is renewed.

Ibor can take the magi to a place where the spirits are strong, as per the next scene, but only does so under compulsion or promise of freedom.

## SCENE 10: FINDING THE REGIO

If Ibor escapes and is tracked, his tracks lead out into the hills surrounding the covenant and then they vanish.

If Ibor is destroyed before he can escape or is otherwise prevented from leaving the covenant, the magi may be able to track the source of the magical effects assaulting the covenant back to a central point. Accessing the level 5 magical regio from the mundane world follows the usual rules.

Alternatively, if the magi are young and likely to be frustrated through a lack of the right spell or device, then have them find the entrance to a tunnel barrow, long since overgrown and now simply part of the landscape. Exposing the entrance allows the magi to walk through the cramped tunnel. When they do so, they exit out into a domed barrow chamber; the inside of the regio.

Inside the regio, there is a throne surrounded by armour, weapons, treasures, food and drink, and fresh flowers. These are the grave goods



buried with generations of sacrifices. In fact, these were the spiritual representations of those goods rather than the items themselves, but they are physical in the regio. If removed, they crumble to nothing. Entering the regio again reveals them to be in-situ.

If Ibor managed to escape, then this is where he can be found. However, the spirits consider, with his disturbance and lack of replacement sacrifice, that the bargain has been broken. They have him pinned to the ground, separated from his sword and shield. In this place, he appears as he did on the point of death, with each of his wounds fresh and glistening.

If Ibor is destroyed or otherwise inaccessible (they may have reburied him, for instance) then the spirits themselves can lead the characters to the regio. Either the rain, the illness, the rot on the books, or any wound caused as the result of a magically-induced argument can be used as an Arcane Connection in order to track the spirits. Using an arcane connection to remotely view the place does reveal the inside of the barrow and may, depending on the troupe and/or storyguide, provide enough information to provide a course the magi can follow to reach its entrance.

The spirits attempt to defend their domain.

## THE SPIRITS

The four spirits are:

**Weather:** Brings the Storm

**Health:** Brings illness

**Fortune:** Causes the books to rot

**Battle:** Causes arguments among the covenfolk

Each has 15 Might and each has three main powers:

**Eidolon:** The ability to take a physical form

**Give Fortune:** The ability to give the element or favour associated with the spirit

**Take Fortune:** The ability to remove or withhold the element or favour associated with the spirit

In the case of powers affecting individuals or groups, each power has a Penetration of +15. This covers powers that promote or remove harmony from individuals or those that deal with health, and even those that promote luck and fortune.

Of course, they need to act through the Aegis if they can so some of the symptoms may not affect the covenant straight away.

## SCENE II: CONFRONTING THE SPIRITS

If the spirits are summoned (any of them), then they demand tribute in the form of a sacrifice. If Ibor is still around then they can go through the ritual again, although he is unwilling this time around. Or they could find another unfortunate. Or they could blast the spirits apart. Or find another accommodation. The storyguide should adjudicate any bargain or threats made. In particular, if the betrayal of the spirit of Fortune in Battle is revealed, the spirits accept *him* as a sacrifice; he becomes powerless and simply serves to bind the bargain once more in favour of the covenant.

If a deal is reached, then the illness stops, as do any arguments, as does the torrential rain and any blight in the library.

In order to summon the spirits, the magus needs to cast a Base 15 spell at Arcane Connection range. If the duration is Momentary, the spirit is not compelled to stay. The effect must penetrate, of course.

The magus could summon the spirit into a circle/ring ward and that would keep it in place.

An example summoning spell is this:

## Summoning the Spirit of Fire

ReIg 40

R: Arcane, D: Conc, T: Ind

Calls a fiery spirit if the magus has an Arcane Connection or knows its full name, and overcomes the spirit's Magic Resistance. (The name can be a non-magical name; it need not be a magical true name or name of power). A fire serves as an Arcane Connection to any elemental fire spirit that resides in the area.

(Base 15, +4 Arcane, +1 Conc)

That summons a spirit of fire. Any Arcane Connection can be used. For the rain spirit, any part of any puddle left by it can be used, as can the rain constantly falling from the sky. For illness, any sick individual under its power, etc.

The spell does need to Penetrate, of course.

So the magus effectively needs to cast the spell (level 40) and then Penetrate. The Arcane Connection could help.

## HELP AT HAND

Assuming that the covenant facing this trial is a young covenant, they may need help. It is worth seeding the potential for help up at the beginning of the story. Perhaps a book returned from a friendly covenant, or a book borrowed recently arrived. Either way, remind the young magi that they are young and that they cannot be expected to know everything; they have allies should they need them.

Of course, you should then ensure that the friendly covenant has casting tablets (as per the *Covenants* supplement) to hand so that the player magi may retain their agency in the story.

# DESIGNING THE INTANGIBLE ASSASSIN

Inspired by Mark Lawford's articles on two of the arch-types presented in *Hermetic Projects*, the Hermetic Shipwright and Architect (Sub Rosa issues 10 and 11, respectively), we would now like to offer some thoughts on another archetype from this tome, the Intangible Assassin.

We offer thoughts, suggestions and observations, nothing more. We hope to inspire, not dictate character development. Especially because this concept has such a huge potential for spreading out in curious specializations and benefit from doing so.

## IDENTIFYING THE END GOAL

As discussed in *Hermetic Projects* the Intangible Assassin is a character build around the use of Arcane Connections to cast the spell Opening the Intangible Tunnel and it's derivatives, as well as spells to use through these created Tunnels. We will specifically be focusing on using these effects for destructive purposes, though we hope to include a small section for beneficial uses as well. We must also refer the interested reader to chapter 5

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of the *Hermetic Projects* book as we will be using effects designed therein and do not wish to replicate them here.

## DISCUSSIONS

Certain things have to be given due thought and considerations before we embark on actually designing this character. This will help us make informed choices and help us understand why some choices have to



SUB ROSA



## EXEMPLI GRATIA: HOUSE

### OCTAVIANUS

In this design we chose House Guernicus because of the interesting potential of a Quaesitor as an assassin. We'll call this magus Octavianus. Also, this is perhaps not the most obvious choice when **Ars Magica** players think of the Intangible Assassin concept. The tendency of the Quaesitores to focus on truth-telling through the Intangible Tunnel. Investigative Vim spells are also a staple of this House so not only can the Guernicus network provide reading materials, it is not even suspicious for this magus.

### RAGNA

For this concept we choose a Bjornaer maga and go for the stealthy approach to AC collection with a raven as Heartbeast. We will call her Ragna. We also intend to take advantage of the communal teaching of apprentices in the sept, at least before they undergo the Gathering of the Twelve Years, and intend for said apprentices to fix ACs as to not waste the time of our maga. A less tangible but still potentially useful synergy from choice of House. Clan Midusulf seems the likely choice for an aggressive Bjornaer maga.

having to kill your friends.

## By STEALTH

This approach involves things like hiding and following your target, gaining access to his person or possessions without his knowledge. Perhaps a few hairs from a comb or his used clothes could be stolen? The drawbacks of this approach is that it is time consuming and not very dignified. In an RPG-context it also has the drawback of likely demanding a lot of solo-play, thus annoying the rest of your troupe.

## By SOCIAL PRESSURE

Hermetic Projects mentions obtaining arcane connections via certamen (page 91). Another way of doing this will be discussed below.

## By AGENTS

This is the big one. You don't actually have to collect these arcane connections yourself. In fact it is often beneficial to not do so. Let others do the hard work for you. Classical uses of this approach involve hiring random thugs to assault your target (probably while traveling) in hopes that at least one of them will draw blood that you can gather after the battle, or infiltrating the household of your target. The latter can mean planting someone loyal to you in a hostile covenant or it could mean suborning someone already present in your target's environment, be it by magic or more mundane means.

This is by no means a complete list, but merely represents a collection of methods for consideration.

## BUILDING THE MAGUS

Both of the above mentioned articles discuss great and focused enchanters. Magi that require huge lab totals and very high scores in Magic Theory to handle all the Vis they need for their projects.

be made or avoided, respectively. Each major element of the character design is first discussed in general before we make our choices.

Since we are two authors we have chosen to collaborate on the general discussion but to design one example magus each, to better showcase the different concepts.

## ARCANE CONNECTIONS

Essential to this way of waging war is the Arcane Connection. Something which is a part of your subject - or so strongly connected with your subject that for mystical purposes, it is indeed a part of the subject. One major consideration for this concept - indeed perhaps the most central one - is how you see the character collecting these Arcane Connections to his enemies. Some sample approaches to collecting arcane connections are presented here.

### By FORCE

Since we have already mentioned magic, this will be physical force. Readers familiar with Houses of Hermes: Societates may recall the schools of Ramius and Vilano. The school of Ramius focuses on using mundane weapons because these are not resisted by Parma Magica (nor other sources of Magic Resistance). And cutting your enemy with a sword largely guarantees that a residue of blood will be left on the sword. Blood that will serve as an excellent arcane connection. The weakness of this approach is of course that it is unsubtle and likely to earn you ill will from the rest of the Order - and that if you can expect to stick a sword into your opponent, why not simply finish the job in the same way? The school of Vilano can be thought of as combining the school this approach with the previous one. Essentially Magical force.

### By CHARM

We're not talking about magic here. If you can mind-control your target into giving you an arcane connection, why would you need one in the first place? Rather, we're taking about skulduggery and pretending to be a friend. Or perhaps actually being a friend, but preparing for the worst, including

### By MAGIC

This is the approach given the most space in Hermetic Projects, pages 86-91, for obvious reasons. These methods have their own problems, mainly those of penetration and legality. And as discussed in Hermetic Projects both can be overcome in certain ways.

This is not what we will see here. The Intangible Assassin is more worried about penetration and as such favors spells of low levels. Thus Magic theory becomes much less of a focus, where as the Penetration ability (and it's adversary Parma Magica) will be of much greater interest.

## HOUSE

Since we are not focusing on enchanting, the choice of hermetic house is much less obvious than in the inspiring articles mentioned above. Indeed an Intangible Assassin of house Verditius would likely focus on recreating these effects via devices and

as such look much more like e.g. the hermetic architect. But that's a discussion for a later time, it is not that character we will be looking at here.

