

TWELFTH NIGHT



A Saga of Death and Destruction
for ARS MAGICA™ 3rd Edition

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SPECIAL THANKS

Rene "National Midnight Star" Lilly, for attaining overseas tabloid status.

Lyndi "Rainbow Bright" McKeeman, for hair color du jour.

Wes "Blind Vacation" Harris, for taking blind dates one step further.

Travis "Lunar Eclipse" Williams, for refusing to look at the Canadian moon.

William "UPSet" Hale, for having his lifetime pass to the Louvre cancelled.

Danny "Fanny" Landers, for being the first employee hired for playing Four Square.

Rebecca "Who's that girl?" Schaefer, for being the company enigma.

Twelfth Night

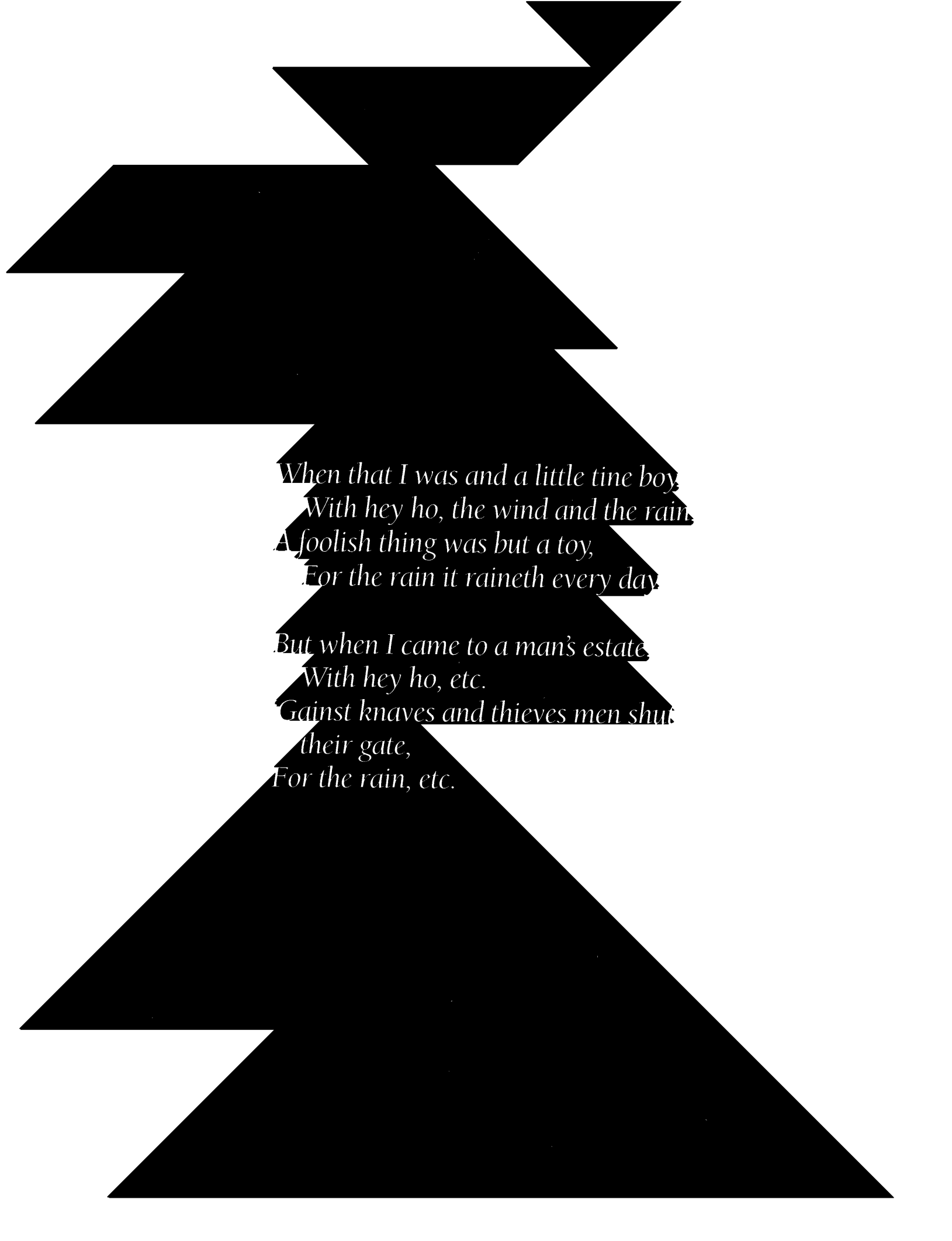
Digital Edition Version 1.0

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*When that I was and a little tine boy,
With hey ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.*

*But when I came to a man's estate,
With hey ho, etc.
Gainst knaves and thieves men shut
their gate,
For the rain, etc.*

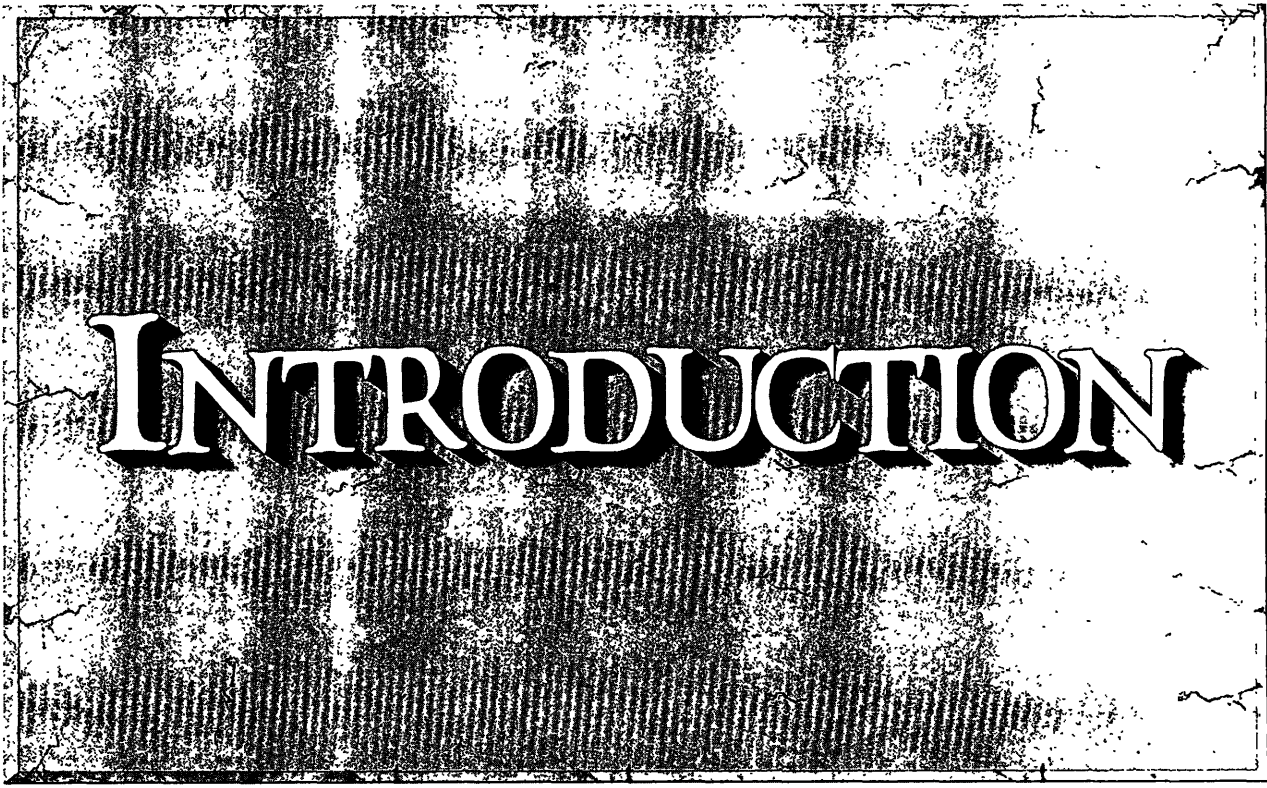
*But when I came, alas, to wive,
With hey he, etc.
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain, etc.*

*But when I came unto my beds,
With hey ho, etc.
With toss-pots still drunken heads,
For the rain, etc.*

*A great ago the world began,
[With] hey ho, etc.
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.*

The Clown, Twelfth Night, Vi. 389-408





INTRODUCTION



Saga is an epic tale, a tale with a theme that transcends its characters, a tale which may take years or even lifetimes to unfold. Most roleplaying games don't tell Sagas. Adventures in most games are quick and simple, and campaigns are sets of adventures connected only by the presence of the same heroes. Sagas, stories spanning many years and united by a theme, are rare.

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Ars Magica encourages the telling of Sagas. Because of Ars Magica's emphasis on Covenants, it's possible to tell stories which affect more than just individual characters and which can last beyond individual characters' lives. When such an ongoing story has an underlying theme, it is a Saga.

Twelfth Night is an Ars Magica Saga. It chronicles the passage of a Covenant from Winter to Spring. At the beginning of the Saga, the Covenant Lux ex Tenebris is in what appears to be its final years. Although the Covenant has a long and rich history, its Magi have passed away and the Covenant has slowly lost its energy and direction. A single ancient Magus is now the sole member of the Covenant. In order to become reborn, the survivors of Lux ex Tenebris recruit young Magi, to again infuse the halls with vigor and purpose.

The players' characters are these Magi. Their task is to restore Lux ex Tenebris, to bring it into Spring. The task is neither easy nor safe. As the Saga unfolds it becomes clear that the main obstacle to the Covenant's rebirth is its one surviving Magus. The characters must confront and defeat this Magus, and all his ties to the past. Here the Saga ends (and begins), with the characters in charge of their own Spring Covenant.

The Saga takes about five to seven years of game time to tell. However, that doesn't mean you should tell no other stories during this time. Between the Saga's stories, you can tell other tales, either published Ars Magica ones such as *Deadly Legacy* or *Black Death*, or stories of your own design. In fact, mixing in other stories is probably a good idea, because it prevents characters and players from immediately recognizing connections between different parts of the Saga. The Saga is more dramatic if such connections are revealed as the story progresses.

Twelfth Night is also the fourth Saga in a series called the Four Seasons Tetralogy. Each Saga in this series chronicles a Covenant's transition from one Season to another. The first, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, describes a Covenant's passage from Spring to Summer; the second, *The Tempest*, describes passage from Summer to Autumn; and the third, *A Winter's Tale*, describes passage from Autumn to Winter. Thus Twelfth Night complements these others. If you've played one or more of these other Sagas, you can run this one in the same area and, if you like, with the same Covenant. Or you can run one or more of these other Sagas after you tell this one. However, Twelfth Night can stand on its own. You don't need any of the other Sagas to tell this one.

THEME

The theme of this Saga is rebirth. The Saga chronicles the rebirth of a Covenant, its movement from a dying Winter to a new and flourishing Spring. In addition to being present as an overriding theme, rebirth arises in small ways throughout the

Saga. In their efforts to rebuild the Covenant, characters encounter many who struggle for new life.

Death is part of this story's theme. All people seeking rebirth are dying, either figuratively or literally. The way they react to their predicament is important. Those who accept death are "reborn;" those who cling to their old life invite disaster. Hopefully, characters learn this lesson in time to save their own Covenant: before Spring can arrive, the elements of Winter must pass. To complete the Saga, the characters must face and defeat the one Magus who remains from Lux ex Tenebris' past.

At the beginning of each chapter is a small section describing how chapter events fit into the Saga's theme. Your players, on the other hand, may not realize how different events are united. You determine how much theme to reveal to players, and if you do point out the Saga's theme, do it subtly. Gently hint at similarities between events, don't bludgeon players with correspondences, and don't make them feel they have to find the theme everywhere.

SETTING

This Saga can take place almost anywhere in Mythic Europe. Generally speaking, the setting should be near a Christian barony that's some distance from the Holy Land, and near a mountain range. Any location with these characteristics is suitable. If there's already such a locale in your Saga, feel free to use it. However, this book details such a place for your convenience.

For reference purposes, names of places and characters in this Saga are French and the "nearby mountain range" is assumed to be the Swiss Alps. This makes the Saga easy to run in Provençal, the setting of many other *Ars Magica* stories. However, names and the mountain range can easily be changed to suit another location.

The date of this Saga is a little more restricted than is geography, at least if you want the Saga to be historically accurate. In Chapter One, a knight named Christophe goes off to the Holy Land on a Crusade. About five or six years later, in Chapter Six, Christophe returns after having fought and won battles against the Saracens. If you want the Crusades of Mythic Europe to parallel the Crusades of historical Europe, historical events restrict the timing of the Saga.

According to history, there was no Crusade on the "official" *Ars Magica* starting date of A.D. 1197. However, there are two Crusades near that time which suit the Saga. The Third Crusade lasted from 1189 to 1192, and the Fifth Crusade lasted from 1217 to 1221. (The Fourth Crusade does not fit the Saga, since it was a complete fiasco and few of its participants even reached the Holy Land). The Christians won some victories in both of these Crusades, and in both they concluded peace without capturing Jerusalem. Christophe could join either Crusade.

Although both of these wars are shorter than the five or six years that Christophe is away, there was skirmishing before and after each. Christophe can travel to the Holy Land a few years

before the start of one of these Crusades, or can return home a few years late. Thus if you want this Saga to be historically accurate, start it in or slightly before 1189 or 1217. For more information about the Crusades, see the *Ars Magica* supplement *Mythic Europe*.

Obviously, if you aren't worried about historical accuracy, you can set the Saga whenever you like.

BACKGROUND

There once was a Magus named Azenis. Azenis was the leader of his Covenant, Lux ex Tenebris, and he had great political and magical power. He feared only one thing: death. Azenis was deeply bitter that all his great power was ultimately useless against the inevitability of old age. He became obsessed with the idea of living forever.

Azenis spent many years in the Order's best libraries, hoping to find some truth in legends of immortality. During his research he met Severine, an aging Magus of House Quaesitor who was also looking for the secret of eternal life. They agreed to share whatever knowledge they found.

Finally, Azenis found a clue to what he was looking for: a legend that the Holy Shroud, the burial Shroud of Christ, could render its wearer immune to all aging. The legends claimed these benefits were only granted to those with True Faith, but Azenis' late colleague Benvolius had done much research on the nature of Divine power. Azenis was confident that with Benvolius' notes, he could use the Shroud. If necessary, he was prepared to twist and warp the Shroud's power, making it no longer a holy item but an item of Hermetic magic.

The legends also stated that the Shroud conferred its benefits only to its wearer. Azenis feared that if he told Severine of the Holy Shroud, she would betray him and take it for herself. So he hid his knowledge from her.

Azenis traveled throughout Mythic Europe, chasing down wild tales and old legends, looking for the Holy Shroud. After many years of wasted effort, he finally got the breakthrough he sought. Using nearly the last resources of Lux ex Tenebris, Azenis made a deal with a dragon and purchased an ancient map which showed the location of the Shroud, in the Holy Land. By this time Azenis was too old to undertake the long journey. He began looking for someone to fetch it for him.

Meanwhile, the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem, founded in a previous Crusade, was under attack by Saracens. Two noble brothers, Francois and Giscard D'Alsante, were greatly distressed by this news and decided to go on a holy quest to fight on behalf of Christendom. Together they recruited eight other religious knights and asked their lord, Baron D'Oeuf, for permission to depart. Although the Baron was not comfortable losing 10 of his best knights, particularly to what he considered a dubious cause, he reluctantly gave them leave to go and the knights prepared for their trip. News of their holy quest spread far and the knights were widely acclaimed for their piety and bravery.

Unfortunately, news of the knights' quest reached the ears of Azenis. Just before the knights left, Azenis intercepted

Francois on the road and enchanted him with *Grant the Hidden Quest* (Rego Mentem 40). Azenis gave Francois a copy of the map which showed the location of the Shroud. He ordered Francois to find the Shroud and return it to him, but to tell no one of his quest or his treasure. Bound by the spell, Francois had no choice but to obey.

Francois and his comrades fought bravely for the Christian cause, but at one point between battles Francois left his companions for 10 days. He followed Azenis' map, dug up the Holy Shroud from its hiding place and kept it with him. However, Francois' strong religious devotion enabled him to resist the spell to a degree. Instead of returning immediately as Azenis had commanded, Francois remained in the Holy Land to continue fighting.

Francois and his companions fought for over a year, suffering many defeats. Three of Francois' companions, including his brother Giscard, were killed in battle. The surviving knights eventually decided to return to their homeland. On the way back, Francois' companions became worried by their leader's strange behavior (caused by Azenis' spell) and by his refusal to explain why he had left them for a time. They feared (correctly) that he was bewitched.

In the knights' attempts to remove Francois' "malady," the Order of Hermes caught word of their suspicions. The news eventually reached Severine, Azenis' old associate, who recognized Azenis' Sigil in the description of Francois' symptoms. She immediately suspected that Azenis had broken his promise to share his research with her. She dispatched her *filius*, Stratus Enor, to watch Francois closely and, if possible, bring him to her for questioning.

Francois' symptoms still uncured, the knights completed the journey home. News of their arrival preceded them. Not even word of Christian defeat prevented tales of the Crusaders' heroism, which spread throughout the Baron's lands. When the knights arrived at Castle D'Oeuf, the Baron arranged a festival in their honor. He hoped to share in the Crusaders' popularity and hoped that, by holding a tournament at the festival, he could offer an outlet for any passions of war other knights might have. The last thing the Baron wanted was more of his knights going off on Crusade. Thus the Baron invited all his vassals to partake of a day-long feast and celebration, in a field north of his castle.