Thus the choice of house becomes much more one of taste than of necessity. But of course some houses are still perhaps a better fit than others. For the Intangible Assassin, the House is less about raw ability and more about style and how to approach the problem of collecting arcane connections. The choice could depend on useful House Virtues, and even though many houses offer Puissance with an Art or useful Ability this is of less use to the Assassin because he needs a 'two-stage rocket' to

work his methods. No House offers unique mechanical benefits. Another factor might be how members of a given house is likely to think of a target and thus how to prosecute either a Wizard's War or even an out-right assassination.

A few suggestions are offered below:

## BJORNAER

A magus of this house has one major advantage when using the Stealth approach. The ability to take the shape of a specific animal and be secure in the knowledge that no hermetic magic can distinguish the magus from any ordinary animal of this type. A wolf-bjornaer could combine this with the forceful approach, while a bird-bjornaer might simply pretend to be particularly obnoxious about collecting for a nest. Of course, if your enemy knows he is your enemy, he will likely be able to learn of your heart-beast and take precautions against all beasts of that kind. Still, it's a place to start. The closely knit organization of the Bjornaer septs is also something to consider utilizing. Bjornaer magi can have many good reasons to want to kill, many political issues to defend and a tradition for doing this brutally.

## GUERNICUS

Here's a magus who can use social pressure like almost no-one else. A charge of code violation can likely get him into your sanctum and who knows what he's picking up while looking through your things for signs of diabolism or book-theft or what-ever-have-you. Even better if he states at the outset that "Personally I don't believe a word of it, but I've been asked to investigate. Yeah I know it's a bother, sorry about that, just doing my duty." Along with house Tremere, the member of this house are perhaps the most likely to study their target before engaging in violence. With the risk of unintentionally shattering the illusions of anyone, not all magi Guernici can be trusted to be infallible, honest, and





truthful. This is only one possible interpretation, varying from saga to saga. And a less honest and law abiding Quaesitor can become an efficient Intangible Assassin.

## JERBITON

Magi of this house are likely to use Charm and deception as their approach, quite possibly even layered, like paying a harlot to get close to the target “it doesn’t matter if he rejects you, I will pay in gold for a single hair off his head!” while cloaked in disguises so that she doesn’t know who she’s working for. A fine example of this is Imanitos Mendax from The Guardians of the Forest.

## TREMERE

Abusing certamen to obtain an arcane connection to a target was probably written for this house, but suffers from one near-fatal flaw. Who in their right mind would actually have a certamen with a Tremere if it can be avoided? As the rules and conventions for certamen stands refusing a certamen challenge is tantamount to admitting defeat and that you are wrong in the matter. This however is not very useful to a Tremere Assassin so trivial matters should not warrant challenges. But nor should matters so great as to attract undue attention, as this risks tipping off the intended victim and his allies. However, if there’s one house that understands the value of minions and

loyalty, it is house Tremere. As such they are probably most likely to use agents - and to recognize what member of your household could be suborned for his purposes. And who would suspect a Tremere of harboring murderous intentions just because he’s studying the strengths and weaknesses of a fellow magus? Bearing in mind the current edition’s definition of this house, that is. Scientia est Potentia after all! Nor should anyone be surprised that a magus of house Tremere is studying Rego and a few select other Arts.

## TYTALUS

The only house were a member might include an arcane connection to himself with the declaration of Wizard’s

## EXEMPLI GRATIA: CHARACTERISTICS

### OCTAVIANUS

Characteristics are not really central to Octavianus’ concept. So he got a bit of a smattering. Intelligence for calculating horoscopes and for being generally smart. Communication for being able to talk with other magi, combined with low Presence to be forgettable – but not presence so low as to be downright unpleasant. No deep thoughts went into these, because characteristics just aren’t that important.

### RAGNA

The characteristics choices for a Bjornaer maga require more thought than for other houses since they affect the values for Heartbeast shape (Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults, page 23 ). They matter the most when Ragna is gathering ACs, a good Perception, Dexterity, and Quickness is prioritized. However as this is likely to be done in animal form, it is the animal’s characteristics which matter, affected to a minor degree by the human’s scores. If both human and animal’s scores are positive we use the higher one. As a natural raven has positive scores for Perception,

Quickness, and Dexterity there is no reason to ‘waste’ the human shape’s characteristic points here, unless we can exceed the animal’s scores.

In the opposite end of the spectrum the rule is that if both scores are negative we use the lower one. Otherwise one uses the sum of the two values. So as we don’t want Ragna’s Heartbeast to be weaker than the natural raven we take care to avoid this, and even have room for some dump-stats. Yes, tragically we stoop this low! But the intent is to showcase an efficient build, and don’t tell me you’ve never designed a magus with negative Str!

A raven would typically have Per +2, Pre -2, Com 0, Str -7, Stm 0, Dex +1, Qik +5. Cun is irrelevant as the human value for Int is always used. The choices made for human characteristics may change these. Even though in raven shape Ragna can speak with other ravens, it requires good social skills and patience to use dumb birds to important work, hence Pre and Com is not important, in either form. Although we did assume the Bjornaer magi teach their sept members so if there are points to spare we may put them here. Blatantly abusing the system we go for a Human Pre of -2 for no net change to the Raven Pre, freeing up 3 additional characteristic points. A Human

Str of -3 has no effect on the Raven Str. Human Stm of +3 results in a Raven Stm of +3 as well, useful when we want to cast a spell. This min-maxing evens out, we still have 10 points to spend. A Human Dex of more than +1 and Human Per of more than +2 is needed to affect Raven Dex and respectively. We need to ask ourselves whether we want or need such high values for human form. Per may be useful to avoid enemies sneaking up on you, but also the more expensive characteristic to buy. Dex is less useful, we don’t intend to do much sneaking about as a human or crafting items, so this seems a waste, even though the Raven intends to rely on stealth. A Human Per of +3 is chosen due to being most useful overall, for an expenditure of 6 characteristic points, leaving 4. Qik is so high that any positive change is impossible, and since this is not important for human shape either a 0 is enough. Int is used in both shapes and while usually important for magi the great effect on lab totals is negligible, but Int +2 costs 3 points. Which brings us back to Human Com which may as well be granted the last point.

To sum characteristics up, we end with: Int +2, Per +3, Pre -2, Com +1, Str -3, Stm +3, Dex 0, Qik 0

War, just to give you a sporting chance, of course. Or they might not. It all depends on what sort of challenge they are looking for. Fortunate, they might also well be the house most likely to declare war on you and let you live. To provide a challenge another day. Having the Self Confident virtue can be a nice and flexible joker, to turn the tables at an opportune moment. However if a significant Penetration Multiplier is achieved even a +6 modifier has less impact. Plus, Confidence is an exhaustible resource.

## FLAMBEAU

As a House known for fighting ability the Flambeau deserve mention, but there is no particular synergy with their House Virtues nor with their archetypical personalities and ethos. In fact their tendency towards noble actions and fair fights can be a hindrance to the garbage-rooting and kill-from-the-shadows Assassin. That said noble does not equal stupid, and the 5th edition interpretation should not rob them completely of their legacy from previous editions as efficient warriors.

## CHARACTERISTICS

We won't be focusing on characteristics. Intelligence is used for lab totals, but these can be surprisingly low for this type of character. Stamina adds to both casting totals and soak but the advantage is fairly slim. Stamina should not be ignored entirely but probably isn't worth focusing on. More important is how you obtain Arcane Connections to your opponent and a wide variety of characteristics might be of use here, in particular Perception, Dexterity, Presence and/or Communication. Certainly a decent communication can help you limit your pool of enemies so that's always a decent investment. When designing an Assassin a choice needs to be made between min-maxing for focus in one field, or to take a broader approach.

## VIRTUES

Previous design articles stated that magi can have no more than 5 minor virtues, however this limit is for minor flaws only. This aside, some virtues are obviously more useful than others for this character concept.

## MAJOR

Flawless Formulaic Magic takes the prize as most useful major hermetic virtue here. Spell mastery is extremely useful in the 5th edition and is a potential point-sink, so getting the first level for free and then doubling all XPs dedicated to this purpose is extremely useful. Useful Masteries include Penetration Mastery, Multi-casting and Resistance Mastery, as well as certain other tricks that are more specific to certain spells. Flawless Magic doubles all experience for spell mastery so Independent Study is particularly useful in combination with this as it adds 2 to

Source Quality when practicing spells.

Flexible Formulaic Magic has been suggested for this purpose as well, but since any spell with a range of Touch or greater (*Hermetic Projects*, page 79) can be used via the Intangible Tunnel, this becomes much less useful. A single argument towards this virtue is the flexibility of knowing most spells at R: Touch for use through Tunnels and still being able to boost them to a greater range if need be. Plus they are easier and faster to invent by being lower level. However note the spell Evil Eye from *Hermetic Projects* which in a way removes this potential advantage.

Seemingly useful major virtues like Elemental Magic or Secondary Insight may very well grant additional experience in one Art when studying another, however this pales in comparison with the benefits of spell mastery.

## EXEMPLI GRATIA: VIRTUES

### OCTAVIANUS

Flawless Magic is taken as our Major Hermetic Virtue without question. Almost all of our remaining virtues go into affinity/puissant virtues for Parma Magica, Penetration and Vim. This character will be overly specialized.

### RAGNA

Again Flawless Magic is taken as our Major Hermetic Virtue without question. Independent Study boosts this considerably for quick mastery of spells. In addition we choose Apt Student, finding it likely that the Bjornaer sept members teach each other to a higher degree than other magi, instead of using books. This will boost Arts and Abilities over time. Minor Magical Focus (Creating Fire & Acid Burns) gives a significant boost to the maga's killing power effects and is shamelessly chosen. Seeing as 'Damage' is a Major Focus this seems like a fair design, limited to narrow and specific effects under Creo Aquam

and Creo Ignem respectively. We hope Puissant Stealth and Puissant Awareness becomes a boon in the long run for procuring ACs. To boost Penetration we take Puissance with it but forgo Affinity. Affinities are without doubt useful however this is mostly true in the long run. For short term benefits Puissance is preferable. This is because we need one final minor Virtue: Inoffensive with Mundane Animals (*House of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 86-87) to blend in with other birds and animals and not stand out. We don't give a hoot about how obnoxious we may seem to any other beings, even humans – the trick is to avoid these. For shapeshifters all applicable Virtues and Flaws from human shape affect the animal shape as well, Social being the obvious exception. All Virtues chosen affect Ragna's animal shape as well.

We do not want or need any Virtues for reducing voice and gesture penalties when in animal form. Few if any spells are needed here, and Mastery can take care of it nicely then.



## EXEMPLI GRATIA: FLAWS

### OCTAVIANUS

The Restriction, Susceptibility and the Lame flaw are really here to illustrate a point. This type of character can usually choose his own location when attacking and is not particularly dependent on physical defences (like dodge). Sure, he'll have to go on investigations every once in a while and these flaws might limit him there, but for his focus of magical warfare, these are surprisingly irrelevant. The enemy and obsession are there to explain why a member of house Guernicus has gone down this fairly dark road: he's a classical archtype popularized in many movies, the cop-turned-vigilante, who is focusing on "Justice not Law" and hope to keep himself safe by investigating his own misdeeds. Thus finally leading to the last flaw, which is a joke of justice being not blind but one-eyed.

### RAGNA

We immediately go for a whopping 3 major flaws to avoid dithering around with minor ones. Even though the Virtue choices mention we are most definitively not creating a people person we still avoid Blatant Gift since only reactions by animals is affected by the cleverly chosen Virtue. When we sneak into a sanctum of a magus for an AC, or raid the clothesline we don't want to stand out like demonspawn to the covenfolk. Chaotic Magic is chosen since we intend to use choice formulaic spells, abilities in Heartbeast form, and avoid spontaneous magic except for rare occasions where we hope weak spells are sufficient. Also, a little risk is also fun! We also take Deficient Perdo to try and work around direct destruction. For Story Flaw we go for Servant of the Forest; Ragna was saved by an ancestral spirit and is bound to protect this wild domain. To round it off we go for minor personality flaw Hatred, specified against those to defile the natural areas. We now have a motivated Wilderist.

## MINOR

Again we can shift our focus away from the multitude of excellent virtues for lab rats. While Adept Lab Student can ease the process of inventing new spells, provided lab texts can be procured, this may be unlikely for highly specialized or non-standard parameter spells, and may not be worth it. Also, since most spells to be used for this sort of character are of rather low levels, lab totals become less important. Instead we focus our attention on virtues that provide an advantage for casting spells or resisting the same. Especially worthy of attention are Puissance and Affinity with Parma Magica and Penetration respectively. These both provide a bonus that will then be multiplied before applying to your relevant total.

Some troupes discourage Puissant Parma Magic. Please check with your troupe before using this.

Other options include Method Caster or Special Circumstances, for a small bonus to casting totals. For building a strong magus the Unholy Trinity of Book Learner, Free Study and Independent Study are recommended for raking in those bonus experience points As they keep on giving they are more efficient in the long run than Skilled Parens or the various virtues granting 50 exp for a specific group of abilities. Apt Student is also useful for maximizing the fruits of study, but requires finding a suitable teacher.



## MAGICAL FOCUS

But why haven't we mentioned Magical Focus at all. Shouldn't every magus have a magical focus? No. The problem is that you will almost always have to cast a mix of spells. As a bare minimum you will be casting a ReVi effect based on Opening the Intangible Tunnel and at least one other spell to affect your target. These will both need to penetrate. It will be very hard to stick both of these effects under the same focus, and a magus can only ever have a single magical focus, regardless of source. For a similar (but more aesthetically pleasing) effect, look to

Potent Magic from *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, pages 31-32. Also, it is tedious when all magi are forced to have the same virtue, is it not? An efficient build may utilize a minor focus covering his Intangible Tunnel spells potentially lowering the necessary levels needed in Arts for this and freeing experience points for the Technique-Form combinations needed for the killing spells. The other argument against the magical focus being that while the virtue exists to grant each magus a mechanical bonus for using a consistent "flavor", using it with every magus makes it dull and boring, thus defeating the very purpose of the virtue itself.

## FLAWS

Nothing springs to mind as particularly suited for this concept, save of course that every magus should have a story flaw, preferably major. After all, a person who would dedicate so much of his life to the study of how to kill from a distance is likely to have a few enemies, surely? And speaking of which, a personality flaw or two wouldn't come amiss either, be it founded in arrogance and pride or ungratefulness. And perhaps a secretive streak as well. Deficiencies need to be carefully chosen as to not ruin certain approaches, however it can also pose an interesting

## EXEMPLI GRATIA: ABILITIES

### OCTAVIANUS

Some attention should probably be paid here, and indeed more XPs have been spent on Abilities than on either Arts or Spells. The Ability set can be roughly divided into three groups:

- Basic Wizard Needs
- Quasitor Needs
- Intangible Assassin Needs.

But as well shall see, this division is partially false.

All magi need Magic Theory, Latin and Artes Liberales. And these are typically kept low for starting magi, to save XPs, which we have also done here. But we have picked astrology as the specialty for Artes Liberales, because Octavianus plans to create horoscopes for his targets, to increase penetration. We also note that Magic Theory is kept to a score of only 3 – the bare minimum – but specialized in inventing spells.

Abilities such as Awareness, Folk Ken, Guile, Code of Hermes and Order of Hermes Lore are extremely useful, possibly even down right necessary for investigators. But many of these are also extremely useful for locating and collecting Arcane Connections to targets.

Finally we come to the abilities essential to the Intangible Assassin, mostly Parma

Magica and Penetration – abilities that could just as well have been placed under Basic Wizard Needs. Both have stacked Affinity and Puissant, for maximum resistance and penetration – in particular, we want a nice, high penetration skill, to really benefit from those penetration multipliers. We also note that Parma Magica starts fairly high, but since Octavianus has an affinity with this ability, we feel that this is entirely justified.

### RAGNA

Early Childhood Abilities are usually not difficult to select - but they are in this case. Again referring to (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 23) when in animal shape no General Abilities (apart from languages and lores) from human shape are usable, instead the animal's natural values are used. Arcane, Academic, and Supernatural Abilities are usable, but none of these are normally available at this stage, without Virtues. For Bjornaer magi Heartbeast Ability and House Bjornaer Lore fit these categories but these are not learned within the character's first 5 years. In effect all abilities chosen here are useless when in animal form if not chosen wisely. A notable exception is Area Lore which is readily available during childhood, usable in animal form, and also potentially useful in a fight or search for an enemy, so [Area A] Lore 3 and [Area B] Lore 2.

That was 45 of our total of 480 experience points spent. Of these we also need 120 spell levels and about 120 points on Arts, leaving us with 195 for remaining Abilities. Give and take, depending on how Arts are best optimized. The most basic package for a magus uses 90 of these on Artes Liberales 1, Latin 4, Magic Theory 3, and Parma Magica 1. We also need House Bjornaer Lore 1 for another 5 points, to cover the knowledge and dedication to the cult needed to initiate the first outer mystery of the Heartbeast. Heartbeast ability itself is gained for free with a score of 1 from the House Virtue, while Dead Language: Gothic is skipped as it is only important for rituals and Clan Ilfetu.

So 100 points for fun and games. Social skills we don't want, Stealth and Awareness we use in Heartbeast form. As a note for further progression, spending seasons in animal forms for the better part allows Practice or the spending of Story Experience on the General Abilities we use, and Independent Study Virtue enhances this even further. And we shouldn't forget Spell Mastery.

We take Penetration 5 (remembering the bonus from puissance of +2) and Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1. This totals only 80 points, the remainder is saved for Mastery, see selection of Spells later.



challenge working around a given defect. Some will suggest that the Blatant Gift is a cheap and easy choice for a magus like this, but we must remember that we do need to gather arcane connections somehow and the Blatant Gift will likely make this much harder, especially if we tried to go about that business via stealth and secrecy. Weak Magic and Weak Magic Resistance should be avoided like the plague as they are counterproductive to the entire concept.

## ABILITIES

We are going to keep this character nicely focused on his magical aims, so a lot of the nice-to-haves like Area Lore, and even Realm Lore Abilities have been pushed to one side; the character can always learn them later if needed.

The usual rules apply though, so 45 experience points need to be spent on childhood abilities. Beyond that, we can

make our own choices.

Best choices for childhood skills, and indeed a lot of design for this character, depends on just how the character intends to collect those vital arcane connections.

Stop and think about this for a moment. If you intend to gather arcane connections by stealth, why not throw 15 or even 30 of those starting experience points into Stealth? If your intended method relies more on charm or skulduggery and misdirection then Guile and Charm are both available as childhood abilities as well.

**Artes Liberales (Astronomy):** Used to calculate a horoscope for the target for that added penetration.

**Leadership:** For those who wish to gather arcane connections via minions.

**Charm, Guile:** As explained earlier

**Stealth:** As mentioned earlier.

**Craft (Sculpter/Painter/other):** Used to create a symbolic representation of your target.

**Concentration:** Opening the Intangible Tunnel is a D: Concentration spell, making this skill essential. Consider using the Minute of Reckoning, making this ability much less necessary.

**Finesse:** Opening the Intangible Tunnel is a D: Concentration spell, meaning you can drop it at will. this is useful when your target notices you and starts casting spells back through the Tunnel. If you've decided to go with the Minute of Reckoning instead, you will need to be able to Unravel that tunnel when your opponent starts using it against you. To do so quickly, you will need Finesse (Casting Speed).

**Magic Theory:** A must have for all magi, but not nearly as essential for this character as for an enchanter. The Intangible Assassin is likely to prefer



## EXEMPLI GRATIA: ARTS

### OCTAVIANUS

Being a member of house Guernicus means that Octavianus was taught a great deal of Intellego magic even before he decided what to focus his studies on. Indeed it is a poor Quasitor who does not know the Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie. Having decided his path in life, he was faced with a dilemma: He would need to be strong enough in magical combat to be able to hurt nominally more powerful magi, but at the same time could not neglect his powers as a magical investigator. Luckily, mastery of Vim magics could provide both (to some extent). He would however need skill with a variety of techniques and even forms.