Azenis, meanwhile, became increasingly worried at news of Francois' return. His delay in returning made Azenis suspect that the spell had been discovered and broken, and he feared the knights were coming back to kill him. Azenis was unwilling to leave the safety of his Covenant but neither did want to await his fate.

Azenis therefore decided to send an expendable group of young Magi to contact Francois at the Baron's festival. If Francois was hostile to Azenis, he would probably attack these Magi and Azenis would know his plan had failed. On the other hand, if Francois' enchantment was still intact, these Magi could escort the knight back to Lux ex Tenebris.

THE COURSE OF THE SAGA

The Saga begins when Azenis recruits the characters as envoys to Francois. In exchange for this small favor, he offers a Season of study in Lux ex Tenebris' arcane library. Assuming they accept this offer, the characters arrive at Castle D'Oeuf just as the Baron is throwing his festival.

To complete their mission, the characters must secretly meet with Francois, which isn't easy since Francois' nephew, Christophe D'Alsante, stays close to the knight most of the day. Christophe is suspicious of strangers and hostile toward admitted Magi. Later in the day, the characters see more of Christophe. He wins the Baron's tourney and gives a victory toast in which he harshly condemns the Saracens, vowing to go on his own Crusade. If the characters succeed in talking to Francois, he agrees to return to Lux ex Tenebris with them.

Once Francois and the characters set off, however, they encounter Stratus Enor, the *filius* of Severine who was sent to intercept Francois. The characters must avoid or bluff past Stratus Enor and travel to Lux ex Tenebris with the returned knight. Francois carries the Holy Shroud (although the characters don't know it) and Azenis is very pleased with his return.

Once the characters have fulfilled their quest, they are rewarded with a Season of study at Lux ex Tenebris. The only current member of Lux ex Tenebris besides Azenis is a friendly Jerbiton Magus named Triandin. In addition to Triandin and Azenis, the Covenant holds an aging but competent turb of Grogs, an excellent and still well-maintained library, and a few middle-aged specialists. In sum, Lux ex Tenebris is old but not decrepit.

Once they've finished studying, the characters may return to their Covenant and probably hear nothing more of Lux ex Tenebris for some time. Several years later, questions arise about their previous errand for Azenis. Francois, dying of old age, confesses of being bewitched by sorcerers and performing a terrible wrong. The Church begins to investigate various Covenants in the area and news of these investigations quickly spreads throughout the Order of Hermes.

Severine sees this as an opportunity to learn what Azenis was up to, and to disgrace his "allies," the characters. She arrives at the characters' Covenant and relentlessly questions them about the purpose of their errand. No matter what they say, she casts them out of their Covenant in disgrace, allegedly for incurring the Church's wrath but actually in retaliation for their dealings with Azenis. The characters' mentors may believe Severine is overreacting (and, in truth, the Church's investigations do not result in an Inquisition), but no one risks offending Severine by questioning her judgment. The characters are exiled from their Covenant.

Disgraced and poor, the characters have nowhere to go but Lux ex Tenebris. There Azenis welcomes them with open arms. In the past few years, Azenis has warped the Holy Shroud to be partially compatible with Hermetic magic, and has

Options: Fitting the Saga into Your World

There are many ways that this Saga can be incorporated into a new or existing game. Before telling the Saga, make sure you understand how it might fit into your world. Necessary adjustments to *Twelfth Night* may change its storyline.

The easiest way to tell this Saga is to follow the storyline, with new characters and a new setting. Choose a place for *Lux ex Tenebris* and then create another nearby Covenant where the characters start their story. You don't have to develop this Covenant in detail, since it's only a temporary home for the characters (they're exiled from the Covenant in Chapter Two). However, if you want to detail this other Covenant, it can be a place for stories set between Chapters One and Two, or after this Saga has ended.

You can also have new characters begin the Saga at *Lux ex Tenebris*, perhaps as apprentices to Azenis or Triandin. In this case, you might run the characters' errand and reward in Chapter One, but skip their exile in Chapter Two, going right to rebuilding the Covenant in Chapter Three. This alternative has the advantage of giving characters a greater stake in *Lux ex Tenebris*, but the disadvantage of not introducing Severine till late in the tale.

Another way to start the Saga is to not have characters contact Francois at all. They might simply be recruited by Azenis to begin rebuilding *Lux ex Tenebris*, either because they're embarrassed in some way and forced to leave their own Covenant or just because they're looking to join a new Covenant. In this case, skip Chapters One and Two and

begin with the swearing of the Covenant Oath in Chapter Three.

You can also tell this Saga in an existing setting. If you already have a Covenant with relatively young characters, this can be the characters' starting home. All you need do is locate *Lux ex Tenebris* nearby. As with a new setting, you can run the Saga according to the provided storyline, or you can have characters skip their errand and disgrace in Chapters One and Two, going right to Covenant membership in Chapter Three. If your existing Covenant has only middle-aged or older Magi, you should probably have players design new, young characters. The Saga is designed for young characters. Older characters are too politically powerful for their roles, they're likely to be aged too much by the Shroud, and they don't work as well with the Saga's theme.

If your existing Covenant is in Winter, an option is to have your Covenant, rather than *Lux ex Tenebris*, be central to the Saga. If it's appropriate, you can even have a former character assume the role of Azenis, although such a character should be played by the Storyguide.

If you use any Covenant besides *Lux ex Tenebris* for this Saga, you need to change some details of this Saga or your Covenant. The existence of other *Lux ex Tenebris* Magi (Benvolius and Triandin), the financial state of the Covenant, the identities of some of the covenfolk, and the depth of the Covenant library are a few of the special features of *Lux ex Tenebris* that are relevant to *Twelfth Night*.

learned how to prevent his own aging. However, in order to preserve himself Azenis must draw life from all those around him. Everyone in *Lux ex Tenebris* now ages at an accelerated rate. This has caused the death of many Covenant inhabitants (including Triandin) and has reduced many others to senility or incompetence. Even the Covenant walls decay faster than normal, so the physical structure has begun to fall apart. In addition, the Covenant is nearly bankrupt due to Azenis' expenditures while looking for the Shroud. Azenis is worried that the covenfolk will all soon die. He doesn't know if the Shroud will continue to keep him alive if there's no one around to feed upon, so he's eager to have the characters join and provide new vitality.

There's much to be done. The group must find a source of income, recruit younger Groggs and covenfolk, rebuild the walls, and re-establish relations with the outside world. Azenis has a suggestion for a source of income (see below); as far as other tasks go, the characters are on their own. During the rebuilding, characters may hear of the famous deeds of Christophe D'Alsante, who is now a hero in the current Crusade.

The characters need money to pay for improvements on the Covenant. If asked for advice, Azenis gives characters a map

to the lair of the Golden Wyrms, the dragon whom he dealt with earlier. He suggests that the characters slay the dragon and bring back her hoard. Azenis doesn't mention that he had dealings with her, only that he knows she has a large treasure hoard.

The characters can follow Azenis' map and find the Golden Wyrms' lair. If they follow Azenis' advice and attack her, they probably regret it. The Golden Wyrms is an old and powerful dragon. Though the characters may defeat her, she can inflict great damage (perhaps killing one or more characters).

Furthermore, any treasure removed from the Wyrms' lair without her permission is subject to her curse. One year after the characters remove the treasure, it vanishes and reappears in her lair. Coins disappear no matter where they are. Those who were paid by the Covenant in the year find a large chunk of their money missing. It doesn't take long for people to trace the missing coins back to the Covenant. Magi better prepare good explanations before the mob arrives at their doorstep. Of course, characters can relocate the treasure in the Wyrms' lair, but they better find a way to remove the curse before they reclaim it.

If the characters speak to the Golden Wyrn rather than fight her, they find her a wise and noble beast, with a great concern. She will soon die of old age, and is worried that when her last egg hatches, the young dragonet will be defenseless. She is willing to part with some of her hoard to arrange for a Magus to act as guard/baby-sitter for her offspring. If the characters agree, they acquire a powerful ally and a steady source of income, in exchange for a moderate commitment of time.

While the characters rebuild their new Covenant, they gradually realize their efforts are failing. New Grogs rapidly grow old, newly-rebuilt walls crack and collapse, and even new lab equipment quickly becomes worn. Through library or magical research, characters discover some part of the truth: that to keep Azenis alive, the Holy Shroud is draining life from everything around him. If confronted, Azenis all but admits the truth but refuses to do anything about it. If the characters attack Azenis, the Shroud protects him. If the characters petition the Order of Hermes for help, Severine hears of their complaint.

Severine is growing older and more desperate for revenge and a prolonged life of her own. She's eager to investigate any complaints against Azenis; she wants to pressure him into giving up his secret to eternal life. She travels to Lux ex Tenebris to investigate the characters' complaint. With her are Stratus Enor, her *filius*, and Istaff, a Flambeau Magus of her Covenant. She threatens to bring charges against Azenis unless he gives up his secret, but he refuses to yield. As she prepares to make good on her threat, he uses the power of the Shroud to age and kill Severine while she sleeps. Although Azenis doesn't explicitly admit his guilt, his veiled threats cause Stratus Enor and Istaff to leave the Covenant.

Soon afterward, the characters hear rumors that Christophe D'Alsante will soon return to the Barony from the Holy Land. Well-connected or socially-aware characters may also learn that Christophe has been on a quest for holy relics. Christophe is looking for the Holy Shroud and now realizes that his uncle brought it back from the Holy Land. When Christophe arrives, he soon discovers where the Shroud is and raises an army to take it from Lux ex Tenebris. The local Bishop blesses Christophe's cause and gives him dispensation to mobilize an army, even during the holy season of Lent.

Any characters who speak to Christophe discover that he has changed. He is now honorable and bears no grudge against wizards. However, he does not delay nor call off his attack on the Covenant, unless the Shroud is returned to him. Azenis admits that he has the Shroud but refuses to part with it. He threatens death to anyone who tries to leave the Covenant or make peace with Christophe.

On Good Friday, Christophe's army arrives at Lux ex Tenebris and initiates the attack. Azenis uses the Shroud to age and kill Christophe, and then creates a circle of decay which begins aging and killing all those in the Covenant and army. To save their lives, the characters must engage Azenis in combat and stop him from concentrating on his spell. If they've done research, the characters know the Shroud's protective powers don't function between Good Friday and Easter — the period that Christ is said to have been dead — and that this may be their only chance to defeat Azenis.

The battle with Azenis is difficult and dangerous. Even without the Shroud, he's an old and powerful Magus fighting for his life. With proper planning and cooperation, however, the characters may win. The Shroud is probably torn in the fight, and all its powers (Magical and Divine) are lost.

With the death of Christophe, the Crusading army becomes listless and confused. On Holy Saturday they do not fight, except to defend themselves, nor do they negotiate. Not even tales of Azenis' death bring them joy. They remain in the area until Easter Sunday.

On Easter Sunday, the Crusaders find new hope. The Dominion is reinvigorated across the land, even sweeping over the Covenant. The Bishop, formerly overshadowed by Christophe, is inspired and leads the remaining knights to the gates of Lux ex Tenebris, demanding the return of the Shroud. Once the tattered pieces are brought to him, the Bishop lays them on the body of Christophe. The Shroud is made whole, and becomes a Holy Relic once again. Christophe's soul rises to the sky and grass and plants grow from under his body. The decay and aging wrought by Azenis' use of the Shroud is reversed. Though the dead don't come back to life, prematurely aged characters become young again.

The Covenant Lux ex Tenebris finally dies as a Winter Covenant and is reborn into Spring.



DELIVERY

CHAPTER ONE

"And just who are ye, and what d'ye want with me?" demanded the knight.

Develi didn't know how to respond. She needed to meet with this knight, but she couldn't explain her business now, in the middle of the festival. People were already staring at her, an odd cloaked figure in a crowd of rich merchants and knights. With talk of a Third Crusade in the air, the last thing she wanted to do was admit she was a Magus.

"I represent... a friend of yours," she answered haltingly. Damn this knight! If what Azenis had told her was true, Francois should have been expecting this contact. He should have made himself more available, rather than spending every waking moment with his nephew, Christophe. Sleeve was distracting Christophe at the moment, but Develi didn't know how long he could keep it up. Sleeve had a talent for trickery but Christophe seemed to dread leaving his uncle's side.

"What friend?" asked Francois suspiciously. He raised his voice as he spoke and his eyes moved from Develi to the large Grog at her side. Gedeon, the Shield Grog, took a half-step forward. Francois' hand moved close to his sword. He didn't look at all like a man awaiting word from a friend.

"Azenis!" Develi practically hissed the word, desperately hoping that this wasn't a case of mistaken identity. As soon as he heard the name, Francois' manner changed drastically. He slouched and hung his head. His hands fell to his sides. He spoke in a voice so low and mumbling that Develi had to lean forward to hear it.

"I'll meet ye at the North Road before dawn tomorrow, and go with ye to see him," he said.

Develi had no time to respond. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Christophe approaching. She and Gedeon quickly slipped into the crowd before the knight spotted them. Once they were safe, Develi turned to Gedeon.

"Methinks there's more to this than meets the eye..."

SUMMARY

The Twelfth Night Saga begins in this chapter, when Azenis invites the characters to Lux ex Tenebris. Once there, he asks them for a small favor in return for a Season of study at his Covenant. Azenis asks the characters to meet Francois D'Alsante at Castle D'Oeuf and to escort him to Lux ex Tenebris. He asks the characters to keep their mission secret, as Francois supposedly doesn't want his relationship with Azenis made public knowledge.

If the characters accept Azenis' offer, they arrive at Castle D'Oeuf in time for a festival held in honor of Francois and other returning Crusaders. During the festival, characters hear brief speeches by Baron D'Oeuf, Bishop Guillet and by Giscard's son (and Francois' nephew), a young knight named Christophe. The speeches by the Baron and Bishop are unremarkable and politically cautious, but Christophe rouses the crowd with his condemnation of infidels and with his declaration that he himself is journeying to the Holy Land.

The characters must find a way to meet secretly with Francois. This isn't easy as Christophe stays close by, to hear as much as possible about the Crusades. However, if characters are persistent and clever, they manage to contact Francois and learn that he does indeed wish to come to Lux ex Tenebris. At this point or at some point later in the story, the characters may realize that Francois is under a spell.

As the group prepares to return to Lux ex Tenebris, they meet another Magus. This is Stratus Enor, Quaesitor and *filius* of Severine. He's been sent to intercept Francois. Stratus Enor insists that Francois be taken back to Severine's Covenant for questioning. If Stratus Enor's authority is directly challenged, he becomes uncomfortable and uncertain. He can be bluffed, evaded or beaten in *Certamen*. If the characters successfully deal with Stratus Enor, they have an otherwise uneventful trip back to Lux ex Tenebris. Azenis is pleased to see them and grants them their reward.

THEME

Though no one recognizes it at the time, the delivery of the Holy Shroud initiates the death and rebirth of Lux ex Tenebris. All of the Saga's events originate here.

Azenis' Request

Azenis decides to send envoys to ensure Francois' safe arrival at Lux ex Tenebris. He chooses the characters for any number of reasons. Perhaps their Covenant is near his. Or maybe a Magus of the characters' Covenant is a *filius* of Azenis, or just someone who knows Azenis well and owes him a favor. Azenis could have met the characters when he was researching the Shroud and was impressed with their abilities (or with their naivete). Or Azenis might not know the characters at all; he might ask Triandin, the other member of his Covenant, to find him some Magi. Triandin might choose the characters because

they're young people who might someday be interested in joining and renewing Lux ex Tenebris.

In any case, Azenis decides to recruit the characters, and via Redcap invites them to Lux ex Tenebris. He passes a message along, stating that he has a small favor to ask and offers something valuable in exchange. The easiest thing for Azenis to offer is a Season of study at Lux ex Tenebris' arcane library. This is an excellent library and most Magi should be eager to study there. However, if the Magi already have access to a good arcane library and/or if Companion characters want some incentive, Azenis offers other rewards, such as gold, magic items or even raw vis. Azenis doesn't offer too much, though. After all, his Covenant is no longer rich, and the favor he's asking is neither time-consuming nor terribly dangerous. If Azenis knows a Magus at the characters' Covenant, he may ask that Magus to persuade characters who decline the offer.

Characters who wish to research Lux ex Tenebris or Azenis may do so by spending a few days in a suitably equipped library. A Hermes Lore simple roll of 10+ reveals that the Covenant is considered by most to be in its late Autumn or early Winter. A roll of 12+ tells characters the Covenant is best known for the brilliant theoretical research of Benvolius, a member of House Bonisagus who worked there until his death a decade ago. Research on Azenis reveals, on a roll of 10+, that he's an old and powerful Tylalus Magus. A roll of 12+ reveals that Azenis is known for his far-ranging travels to famous libraries. A roll of 15+ reveals that he hasn't traveled much in the past few years.

Lux ex Tenebris

If the characters accept Azenis' offer, they travel to Lux ex Tenebris. If you like, on their way you can have them meet up with some of the local characters who might be important later in the Saga. For example, characters might encounter bandits in the Forest of Somme (see Chapter Three, under Groggs) or might pass through the peasant village of Gaverne (again see Chapter Three). Otherwise, the characters have an uneventful trip to Lux ex Tenebris. For a description of the Covenant, see Chapter Three. For descriptions of Azenis and Triandin, see the Appendix. For the layout of the land around the Covenant, see the *Area Surrounding Lux ex Tenebris* map.

ARRIVING AT THE COVENANT

The characters are greeted at the gate by one of the Covenant's Groggs (see below). When the characters announce themselves they are escorted into the entry hall (area 1 — see the *Lux ex Tenebris* map) and are soon met by Triandin.

Triandin welcomes the characters to Lux ex Tenebris and introduces himself. He hopes the characters will eventually join the Covenant, so tries to make a good first impression. He's open and friendly, especially to Magi. He asks about their *parentes* and research, and shows great interest in anything they

have to say. If asked about his own research, Triandin modestly mentions his experiments with the more refined aspects of Terram (i.e., metals and precious jewels). If asked about anything else in the Covenant, Triandin is unequivocally positive, praising the depth of the library, the experience of the Groggs and covenfolk, and the wisdom of the Pontifex (Azenis). Anyone whose Perception + Guile simple roll beats Triandin's Communication + Guile simple roll realizes that Triandin isn't being completely honest in his praise of Azenis.

Triandin doesn't know what Azenis wants the characters for, but tells them Azenis has been informed of their arrival and will probably meet with them soon. After about 10 minutes, Azenis' servant Tappel enters the entry hall and announces that Azenis is ready to meet the characters in the Council Chamber (area 15). Triandin is not invited; he goes off to his sanctum, saying as he leaves that he hopes to speak more with the characters later. Tappel shows the characters to the Council Chamber.

MEETING AZENIS

In the Council Chamber the characters meet Azenis for the first time. At this point Azenis is already obsessed with power and the thought of his own immortality. However, unlike later in the Saga, Azenis needs the characters, so hides his dementia from them. Like Triandin, Azenis assumes a charming disposition. Though he's not as outgoing as Triandin, Azenis is polite and friendly. He makes small talk for a while, asking about the characters' journey. He also describes the Covenant's mundane and arcane libraries (areas 20 and 21), giving a brief tour for any who request it. After this, Azenis returns to the Council Chamber and explains his request.

Azenis states that while traveling several years ago he met a knight named Francois D'Alsante. Although Francois was religious, he was an open-minded man who was not disturbed by Azenis' calling. Like Azenis, Francois had traveled widely, and in sharing tales of their travels the two became friends. Since Francois was about to journey to the Holy Land on Crusade, Azenis invited him to come to Lux ex Tenebris when he returned, so that the two could discuss his experiences. Azenis was particularly interested in getting a good map of the region and thought Francois' help would be invaluable. Francois agreed, his only request being that Azenis keep his aid secret; Francois "felt" his family would misunderstand his friendship with a Magus.

Azenis continues, claiming he has learned Francois has returned to the area and will soon arrive at Castle D'Oeuf. Azenis is worried that Francois' family, which is very religious, will prevent the knight from coming to the Covenant. Azenis is also worried that Francois might be attacked or robbed on his way, since he's returning with many valuables from the Holy Land. He asks the characters to secretly contact Francois at Castle D'Oeuf and escort him safely to Lux ex Tenebris. Azenis would go himself, he says, but he's too old for traveling anymore. He plans to live out his few remaining years at the Covenant.



Alex' Hart

If the characters ask why Azenis has asked Magi to escort Francois rather than have *consortes* or Grog do so, Azenis explains that it is best to have "those of learning and wisdom" approach Francois, since Francois has a deep respect for scholars. Also, Azenis claims to believe that Francois deserves a prestigious escort.

Of course, most of this is a lie. Azenis doesn't care about maps of the Holy Land or Francois' personal safety; he wants the Holy Shroud. He's sending the characters to Castle D'Oeuf for two reasons: one, if the enchantment has been dispelled and Francois has recovered, Azenis wants someone else to take the fall; and two, if the enchantment has held and Francois really does have the Shroud, Azenis wants to ensure no one steals it between Castle D'Oeuf and Lux ex Tenebris.

If the characters seem reluctant to believe Azenis' story, Azenis may hint that Francois holds additional important information which he cannot disclose. Under no circumstances does Azenis tell the characters the truth; he's afraid they would steal the Shroud for themselves (after all, that's what he would do). If it's necessary to further convince characters to accept the mission, Azenis sweetens his initial offer with promises (which he keeps) of gold or raw vis. However, he isn't rich and he isn't asking too much. A Season of study at the library should be enough for most Magus characters.

Once the characters accept the mission, Azenis asks them to leave as soon as possible, so they can meet Francois at Castle D'Oeuf. Unless the characters object, he suggests they leave the next morning. Azenis retires to his tower, and Azenis' servant

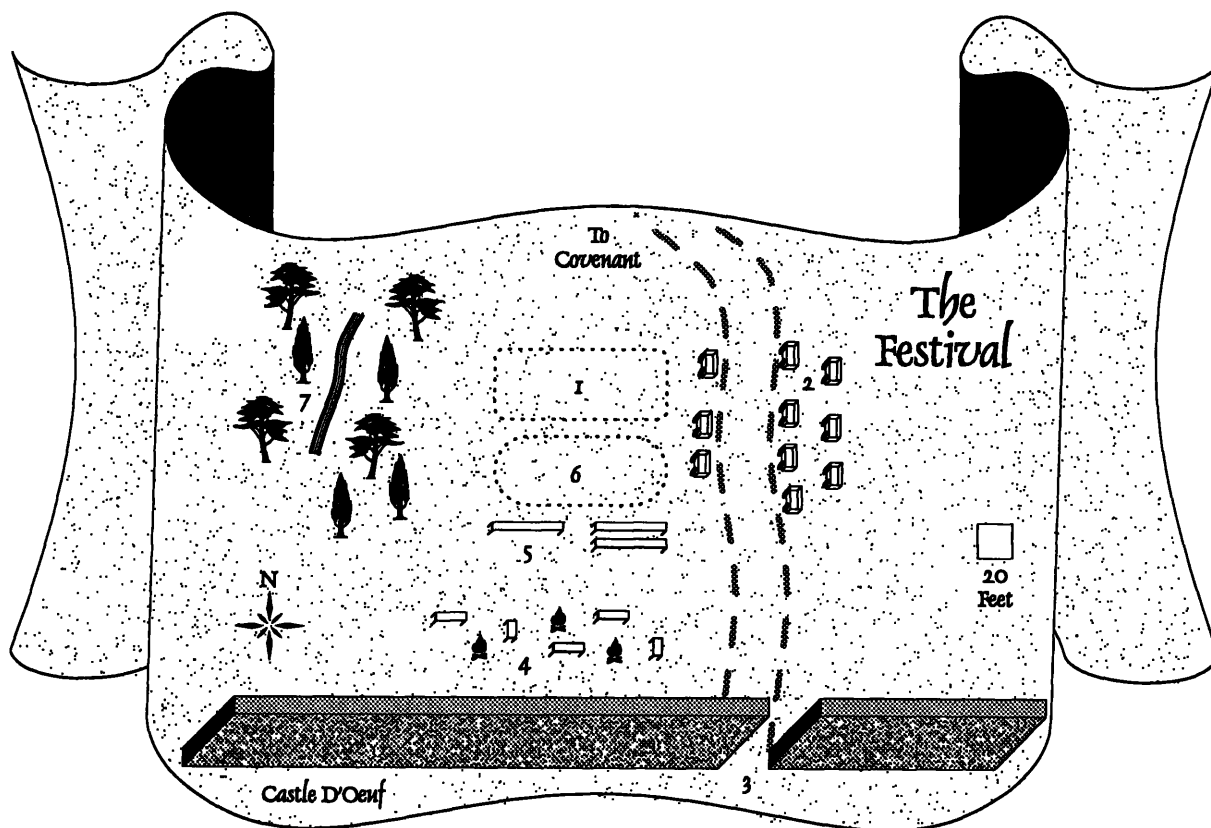
Tappel escorts the characters to their guest quarters in area two. The characters are free to explore the Covenant or speak with any of its inhabitants. Tappel offers his services as a guide but consents to be sent away if characters wish to explore on their own. Triandin is in his sanctum (area 24), but he's happy to come out and chat if anyone asks him to. Most of the covenfolk and Grog eat dinner in the mess hall (area 12). The only person who's unavailable is Azenis. He takes dinner in his sanctum (areas 22 to 23), looking over Benvolius' notes and planning how to warp the Holy Shroud to his ends.

Azenis has Tappel wake the characters the next morning to make sure they get an early start. Tappel provides for any reasonable travel needs, but there are no horses at the Covenant.

The Festival

The characters' trip to the festival provides an opportunity for them to become acquainted with the people and places around Lux ex Tenebris. If you like, you can run one or more brief encounters involving characters who are important later in the Saga, establishing those people in the characters' perspective of the land. See the beginning of *Lux ex Tenebris*, above, for suggested encounters. Otherwise, the trip to the Baron's lands is uneventful.

As the characters approach Castle D'Oeuf, they encounter others on the road, hurrying toward the festival. Knights ride by with splendid arms and armor, peasants hurry along on foot,





and merchants ride on carts loaded with their wares. If they ask about the commotion, the characters soon hear of the Crusaders' return and the Baron's festival in their honor.

When the characters arrive at Castle D'Oeuf, they find the festival laid out before of them (see *The Festival* map). In a large field north of the castle, over a thousand people are eating, drinking, milling about and having a good time. There are about 60 knights here, 20 who normally reside at Castle D'Oeuf and 40 of the Baron's vassals from surrounding lands. They're dressed in their most splendid and expensive armor, and their squires and servants bear their colorful coats-of-arms. Dozens of merchants, selling trinkets, food, spices and furs, have set their carts in the east part of the field. Several performers, including a juggler and some acrobats, wander through the crowd. Meanwhile, the Baron's servants run to and fro, cooking ducks, pigs and beef for the feast, and bringing fresh fruit and vegetables to the Baron's table. Last but not least, hundreds of poor peasants and townspeople mill about, eager for the spectacle of the tourney.

If you want to give the characters a feel for the festival, you can have them encounter one or more of the festival's participants. Suggestions for two encounters are described below. These encounters don't have direct relevance to the plot, but give insight into it and add atmosphere. If you'd rather have the characters attend to their mission directly, just describe the layout of the festival and let players think about how to contact Francois.

AREAS OF THE FESTIVAL

The following locales are depicted on *The Festival* map.

1. Peasants' Market

Many of the area's peasants are here to sell or barter their spare food. There are also a few weavers selling wool, and a tanner selling leather clothing. In contrast to the Merchant's Lane (area two), most of the people here are poor. Anyone well-dressed or well-armed attracts attention, and anyone dressed in wizardly garb is followed by a hush in the crowd.

There are several beggars here. One of them, a blind man named Muiet, is exceptionally well-informed. He knows that Christophe, Francois' nephew, hates non-believers and hopes to someday go on a Crusade. If asked, Muiet reveals this to anyone who gives him a donation and wins his trust (Communication + Charm simple roll of 7+).

2. Merchants' Lane

Unlike the peasants' market, many of the wares here are quite expensive. Most of the merchants come from Tourien to sell their products to knights gathered for the tourney. The merchants sell furs, jewelry, weapons and a few less expensive trinkets for poor customers. Dressing richly attracts no attention here, but anyone in wizardly garb is likely to be questioned. Anyone who claims to be a wizard or demonstrates powerful

Muniet

Characteristics: Intelligence (pragmatic) +2, Perception (insightful) +2, Strength (small frame) -1, Stamina (delicate constitution) -2, Presence 0, Communication (glib) +1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 34

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Blind -5, Sharp Ears (+3 to hearing rolls) +1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (begging) 5, Alertness (sounds) 3, Folk Ken (city folk) 3, Charm (city folk) 2, Guile (to guardsmen) 2, Pretend (suffering) 2, Bargain (pawn shops) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Well-Informed (Tourien) 2

Personality Traits: Practical +2, Content +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense n/a, Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2

Appearance: Muniet is dressed in rags. He looks dirty, unshaven and generally pathetic. However, his miserable appearance is intentional and designed to generate sympathy and donations.

Roleplaying Tips: Although he is blind, Muniet is otherwise healthy and quite content in his profession. He likes to supplement his income by selling useful gossip, which his sharp ears help him gather.

magic is immediately invited to see the Baron (see *The Magi Reveal Themselves*).

A thief named Denise casually wanders through this area. Anyone carrying a large pouch or buying expensive items may attract her professional interest. If Denise's Dexterity + Legerdemain stress roll is less than her victim's Perception + Legerdemain stress roll + 2, the character notices her robbery attempt. You may also allow Perception rolls for bystanders. If Denise Botches, she trips and falls in the attempt. If the robbery victim Botches, something truly valuable is lost. If Denise is caught, she begs for mercy and promises anything to gain her freedom. She can be blackmailed into helping the characters, but if she's not watched closely she runs off at first opportunity.

If the characters turn Denise over to the Baron's authority, she's taken to the dungeons of Castle D'Oeuf.

3. Castle D'Oeuf

The castle's main gate is wide open and many servants and knights move in and out. However, the castle is guarded by several sentries at the gate and several more on the walls above. The guards question any stranger who attempts to enter the castle. Those who don't answer satisfactorily are disarmed and taken to the Baron's table (area five).



Muniet

Denise

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (careless) -1, Strength (puny) -2, Stamina (no self-discipline) -2, Presence 0, Communication (convincing liar) +1, Dexterity (nimble fingers) +2, Quickness (sure-footed) +2

Age: 13

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (to strangers) 4, Climb (buildings) 2, Dodge (thrown weapons) 1, Pretend (injury) 1, Guile (to authority) 3, Legerdemain (pick pockets) 2, Stealth (hide) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Brave -2, Flighty +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +4 (10 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Appearance: Denise is an orphan who makes her living by picking pockets on the streets of Tourien. Her clothes are loose-fitting to allow her to escape the grip of authority, and her hair is cut short.

Roleplaying Tips: Although she's starving and needs to steal something at the festival to survive, Denise is terrified of being thrown into the Baron's dungeon. If she's caught by the characters, she uses all her quickness and guile to avoid being turned over to the Baron.

The outer castle wall is about 10 paces high and three paces thick. There are about 60 men-at-arms, generally loyal and alert, guarding the castle. The characters should realize that breaking into the castle is a bad idea. Their best chance to contact Francois is during the festival.

4. The Portable Kitchens

Here the Baron's servants prepare the feast. They're roasting animals, chopping fruits and vegetables, and pouring beer and wine into mugs. Though the servants are very busy, they notice anyone who doesn't belong in the area. Anyone who lingers too long risks being reported to the guards at the castle gate (see area three).

5. The Baron's Table

This is the Baron's table of honor. At the head sits Baron D'Oeuf himself. Down the table's length are seated Bishop Guillet, Francois and his six companions, and 14 of the Baron's most notable knights, including Christophe D'Alsante. The rest of the Baron's knights sit in the vicinity, at tables just east of the Baron's.

For the combat and roleplaying statistics of a typical knight, use the section on non-Crusading knights in Chapter Seven. For Francois' companions, use the section on Crusading knights in Chapter Seven.

6. The Tourney Field

This is a small dirt field used for the tournament. Contestants form an oval around the area and are called to enter in pairs. The tournament ring is occupied by people until early afternoon, at which point the Baron's servants clear it for the tournament. See *The Tourney* for details on the tournament. After the tournament ends people again fill the field.

7. The Latrines

Behind some trees the Baron's servants have dug a wide ditch where festival participants may relieve themselves. If the characters are waiting for Francois to leave Christophe's side, their only chance may be when Francois comes here (See *Francois' Movement and Reaction*). However, Francois is not well-disposed to characters who interrupt him here, and although Christophe is not with him, this is still not a private place. Other knights and commoners can overhear any non-whispered conversation. Furthermore, Christophe is likely to notice if Francois is away too long.

EVENTS

Described below are events which might occur at the Festival. Some of these can arise at any time or not at all, depending on the actions of the characters. Other events are scheduled parts of the festival and occur at times listed unless characters radically disrupt events.

Unless you have a reason for deciding otherwise, assume characters arrive at the festival just before noon.

Francois' Movement and Reaction

The characters' goal is to find Francois D'Alsante and escort him to Lux ex Tenebris. Finding Francois is easy. As one of the guests of honor, Francois has a prestigious place at the Baron's table. He stays there for most of the festival and almost anyone can point him out. Shortly before the tourney, he and Christophe wander through the Merchants' Lane (area two). Again, his presence is obvious, as many of the merchants recognize him and call him by name. During the tourney, Francois assumes his place at the Baron's table and remains there for the feast. After dinner, Francois and Christophe retire to their rooms in the castle.

The second part of the characters' goal — escorting Francois to Lux ex Tenebris — is more difficult, mainly because Francois doesn't know he's going to Lux ex Tenebris. Francois is currently unaware of Azenis' enchantment on him, and unless he's reminded of it in one way or another, he acts completely normal. Normal behavior for Francois means staying close to his nephew Christophe, refusing suspicious



requests from strangers, being wary of Magi, and generally being uncooperative in any attempt to communicate with him privately. Francois believes he has nothing to hide and is likely to perceive secretive strangers as enemies rather than friends.

In order to get Francois to agree to come to the Covenant, characters must remind him of the enchantment that's upon him. Mentioning Azenis or Lux ex Tenebris does the trick, as do more indirect methods, such as reminding Francois of a favor for a learned friend, or asking him whether he's brought something special back from the Holy Land.