Octavianus is currently very focused on Vim. If his opponent's Parma Magica is too strong to be broken with his Break the Weak Shield, his only available recourse is trying to inflict a Twilight episode on his target. Octavianus though,

is a patient hunter and believes his enemies are still unaware of him, so that he will have time to study further before having to engage in any confrontations.

### RAGNA

Rego and Vim are the most important Arts, since they are needed for the Intangible Tunnel necessary for all attacks, so in effect they are the limiting factor. However with the Focus chosen to cover attacks spells we do not need all relevant Arts to be equal. For Ragna we choose a dual Form to attack and kill with – Aquam and Ignem – but tied to a single Technique. A number crunching endeavour to optimize tells us that Rego and Vim at equal levels makes for the cheapest buy. And with a Focus helping us for Creo, Aquam, and Ignem we want scores here of 2/3 what we buy for Rego and Vim to have them at comparable levels. Dividing up 120 experience we choose Creo 5, Rego 8, Aquam 5, Ignem 5, Mentem 2, Vim 8.

low levels spells and focus on having high Arts, meaning that spells can be invented easily and usually quickly, sometimes even several in a season.

**Parma Magica:** Yes please. This is often said to be an irrelevant defense, but since with Flawless Formulaic Magic, we can easily pick up some of the more common attack spells and take Resistance Mastery with them, which suddenly makes for rather more impressive resistance.

**Penetration:** Again, yes please. In many ways, this is the iconic ability for the Intangible Assassin. It will be multiplied due to possession of an arcane connection and possibly also a Sympathetic Connection (**ArM5**, page 84)

## ARTS

Arts are useful - indeed vital - for the Intangible Assassin, as they provide penetration and allow us to cast spells without fatigue. Interestingly though,

this concept could theoretically be made to work with very low Art scores, as long as penetration was high enough and the penetration multiplies abundant enough.

Still, most will want to have at least a few high Arts. Rego and Vim are obvious choices, for creating the Tunnel, but having an Intangible Tunnel is no fun if we can't push anything through the Tunnel and expect it to penetrate. One approach is finding your favorite attacks below and focusing on those Arts, at least when starting out. Another suggestion is to consider how you would go about gathering your arcane connections. Auram, Corpus and Mentem are excellent for this. With experience though, one should spread out. Simply put, that Flambeau Archmagus is going to be better at Ignem than you will ever be, so it's a good idea to add a little variety, preferably after studying your target to find his strengths and weaknesses.

## SPELLS

The obvious must-have here is Opening the Intangible Tunnel or one of its variants, i.e. one of those given in *Hermetic Projects*, pages 80-81. We can highly recommend The Minute of Reckoning as one would not have to roll for concentration every time one cast a spell through the Tunnel.

Similarly, Vim spells to manipulate the Tunnel or detect Tunnels cast by others are useful as well and can be found in *Hermetic Projects* pages 81-83. Finally Learning Unraveling the Fabric of Vim and fast-cast-mastering it will allow the character to undo a Tunnel which has been compromised by the Target.

Then we come to spells that are useful to cast through the Tunnel. This selection depends on taste as much as anything. It is however worth mentioning that a magus could conceivably focus on using either Rego or Vim effects against his target, as this would allow the character a sort of "double-benefit" from these Arts.

Finally one spell from *Hermetic Projects* deserves special mention, because it can so fundamentally change the tactics behind this entire design. **Break the Shield** is an awesome spell which should probably have been designed as a General spell, as it is quite easy to vary the base level and thus the strength of the Parma Magica it can destroy. Break the Shield gives us a new strategy as Intangible Assassins. Estimate the target's skill with Parma Magica. Open a Tunnel and cast an appropriate-level-version of Break the Shield down the Tunnel. Close the Tunnel. Immediately open a new Tunnel and cast whatever spell you prefer through this.

Because it takes a two minutes to raise the Parma Magica again, your target is unlikely to have any Magic Resistance except that afforded by his Forms. With your arcane connection at hand, you now have a window of about 20 rounds to cast a much higher level Tunnel and have it penetrate, and then



## EXEMPLI GRATIA: SPELLS

### OCTAVIANUS

Right at the outset, Octavianus is not a powerful magus. He knows basic investigation spells and what he hopes will be a few nasty surprises for his code-breaking prey. His focus is somewhat on defensive effects for the moment, with The Minute of Reckoning master with defense mastery, giving him an effective resistance of no less than 70 against this spell and similar effects – which essentially cover almost any Intangible Tunnel-like effect he's likely to ever encounter. A similar choice has been made with his Break the Weak Shield spell which is still Vim and so still affords resistance 70 against similar effects. Resistance 70 is not unbreakable, but it's a good start. Next Octavianus has the Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie, Sense of the Lodestone, Odor of Lingering Magic and Demon's Eternal Oblivion – all

classical spells for Quaesitores, being either extremely helpful with investigations or in the case of DEO, the basic go-to spell when facing the infernal, which seems to occur much more often for members of house Guernicus than for those of other houses.

Octavianus has both a low-level version of Opening the Intangible Tunnel (for strong penetration) and somewhat higher-level version of the basic Tunnel-effect (The Minute of Reckoning, ReVi15) for use when breaching the target's resistance is not an issue. This also allows him to play a bit of silly buggers by taking advantage of the mastery rules, mastering one for penetration and the other for resistance. Finally he also has Shroud Magic in order to cover his tracks (before the deed) in case he needs to break the Code – or simply needs to conceal evidence of his activities from his enemies.

*(Continued on page 70)*

obvious. So we use low-level spells against targets with magic resistance, for better penetration. But lower-level spells are more easily countered (**ArM5**, page 83) or Unravelling (using Perdo Vim, **ArM5**, page 160-161).

Thus, while a higher score in Parma Magica might not make you immune to your opponent's spells, it forces him to use lower-level spells, that you can more easily counter.

To maximize this, use the magic resistance mastery (**ArM5**, page 87) with some of the more common attack spells, even if you never intend to use them for any other purpose! This isn't perfect immunity, but does force you opponent to rely on relatively lower-level spells.

Now, if you're planning on being serious with the Intangible Assassin approach, you will need to be good at Vim anyway, so using InVi to sense incoming spells and PeVi to unravel them should be an entirely sensible approach.

## THOUGHTS ON KILLER SPELLS

For dealing damage with the intent to kill there are two basic types, each with pros and cons. Direct damage

proceed to cast whatever kill-spell you prefer down that Tunnel and not worry overly much about penetration.

We strongly recommend taking resistance mastery with both Opening the Intangible Tunnel and Break the Shield as soon as possible if you even suspect you might get into this sort of debacle.

## PENETRATION IN PRACTICAL USE

We're going to have a look at penetration and that means abusing **ArM5**, page 84.

## THOUGHTS ON PARMA MAGICA

It has often been stated that in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**, Parma Magica is largely irrelevant. The argument tends to be that with penetration multipliers, anyone can penetrate any amount of magic resistance, which is to some

degree true, if somewhat exaggerated. Indeed this assumption is to some degree what this character conception is all about. But the **Fifth Edition** has a very interesting mechanic: The level of the spell is subtracted from the casting roll for purposes of penetration, which means that higher-level spells penetrate less well than low-level spells. This is



## EXEMPLI GRATIA: SPELLS

### RAGNA

The cornerstone of the Assassin's concept is an Intangible Tunnel spell, but before choosing this we need to decide how we want to kill people. We want Creo Aquam spells to inflict acid burns and Creo Ignem to incinerate our victims. *Hermetic Projects*, page 84 lists the spell Searing Touch (Creo Ignem 5, Touch/Mom/Ind, +5 dam).

Creo Aquam guidelines list the general guideline for "create a corrosive substance doing +[level] dam". We start out with a base 4 for a measly +4 dam, and add a magnitude for R: Touch. We disregard the somewhat loose phrase about increasing Range above Touch because *Hermetic Projects* says that Searing Touch spell may harm the caster unless cast through a Tunnel-effect. The final design is Acid Touch (CrAq5 Touch/Mom/Ind +4 dam), and since it will cost a full magnitude for only +1 more damage we leave it at this. If we add a further magnitude (for a total of level 15) adds another +5 damage, and while this is cost effective if you will, it also requires a higher level Tunnel-effect and seriously hampers our Penetration. This is one for later development, as Ragna's Arts increase.

Flawless Magic grants a free Mastery of 1 in all spells, for these three we choose Multicasting. The Virtue also doubles the Study Total for Mastery, and like Affinities this is easy to take into account

at character creation (unlike, for example, Secondary Insight and Elemental magic). Thus, we spend another 5 experience per spell – doubled to 10 – to raise Mastery to 2, choosing Penetration as the ability.

With the killer spells in place we see a need for an Intangible Tunnel to allow at maximum a level 10 spell, but to optimize we also want a level 5 version for the lower level spells used. To avoid unnecessary Concentration rolls we take Minute of Reckoning from Hermetic Projects to get the D: Diam. We want Penetration Mastery for these two spells. We add in a D: Diameter version of Arcane Seal to be able to close the tunnels: Minute of Arcane Seal ReVi15 (Touch/Diameter/Ind seals a level 10 Tunnel). Fast Casting Mastery for this one, just to be on the safe side. Although we have a Deficiency in Perdo we still take Unravelling the Fabric of Vim Pe Vi10. It is handy in case we want to completely stop a Tunnel, and Penetration does not matter.

This was only 45 of our 120 spell levels. For the remainder we choose useful spells within our specialty of Arts with little or no impact on the Intangible Assassin concept or any great benefit from Masteries chosen.

Designing such a maga means you are horrendously over specialized post-gauntlet, but the fact that such a magus can be built it is a point we are trying to make. In time you can fill in the gaps with all those nice-to-have utility spells as well as expand in the Intangible Assassin concept.

spells using Perdo Copus inflicts wounds of a specific level. This disregards Soak but unless using Base 30 they can never kill outright. You also need to take into account any Size modifiers necessary. Stacking myriads of Light Wounds eventually renders the victim useless in a fight, after which even a weak, untrained punch can theoretically kill. The massive penalty to Defense almost guarantees a good Attack Advantage eventually making a killing blow likely. But this is no good

for the Intangible Assassin, unless they have an agent on hand.

The other type deals damage through some medium, fire for instance. Damage is +X and is Soaked, while Size is taken into account for Wound Range. This is a non-combat Soak so it is rolled and compared straight to the damage roll. While not completely clear in the Rules As Written it makes sense to us that Wound Penalties are applied here [*Wound Penalties apply to all rolls, unless*

*otherwise instructed. Ed.*] The argument is that in melee or missile combat the Wound Penalties apply to Defense eventually allowing even a mediocre Attack roll to kill. But why can't a +5 dam spell ever kill, even if the victim has accumulated 25 Light Wounds, when a corresponding stab with a knife can? The assumption for this design process is that Wound Penalties are applied to non-combat Soak. Of course, several consecutive 1s on the damage roll can really do wonders, however unlikely this is. Killing efficiently should not rely too much on luck though, but rather on being clever and wearing the opposition down.

## CONCLUSION

As thoroughly described in the article, it is quite possible to design a magus fresh out of Gauntlet to be an efficient Intangible Assassin. It is a highly specialized magus though, and care needs to be given to choices. The choice of House has less impact than first anticipated, and some surprises occurred while discussing and writing this. For Virtues a lot of the choices seem rigid, however none of them are necessary just very useful for efficiency! Abilities especially and Arts as well are the most important factors. Spell choices less so, even with the unavoidable Rego Vim spells around which the entire concept is based very few levels are actually earmarked for Assassin's activities.

Future advancement of the example magi follows in a later **Sub Rosa** article. Here we will develop and improve the magi in an appropriate environment to iron out their respective weaknesses. Among others the immediate killing power once Parma Magica is breached, but also personal defenses, methods to find and procure ACs, utility spells, and other useful elements in the example magi's lives.



## EXEMPLI GRATIA

### OCTAVIANUS

In this example, Octavianus has found a hair belonging (he believes) to Eldavus of Ex Miscelanea, whom he believes is a secret murderer and code-breaker. Octavianus would prefer to take this AC to his lab and fix it as an indefinite Arcane Connection, but for some reason of other, that is not practical at this point. As an AC, a hair lasts for “months”, which means it provides a penetration multiplier of “+2”. Octavianus is then going to work with Sympathetic Magic. He has several options here. He can try for a daily horoscope, a nativity horoscope or a symbolic representation. In this case, Octavianus lacks the information to do a nativity horoscope, but will attempt both of the other options.

Creating a daily horoscope requires a roll of **Intelligence + Artes Liberales** of 9+, using the Astrology Specialty. For Octavianus this is a total of  $(2+1+1) 4 + \text{die}$ .

Creating a symbolic representation is uses a roll of **Dexterity + (Craft)** of 12+. For Octavianus, this would craft would be Sculpture, and his total would be  $(1+2) 3 + \text{die}$ . With a lower difficulty (of only 9) a simple representation could be created, but it would be good for only one use – probably meaning only a single spell – which would limit it’s usefulness as we shall see below.

For the sake of the example, let’s assume that passes both of these rolls. Sympathetic magic now provides him with a further penetration multiplier of “+3”, for a total multiplier of +5. What will this mean in practice? Octavianus starts out by casting Opening the Intangible Tunnel (ReVi 5). Normally his penetration would be the result of the die used for casting +25. But Octavianus has mastered the Intangible Tunnel for penetration, has a  $3 + 2$  score in Penetration and a specialty in Vim. That’s an effective Penetration Ability score of 7. With a multiplier of +5, that’s a further +35.

His penetration is now the die of his casting roll + 60. Enough to even threaten his own fairly impressive Vim resistance of 70.

Had Octavianus opened with his Minute of Reckoning (ReVi 15) his Penetration would have been substantially lower, as this spell has not been mastered for penetration, so his effective penetration score would have been only 6. Combined with the higher level of this spell, his penetration (without the die) would have been only  $13+30 = 43$ , which is still good, but rather less impressive.

Octavianus now casts Break the Weak Shield (PeVi 5) through his Intangible Tunnel. This spell is not mastered for resistance either (though Octavianus probably will in the future), so penetration will only be  $(21-5 \text{ from casting total minus level}) + ((5+1) \times (1+5) \text{ from Penetration} + \text{specialty times the multiplier plus the penetration we always get}) 52 + \text{die}$ . Had Octavianus decided to go with a single use representation, his penetration multiplier would by now have been only +3,

making the above calculation into  $(21-5) + ((5+1) \times (1+3))$  for only penetration 40.

Hopefully, this will bring down Eldavus’ Parma Magica, so that his resistance will be limited to his Art scores. Now Octavianus drops concentration on his Opening the Intangible Tunnel spell and casts Minute of Reckoning on Eldavus via the same hair. As seen above, his penetration should be  $43 + \text{die}$ , which should hopefully make it through Eldavus resistance. Octavianus now proceeds to cast Fading Star of the Evening (CrVi 15) on Eldavus. Probably repeatedly, just to make sure Eldavus is forced into Twilight, buying time for Octavianus to take that hair back to his lab and fix it.

### RAGNA

The earlier example of Octavianus’ clever use of using several elements to combine Penetration modifiers illustrates both the concept and mathematics nicely. The example give for Ragna offer no new tricks, merely showcases her approach and what she can attain.

We picture Ragna in a Rhine Tribunal setting, where she and her Wilderist sept battles members of the Apple Gild who well-meaningly improves the life of mundanes. The Bjornaer magi resent active plans for settling a previously wild and untamed area made possible by the wealth and population growth brought on by the Apple Gild magi. Ragna targets the Apple group’s main enforcer Magnus of Flambeau, who is to lead a group of combat capable men into the sept’s sacred area, to kill and drive out wild animals. A camp is to follow, and eventually a village will be formed. Once a church is built the Dominion is bound to drive out the last remains of the wild, magical power.

In hindsight it may have been more clever to preemptively have disrupted the growth and resources leading to this expansion. But as the Bjornaer sept keeps to the wild they have tragically missed noticing the early signs. As Ragna needs time to study her opponent and gather a usable AC she allows the project to venture quite far, before attacking her sworn enemy from a prime position.

Spying on Magnus as a raven Ragna has only managed to gather a chunk of Magnus’ excrement from a latrine. Not very dignified, but also very hard to spot by her enemy. Also, all is fair in love and war. This Arcane Connection however only lasts mere hours and is only good for a +1 multiplier. Luckily Ragna has taken time to prepare before striking down on Magnus, plus she shamelessly uses her sept. A young member, with his opened to Hermetic Magic but still not having participated in the Gathering of the 12 years spends a season in lab (and a single pawn of Vim vis) to fix the Arcane Connection. In the meantime Ragna has overheard an old, trusted grog mention Magnus’ secret nickname “Longspear” used only by his closest fighting men.

Once ready, Ragna declares Wizard’s War on Magnus, knowing he is in the city with the other Apple Gild magi

waiting around in the Bishop's Court to clear out political and administrative matters of the expansion and a future church. She intends to take advantage of Magnus being in the Dominion, which is detrimental to his Resistance, while she herself attacks from the safety of the sept's sacred place in the wilderness, where the high magic aura is to her benefit.

Ragna has a fixed Arcane Connection plus a nickname, good for a (5+1) multiplier, she has a Penetration Ability of 5+2 for Puissance, and her combat spells to be used all have Mastery 2. Her final Penetration bonus, added to the excess of Casting Total-Spell Level is  $((5+2)+2) \times (1+(5+1)) = +78$ .

First she opens a Tunnel using Minute of Reckoning level 10, Casting Total is Stress die +20+ local aura (we assume a magical aura of 4, although a place sacred to Bjornaer magi may be even higher). With an average roll of 5 that's 29. Penetration is calculated as Casting Total (29) – Spell Level (10) + Penetration bonus, calculated earlier (78) = 95.

She follows up using Scorching Touch level 10, confidently believing Magnus to be a follower of the School of Ramius as her spying suggests, meaning he is less likely to be more or less immune to fire. With assumptions as mentioned earlier we get an average of Casting Total (29) – Spell Level (10) + Penetration bonus, calculated earlier (78) = 95.

Now, Magnus is located in a place most inconvenient for his Magic Resistance, even if he is merely in a Dominion rating of 3, equivalent to a village or town, his Resistance is modified by -3 times this for a -9. Had he been inside the Cathedral it would have been -15. While significant, if Ragna can rack up a Penetration Total of 95 it is not decisive, however a School of Ramius magus of House Flambeau is likely to have a good Parma Magica. But nowhere nearly enough.

As Ragna multi-casts 2 additional copies per round, each doing +10 damage, for 20 rounds if need be, this totals 60 times +10 damage. Even though Soak is rolled for each and a lot of the Scorching Touches may be completely inefficient, a few good damage rolls are bound to pop up, or a Soak Botch. We divert the attention of our readers to the section Thoughts on Killer Spells later for a point about this method of killing. Otherwise, Ragna may just have to repeat the circus once again. After all, where is Magnus going to go in a matter of mere minutes to prevent this? If he or an ally casts Ward Against Heat and Flames Ragna merely switches to using Acid Touch, although the damage is lower there is less chance of it being circumvented.

Of course, there is the argument that with this many rolls a nasty Botch, or even a Twilight, is bound to happen. We know that our gaming group happily does this, finds reasons for additional Botch die, for fun and games or because some things should not be too easy. But strictly speaking there are few reasons in this situation, as Ragna is in the comfort of a well-known place, protected by her sept, in an aura she is aligned towards, and has Mastery 2 to reduce some of the Botch dice.

But how nasty an opponent could Ragna actually have taken down, in the earlier example? What range of Parma Magica are we talking about here? Magnus is described as specifically not being an Ignem expert, so let's assume a score of no more than 10. Situated in a Dominion with a meagre level 3 aura, his Resistance is modified by -9, worse if timed as he is inside a cathedral or even during mass, but never mind. To withstand Ragna's Penetration of 95 Magnus would need a Parma Magica score of 19 to avoid being toasted!