Once the enchantment has been invoked, Francois' demeanor changes drastically. His head hangs low and he begins to mumble. He realizes that he must go to Lux ex Tenebris, and agrees to leave whenever the characters want. Francois is reluctant to leave in mid-festival, preferring to go early the next morning (*"before my nephew wakes"*), but can be pressured into leaving at whatever time the characters like. Francois wants to bring his horse, which is skittish and difficult to control near Magi, but he can be persuaded to leave it behind. Once the spell is invoked, Francois understands the need for secrecy and cooperates in any secret meeting the characters propose.

Naturally, any witnesses to Francois' transformation (especially Christophe) may be highly suspicious of nearby characters. Passing peasants or clergy may stare at the characters or listen in on their conversation. Christophe may accuse them of witchcraft and does what he can to deny them further access to Francois. Indeed, the day after the festival Christophe plans to return with Francois to their manor, and does not accept excuses for a detour to any Magi's Covenant (or anywhere else, for that matter). Francois may temper the extremes of Christophe's anger, but unless Francois is given a chance to recover and forget his enchantment again, Christophe does not completely trust his uncle's orders. If the characters persist in speaking to Francois, Christophe may seek to bring them before the Baron (see *The Magi Reveal Themselves*).

The best way for characters to complete their mission is to contact Francois when he's away from Christophe. This isn't easy. Christophe stays close to Francois most of the day, to hear as much as possible about his father's death and his uncle's battles with the Saracens. Before the tourney, Christophe and Francois take a brief walk in the Merchants' Lane (area two). The characters could try to distract Christophe from Francois during this walk, either by magical or mundane means. Later, during the tourney, Francois remains at the Baron's table while Christophe participates in the competition. The characters may try to talk to Francois then, though the Baron and others are likely to notice the characters unless they disguise themselves. Finally, during the feast, Francois visits the latrines (area seven). If the characters haven't contacted Francois yet, this may be their last opportunity.

The Magi Reveal Themselves

Anyone who manifests magical power is brought before the Baron. Although the Baron tolerates Lux ex Tenebris, it's been years since its Magi have openly walked his lands. Many

of his knights are very religious and opposed to the Order of Hermes, so the Baron prefers that Magi not show themselves. The Baron therefore has no desire to declare anyone a Magus. If the characters publicly declare themselves Magi, the Baron tries to downplay the situation, to avoid confrontation. The Baron first asks Magi to explain themselves, and then solicits advice from his knights and the Bishop.

As long as the characters seem straightforward and with good intentions, they're in no danger. Though Christophe harshly condemns Magi no matter what they say, demanding that they stand trial for witchcraft, the other knights, especially Francois, are more lenient. The Bishop, wary of the Order's power, has no desire for an Inquisition and does not support Christophe. If the characters are polite and seem benevolent, the Baron lets them stay for the festival (although they're closely watched the entire time).

If the characters seem dangerous or suspicious, the Baron tells them to leave (though he does not put them on trial as Christophe requests). The characters might appear dangerous (or more accurately, sinister) if they ask to speak with Francois alone. Unless they mention Azenis or Lux ex Tenebris, Francois has no desire to speak with them. If characters do mention Azenis or Lux ex Tenebris, or otherwise allude to Francois' "friend," Francois hangs his head and mumbles agreement to anything the characters propose. This event probably makes the characters seem even more dangerous; the reemergence of the symptoms Francois suffered from in the Holy Land make his companions suspect the characters are to blame for his enchantment. If Magi protest their innocence eloquently enough (i.e., Communication stress rolls of 7+), the characters may be spared a trial, but are still ousted from the festival. The rest of the knights keep a close watch on Francois after that. If pleas of innocence are Botched, a trial may well be called (but with inconsequential results as both Baron and Bishop still fear conflict in their very home).

The Tourney

The tourney is a jousting and melee competition open to all knights. The contestants fight with dulled weapons in single battles, and in jousts for various prizes awarded by the Baron. Those who do well in the tourney also gain valuable prestige: the winners of the jousting and melee competitions are seated at the Baron's table (and gain a Good Warrior Reputation, rated one, with a Specialization among *knights*).

The tourney is open only to those of noble blood. Any noble character who asks to participate is granted entry by the Baron, although that person's presence may arouse some curiosity. For tourney combats, use the Dueling Combat system for all combat rolls, except characters lose Short-Term Fatigue Levels rather than Body Levels when harmed (thus if they exert themselves heavily and are harmed they may be beaten quickly). This rule change reflects the lesser damage of blunt weapons. In order to win the tourney, a character must win four combats, three against ordinary knights and one against Christophe. Use the statistics in Chapter Seven for the ordinary (i.e., non-Crusading) knights.

The tourney begins in early afternoon and lasts for about three and a half hours. Unless one of the characters enters and beats him, Christophe wins both the mounted and melee competitions. Great cheers rise whenever Christophe competes, but applause are mixed with murmured disapproval of his temper and with murmured sympathy for those who fight him. Christophe is a controversial figure; he has the body of a hero and the soul of a spoiled child. People don't quite know what to make of him. When Christophe wins, the Baron presents him with the tourney's two first prizes: a young warhorse for the jousting competition and a prize falcon for the melee.

Any character who fights well in the tourney earns the respect of the Baron's knights and a place at the lesser knights' table. Anyone who wins is seated at the Baron's table (and thus has a chance to talk with Francois).

Francois does not participate in the tourney, but watches his nephew's performance from the Baron's table. Baron D'Oeuf, Bishop Guillet and a few older knights remain there as well.

The Feast

Just after the tourney, the feast begins. The Baron's servants have prepared a huge banquet for his guests, but before anyone eats, the Baron makes a toast to the returning heroes:

"A toast, to our knights brave and true, who set forth at our request so many years ago: in gratitude for battles well-fought, we



Baron D'Oeuf

offer you our greatest wishes for peace and long life! May you be forever ready to heed the call of battle!"

The people cheer at the Baron's toast. When the Baron's finished, the Bishop rises and offers a toast of his own. He also wants to associate himself with the knights' popularity, but has another motive. The Church has begun to preach for another Crusade to reverse recent Christian defeats. Though the Bishop isn't personally committed to the cause, he'd look better in the eyes of his superiors if several knights from his diocese took up the Cross. He says:

"Yes, a toast to these most holy of knights, who have won eternal reward by fighting to free the Holy Land from the infidel! May the world never want for knights brave enough to fight for the holy cause of our Lord!"

The Bishop's toast also receives cheers. As soon as the Bishop's finished, Christophe rises and gives the final toast. He'd already decided to set forth on a Crusade; he realizes this is the perfect time to announce it:

"Aye, cheers for these valiant knights, who have fought well against the Saracen. But their work is not yet done! The infidel still walks the Holy Land, and his presence defiles the earth where our Savior trod. So I say, cheer for me and for those who will accompany me, for I swear before God that I will not rest until my right hand drives the Saracens from the very Holy City! Who is with me?!"

Chaos breaks out at Christophe's toast. About half of the Baron's knights, carried away by the moment, leap to their feet and swear to follow Christophe. Listening commoners cheer loudly and immediately begin gossiping among themselves. The Bishop smiles thinly and the Baron looks uncomfortable. Francois looks pleased, but his pleasure is tempered by his knowledge of the dangers ahead, so does not cheer loudly.

For the rest of the feast, the Baron's knights try to outdo one another in boasting of what they will do to the Saracens. The Bishop moves among them, encouraging them and trying to make their commitments more sensible. Christophe and Francois discuss Francois' battles in much detail, and Baron D'Oeuf becomes more and more uncomfortable. Commoners and servants, who are scattered throughout the rest of the festival, gossip excitedly about the Crusades and about Christophe. Characters who are sharp-eared enough to eavesdrop (Perception simple rolls) or smooth enough to become trusted (Charm + Communication simple rolls) can learn of valuable information, such as Christophe's relation to Francois (roll of 6+), the death of Christophe's father's (roll of 7+), and of Christophe's legendary temper (8+) and ego (9+).

The End of the Feast

The feast lasts about two hours. As the sun sets, the Baron's servants set up a few large tents in the tourney area, for anyone who wishes to spend the night. All the knights, including Francois and Christophe, stay in Castle D'Oeuf, while many merchants and commoners leave early to get back to their homes by nightfall. A few commoners who live too far or have

drunk too much prepare to spend the night under the Baron's tents.

If the characters have spoken with Francois and set a time to meet with him, he meets them on time and travels back with them to Lux ex Tenebris (although see *The Quaesitor*, below). If the characters did not approach Francois during the festival, he and Christophe set out for their manor at mid-morning, and characters may attempt to approach Francois on the road. If they avoid or distract Christophe and remind Francois of his "friend" Azenis, Francois agrees to accompany them to the Covenant (again, see *The Quaesitor*). If the characters still don't contact Francois, he rides back to his manor and resumes his life there. However, he soon feels the draw of Azenis' spell and rides off to Lux ex Tenebris by himself.

The Quaesitor

The characters aren't the only ones interested in Francois D'Alsante. Severine heard of the knight's "symptoms" and recognized Azenis' Sigil in them. She dispatched her filius, Stratus Enor, to watch Francois and, if possible, bring him to her. Because Severine wants whatever Francois has, she hasn't declared an official investigation and she's told Stratus Enor to keep a low profile.

Stratus Enor, dressed in a simple robe, keeps a close eye on Francois during the entire festival. Anyone who searches the crowd for someone paying special attention to Francois notices Stratus Enor on a Perception + Scan simple roll of 7+ (he's not



Stratus Enor

very stealthy). Unless he's detected and confronted, Stratus Enor witnesses any contact the characters have with Francois. If possible, he listens to their conversation with the spell *Whispering Winds* (Intéllego Auram 15). He casts this spell with soft words and no gestures to avoid detection (-10 on casting roll). Stratus Enor's plan is to follow the characters and Francois as they leave the festival area, and then overtake and confront them on the road (armed with his Quaesitor status).

If the characters confront Stratus Enor during the festival (or at any time when there are a lot of people around), he denies any accusations made against him. He was told to keep a low profile. With talk of a Crusade in the air, the last thing he wants to do is to publicly acknowledge himself as a Magus. He claims to be a simple scholar from Tourien, here to watch the tourney.

If characters confront Stratus Enor when there is no one around, or if they start off to Lux ex Tenebris and let him confront them, his manner is totally different. If he doesn't think characters are Magi, Stratus Enor initially tries to scare them away with a flashy display of power (perhaps using *Rise of the Feathery Body* [Rego Córpoem 10]). Once he realizes that characters are Magi, Stratus Enor announces that he is a Quaesitor sent by Severine, and requires that Francois be put in his care for questioning. Although Stratus Enor was told to keep his and Severine's identity secret, he cannot imagine giving orders to Magi without first clarifying his authority.

Stratus Enor's manner is initially commanding and authoritative, but if he's pressed he starts to waffle. If asked, he admits that he's not here in his "official" capacity as Quaesitor, and that neither Azenis nor the characters are the subject of any investigation. He evades any questions about why Severine wants to question Francois, simply because she hasn't told him. In general, once he's asked to justify his conduct, Stratus Enor becomes uncomfortable. The truth is that he's an honest Quaesitor who can't admit to himself that he's being used for dishonest purposes.

There are several ways to get past Stratus Enor. If the characters steadfastly insist on their right to escort Francois to Lux ex Tenebris, Stratus Enor threatens, cajoles and tries to get the characters' names, but in the end lets them go. If one of the characters challenges him to *Certámen*, Stratus Enor accepts and allows the characters to depart with Francois if he loses. If the characters simply run from the Quaesitor, he chases them, but he's not terribly fast. The characters can probably outrun him and detour to the Covenant.

In any conversation between characters and Stratus Enor about the group's destination, Francois is reminded of Azenis' spell and assumes his defeated appearance (if he hasn't already). If asked directly, Francois expresses a desire to see Azenis as soon as possible.

If the characters lose *Certámen* with Stratus Enor or if they give up Francois without a fight, Francois and Stratus Enor begin traveling toward Severine's Covenant. After a few days, Azenis' spell exerts its pull on Francois. He escapes from Stratus Enor and makes his way to Lux ex Tenebris on his own.

If the characters threaten or physically attack Stratus Enor, he immediately runs (using *Wizard's Sidestep* to escape if

necessary) and later brings charges against them. Severine presses these charges with her full authority. Depending on what they did, the characters might find themselves facing substantial penalties. These actions could be the main reason for their banishment in Chapter Two, or their "crimes" might brought up again in Chapter Two as additional evidence against the characters.

Conclusion

If the characters successfully escort Francois to Lux ex Tenebris, Azenis immediately invites Francois into his sanctum, alone. Azenis is very pleased to discover that his enchantment is still intact, and that Francois has the Holy Shroud. It's possible for characters to eavesdrop on this meeting, but Azenis' sanctum defenses (see Chapter Three) and his spell *The Invisible Eye Revealed* (see the Appendix) make spying on him very difficult. As soon as he has the Shroud, Azenis dismisses Francois (without an escort). Azenis then emerges from his sanctum to thank the characters for a job well done, and arranges for them to receive whatever reward he promised. If this prize consists of a Season of study at the Covenant, the characters now have a chance to fully explore Lux ex Tenebris and meet the Covenant's inhabitants.

If the characters return to Lux ex Tenebris without Francois, Azenis brands them incompetents and traitors, and refuses to let them study in his library. However, Azenis' spell eventually causes Francois to return to Lux ex Tenebris on his own. This event dramatically improves Azenis' mood, and if the characters are still around or they encounter him later, Azenis agrees to pay what he originally promised.

If asked, Azenis claims to have no idea why the Quaesitoris would be interested in Francois and denies having cast a spell on the knight. However, once Azenis has the Shroud, he doesn't care whether the characters believe his denials or not, so doesn't try to make them particularly convincing. He does, however, ask for the names of the Quaesitoris interested in Francois.

François D'Alsante

Francois D'Alsante is a brave and pious knight. He's a strong believer in the ideals of chivalry and the teachings of the Church. Indeed, he's spent most of his life trying to improve himself spiritually, through acts of charity, self-sacrifice and service to the Church. When Francois heard that the Kingdom of Jerusalem was under attack by Moslem infidels, he swore to fight on its behalf. Unlike many Crusaders, Francois "took the Cross" selflessly, with full knowledge of the hardships involved and without any thought of plunder or personal glory. With his brother Giscard, Francois assembled a small force of eight knights and prepared to travel to the Holy Land.

Before he left, however, the Magus Azenis met Francois on the road and cast a great spell upon him. Francois was enchanted so that he was compelled to find the Holy Shroud

Francois D'Alsante

Characteristics: Intelligence (wise) +1, Perception 0, Strength (broad shoulders) +2, Stamina (strong constitution) +3, Presence (dignified) +1, Communication 0, Dexterity (arthritic joints) -2, Quickness (slow reactions) -1

Age: 46

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Social Contacts (in Holy Land) +1, Enduring Constitution (+3 to resist pain, -1 on effects of wounds and Fatigue) +1, True Faith (stress roll — no Botches — of 0 or 1 negates magic) +1, Arthritis (physical Botches impose -5 penalty to actions) -3, Poor Memory (-2 on memory rolls) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (battle cries) 5, Speak Latin (prayers) 3, Scribe Latin (prayers) 2, Speak Arabic (etiquette) 2, Scribe Arabic (medical texts) 1, Dodge (missiles) 3, Animal Handling (horses) 1, Ride (in combat) 4, Leadership (soldiers) 2, Lance Attack (in formation) 3, Broadsword Attack (in formation) 4, Kite Shield Parry (lances) 4, Church Lore (Crusades) 3, Church Knowledge (heresies) 2, Medicine (anatomy) 1

Faith Points: 1

Reputation: Heroic (nobility) 4, Religious (clergy) 3

Personality Traits: Brave +2, Devout +3, Honorable +2, Defeated (while under spell) +3, Confused (while under spell) +2

Weapons and Armor: Chain Mail Hauberk, Lance, Broadsword, Kite Shield

Lance Totals: First Strike +3, Attack +3, Damage +13

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +0, Attack +6, Damage +12

Kite Shield Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), Soak +15/+35* (21/41* Action), Fatigue -3.

*Francois wears the Holy Shroud, which adds +20 to his Soak. See the Appendix for details on the protective powers of the Shroud.

no longer aware he is ensorcelled. However, whenever he is somehow reminded of the spell or his quest, the enchantment regains control of him. Francois can be reminded of the spell either directly or by being confronted with actions that he performed while "under the influence." When this happens, Azenis' Sigil is restored to full potency, causing Francois to hang his head and mumble his words. In addition, Francois does whatever is necessary to fulfill Azenis' commands. Once he does what the spell compels him to do, Francois forgets what he did and becomes his old self again.

A Spontaneous Intéllego Vim spell of Level 10+ reveals that Francois is under some sort of enchantment. Further information can only be gained through laboratory investigation (a time-consuming process), as if Francois were a magical device (see *Ars Magica*, p.254). The spell he is under is *Grant the Hidden Quest* (Rego Mentem 40), detailed in the Appendix.

Francois is somewhat indulgent of his nephew Christophe. Though he disapproves of Christophe's pride and temper, he believes his nephew will eventually learn maturity and self-control. Francois is loyal to his lord, the Baron D'Oeuf, but distrusts Bishop Guillet (although he respects Guillet's office).

Francois' companions from the Crusade are worried about his symptoms and his refusal to discuss why he left them for a time. However, they're reluctant to discuss his symptoms openly, for fear of ruining his reputation, and they don't trust Magi to cure him. Francois' symptoms are not common knowledge.



Francois D'Alsante

and bring it to Azenis. Azenis also compelled Francois to say nothing of his quest or of his enchantment.