Had Ragna's target instead been a powerful Flambeau follower of the Founder's School his Ignem may have been in the mid 30s. Could he have Mastered a relevant Ignem spell for Resistance? Possibly, however he would need to have had invented a Range: Touch spell for it to count as similar – Pilum of Fire does not (in this author's mind) cut it. But let's assume he in fact did have this, which means his Resistance is doubled. Parma Magica of 6 is not unlikely among magi voluntarily seeking out danger, with a specialization in Ignem as well. So we end up with  $2 \times (\text{Parma Magica} \times 5 + \text{Ignem score})$  or  $2 \times ((6+1) \times 5 + 35) = 140$ ! Here we clearly see that Ragna is not even near this, which is also as it should be seeing as she is fresh out of Gauntlet and the Flambeau opponent is experienced. But we also see that without the effort given to Resistance Mastery of likely spells to be hit by he would in fact be vulnerable! On an end note, the Form Bonus you should remember to apply to the Soak is quite significant when the attack spells are as weak as in the example given. Which is precisely why a successful Intangible Assassin may want to have two different Form options and obviously needs to research the enemy to find weak spots.



## OCTAVIANUS

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 25 (25)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Hermetic Magus; Affinity with Parma Magica, Affinity with Penetration, Flawless Magic, Affinity with Vim, Hermetic Prestige\*, Puissant Vim, Puissant Parma Magica, Puissant Penetration, Skilled Parens; Restriction (Cannot cast on a boat), Missing Eye, Susceptibility to Divine Power, Obsessed (Bringing Justice to the Guilty), Enemies (Briganus of Ex Miscellanea), Lane

**Personality Traits:** Obsessed +3, Devious +2, Outgoing -2

**Reputations:** Quaesitor 3 (Hermetic)

**Combat:**

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

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

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

**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:** Artes Liberales 1 (Astrology), Awareness 2 (determining effect), Code of Hermes 1 (wizards' marches), Concentration 3 (spell concentration), Folk Ken 3 (magi), Guile 2 (lying to authority), Latin 4 (hermetic usage), Leadership 1 (magi), Living Language 5, Magic Theory 3 (inventing spells), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (personalities), Parma Magica 2+2 (Mentem), Penetration 3+2 (Vim), Scribe 1 (copy lab text), Sculpting 2

**Arts:** Cr 7, In 7, Mu 0, Pe 4, Re 5, An 0, Aq 0, Au 0, Co 1, He 0, Ig 6, Im 0, Me 5, Te 0, Vi 12+3

**Equipment:**

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** At Gauntlet, Octavianus is an unassuming, somewhat boring looking man of 25. At home or among magi he tends to dress in simple robes, usually grey. venturing outside, his outfit includes a simple tailed hood. His hair and beard are dark, and he is already losing the hair at the top of his head, while still not able to grow much of a beard. Octavianus' most distinguishing feature is his missing right eye. He does

not have a false eye and usually does not cover the empty socket. He wears a small amulet depicting a scale (symbol of House Guernicus) on a string around his neck, but this is usually worn under his clothes.

**Spells Known:**

*Sense of the Lodestone* InCo 5/+10, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Searing Touch* CrIg 5/+15, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* InMe 20/+14, Mastery 1 (acute sense)

*Fading Star of Evening* CrVi 15/+24, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Flesh Crawls at the Intangible Touch* InVi 30/+24, Mastery 1 (acute sense)

*Odor of Lingering Magic* InVi 30/+24, Mastery 1 (acute sense)

*Shroud Magic* MuVi 15/+17, Mastery 1 (disguised casting)

*Break the Weak Shield* PeVi 5/+21, Mastery 1 (magic resistance)

*Demon's Eternal Oblivion* PeVi 5/+21, Mastery 1 (multiple casting)

*Opening the Intangible Tunnel* ReVi 5/+22, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*The Minute of Reckoning* ReVi 15/+22, Mastery 1 (magic resistance)

## RAGNA

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

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 25 (25)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 0 (0)

**Confidence:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** The Gift, Hermetic Magus; Flawless Magic, Apt Student, Heartbeast (Raven)\*, Independent Study, Inoffensive to Mundane Animals, Minor Magical Focus (Create Acid & Fire Burns), Puissant Penetration, Puissant Stealth, Puissant Awareness; Chaotic Magic, Deficient Technique (Perdo), Servant of the Forest, Hatred (Defilers of the natural areas)

**Personality Traits:** Hateful +3 Patient +3, Raven +3, Forgiving -3

**Reputations:** None

**Combat:**

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

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

*Kick:* Init -1, Attack +0, Defense -1, Damage +0

**Soak:** +3

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

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

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Area A 3 (geography), Area Lore: Area B 2 (geography), Artes Liberales 1 (rhetoric), Concentration 1 (spells), Heartbeast 1 (resist change), Latin 4 (Hermetic), Living Language 5 (common), Magic Theory 3 (invent spells), Organization Lore: Bjornaer Cult Lore 1 (initiations), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 1 (personalities), Parma Magica 1 (Corpus), Penetration 5+2 (Vim)

**Arts:** Cr 5, In 0, Mu 0, Pe 0, Re 8, An 0, Aq 5, Au 0, Co 0, He 0, Ig 5, Im 0, Me 2, Te 0, Vi 8

**Equipment:**

**Encumbrance:** 0 (0)

**Appearance:** Ragna at her Gauntled is 25 years old. She is a short woman, with sinewy arms and legs. She has piercing eyes, a rather prominent, beak-like nose, a weak chin and wild ruffled curly black hair. She is tanned and often dirty. Her posture is often slightly bent forwards and her arms gesture wildly - much like the wings of a bird. When she is not speaking but observing she tends to turn one side of her face towards whoever speaks and look at them sideways, alternating between being motionless and moving her head in jerking motions. She wears a simple and well-worn dress in earth tones and almost always walks barefoot.

## Spells Known:

*Acid Touch* CrAq 5/+20, Mastery 2 (multiple casting, penetration)

*Creeping Oil* CrAq 15/+14, Mastery 1 (multiple casting)

*Comfort of the Drenched Traveler* PeAq 5/+5, Mastery 1 (quiet casting)

*Cloak of the Duck's Feathers* ReAq 5/+17, Mastery 1 (quiet casting)

*Searing Touch* CrIg 5/+20, Mastery 2 (penetration, multiple casting)

*Scorching Touch* CrIg 10/+20, Mastery 2 (multiple casting, penetration)

*Pilum of Fire* CrIg 20/+19, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Tremulous Vault of the Torch's Flame* ReIg 5/+17, Mastery 1 (quiet casting)

*Touch of Falling Feathers* ReMe 10/+14, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Unravelling the Fabric of Vim* PeVi 10/+6, Mastery 1 (fast casting)

*Minute of Reckoning* ReVi 5/+20, Mastery 1 (penetration)

*Minute of Reckoning* ReVi 10/+20, Mastery 1 (magic resistance)

*Minute of Arcane Sealing* ReVi 1/+20, Mastery 1 (fast casting)

## RAGNA'S RAVEN FORM

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per +3, Pre -2, Com +1, Str -7, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik +5

**Size:** -4

**Virtues and Flaws:** Keen Vision

**Combat:**

*Dodge:* Init +5, Attack n/a, Defense +8, Damage n/a

**Soak:** +3

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

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

**Abilities:** Awareness 4 (ACs), Athletics 3 (flying), Brawl 2 (dodging), Hunt 1 (voles), Survival 3 (woodlands), Stealth 1 (sneaking)

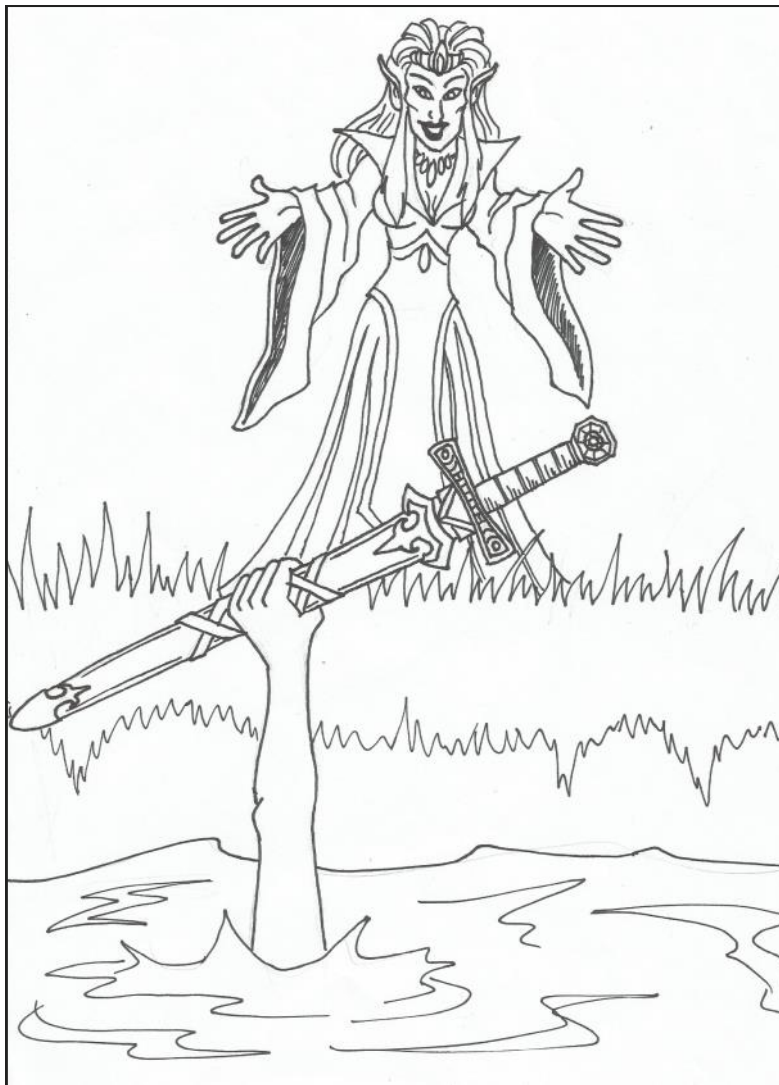
**Notes:** Design of the raven uses *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 38-43, with inspiration from the Raven of Virtue from *Realms of Power: Magic* for additional Abilities.



# MYTHIC BLOODLINES: MORE THAN THE FOUNDERS

For magi, the Mythic Blood Virtue offers a fantastic benefit. As a Major Virtue, it grants the character fatigue benefits, a magical power with no limitation on use and maximum total level of 30, a Minor Magical Focus, and a minor Personality Flaw. Additionally, this establishes a birth legacy for the character, opening the door to the possibility of blood-siblings who share their heritage and may serve as potential allies, rivals, or enemies. Such a

background gives easy hooks for Storyguides to tie in the lost projects of powerful sorcerers, enemies who simply wish to eliminate a wizard's lineage, or grudges born by unaging creatures and transferred to the player magus. However, for those seeking a source for their character's Mythic Blood, hunting down suitable ancestors can prove challenging. To ease the search, we offer this series.



By BEN MCFARLAND

## STONEHENGE TRIBUNAL

The Stonehenge Tribunal is rich with magical legends. It is a strange confluence of Roman heritage, Celtic legacy, and Anglo-Saxon culture, all mixed together to bring about the wild and sometimes conflicting stew of traditions and backgrounds. The fae are commonplace, the friction between tribunals is regular, and the vis is plentiful. It is well documented in the **Ars Magica Fourth Edition** book by the current Line Editor, David Chart. The book itself is almost completely statistic-neutral and can easily be used in **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** games.

Due to the mingling of peoples in the British Isles, by 1220 these bloodlines could appear anywhere but are more common in residents of the Hibernia or Loch Leglean Tribunals. Nothing prevents them from being found in a wizard originally from this region who has since traveled to another part of Mythic Europe.

## GWYDION FAB DÔN

Gwydion fab Dôn was a magician, hero and trickster who fought many battles and performed a number of both decent and terrible acts. He spent years transformed into a variety of animals for raping the woman his uncle later married, and he started a war between two kingdoms by stealing the southern kingdom's magical pigs. After his uncle's forces suffered badly, Gwydion ended the conflict when he defeated the attacking lord in single combat. Later, he led an army of trees against the armies of Arawn, the Welsh god of the

Underworld, to help his brother. To end the battle of the trees, he successfully declared the hidden name of one of Arawn's champions, who could not be defeated until his name was spoken.

**Possible Powers:**

**Speak & Gesture:** ReHe 30 *Freeing the Striding Tree* (R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 139.

**Speak:** MuCo 25 *Shape of the Woodland Prowler* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 131.

**Gesture:** InMe 20 *Posing the Silent Question* (R: Eye, D: Mom, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5**, page 149

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** MuIm 15 *Disguise of the Transformed Image* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 146.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Changing into animals, controlling trees, disguising illusions, learning people's secrets, single combat.

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Ambitious, Greedy, Lecherous, Overconfident.

## GWYNN AP NUDD

Gwynn ap Nudd was the king of the Tylwyth Teg or "fair folk" and ruler of the Welsh Otherworld, Annwn. Gwynn helped King Arthur complete the tasks listed in the Culhwch ac Olwen, an 11th century Welsh tale, including the capture of the great, magical boar, Twrch Trwyth, which was a cursed creature covered in vicious, poisonous barbs. He was considered a psychopomp and led the Great Hunt to collect souls. Gwynn ap Nudd was bound to fight a battle every May Day until Judgement Day, where he fights to keep his sister Creiddylad from his rival, Gwythyr ap Greidawl. Some claim he is also Nodens, a Gaulish god associated with healing, the sea, hunting and dogs. He is equated with the gods Mars, Mercury, Neptune and Silvanus.

This bloodline is also appropriate for wizards with Faerie Blood (minor).

**Possible Powers:**

**Speak & Gesture:** ReMe 30, *Like Visions of the Infernal Terrors* (R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Ind, but everything the target sees induces madness. Personality Traits such as Strong-willed, Resolute, or Dedicated help on the associated roll, while Weak-willed, Accepting, or Naive subtract from the roll.) See **ArM5**, page 152.

**Speak:** MuCo 25 *Gift of the Bear's Fortitude* (R: Per, D: Mom, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 131.

**Gesture:** MuTe 20 *Edge of the Razor* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 154.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** PeMe 15 *Calm the Motion of the Heart* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind) As per the spell, **ArM5** page 150.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Battle, causing madness, commanding one type of faeries, commanding spirits of those killed in battle, eliminating fear, hunting beasts, inspiring bravery.

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Compulsion: Fickle, Dutybound, Faerie Upbringing, Wrathful.

## MENW

Menw was a skilled magician and capable warrior, able make himself and his companions invisible. Uther Pendragon taught him the ability to shapeshift, a power called one of the "Three Great Enchantments of Britain." He participated in the hunt for Twrch Trwyth, with Gwynn ap Nudd and King Arthur, where he spied on the magical boar in the form of a bird and suffered a poisoned wound. Menw never completely healed the injury, but no one else had survived an attack from Twrch Trwyth. Later, Menw served as one of Arthur's chief advisers, gaining the title "the Enchanter Knight." He had a son named Anynnawg.

**Possible Powers:**

**Speak & Gesture:** PeIm 30 As per *Veil of Invisibility*, but with a Group target (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Group)

Refer to the spell, **ArM5** page 146.

**Speak:** MuCo 25 *The Form of Beast* (R: Pers, D: Conc, T: Ind) The caster may transform into any bird, fish, or beast for the duration of the effect. (MuCo 20 + 1 Conc)

**Gesture:** CrCo 20 *Purification of the Festering Wounds* (R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Ind) Refer to the spell, **ArM5** page 129.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** InMe 15 *Perception of the Conflicting Motives* (R: Eye, D: Mom, T: Ind) Refer to the spell, **ArM5** page 149.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Changing into animals, combat, finding enemies, healing wounds, remaining unseen

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Generous, Higher Purpose, Humble, Reckless.

## MERLIN

Merlin's story is known to almost all wizards in British isles. The tales claim a demon sired him on a virgin as an intended Antichrist. When Merlin's mother, Adhan, informed her confessor of the situation, they baptized him at birth to free Merlin from diabolic power. However, Merlin still possessed a preternatural knowledge of the past and present, supplemented by God. Others state he was a mad druid. He could shapeshift, traveled safely amongst beasts, and supposedly engineered the birth of Arthur through magic and intrigue. He defeated dragons and supposedly constructed the Stonehenge monument itself. Later he served as one of King Arthur's advisers.

**Possible Powers:**

**Speak & Gesture:** ReMe 30 *Invoke the Muse's Inspiration* (R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Ind; ReMe 10 + 2 Voice + 2 Sun) The caster may cause the target to imbue all of their responses with a particular emotion until the sun rises or sets.

**Speak:** MuCo 25 *All Forms in One* (R: Pers, D: Conc, T: Ind; MuCo 20 + 1 Conc) The caster can change into any



mundane beast, bird, or fish up to Size +1. As this requires speaking, the caster must shift into a human between each transformation.

**Gesture:** MuIm 20 *Image Phantom* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind) As per **ArM5**, page 146.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** ReTe 15 *The Monument in Motion* (R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind; ReTe 2 + 2 Voice + 1 Conc + 1 Stone + 1 Size) The caster may move a stone up 10 cubic paces in volume, lifting it up and floating it through the air.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Calming animals, changing appearance, influencing emotions, moving stone,

transforming into animals

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Compulsion: Inappropriate Humor, Delusional, Lecherous, Wrathful.

## MORGANA LE FEY

Morgana is a creature of conflicting and mysterious heritage. She is a queen of Avalon, she is the sister of King Arthur, she is a student of Merlin, and she is the mother of Oberon by Julius Caesar. All of this implies she is mortal and yet she is also Faerie, contemporary to King Arthur and yet predates him. Morgana was said to be the wife of King Urien and the mother of Yvain, some stories make her the mother of

Modred. She dwells either in Avalon with her lover, King Guingemart or in an equally mysterious realm known as the Perilous Vale, where she trapped Sir Lancelot and other knights of the Round Table several times. She hated Guinevere for exposing her affair with Guingemart and chased Lancelot, both because she had feelings for him and to hurt Guinevere. Morgana kept many lovers, though, including the knights Accalon of Gaul, Helians, Kaz, Gui, and Corrant. She fashioned several items in attempts to disrupt Arthur's court- a mantle which set its wearer ablaze, a false Excalibur, and a drinking horn which only spilled its contents when the bearer was unfaithful. She also provided healing potions to several knights before leaving Arthur's court and helped carry King Arthur away to Avalon to sleep and heal his wounds after the Battle of Camlann.

This bloodline is also appropriate for wizards with Faerie Blood (minor).

### Possible Powers:

**Speak & Gesture:** ReCo 30 *The Restless Servant Persists* (R: Touch, D: Moon, T: Ind) As per *The Walking Corpse*, **ArM5**, page 135, but this has a Moon duration.