The spell has had strange and somewhat unexpected effects on Francois. His strong religious beliefs and the power of the Shroud itself enable him to resist the enchantment somewhat. Although Francois did find the Holy Shroud as Azenis commanded, he did not return it to Azenis immediately, instead spending years in the Holy Land fighting the infidel as he had vowed. And although Azenis' Sigil is to make the objects of his spells appear defeated in some way, Francois largely resists this aspect of the spell.

Francois' resistance has not been complete, though. He has resisted the spell by shutting out the memory of Azenis' commands. Indeed, he has been so successful at this that he is

Throughout this chapter, Francois wears the Holy Shroud at all times. For purposes of resisting spells cast on Francois, the Shroud acts as a relic with three Faith Points (see *Ars Magica*, p.329). See the Appendix for a description of the Holy Shroud.

Because the characters' gradual, not immediate, discovery of the Holy Shroud is central to later chapters of this Saga, it's best if characters don't realize Francois has the Shroud. This should be easy to arrange, since Francois wears the Shroud under his armor and refuses to discuss it or allow himself to be searched. If the characters risk Azenis' wrath and forcibly take the Shroud from Francois, the Saga can still continue if they return it to Azenis, but some of the mystery is lost.

Appearance: Francois is a tall, strong man. His face is lined, and he has a short, graying beard that gives him an air of dignity and authority. He's most comfortable when wearing his armor.

Roleplaying Tips: Until you are reminded of the spell, speak decisively and hold your head high. Don't speak often, but when you do, sprinkle your speech with references to chivalry and God. Once the enchantment takes hold of you, hang your head. Act disoriented and passive.

Reward

As reward for services rendered to Azenis, the characters may spend a Season at Lux ex Tenebris, studying from its library. They may explore the Covenant and interact with its inhabitants: a kindly Jerbiton Magus, a veteran Grog Captain, an aging librarian, a nervous and harried Autocrat, and a variety of servants and Grogs. In general, Lux ex Tenebris looks like a Covenant in early Winter: though many of its inhabitants are growing old, the Covenant is still functioning.

Though there's no death or rebirth in this part of the Saga, the characters' experiences here set the stage for the Covenant's coming decay. Here the characters meet many of the Covenant's inhabitants while they're still alive and well; in Chapter Three these same people are decrepit or dead.

A SEASON OF STUDY

In exchange for their help in bringing Francois to Lux ex Tenebris, the characters are given the opportunity to study from Lux ex Tenebris' library (mundane or arcane) for one Season. Of course, this is aside from any other rewards offered.

Magi and Companions are put up in the Covenant's guest rooms (area two), while any Grogs who wish to stay are invited to sleep in the barracks (area five). The Autocrat, Bouvette, accommodates any reasonable requests for special attention regarding sleeping quarters or meals. Lamar, the librarian, is very cooperative in finding books for Magi and other characters. In general, the characters' needs are attended to and they spend their study time in security and comfort. See Chapter Three, areas 20 to 21, for a description of the Lux ex Tenebris mundane and arcane libraries; the characters can study any knowledge, Art or spell listed.

MEETING THE INHABITANTS

Although the characters are given the freedom to explore most parts of the Covenant, there are several areas that are off-limits. The two sancta, Azenis' in the central tower (area 22 to 23) and Triandin's underground (area 24), are naturally forbidden to all but their respective Magi. The Covenant treasury (area 18) is jealously guarded by Bouvette, mainly because she doesn't want anyone to know how empty it is. She refuses to let anyone in without Azenis' permission (which he doesn't give without good reason). The shifting caverns (area 28) are off-limits as well, because of the danger of becoming lost within. And wandering through the Grog barracks or servants' quarters without permission might not endear characters to the covenfolk.

Azenis remains in his sanctum the entire Season that the characters are present, having meals brought to him by Tappel, his servant. Azenis is busy trying to warp the Holy Shroud to Hermetic magic, so has neither the time nor the inclination for conversation. He even refuses requests on his time. Azenis emerges only to bid the characters goodbye at the end of their Season of study.

Other inhabitants of the Covenant are available for interaction. If you don't need or want to force characters into talking to people, characters can interact with covenfolk in the course of life at the Covenant. If it would be fun to force confrontations between characters and covenfolk, or if you simply want to invest character interactions with more substance, you can run a few short stories involving covenfolk. For example, an Unseelie faerie might start ambushing visitors on their way to the Covenant, and characters might be asked to help Andrew, the Grog Captain, hunt it down. Or the characters might encounter Kakithric (Azenis' Familiar) and Bouvette (the Autocrat) in a heated argument about the Covenant's future, and might have to intervene to prevent violence. Or Triandin might give a singing performance for the characters, or give one of them a gift of jewelry.

These are just examples, but no matter how you run this section of the Saga, try to give characters some opportunity to interact with Lux ex Tenebris' inhabitants. Many of the people described here are much worse off in Chapter Three, and if characters know them well when they're healthy, the drama of the coming decay is intensified.

Befriending Triandin

Triandin, the junior Magus of Lux ex Tenebris, is probably the friendliest inhabitant of the Covenant. He hopes the characters will someday join Lux ex Tenebris and restore it, so makes a great effort to get to know them and make them feel welcome.

If Triandin becomes friends with the characters, he may bring up the subject of their joining the Covenant. Although Azenis now refuses to let anyone join, Triandin knows Azenis



is very old and doesn't expect him to last much longer. When Azenis dies, Triandin will become Pontifex and he'll be able to revitalize Lux ex Tenebris by opening it to new, younger Magi. Although Triandin cannot make any official offers of membership, he may sound out friendly Magi to see if they would be interested in joining later.

See the Appendix for a description of Triandin.

THE COVENANT'S DECAY

The characters are expected to leave Lux ex Tenebris when their Season of study is over. Azenis, fearful of any threat to his power, makes sure of that. The Season after the characters leave, Azenis succeeds in warping the Shroud to Hermetic magic. It now halts his aging completely and provides him with various other protective powers (see the Appendix). However, in order to preserve Azenis, the Shroud must drain life from everything around it. Thus the Covenant begins to die. Books decay, buildings fall into ruin and inhabitants age at an accelerated rate.

Unless the characters make a special effort to visit the Covenant in the next three years, they don't hear anything from Lux ex Tenebris until they receive Azenis' offer at the end of Chapter Two. When they arrive at the Covenant at the beginning of Chapter Three, they find it decayed and dying, as described in that chapter.

If characters want to visit Lux ex Tenebris between Chapters One and Two, Azenis tries to discourage them but Triandin tells them they're welcome. If they do visit, they find the Covenant at some stage of decay intermediate between the Covenants described in Chapters One and Three. The amount of disrepair, senility, and death is generally proportional to the amount of time that has passed, with the following two exceptions: Lamar dies the Season after this chapter and Triandin dies the Season before Chapter Three. If the characters begin investigating the reason for this decay, they may be able to make some initial progress (see Chapter Five), but as soon as Azenis realizes what the characters are up to (through his spells or through Kakithric or Tappel), he throws them out of the Covenant.

COVENANT INHABITANTS

Three of the Covenant inhabitants (Azenis, Triandin and Kakithric) recur throughout the Saga and are therefore described in the Appendix. Other important inhabitants are described below.

Andrew

Characteristics: Intelligence (level-headed) +1, Perception 0, Strength (strong grip) +2, Stamina (enduring) +3, Presence (dirty) -1, Communication (commanding voice) +1, Dexterity (steady) +1, Quickness (slow reflexes) -1

Age: 47

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Tough (+3 to Soak; already added below) +1, Missing Ear (-1 to hearing rolls) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 3, Scan (forest) 2, Search (for people) 2, Athletics (wrestling) 2, Dodge (missiles) 3, Charisma (Grog) 4, Survival (forest) 1, Brawl (strikes) 3, Storytelling (his adventures) 1, Drinking (keeping wits) 2, Leadership (combat) 1, Pole Axe Attack (standing ground) 4, Pole Axe Parry (beasts) 3, Shortsword Attack (small spaces) 2, Fantastic Beast Lore (giants) 2, Faerie Lore (festivals) 1

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Experienced (Grog) 1, Loyal (Magi) 1

Personality Traits: Loyal +3, Brave +2, Proud +2, Gruff +1

Weapons and Armor: Pole Axe, Shortsword, Scale Mail Hauberk

Pole Axe Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +6, Damage +19, Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Sword Totals: First Strike -1, Attack +7, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +15 (21 Action), Fatigue -1

Andrew

Andrew has been Captain of the turb at Lux ex Tenebris for many years. He started as a common Grog and worked his way up through the ranks by virtue of his bravery, loyalty and martial skill. He's proud of his position and accomplishments, and is well-respected by his Grog.

Andrew is obedient to Magi but maintains a distance from them. He can be befriended by a Grog or Companion, particularly one who has a lot of combat experience and who's willing to listen to his tales of adventure.

Appearance: Andrew has been through a lot, and it shows. His ear is missing, his hands are scarred and his face is rough and weathered. He's often unkempt and unshaven, but he keeps his weaponry clean and shiny.

Roleplaying Tips: Be direct. Don't question a Magus who gives you an order.

Bouvette

Bouvette is the Covenant Autocrat. She manages the day-to-day affairs of Lux ex Tenebris and commands the 15 folk who cook, clean and otherwise maintain the Covenant. Although Bouvette is a competent administrator, the task of managing a disintegrating Covenant is taking its toll on her.

Her main worry is the Covenant finances. Lux ex Tenebris had a large reserve of silver and gold from its glory days of Autumn, when it sold raw vis and magic items and taxed the surrounding lands. The Covenant has been spending that reserve for a long time, though, and it's nearly depleted. Azenis' travel expenditures and the gold that he paid to the dragon haven't helped matters. Bouvette has calculated that in a few years, Lux ex Tenebris will be bankrupt.

To make matters worse, Bouvette doesn't know what to do about the situation. She considers it her job to keep the Covenant afloat financially, so she thinks it her fault that it's failing. After so many years of being an exemplary administrator, she can't bring herself to admit failure. So, rather than look for a new source of funds, Bouvette spends most of her time trying to keep others from learning of the Covenant's financial problems. She keeps all of the books herself, and doesn't let anyone (even Triandin) see them without permission from Azenis. Privately, she worries what would happen if anyone ever found out. In public she pretends that everything is fine and she hotly disputes with anyone who suggests that the Covenant is in trouble. Of course, all of this only delays the inevitable.

Appearance: Bouvette is a small, graying woman with a clear, firm voice. She is always clean and neatly dressed.

Roleplaying Tips: Be straightforward and efficient unless someone suggests the Covenant is dying or asks to see the financial records. Then, be defensive and paranoid.

Bouvette

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (observant) +1, Strength (decrepit) -2, Stamina (enfeebled) -1, Presence 0, Communication (secretive) -2, Dexterity (gawky limbs) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 39

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Educated +1, Obsessed (with Covenant finances) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 4, Speak Latin (numbers) 3, Scribe Latin (numbers) 3, Alertness (covenfolk) 2, Guile (lying about finances) 1, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 2, Pretend (to be calm) 2, Bargain (with peasants) 4, Diplomacy (Covenant politics) 2, Intimidation (Grog) 3, Chirurgy (bind wounds) 2, Cooking (vegetables) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Strange (covenfolk) 1

Personality Traits: Stressed +3, Secretive +2, Paranoid +1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Lux ex Tenebris Grog

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (alert) +1, Strength (strong arms) +1, Stamina (stalwart) +1, Presence (scarred) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (agile) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 31-45

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (battle cries) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 2, Scan (from Covenant) 2, Brawl (strikes) 2, Drinking (guzzle) 3, Hand Axe Attack (in formation) 3, Knight Shield Parry (thrusting weapons) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Loyal 1

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Andrew) +3, Laconic +2

Weapons and Armor: Hand Axe, Knight Shield, Ring Mail Hauberk

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +6, Damage +11

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +6

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -2

Lux ex Tenebris Grog (20)

The Covenant's Groggs are veterans of many battles. They are completely loyal to Andrew, who has seen them safely through their hardships.

Tappel

Tappel is Azenis' personal servant, and the only person Azenis allows in his sanctum. Azenis saved the life of Tappel's grandfather. The Tappel family has since served Azenis. The current Tappel is completely loyal to Azenis, but knows nothing of Azenis' research or plans.

Appearance: Tappel is thin and rather slimy. Azenis makes no demands upon his servant's cleanliness or odor, so Tappel rarely makes an effort at hygiene.

Roleplaying Tips: Whine and sigh when something bothersome arises. Be obedient to Magi but look for excuses when anyone else makes a request.

Lamar

Lamar is the Covenant librarian. He was originally hired as an apprentice glassblower, but showed a great interest in books and quickly learned to read. Ever since, Lamar has worked in the library. Although he still supplies Magi with glassware, most of his time is spent arranging and maintaining the mundane and arcane libraries. He's proud of his job and



Tappel

Characteristics: Intelligence (dull-witted) -1, Perception 0, Strength (weak chest) -2, Stamina (short-winded) -1, Presence 0, Communication (faltering voice) -1, Dexterity (gangly) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 23

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Weak Self-Confidence -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (talking to Azenis) 4, Search (Covenant closets) 2, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 1, Brawl (throws) 1, Stealth (sneak) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Flatterer (Grogs) 1

Personality Traits: Loyal +3, Honest +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

Lamar

Characteristics: Intelligence (learned) +2, Perception (weak eyes) -3, Strength 0, Stamina (nagging cough) -1, Presence -2 (unassuming), Communication (quiet voice) -2, Dexterity (clumsy) -2, Quickness (slow reactions) -2

Age: 54

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Educated +1, Arcane Lore +1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (long words) 5, Speak Latin (Classics) 4, Scribe Latin (recognizing decaying script) 4, Speak Arabic (Classics) 3, Scribe Arabic (recognizing decaying script) 2, Search (libraries) 3, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 2, Craft — Glassworking (beakers) 3, Hermes History (the Old Ones) 3, Hermetic Law (the Peripheral Code) 2, Hermes Lore (history of Lux ex Tenebris) 3, Fantastic Beast Lore (dragons) 3, Legend Lore (wizards) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Knowledgeable (Magi) 1

Personality Traits: Protective (of books) +2, Careful +2, Loyal +1, Brave -1

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue -1

protective of the books, but he's worried about what will happen to the library when he's gone.

Appearance: Lamar is a small old man with a back that's bent from carrying too many books. His eyes are so weak that when he reads, he practically has to touch the book to his face.

Roleplaying Tips: Bend over and speak in an old voice. Squint when you look at someone. Be polite to scholars.



DISGRACE

CHAPTER TWO

Develi couldn't believe it. Only a few days ago, she was a respected member of the Order and her Covenant. Her greatest worry was whether Olendur would let the Covenant's Terram books out of his sight long enough for her to study from them.

Then came the rumors. An Inquisition, said some. No, not an Inquisition, just an investigation, said others. No, a full-blown Crusade, said still others. The one thing that everyone agreed on was that Develi and her companions were the focus of the Church's questioning. The Bishop wanted to know about her contact with Francois D'Alsante.

It had surprised Develi that such a trivial event would be the subject of such scrutiny, but she wasn't worried. There were a few aspects of that mission that she still didn't understand, but she couldn't believe that anyone would start a Crusade over it. Besides, she'd run the errand on behalf of Azenis. As far as she was concerned, he should be held responsible.

It hadn't worked out that way. Develi and her companions were now sitting across the table from Severine, the senior Quaesitor of the Tribunal. Severine was accusing them of interfering in mundane affairs and arousing the Church's anger against the Order. She was threatening them with exile from their Covenant.

Develi had responded to every accusation as deferentially as she could, but Severine didn't let up. Her cold eyes glared hatefully at them and her face seemed permanently frozen in a scowl. Nothing that Develi did lessened the judge's anger.

Develi looked across the table. Severine was interrogating Olendur. "What reward did Azenis give you to break the Code of Hermes?" she demanded.

Olendur, unable to answer such a question, only stared at her in bewilderment, but at this latest insult Develi finally lost her temper. "Why are you doing this to us?" she shouted. "Why don't you question Azenis if you think he bribed us to break the Code?"

Develi's companions looked at her with approval, for she'd said what they'd all been thinking. But Severine only scowled more deeply. "I'll make Azenis pay for his crimes," she said, "after I make you pay for yours."

SUMMARY

This chapter is set three years after the characters return from *Lux ex Tenebris*. Francois dies and on his deathbed confesses to having been bewitched by wizards, forced to perform a terrible wrong. Bishop Guillet investigates the charges, asking nearby Covenants what they know of Azenis and the characters. The characters soon hear the Church is looking for them. This news also reaches the ears of Severine, who sees this as an opportunity to make an example of the characters.

Soon after the characters receive word of the Church's interest, Severine arrives and harshly interrogates all who guided Francois to *Lux ex Tenebris*. No matter how they answer, she uses her influence to banish them from their Covenant, supposedly in punishment for arousing the Church's ire but actually in retaliation for having aided Azenis.

Azenis hears of the characters' plight and offers them membership in *Lux ex Tenebris*. If they are reluctant to join, he sweetens the offer with promises of raw vis and lab space.

THEME

This chapter allows the characters to directly experience the theme of death and rebirth. The characters' exile costs them their home, their prestige and, perhaps worst of all, their labs and library. But the same exile also gives them motivation and opportunity to join *Lux ex Tenebris*, to create a new Covenant for themselves. If the characters choose to accept their fate, they have a chance to build a new, stronger home, one in which they have a greater stake.

OPTIONS

In addition to bringing out the Saga's theme, this chapter introduces the characters to Severine, and provides some motivation for them to join *Lux ex Tenebris*. However, if you feel that having characters lose their status is unduly harsh, or if you want characters to maintain their connections to their old Covenant, there are several ways this story can be modified. Severine's questioning can be more subtly threatening, so that characters decide to leave on their own before she finds genuine evidence against them. Perhaps Severine might not appear at all, and the characters decide to leave their old Covenant to avoid the Bishop's envoy, or simply because Azenis makes them a tempting offer. The main storyline is presented below, but any variation that inspires characters to join *Lux ex Tenebris* is fine.

Rumors of Inquisition

At D'Alsante Manor (see the *Area Surrounding Lux ex Tenebris* map), Francois D'Alsante becomes sick and dies. Although he was bound to silence by Azenis' spell, a miracle occurs on his deathbed and the spell is lifted so that Francois can confess his sins. Half-delirious, Francois tells his family

and the attending parish priest that evil wizards bewitched him into doing a "terrible wrong." He names Azenis and the characters as the villains and then passes away.

The parish priest reports Francois' final words to Bishop Guillet and the D'Alsante family pressures the Bishop to launch an investigation of the Order of Hermes.

The D'Alsante family is prominent and politically powerful, mainly because of Christophe D'Alsante, whom the characters encountered in Chapter One. In the past few years, Christophe has become widely known for his heroic deeds in the Holy Land, and his popularity has spread to his family.

Although the Bishop has no wish to antagonize the Order, he feels he has no choice but to conduct at least a cursory investigation. The Bishop dispatches his envoy, Father Talmadge, to question all those who might know something of the characters' whereabouts. Azenis, when questioned, claims that he's never heard of Francois or the characters. Other Covenants also deny knowledge of the knight and, being unwilling to turn in fellow Magi, also say they've never heard of the characters. However, Father Talmadge somehow discovers who the characters are and to what Covenant they belong. Perhaps he finds some disgruntled ex-Grogs willing to turn in old employers, or pressures a merchant who does business with the characters' Covenant, or talks to a Magus who has some grudge against the characters. In any case, Father Talmadge's questioning isn't subtle, and the rest of the Order soon hears of the Church's interest in the characters.



Father Talmadge

Father Talmadge

Characteristics: Intelligence (stupid) -3, Perception 0, Strength (small frame) -1, Stamina (weak-willed) -2, Presence (unassuming) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (awkward stance) -1, Quickness 0

Age: 45

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (prayers) 4, Speak Latin (the Mass) 4, Scribe Latin (the Holy Bible) 3, Debate (Church doctrine) 3, Meditation (prayer) 2, Diplomacy (nobility) 2, Church Lore (confessions) 3, Church Knowledge (heresy) 4

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Boring (clergy) 2

Personality Traits: Dull +2, Easily Annoyed +2, Rule-Bound +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

While Father Talmadge prepares to journey to the characters' Covenant to question them, rumors of an impending Inquisition spread throughout the Order. In reality, Bishop Guillet is afraid of the Order of Hermes and is organizing investigations only to placate the D'Alsante family. The characters learn of the impending "Inquisition" when a Redcap brings news of the Church envoy's impending visit, and of the Order's concern. The Redcap doesn't know that Azenis has already been questioned by Father Talmadge.

At this point other Magi of the characters' Covenant probably question the characters regarding their previous experience. Assuming the characters answer truthfully, the other Magi probably conclude that if there was any wrongdoing, it was the fault of Azenis and the characters were his unwitting accomplices.

If the characters remain at the Covenant to wait for Father Talmadge, Severine arrives first and questions them (see *Severine's Visit*). If the characters decide to demonstrate their helpfulness and travel to Tourien to speak with Bishop Guillet or Father Talmadge, they are admitted to Guillet's presence and questioned at length about their contact with Francois (see the Appendix for a description of Bishop Guillet). Whether the characters lie or tell the truth, Bishop Guillet suspects they are holding something back. However, he's not willing to challenge the Order of Hermes, so simply looks displeased and tells the characters that he may question them again later. When the characters return to their Covenant, Severine is waiting for them.

FATHER TALMADGE

Father Talmadge is a dutiful but uninspiring priest who has little ambition and no desire to investigate the Order of Hermes. He doesn't understand why he was chosen to be the Bishop's envoy, but the job has put him in a foul mood.

Actually, Bishop Guillet chose Father Talmadge for this investigation because the Bishop thought he was the most likely candidate to fail.

Appearance: Father Talmadge is small and almost completely bald. His appearance is unremarkable, except perhaps for the unusually stupid look on his face.

Roleplaying Tips: Assume a bland expression. Players might initially think you shrewd, but when you ask someone to repeat a statement, admitting to have been daydreaming, they realize the truth.

Severine's Visit

At her Covenant, Severine hears rumors of an Inquisition. She knows (from Stratus Enor or from other sources) that the characters helped Azenis contact Francois. She sees the Bishop's investigation as an opportunity to discredit the characters and punish them for aiding her rival. She also wants to interrogate the characters about Francois, mistakenly believing that she can learn why Azenis enchanted the knight.

Two days after the Redcap brings news of Bishop Guillet's envoy, Severine arrives, unannounced, at the characters' Covenant. She demands an immediate council meeting, wherein she accuses the characters of violating the Code. She claims they have brought the wrath of the Church upon the entire Order, and announces that she's here to question the characters and to determine their punishment.

Many of the Covenant's Magi (undoubtedly including the characters themselves) are taken aback by such extreme accusations and some may try to moderate Severine's anger. Severine, however, is not to be placated. She asserts her right as a Quaesitor to investigate violations of the Code, and immediately begins to question the characters who accompanied Francois to Lux ex Tenebris. Unless the characters object, Severine questions them under *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (Intelligence 20). If they do object, she does not insist on using the spell, but may later use the characters' objection as evidence against them.

Severine's questions take two forms. The first are intended to gather information. Severine knows Azenis was interested in the knight and has guessed that the knight was enchanted, but doesn't know what Azenis wanted from him or what the nature of his enchantment was. Although the characters probably don't know either, Severine thinks they do and asks lots of questions to discover why Francois went to Lux ex Tenebris. For example, she asks, "Precisely where in the Holy Land had Francois been?" or "What information was he bringing to Azenis?"

She may also ask characters about time spent at Lux ex Tenebris, particularly about Azenis' activities (e.g., "*How did he spend his time?*" or "*Did he seem pleased with the progress of his research?*"). She is initially reluctant to believe the characters know as little as they do, but complete and truthful answers under her spell may eventually convince her of the characters' ignorance (not that this makes any difference in her final judgment).

The second type of question is designed to make the characters look bad. Severine asks loaded questions in order to justify the punishment she has already decided to mete out. Some examples of these are "*Did you bring this Inquisition upon us by accident or by design?*", "*How could you be so negligent as to continue your mission when you could plainly see that this knight was enchanted?*", and "*Why were you so willing to break the Code's prohibition against interference in mundane affairs?*" Although Severine claims to be determining the characters' guilt or innocence, she's completely uninterested in the extent to which they have violated the Code, so long as she can use evidence to justify a harsh punishment. She wants to set an example to all those who would ally with Azenis. The Church's interest merely makes this easy for her.

If the characters ask why Azenis isn't also being punished, Severine says that he'll be questioned. Severine expects to use these same accusations against Azenis, but wants to wait until the Bishop presses the matter further before she moves against such a powerful figure. The more pressure the Bishop applies to the Order, the more leverage she has against Azenis. (Unfortunately for her, Bishop Guillet is not interested in attacking the Order and talk of an Inquisition soon dies down).

The characters may know of Severine's interest in Francois from Chapter One, when her *filius* Stratus Enor confronted the characters. If they bring this up, she claims she was investigating the matter even then, to prevent what has just occurred. If the characters press the issue or suggest that Severine is pursuing a personal vendetta against Azenis (which is true), she becomes angry and commands them to silence, threatening charges of insubordination.

Once Severine has completed her questioning, she retires for a few hours and emerges with her judgment.

JUDGMENT

Severine delivers upon the characters the harshest punishment she can justify. At the very least she puts strong pressure on them to leave their Covenant, perhaps by denying them access to their Covenant labs for a year. Her intended punishment is more severe than this: permanent exile from the Covenant. If she has the power, she even imposes permanent exile without any vis or magic items. In any case, these punishments only apply to the Magi who accompanied Francois to Lux ex Tenebris. Although she suggests that Grogs and Companions on that errand be punished as well, she leaves that to other Covenant Magi.

Severine's ability to justify the characters' punishment depends mainly on her influence in the Tribunal. You can

determine this based on the punishment that works best for your Saga. If you want the characters to maintain close ties to their old Covenant (or if you're in a benevolent mood), you might make Severine only powerful enough to pressure the characters into leaving. On the other hand, if you want the drama of a first-class exile (or if you're just feeling particularly nasty), you can make Severine the senior Quaesitor of the Tribunal, with the power to impose just about anything short of a Wizard's March.

If the characters have a powerful ally (such as a famous or influential *parens*), Severine's judgment might be moderated. However, if you want to afflict the characters with a harsh punishment, you can determine that their ally is unable or unwilling to help them. Severine might have a way to blackmail the ally, or perhaps Severine herself has a powerful backer (such as the Tribunal Praeco, or the Primus of House Quaesitor) who overrules the characters' protector.

In deciding how harsh to make Severine's judgment, keep in mind that the punishment should hurt. The characters shouldn't feel it is fair. They've just been cheated and have very little recourse.

THE REACTION

The characters and other Magi of the Covenant are probably dismayed by Severine's judgment, but there's little they can do. Even if she's not the Tribunal's senior Quaesitor, Severine is old and well-respected, and she's chosen a punishment that's just mild enough to make stick. The characters have to live with her punishment.

However, it's unlikely that characters immediately accept this fate. There are several ways that they might try to reverse the decision. The simplest is to appeal to a higher Hermetic authority. If you don't want the characters to do this, you can say that no other Quaesitor is interested in second-guessing Severine. Severine hopes to avoid an appeal to a superior Quaesitor, as she's dancing on the edge of her legal rights, but if she has to defend her judgment she does. She has enough respect from her superiors that the characters' appeal probably fails.

If during an appeal characters bring up Severine's own interest in Francois, she herself might be questioned. Because Severine doesn't dare lie to her seniors, the characters can learn how she knew Francois had been enchanted by Azenis: they learn what Azenis' Sigil is. The characters might also learn that Severine hates Azenis; they might infer that this is why she punished them so harshly. Severine evades the question of why she hates Azenis and her superiors don't press the issue.

Another way that characters can try to reverse Severine's judgment is by searching for something incriminating about her. Even if the characters aren't thinking of blackmail, it's probably an automatic response (and a good idea) to learn as much as possible about Severine. Anyone who spends a few days in a Hermetic library can make an Intelligence + Hermes Lore simple roll to discover something about Severine.

There's plenty of information about her. Severine is frequently mentioned in the Tribunal notes and Peripheral Code rulings of the past 130 years. Most of these citations describe some official duty that she performed, but a character versed in Hermes Lore can learn valuable things from these accounts. On a roll of 6+, characters learn that Severine is knowledgeable and well-respected among Quaesitoris. On a roll of 8+, characters learn she's a Traditionalist in her interpretation of the Code. On a roll of 12+, characters learn that in the past 15 years she has delegated many of her legal duties to junior Quaesitoris, and has spent much of her time collecting rare books and traveling to famous libraries. The characters find no hint that Severine was ever involved in any scandal or crime.

The third and least intelligent way to reverse Severine's decision is to threaten or attack her directly. Severine refuses to engage in *Certamen*. She's not at all intimidated by threats, and she's fully capable of defending herself from attack. In addition to her many powerful spells, she has a ring which casts *Circling Winds of Protection* (Rego Auram 20) around her. Severine stays behind her wall of wind and either casts spells (*Incantation of the Milky Eyes* [Perdo Corporem 20], *Lifting the Dangling Puppet* [Rego Corporem 20] or *Pilum of Fire* [Creo Ignem 20]) to destroy her attackers, or casts spells to escape (*Wall of Protecting Stone* [Creo Terram 25] or *Leap of Homecoming* [Rego Corporem 35]). Later, she brings charges against anyone involved in the attack. Any such characters are lucky if they survive.



Severine

AZENIS' OFFER

Eventually, all characters who escorted Francois undoubtedly leave their old Covenant, either because they've been pressured into leaving or because they've been thrown out. If you and your Troupe want to maintain connections to the old Covenant, you can have Grog and some Companion characters remain there. Such characters can be involved in stories unrelated to this Saga, they can visit Lux ex Tenebris for stories within this Saga, or they can eventually join Lux ex Tenebris after the exiled characters have established themselves. On the other hand, if you and your Troupe want all your characters to leave your old Covenant, all Grogs and Companions can immediately join the exiles, either out of friendship, loyalty or a sense of adventure.

If she can, Severine orders the outcast characters to leave their former Covenant within two days, before Father Talmadge arrives. When he arrives, Severine explains to him that the offenders were exiled from the Covenant for their crimes against Francois D'Alsante. She refuses to say where the characters are and refuses to explain exactly what they did. She hopes this evasion will anger the Bishop and cause him to press his investigation.

However, the Bishop greets the news with relief. He can now claim that the Magi involved have been punished. This allows him to suspend his investigation without reaching any conclusions or offending anyone. Even if the characters later become known to the Bishop, he's not interested in questioning them until Christophe returns (see Chapter Six). Of course, the Bishop's failure to pursue the issue does nothing to change the characters' punishment.

If the characters manage to stay at the Covenant until Father Talmadge arrives, they find him to be dull and officious. He does not question them very thoroughly and says nothing of his conclusions. Soon after questioning them, he leaves for Tourien to report to Bishop Guillet, after telling the characters that they may be questioned again later. Again, the Bishop is uninterested in antagonizing the Order. Even if the characters' story conflicts with Azenis', the Bishop doesn't press the matter.

Later in the Saga, if they acquire knowledgeable contacts in Tourien, the characters may learn why the Bishop initiated his investigation and why he called it off. However, until then the characters are probably in the dark about the Bishop's intentions and may even avoid him, mistakenly thinking that he's still looking for them.

Meanwhile, the characters are banished from their Covenant. Severine's judgment gives Magi characters a Tribunal-wide reputation as troublemakers (rated 3). Players should mark this on their character sheets. Other Covenants are therefore reluctant to offer the Magi membership, and founding a new Covenant is very difficult at best. Depending on the characters' contacts and politeness, they might be able to temporarily stay at some other Covenant, but ultimately need a permanent home. If the characters travel to Lux ex Tenebris and ask Azenis for membership, he receives them warmly.

To my most trusted and esteemed friends, the Magi [insert names], who have been so unjustly banished from their former Covenant:

I have heard of your troubles and I extend to you my deepest sympathy. I do not understand why you have been subjected to such punishment, for what was an entirely innocent mission. I continue to have complete faith in your competence and integrity.

To demonstrate that faith, and to aid you in your predicament, allow me to extend a formal invitation to join my Covenant, Lux ex Tenebris. As you may know, Lux ex Tenebris has an excellent library to allow you to study magical and mundane Arts, a strong Aura of magic to aid you in your laboratory experiments, a powerful Aegis of the Hearth to protect you from supernatural attack, and a steady supply of Terram vis collected annually on Covenant grounds.

With the death of my sodalis Triandin last Season, I am the sole Magus of Lux ex Tenebris, and it would give me great joy to know that the Covenant will continue after I am gone. I ask you then, as Magi in the Spring of your lives, to join Lux ex Tenebris and restore it to its own Spring.

Pax,
Axenis

Indeed, he's even more friendly once he hears of their difficulties with Severine. Chapter Three begins at this point.

If the characters don't go to Azenis, he hears of their exile and sends a message to them via Redcap. (see the previous page).

At this point the characters may be willing to forget that Azenis is partly responsible for their predicament, and may accept his offer in good faith. Even if the characters blame

Azenis for what happened to them, they might still join Lux ex Tenebris. The best chance they have to clear their names is to prove Azenis' guilt. Joining his Covenant could put the characters in an excellent position to gather evidence against him. No matter how the characters feel about Azenis, they shouldn't need much prodding to join Lux ex Tenebris. Chapter Three begins when the characters arrive at Lux ex Tenebris, prepared to join.



RESTORATION

CHAPTER THREE

Olendur wished that Develi was here. He knew it made sense for him to come alone; he was physically stronger and he was a better negotiator. But as he and his four Grogs followed the bandit scouts through the woods, he wished she was here to watch his back. If the bandits led him into an ambush, Olendur worried that his magic might not be able to save him.

The scouts led Olendur and his party into a small clearing. "Wait here," said one as they quickly vanished into the forest. Olendur looked around. The clearing provided no cover. Just a few paces away the forest was so thick that Olendur couldn't see into it. This was the perfect place for an ambush.

Olendur shuddered involuntarily and began moving his party to one side of the clearing. Before he and his Grogs took a step, an arrow flew out of the underbrush and landed at Olendur's foot.

The young Magus immediately dropped to his knees and prepared to cast, but there were no more arrows. A warning, then, not an attack. Out of the forest ahead of him stepped a tall, middle-aged man, wearing surprisingly fine clothes but covered in dirt. His hair was long and tangled. A sword dangled by his side but he made no move to draw it. Probably a negotiator, thought Olendur. The one they call Red Arrow was undoubtedly waiting and listening in the trees.