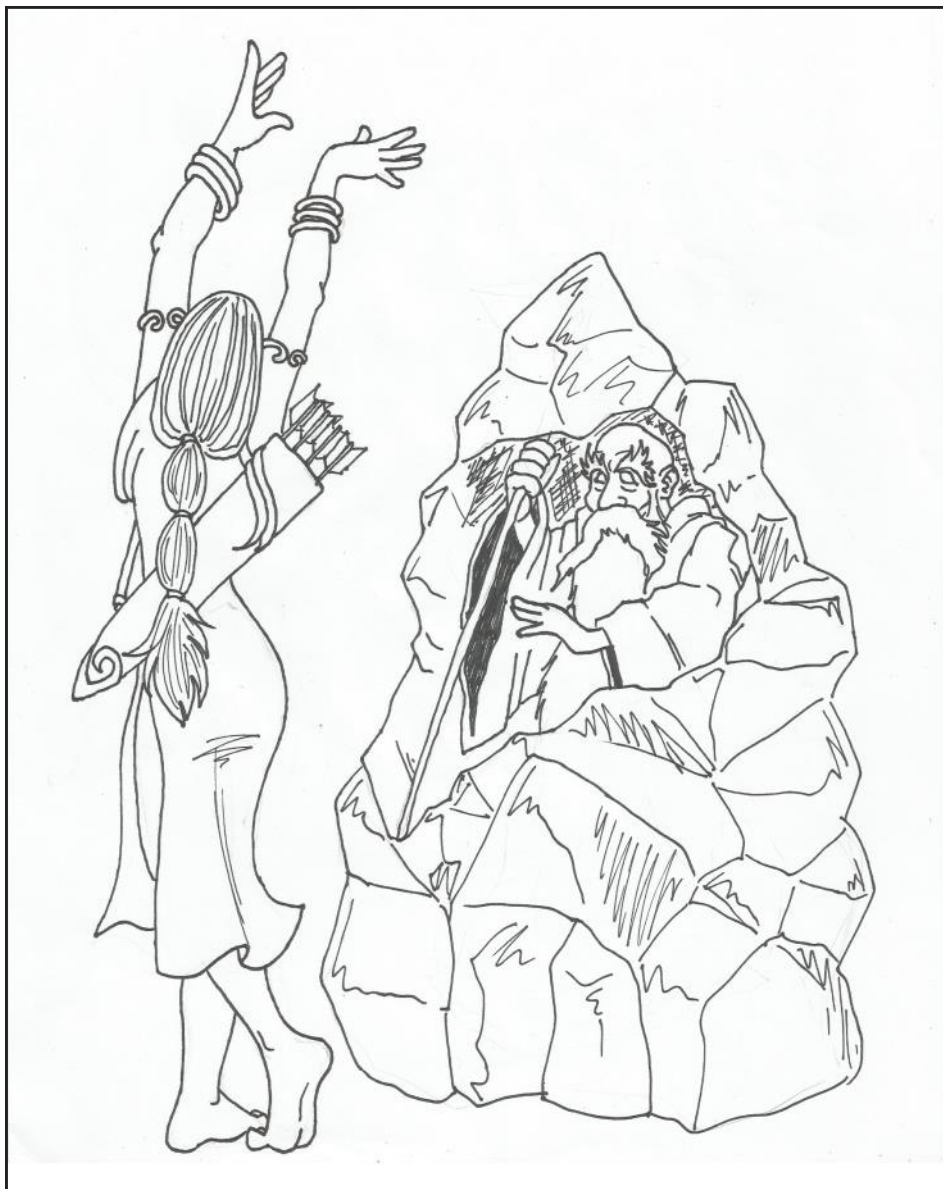
**Speak:** ReCo 25 *A Leaf on the Breeze* (R: Pers, D: Sun, T: Ind) The caster may fly about quickly, as per **ArM5**, *Wings of Soaring Wind* on page 126, but does not require a Finesse roll or Concentration.

**Gesture:** InMe 20 *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (R: Eye, D: Conc, T: Ind) As per **ArM5**, page 149.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** MuCo 15 *Disguise of the New Visage* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Part) As per **ArM5**, page 131.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Curing madness, flying, illusions, necromancy, revealing lies (deceptions), shapeshifting.

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Ambitious, Compulsion: Vindictive, Faerie Upbringing, Proud.



## NIMUE

Known by the names Elaine, Evienne, Niniane, Nivian, Nyneve, and Viviane, Nimue was said to be the Lady of the Lake, the Queen of Avalon, a huntress, the student of Merlin, and his unrequited love interest. Once Merlin completed her training, Nimue entombed her master and replaced him as King Arthur's magical adviser. She married one of the knights of the Round Table, Sir Pelleas, bore him a son named Guivret, and helped bear the King's body away after he fell in battle.

This bloodline is also appropriate for wizards with Faerie Blood (minor).

### Possible Powers:

**Speak & Gesture:** InMe 30 *Peering into the Mortal Mind* (R: Eye, D: Mom, T: Ind) As per **ArM5**, page 149

**Speak:** ReAn 25 *The Prey's Destiny Sealed* (R: Sight, D: Conc, T: Ind; ReAn 5 + 3 Sight + 1 Conc) The caster holds an animal, which they can see at the time the effect is invoked, rigid and unable to move for as long as they concentrate on it. As per *Viper's Gaze*, **ArM5**, page 120, but with Sight range.

**Gesture:** MuCo 20 *Lungs of the Fish* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Part) As per **ArM5**, page 122.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** CrHe 15 *Trap of the Entwining Vines* (R: Voice, D: Sun, T: Group) As per **ArM5**, page 135.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Changing water, convincing others to act in some way, hunting, imprisoning individuals, learning secrets

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Busybody, Lecherous, Lost Love, Meddler.

## ORDDU, WITCH OF THE UPLANDS OF HELL

There is not much written on Orddu, except in the Culhwch ac Olwen, where she bests four of King Arthur's men, including Gwynn ap

Nudd, before King Arthur cuts her in half. The group had been sent to complete a series of tasks so that Arthur's cousin Culhwch could marry the giant Ysbaddaden's daughter. Orddu was reputed to have great strength, the ability to hold men in place, and could command demons and spirits. Her cavern home was said to be a portal between Hell and living world.

### Possible Powers:

**Speak & Gesture:** ReMe 20 (effectively 30) *Coerce the Spirits of the Night* (R: Voice, D: Conc, T: Ind; with 10 Penetration) As per **ArM5**, page 152.

**Speak:** PeVi 10 (effectively 25) *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* (R: Voice, D: Mometary, T: Ind; with 15 Penetration) As per **ArM5**, page 160.

**Gesture:** ReCo 20 *Bind the Foolish*

*Upstart* (R: Voice, D: Diam, T: Ind; ReCo 5 + 2 Voice + 1 Diam) The target is held in place and unable to move. If the target was in motion when affected, they fall to the ground, otherwise, they remain motionless until the duration ends.

**Neither Speak nor Gesture:** MuCo 15 *Preternatural Growth and Shrinking* (R: Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind; with 10 Penetration) As per **ArM5**, page 131.

**Possible Minor Magical Foci:** Commanding spirits, demons of lust, increasing strength, imprisoning people, pagan ghosts

**Possible Personality Flaws:** Busybody, Lecherous, Lost Love, Meddler.





# MAPPA MUNDI

With the recent release of *Faith & Flame*, we thought it might be useful to know about some of the additional legends and myths of the region which didn't make it into the book, as well as the source materials some of us used when researching. Certainly, these lists aren't comprehensive, but they might help Storyguides looking for the optional homework assignments to add depth and variety to your saga. Some of these topics may appear in greater detail in a later issue of Sub Rosa, but until then, we offer a brief treatment now.

## MYTH AND LEGEND

The region of Gévaudan, in the Massif Central is mentioned in the sidebar of chapter 7 as the home to the wolf-like Beast of Gévaudan in the 18th century, and between the 15th and 18th centuries, tales of wolf attacks proliferate across France. A pack of wolves actually hunted the Paris streets in the 1450's, while the wolves of Périgord, Sarlat, and Soissons all hunted the people at other times. A rare resource on these creatures is *Wolf-Hunting in France in the Reign of Louis XV: The Beast of the Gévaudan*, by Richard H. Thompson. *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast* by Jay Smith is easier to come by and available electronically.

The giants of Castelnau were discovered by workers building a reservoir outside Montpellier in 1894. A trio of skulls, 28, 31 and 32 inches in circumference were uncovered, belonging to men between 10 and 15 feet in height. These creatures have very little documentation, discussed in the wikipedia page ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant\\_of\\_Castelnau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giant_of_Castelnau)) with some

additional articles referenced. They could easily be a clan of Corpus-based magic kin descended from jentilak of the Pyrenees, or even a tribe of the fading giants, who fled to the hills near Montpellier.

Discussed in the mythology of the Founder, the Cave-shrine of Flambeau simply did not make it into the manuscript of *Faith & Flame*. Located somewhere in the Pyrenees, this place is easily the object of many a Flambeau magus' quest, either as an initiation to the Cult of Mithras, or for those who venerate the Founder and wish to better understand their roots. The drake-infested slopes of the mountains serve as adequate challenge, the magical nature of the cavern, and the renown within House Flambeau both offer ample reward. Such a story seed also offers an opportunity to introduce the ghost of Pyrene.

The mad Verditius, Himinis, lived in Provence, and his Confraternity likely keeps a watchful eye on potential sites associated with their founding member. For a Verditius hoping to join the sect of the House, or those seeking the magus' secrets, Provence is the best place to hunt. Given his focus on traps and curses, such a search will certainly prove to be interesting.

Other books used by the authors include, *Folklore of Provence*, by William Johnson, *Old Provence* by Theodore Cook, and *Provençal Tales* by Michael De Larrabeiti. One unifying aspect the authors all noticed was that most books on the myths of Provence were out of print, but occasionally show up on Amazon for reasonable prices.

## GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Many historical topics make for great story seeds within Provence, but the authors simply lacked the space to treat them appropriately. For instance, there are an enormous number of active Templar sites in Provence in 1220, allowing for great intrigues utilizing one of the interpretations of that Order presented in Sub Rosa, issues 1 through 4. Eleanor of Aquitaine was closely tied to the region, and has family still living there. The Black Madonna is a Christian icon which, while found in many parts of Europe, is quite common in Provence, allowing for a Divine Societas to grow from its veneration; one which could merge with or spring from the Maters and Matrones cult. La Graufesenque, the Millau roman ruins, might serve as a covenant site, but this would require the 1221 tribunal gathering to occur in another location.

The authors found Cadogan Guides to be a good resource on the region; they utilized the volumes on Gascony, the Pyrenees, and Southern France, as well as the Knopf Mapguide to Provence and Cote D'Azur. Other titles included *The Albigensian Crusade*, by Sumption; *The Albigensian Crusades*, by Strayer; *France in the Middle Ages 987-1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc*, by Duby; *Urban and Rural Communities in Medieval France: Provence and Languedoc, 1000-1500*, by Reyerson; *The Road from the Past: Traveling through History in France*, by Caro; and *The World of the Troubadours: Medieval Occitan Society c.1100 –c.1300*.



# COMING SOON

## ARS MAGICA: THROUGH THE AGES

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