The man sneered at Olendur. "Are you the great wizard who needs our help?" he asked scornfully.

Olendur had been hoping for a friendly negotiator, but he had a speech prepared. He spoke loudly so that archers in the forest could hear. "Good men and women of the forest," he began. "I am the Magus Olendur of the Covenant Lux ex Tenebris. Until now you have lived your life by sword and bow, robbing from whom you could. I offer you a new life. We Magi seek guards, protectors of our keep and persons. I offer you employment at our Covenant. No longer must you live as outlaws and be hunted by the Baron's men. I offer you security and a future."

Olendur heard nothing from the forest. But the man scowled. "You offer us security and a future — in exchange for our souls!"

"Not so," answered Olendur. "I have no truck with demons. But I did not come here to be insulted. I have made my offer. Let Red Arrow show his face. Only he can accept or reject my offer."

At that, a small figure dropped from the trees and landed lightly at the edge of the clearing. Olendur turned to face a young woman, armored in brown leather and bearing a small bow. Her hair was cut short, and her face calm. Her eyes watched Olendur intently.

"I am Arma Red Arrow," she announced. "Let's talk."

SUMMARY

The characters arrive at Lux ex Tenebris. They find a Covenant deep in its Winter Season, as Azenis' use of the Shroud has caused the Covenant to age at an accelerated rate. Azenis asks the characters to join Lux ex Tenebris and restore it to Spring.

Once the characters join, Azenis gives them full responsibility for restoring the Covenant. The characters must find new Groggs and covenfolk, rebuild the Covenant's decaying walls, re-equip their magical laboratories, and restore the Covenant's relations with mundane society and with the Order of Hermes. These tasks form the basis of several stories set in the Covenant and surrounding lands. Rumors of Christophe D'Alsante are heard during these stories.

TIMING

Unlike the first two chapters, Chapters Three through Five are not necessarily meant to be run in order. Chapter Three describes the process of rebuilding the Covenant. Chapter Four describes the characters' search for a new source of income. Chapter Five describes the failure of the characters' efforts to restore the Covenant and details the characters' investigation of that failure. It's unlikely that characters choose to, or are even able to complete all of these chapters exactly in order. For example, the characters probably aren't able to afford all the restorations in Chapter Three without first acquiring a new source of income in Chapter Four. Observant characters may also notice and investigate signs of decay (Chapter Five) before restorations are complete (Chapter Three).

The best way to handle these three chapters is to let characters do what they want when they want to do it. Describe

the state of the Covenant, then let characters decide what to repair and when. Let characters come to the conclusion that they need a new source of income. Let characters realize that their restorations are failing and let them do something about it. If, for reasons of drama, you want to slow down or speed up their discovery of the Covenant's decay, caused by the Holy Shroud, Chapter Five suggests ways to do so. However, don't feel compelled to make changes obvious. It's a good idea to let characters and players accomplish and discover things at their own pace. If they put the mystery together on their own, they will feel a greater sense of accomplishment.

THEME

The Saga's theme of death appears at the beginning of this chapter. When the characters arrive at Lux ex Tenebris, they find it's far worse off than when they left it. The Covenant and its inhabitants are dying in many ways.

The theme of rebirth occurs in later parts of the chapter, as characters strive to restore and renew the dying Covenant.

The Dying Covenant

Three years ago, Azenis twisted the power of the Holy Shroud so that it is no longer an item solely of Divine power, but is now partially based on Hermetic magic. He did this so he could use its preservative powers to prevent himself from aging. Unfortunately for everyone else at the Covenant, Azenis' corruption of the Shroud has caused its preservative powers to acquire a drastic side effect. Anyone in the vicinity of the wearer now ages at an accelerated rate. Physical objects are affected as well, so that buildings, clothes and equipment decay much faster than normal. See the Appendix, under *The Holy Shroud*, for a description of this effect.

At the time Azenis received the Shroud, Lux ex Tenebris was an old but reasonably healthy Covenant. His actions have nearly destroyed it. In the past three years, the walls of the Covenant have fallen into ruin, arms and equipment have decayed, and half the covenfolk and Groggs have died of old age. The only other Magus in the Covenant, Triandin, has died, as has the librarian, Lamar. The pressures of managing a ruined Covenant have driven the Autocrat, Bouvette, insane, and the atmosphere of decay which surrounds the Covenant has left all of its survivors, Andrew and Tappel included, listless, full of despair, enfeebled and senile.

See the insert later in this chapter for a description of the present state of Lux ex Tenebris. Also see later in this chapter for descriptions of important surviving inhabitants.

Negotiation

This chapter begins when the characters arrive at Lux ex Tenebris. In all likelihood, they have been unjustly banished from their home Covenant and are here because they want to join Lux ex Tenebris.



Characters may have second thoughts when they see the state of the Covenant. The disrepair of the walls and buildings is obvious, as is the worn state of much of the Covenant's furniture and equipment. The advanced age and senility of the covenfolk may also be apparent once characters have time to interact with them. Assume that characters are greeted at the Covenant gate by Andrew, and that they are free to explore the Covenant as much as they want before meeting with Azenis. If characters ask, Andrew tells them that Triandin recently died of old age.

The characters may already suspect that the decay of the Covenant has been unnaturally swift. The covenfolk certainly suspect this. However, no one has any hard evidence to affirm their suspicions, and no one knows why it's happening. Among the Grog, rumors circulate of a curse cast upon the Covenant. Some servants believe Kakithric, Azenis' Familiar, is a life-draining demon in disguise. Other covenfolk suggest that harsh winters of the past few years are responsible for the number of deaths. They also point out (correctly) that no one has made much effort to repair or replace anything. That, more than anything else, may be responsible for the unusual number of broken items littering the Covenant.

Although Azenis is generally disliked and distrusted, no one associates him with the decay. In fact, his emaciated appearance, caused by a Wizard's Twilight during his research of the Shroud, makes covenfolk believe he is another victim, that it's only a matter of time before he will die too.

In any case, when the characters arrive the Covenant inhabitants are helpless and full of despair. The appearance of the characters changes that, especially if the characters express intent to join the Covenant. Unless the characters were unusually rude or incompetent when they stayed here before, many Covenant inhabitants (including Triandin's ghost — see below) hail them as heroes, the young blood that will rescue Lux ex Tenebris from the clutches of death. Although Andrew is too proud to idolize the Magi and Bouvette probably resents the characters' intrusion, play up Triandin's happiness and the admiration of younger covenfolk and Grog. This acclaim should contrast the treatment characters recently received from Severine, and should provide them with further reason to join Lux ex Tenebris. Encourage the characters (and players) to see this as their chance to redeem themselves and save a Covenant in the process.

If the characters investigate the Covenant's decay and the death of covenfolk, refer to Chapter Five for details on what they learn.

Soon after the characters arrive at the Covenant, Azenis asks to see them in the Council Chamber (area 15). He formally offers the Magi membership in Lux ex Tenebris. As he always does when he wants something from someone, Azenis puts on a charming facade. He's friendly and talkative (especially regarding the positive aspects of the Covenant). He honestly admits that he needs the characters to rebuild the Covenant. His magical research, he explains, leaves him little time or energy for mundane matters.

If asked about the unusually high death rate among the covenfolk and the generally decrepit nature of the Covenant, Azenis attributes it to harsh winters and a decline in morale among inhabitants, but promises to investigate if the characters insist (a promise which he doesn't keep).

If asked to revise the Covenant Charter or Oath for the characters, Azenis initially refuses (if they don't already realize it, a Hermes Lore simple roll of 6+ lets characters know that this is a very rude request). If asked for time to consider his offer, Azenis grants the characters up to a week. If the characters seem reluctant to join, Azenis offers each Magus up to three pawns of Terram vis from his private store (a promise which he keeps).

Young, ambitious characters may be reluctant to join Lux ex Tenebris; it means accepting a Covenant which they had no part in creating. In order to convince these characters to join, Azenis points out that almost all aspects of the Covenant can be changed. The Grog, covenfolk, library, mundane relations and many other attributes can be improved upon, and the characters would be the ones making the improvements. Even the Covenant Charter and Oath can be revised by unanimous vote, and prospects seem good that the characters might soon be the only Magi in the Covenant. Thus characters shouldn't feel they are limiting their freedom by joining Lux ex Tenebris.

Ultimately, Azenis does whatever he can to get characters to swear the Oath and join the Covenant. His motive, of course, is purely selfish. He wants the characters to join so he can preserve his life by draining theirs, and by draining the lives of all new covenfolk and Grog brought into the place.

Although the Covenant is in disrepair and requires much work, it has much to offer beyond eventual autonomy for Magi. The Covenant's arcane and mundane libraries, though partially decayed, are still excellent and offer Magi a great opportunity to improve their magic arts. The covenfolk's admiration may appeal to the characters' vanity. The mystery of the Covenant's decay might intrigue them. The task of rebuilding the Covenant might challenge them. Or characters might simply have nowhere else to go. Azenis is offering a place to do magical research and a chance to once again become respected members of the Order — an offer few other places offer outcast Magi. Lastly, the characters may blame Azenis for their predicament, and may join him in order to gather evidence against him, proving their innocence to Severine.

If the characters refuse membership and leave Lux ex Tenebris, you can run stories involving hardships for the characters, possibly prompting them to reconsider Azenis' offer. Or you can run another Saga, which incorporates some of the people and events presented later in this book. Perhaps Severine questions the characters about their latest visit at Lux ex Tenebris, or Christophe D'Alsante's army, on its way to Lux ex Tenebris, comes across the characters (see Chapter Seven). Such later events may draw characters back into the main storyline of Twelfth Night.

Swearing the Oath

Lux ex Tenebris' Oath of Covenant, in Latin, is carved into the wall in the Council Room (next to the Code of Hermes) and is also on display in the library. It's a good idea for characters to read it before they swear to it (you shouldn't have to mention this to them). Once the characters have sworn the Oath, they are formally members of Lux ex Tenebris.

The Oath is written below. You might want to have players read it aloud, as their characters do.

THE OATH

"I, _____, filius of _____, follower of _____, swear that I am a Magus of the Order of Hermes. I swear that I have always upheld and will continue to uphold the Code of Hermes and the Peripheral Code; that I have been trained solely in Hermetic magic; that all my apprentices shall be likewise trained; that I have never dealt with demons or diabolists; and that I will never do so. I further swear that I speak these words of my own free will and with complete understanding of their significance.

"I hereby renounce any and all ties to other Covenants, and do solemnly swear allegiance to the Covenant Light out of Darkness. I swear that this Covenant's goals, fortunes, hardships, allies and enemies shall be my own. I swear to abide by the Covenant Charter. I swear to be loyal to my Pontifex. I swear to regard my fellow members' lives as my own. I swear never, through action or inaction, to allow this Covenant to come to harm.

"Thus may I be a Light out of the Darkness, that I may work with my Covenant brethren to drive away ignorance, and to bring the light of knowledge to the world.

"I do solemnly swear this Oath on the _____ day of _____, in the year _____, in the Age of Aquarius."

READING THE CHARTER

Characters may want to read the Covenant Charter before they swear to abide by it. Azenis has no objection to this and directs them to a copy in the library. If you want to add some atmosphere to the game, you can write out a charter based on the outline, below, and the Mistrudge Charter given in that Covenant's sourcebook. If you don't want to bother with that, you can inform Charter readers of the basics of how the Covenant functions, as described below in Summary of the Charter.

As it's written, the Charter gives characters some rights but doesn't let them oust Azenis from his position as Pontifex. You can change the Charter in some ways, but try to preserve this aspect of it. This makes it more difficult for characters to act against Azenis when it becomes clear they must. The tension between the need to deal with Azenis and the need to follow the Charter is lost if characters can legally overthrow Azenis.

Summary of the Charter

Lux ex Tenebris was founded by a group of Magi who believed it important for a Covenant to have a strong leader, to give it direction. Thus the Covenant has a designated Pontifex, appointed for life, who leads the Covenant and has many special powers.

The Covenant Charter has the following sections. The subjects are discussed in more detail than presented here.

Membership: New members must be approved by the Pontifex and by a majority of current Covenant members. Memberships can only be terminated if a two-thirds majority, and the Pontifex, agree that a member has broken the Oath of Covenant.

Relations: The Pontifex has full authority in all dealings with mundanes, although the Pontifex may delegate such authority. All relations within the Order of Hermes are conducted by the Covenant as a whole, and any agreement within the Order which involves Covenant resources must be approved by a majority of Covenant members. The Pontifex resolves any deadlocks.

Duties: The Pontifex may require each Magus to spend up to one Season a year in duties for the good of the Covenant. The Pontifex may also require each Magus to contribute a pawn of Vim vis per year to the Covenant Aegis.

Rights: The Magi have the right to the privacy of their sancta, to at least three Seasons per year of free time, to any vis

that they discover outside Covenant grounds, to use of the library (disputes over books are settled by majority vote), to a working laboratory, and to protection from outside attack.

Vis: Any vis collected on Covenant lands is the property of the Covenant as a whole, and may be distributed by a majority vote of Covenant members. The Pontifex breaks any ties. Any vis collected outside Covenant lands is the property of the Magus who finds it.

Pontifex: The title of Pontifex is for life. The Pontifex can resign but cannot be removed from office. When the old Pontifex dies, the new Pontifex is chosen by majority vote. The oldest attending Magus decides any ties. Magi can vote for themselves.

Amending the Charter: The Charter and Oath can only be amended by unanimous vote.

Restoring the Covenant

Once the characters have joined Lux ex Tenebris, Azenis is no longer concerned about them and no longer makes an effort to be friendly. He orders them to restore the Covenant, giving them the authority to do anything necessary as long as it doesn't disturb him. He tells them to make new lab equipment a priority, since his is beginning to wear out. Azenis then retires to his sanctum to continue warping the Shroud. If the characters disturb him to get his advice on a new source of



income, he gives them a map to Impathis' lair (see Chapter Four). Otherwise, except for annual appearances to cast the Covenant's Aegis, he remains in his sanctum until the characters' questioning or Severine's arrival (see Chapter Five) forces him to emerge. The Covenant is now in the characters' hands.

There are several things the characters might do at this point. If they begin to investigate the deaths of covenfolk, see Chapter Five. If they try to find a new source of income for the Covenant, see *Source of Income*, below, and then see Chapter Four if the characters seek out Impathis. If they take the Covenant's remaining money and begin rebuilding the walls, hiring covenfolk, and restoring the Covenant in other ways, see below. The characters may choose to split up and do several things at once.

Restoration of the Covenant requires that characters deal with large sums of money. There are two ways you can handle this. The first is realistic but complicated. You know how much money the Covenant has (see *Source of Income*, below). Assign a price to everything that characters buy and to everyone they hire. Have characters keep track of how much money they have as they go through the Saga. This requires coming up with wages for masons, prices for materials and updating finances every Season.

The second way is less realistic but much more simple. Use a rule of thumb based on the options for Covenant creation, discussed in the Covenants Chapter of the *Ars Magica* rulebook: for each positive option that's chosen or created for *Lux ex Tenebris*, assume a cost of 1000 silver pennies. Naturally, these upgrades can't be bought directly; 1000 pennies spent on building improvements pays for masons and stoneworkers, for example, while 1000 pennies spent on Grog improvement goes toward hiring guards. The masons and Grogs still have to be hired. The rule just tells you the overall price. This system allows you to limit the characters' improvements without worrying about every last coin.

Some Covenant improvements should involve stories. These stories are an excellent way to introduce new characters to the Saga. If you have new players or if some of the players don't have Companion or Grog characters, existing characters at *Lux ex Tenebris* can hire them. Depending on what kinds of characters that players want, you can have them flesh out the people described below, or you can write new stories to accommodate new player creations.

Even if you don't want to add new characters to the Saga, you should still run stories based on Covenant improvements. The renewal of the Covenant is much more meaningful if players tell its tale slowly, rather than "fast-forwarding," buying everything their characters need. Covenant improvement stories can also be used to foreshadow the return of Christophe D'Alsante, and to explore the theme of death and rebirth.

Keep in mind that not every Covenant improvement lends itself to a story and not all stories are equally interesting. Eight story ideas are listed in the sections below. Choose three or four that you like (or make up new ones) and let characters unfold the stories as they make appropriate improvements. Regardless

of which are told, at least one should be told in addition to the story in Chapter Four.

COVENANT ATTRIBUTES

Below is a description of the Covenant's attributes when the characters join, after it has aged somewhat. The point values in parentheses apply to Covenant creation rules outlined in the 2nd edition supplement, *Covenants*. That book is not required to understand the Covenant's current state of repair (or disrepair). For each attribute, there's a short description of how characters might improve an attribute without telling a story. For some, story ideas are provided.

For the layout of the Covenant, see the *Lux ex Tenebris* map.

Location: Hilly Country (0)

The Covenant is in hilly country, but not on a hilltop. This cannot be improved.

Aura: +4 (+3)

The Covenant has a +4 Magic Aura. This cannot be improved.

Size: Average (0)

The Covenant is large enough to hold 50 Grogs, and unless you have an unusually large Troupe there's probably enough space for all players' Magi. If the characters choose, they can enlarge the Covenant by adding extra buildings or by excavating underground. One thousand pennies hires enough miners and stone masons to move the Covenant up to Large (+1); further expenditures can enlarge the Covenant even more. The closest place to hire workers is Tourien (see the *Area Surrounding Lux ex Tenebris* map); see Integrity below for a possible story involving a mason.

Defensibility: Strong (+1)

As the map of the Covenant shows, the structure has several outer towers useful for defense and watch. At the usual cost, the characters can hire workers to strengthen the walls or dig a moat; see Integrity for a possible story on this. Increasing the defensibility of the walls is likely to attract the notice of Baron D'Oeuf (see *Mundane Relations*).

Integrity: Partial Ruin (-4)

Unnaturally rapid aging and a complete lack of maintenance have caused large areas of the Covenant to crumble into ruins. The main portcullis is completely rusted through, the outer walkways have decayed so badly that some Grogs are afraid to walk them, and large cracks run through the Covenant's main tower. Restoring walls and buildings may be one of the characters' top priorities. For the cost of 2000 silver pennies, the Covenant can be restored to a dilapidated state (-2). This requires hiring large groups of masons to come to the Covenant and live there while they work. Such mass hiring is certainly noticed by Baron D'Oeuf (and just about anyone else in the area). Assume work takes a year to complete.

Story Idea: One of the masons hired by the characters is a religious zealot. He only accepts the characters' offer so he can convince the covenfolk to repent from their evil ways and leave

the Covenant. He begins preaching against the Magi, and is convincing and popular. How do the Magi act against him without alienating their workers and covenantfolk?

Caves (+1)

As shown on the Covenant map (area 28), there are natural caverns below the Covenant. These cannot be improved.

Magi: Leader (-1)

This attribute can only be improved upon by getting rid of Azenis, which the characters may do in later chapters. If the characters begin to act against Azenis, see Chapter Five.

Grogs: 10 (-4)

The Covenant's Grogs are organized and outfitted with standard arms, but are resigned in attitude.

The 10 aging Grogs, and Andrew their Captain, are described later in this chapter. Although the Grogs are experienced and still somewhat loyal, they've long ago lost their spirit. There are only a few of them left and they're dying off fast (see Chapter Five). The characters may bring some Grogs with them, but these are probably not enough to guard the entire Covenant. Hiring a new turb of Grogs is therefore an important part of the Covenant's restoration.

New Grogs can be hired from any number of sources. There are usually mercenaries in the area of the barony and Covenant. These are poor knights, recently unemployed men-at-arms, or city thieves willing to fight for anyone who pays them. Characters may hear tales of some of these people and may begin searching for them in Tourien. However, many soldiers of fortune joined Christophe on his Crusade three years ago. Although he didn't pay them much, he offered loot captured from Saracen cities. This exodus of good soldiers means few *quality* mercenaries are available.

One way to find Grogs without going through a story is to hire untrained peasants and teach them to fight. For enough silver, characters can find peasants willing to forsake their livelihoods and risk their lives. See Gaverne, below, for one possible village where characters can hire peasants. The peasants need to be trained in combat skills (they gain two experience points per year), and even when trained new Grogs are inexperienced and fearful. None of them has a positive Brave or Loyal score and they're likely to run or desert in any serious confrontation (such as with Azenis or with Christophe's army).

A better idea is to find experienced soldiers somewhere else. Below are two possible story ideas for how characters might accomplish this.

Story Idea: A group of bandits is attacking merchant caravans near the Forest of Somme (see below and the *Area Surrounding Lux ex Tenebris* map). Perhaps they even steal supplies being shipped to the Covenant. The characters may decide to hire the bandits as Grogs. The characters must somehow find the hidden (and mobile) bandit camp and convince its members to negotiate. The bandits are the remains of a noble family that was attacked and driven from its lands by a rival lord. Since then, a fierce young woman has led her surviving relatives and servants in a nomadic existence. They

travel across the country, stealing what they can and fleeing before they can be hunted down.

Many of the family are tired of living by thievery, but believe they have committed so many crimes that they have no choice but to continue. To convince the bandits to give up their life and start anew as Covenant Grogs, the characters must not only pay well but assure that the bandits will be protected from the Baron's knights and others who might try to arrest them. If the characters agree to these terms, the bandits are deeply grateful. As long as the characters keep their word, the family fights loyally and bravely on their behalf. The bandits consist of 15 trained warriors (organized and loyal, with average skills and standard armaments), plus 10 others who can serve as covenantfolk.

Story Idea: The characters travel to Iberia to find Grogs. Acting on a recommendation from an Iberian Covenant, the characters introduce themselves to a Christian noble who's active in the Reconquista (the reconquest of Spain from the Moors). He promises to release some of his mercenaries once he's won a decisive victory against the Moors.

Unfortunately, things go badly for the Christians. As the characters wait in the noble's castle, the Moors defeat his armies in the field and march on the castle itself. Though his cause is clearly lost, the noble refuses to accept defeat; he orders all his vassals to prepare for a final defense and commands the characters to use their magic to help. The characters may choose to avoid involvement in the conflict (which would violate the Code and deeply embroil the characters in the politics of the Iberian Tribunal). If they remain neutral, and still want Grogs, the characters must convince some knights to flee back to their Covenant with them. The knights who come with the characters are experienced and have good armaments, but aren't particularly loyal (as their escape from their lord suggests). You decide how many knights join the characters.

Of course, the question remains of how the noble, who loses knights to the fleeing characters, responds to their treachery (assuming the noble survives the battle). Does he plot revenge, turning up in a future story?

No matter how the characters acquire Grogs, their recruiting and training of an army makes Baron D'Oeuf very uncomfortable. He quickly learns about the new turb's existence, after one of the new Grogs accompanies a Magus into town, or is seen by the townspeople guarding the Covenant walls. The Baron doesn't see any reason why the Covenant needs to hire or train soldiers, and he certainly sees no excuse for harboring bandits (if you use the above story idea). See *Mundane Relations* for details on the Baron's reaction and what the characters can do about it.

The characters may also have to replace their Grog Captain. Although Andrew is clearly past his prime and no new Grogs accept him as their leader, he refuses to acknowledge that he's incapable of doing his job. If the characters fire him or rudely force him out, he grudgingly "retires," but the characters lose the loyalty of Andrew and the old Grogs. The old cadre does nothing to help the characters, and even when forced into combat, the old guard fights without spirit and flees

at first opportunity. If the characters allow Andrew to hold his post, new Grog soon falter in their loyalty to the Covenant (although loyalty can be restored once Andrew is retired).

The best way to deal with Andrew is to ease him out gently, offering him a "promotion" as Special Defender of the Council Chamber or advisor to the Magi. Though he's reluctant to leave his post, assurances that he's desperately needed in his new position convince him to accept the promotion. In fact, Andrew is quite useful as an advisor. He knows Tourien and the surrounding area. He knows which merchants deal with Magi, and which peasants are friendly to the Covenant (see *Mundane Relations* for more information). The old Grog follow a new leader if Andrew willingly leaves his post.

Covenfolk: Few, Deformed (-2)

Eight servants have survived the past three years. With the exception of Tappel, Azenis' personal servant, all of these covenfolk are somehow deformed by their premature aging. Some are senile and speak to long-dead friends or Magi; others are hunched or bent so badly that they can barely walk; still others have lost all hope and energy, and spend their days staring at the walls of their rooms. None are efficient or motivated and none are going to live very long. Unless the Magi want to learn to cook, they'd better start looking for new covenfolk.

Fortunately, semi-skilled covenfolk are readily available. As long as characters have reasonably good relations with the mundane world, they can employ peasants from the surround-

ing lands to cook and clean. See Gaverne, below, for one village where the Covenant can hire covenfolk.

Specialists are more difficult to find. There are presently no craftsmen in the area who are interested in leaving their established practices to work at the Covenant. If the characters really need an armorer or weaponsmith, they have to travel to find one. However, the arcane and mundane libraries at Lux ex Tenebris are a great attraction for anyone interested in books, so it's possible to find a librarian or scribe willing to move to the Covenant and maintain its library. Play out the stories below or assume that characters find a librarian or scribe in Tourien.

Story Idea: A local monk hears rumors of the wondrous library at Lux ex Tenebris and learns that the characters are searching for a librarian. The monk loves books more than anything else (even God), but has been taught that Magi are diabolists who will only let him see their books if he gives up his soul. The monk resists temptation for a long time, but finally gives up and travels to the Covenant, offering the Magi his soul. Although the Magi may accept him as their librarian, the former monk still has trouble with the distinction between diabolism and magic, and continues to consider himself damned. Patient characters may eventually make things clear to him.

Story Idea: A wealthy and unscrupulous merchant employs a young bookkeeper with a remarkable talent for numbers. The bookkeeper hates the merchant and when he hears the characters are looking for an autocrat to manage their Covenant, he asks for the job. The merchant, however, is unwilling to give the young man up, and sends thugs to



intimidate him or the Magi. If the Magi accept the man and offend the merchant, they may find it difficult to buy supplies in Tourien.

Contacts: Basic Information (-1)

Right now Lux ex Tenebris has no real contacts; it simply gets rumors from anyone who visits. Once the characters begin to rebuild the Covenant, visit Tourien and hire Groggs, they become involved in the politics of the region and a network of contacts becomes valuable. The easiest means to build such a network is for characters to pay their business associates a little extra money, in exchange for passing any news of interest on to the Covenant. In addition to this, characters might want to hire spies for sensitive areas (such as the Baron's court). A thousand pennies can buy normal contacts.

Story Idea: While traveling outside the Covenant, the characters meet a wandering minstrel who takes nothing seriously. On learning the characters are Magi, the minstrel sings a song poking fun at the Order of Hermes. If the Magi graciously overlook the insult, the characters can befriend the minstrel and hire him as a potential contact. If they threaten or attack him, the minstrel runs, but ever after dislikes the Magi. The minstrel soon gains employment at the Baron's castle. The Magi acquire either an important contact or a potentially influential enemy.

Hermetic Status: Respected but Powerless (-1)

Although Lux ex Tenebris is respected within the Order, it's no longer influential. The characters may have many or few opportunities to change their Covenant's status, depending on your Saga. If you want to create stories (such as Tribunal meetings) in which characters can make a name for their Covenant, go ahead. Otherwise, you can simply rule that until the investigation of Severine begins (see Chapter Five) the Covenant continues to be ignored by the Order.

If you do run stories in which characters try to gain influence within the Order, keep in mind the circumstances of their exile. Severine's judgment has given the characters a bad reputation, which may make it difficult for others to trust them. On the other hand, Severine might have political enemies who might ally with the characters.

Mundane Relations: Little Interaction (0)

Although the existence of the Covenant is known to knowledgeable people in surrounding mundane society, Lux ex Tenebris has for many years had little contact with the outside world, so has given no one cause for alarm. This changes as soon as the characters start rebuilding Covenant walls, buying supplies and hiring Groggs. Word of the Magi's activities immediately spreads throughout the area and any person of importance (such as Baron D'Oeuf or Bishop Guillet) hears what they've been up to.

Unlike its other attributes, the Covenant's mundane relations immediately drop as soon as characters begin restoring the Covenant. The peasants fear Magi simply because they are unknown, Baron D'Oeuf feels threatened by a growing military installation, and Bishop Guillet doesn't like Magi making friends in Tourien. The Covenant's mundane relations drop to

-1 (fearful peasants), and must be "bought back" to 0 before the Magi are left in peace by mundane society. In fact, if the characters don't invest in their mundane relations, those relations may deteriorate further, as the Baron or Bishop becomes overtly hostile. Money spent on improving relations goes to helping peasants get through the winter, paying nominal taxes to the Baron, and supporting the good works of the Bishop's Church. Further expenditures can increase the Covenant's standing to tolerance or friendliness.

Story Idea: By hiring masons in Tourien, buying large amounts of food from the countryside, and hiring bandits as Groggs, the characters attract the attention of the Baron. He invites the Magi to Castle D'Oeuf, to discuss "various matters of importance."

Once at the Baron's court, the Magi are virtually subjected to a trial. The Bishop and several of the Baron's knights question the characters on alleged crimes of witchcraft, diabolism, harboring bandits and failing to pay taxes. Several knights invoke Christophe D'Alsante while interrogating the characters, claiming that "avowed wizards were not so brazen while he walked the land." They call it a terrible irony that while Christophe fights infidels in a faraway country, they strike at his home.

The Baron is made somewhat uncomfortable by the knights' extremism, and unless the characters provide a good defense for their actions (and probably agree to pay some taxes), he has no choice but to order that they be punished. Possible punishments range from a small fine, to a prison term for one or more characters, to a declaration that all dealings with Magi are illegal.

If the characters successfully defend themselves or take steps to placate the Baron, they remain in good standing with him. The knights grumble, but don't harm the characters without the Baron's approval.

Enemies: Grudges (-1)

Severine is a powerful enemy of the Covenant, but for now does nothing against it. The Covenant faces her in Chapter Five. Until then, this attribute cannot be improved.

Friends and Allies: None (0)

At present the Covenant has no allies. If you want, you can run a story in which the characters acquire the friendship of another Covenant, a supernatural creature or perhaps that of a powerful merchant.

Reputation: Neutral (0)

Though there are old stories circulating about Lux ex Tenebris, it has no prevailing reputation, good or bad. Through public acts of generosity, characters can improve their Covenant's reputation. However, it's likely that the characters' actions in later chapters of the Saga determine the reputation of their Covenant, more so than do their immediate actions. Thus, even if the characters improve their reputation now, they may end up with an abysmal reputation at the end of the Saga.

Also remember that characters themselves may start their lives at Lux ex Tenebris with bad reputations of their own, garnered through expulsion from their former Covenant.

Arcane Library: Excellent (+3)

The arcane library is beginning to decay but is still excellent. Assume that any expenses for hiring a librarian also pay for the upkeep of the magical books, so that as long as characters improve their covenfolk attribute and hire a librarian, the library does not decay. The arcane library cannot be improved without contact with other Covenants and centers of knowledge. See below (area 21) for a listing of the spells and Arts in the arcane library.

Magical Laboratories: Inadequate (-2)

There is a lot of once sophisticated equipment in Covenant laboratories, but much of it is broken or worn out. Not even Azenis' lab is immune to the effects of the Shroud, so his one request is that characters buy him new equipment. Until the characters improve this attribute, all Lab Totals are at -3. Improving this attribute by one point (or trait if using Covenant creation tips in the *Ars Magica* rules) allows the characters to equip one lab particularly well (+3 to Lab Totals), while others remain inadequate. Improving the lab attribute by two points makes all labs of standard quality.

Story Idea: While purchasing some lab equipment from a glassworker, the characters hear of a learned man just outside of Tourien who buys similar products. Hearing what the old man buys, characters may suspect he practices magic. The characters may visit the man, but he is a hedge wizard, not of the Order. Specifically, he is an alchemist who discovered his Gift by accident and now uses his magic to aid in his alchemical research. Having heard tale of the Order's mercilessness against his kind, the wizard prefers to flee from rather than meet Magi. The characters can ask the man to join the Order, threaten him into giving up his expensive lab equipment, or leave him be.

Magical Artifacts: Extreme Enchantment (+5)

The enchanted artifact is, of course, the Holy Shroud. There may also be various minor magical items around the Covenant, useful or not.

Protected Vis: Meager Supply (+1)

Each year, 10 pawns of Terram vis are available in area 29 (see below). This attribute cannot be improved.

Aegis of the Hearth: Good (+1)

Azenis knows *Aegis of the Hearth* at Level 25 and casts it each year. As the Covenant Charter allows, Azenis requires that each Magus contribute one pawn of Vim vis per year toward the Aegis. If necessary, Azenis makes up the difference from his private store. If the characters know or invent a stronger Aegis, they may improve this attribute.

Haunted (-2)

The Covenant is haunted by the ghost of Triandin, who cannot rest until the Covenant is reborn (see later in this chapter for details on Triandin). If you like, you can add other

ghosts. Perhaps some old Groggs or covenfolk, victims of the Shroud's magic, are forced to wander the night until they find out why they died. Or perhaps a centuries-dead architect has been awakened by the slow destruction of his prized work.

Mundane Library: Decaying (+2)

The mundane library is excellent but partially decayed. Assume that any expenses used to hire a librarian are adequate to keep the library from decaying further. See below (area 20) for a list of the knowledges in the mundane library.

Equipment: Inferior (-1)

All except the most basic supplies are decayed or broken. Most of this broken equipment is piled in rat-infested storage rooms and some of it has started to rot. New equipment can be purchased in Tourien, although some may have to be ordered from larger cities and might take some time to arrive.

Source of Income: Poor (-2)

Bouvette, the Covenant Autocrat, refuses to let characters see the treasury (area 18) or the financial records (in area 19). She claims that the Covenant is wealthy but refuses to give any specifics. She opposes Magi who seek to enter the treasury and characters must physically subdue her to see the books or gain entrance to the treasury. When this happens and the characters discover the poverty of the Covenant, Bouvette collapses in tears, begging the Magi's forgiveness for allowing the Covenant to come to such straits. If the characters forgive Bouvette, she is humble and grateful, but her heart is still broken and she never again makes a competent autocrat. If the characters scold or refuse to forgive Bouvette, she slinks away and, if possible, commits suicide. Her ghost haunts the Covenant until the finances are restored.

There are several small chests in the Covenant treasury (area 18). These hold a total of 4500 silver pennies. Throughout the Covenant, there are various gold and silver platters and pieces of silverware, crystal wine glasses, and other rich furnishings. Although some of these are tarnished or broken, the remaining pieces can be sold for a total of 1500 silver pennies. Thus, the Covenant has 6000 silver pennies in assets and no source of income. In its Summer and Autumn Seasons, Lux ex Tenebris sold vis and magic items, taxed the surrounding lands, and accompanied Crusaders as they plundered Saracen cities. That was all long ago. For a long time now, Lux ex Tenebris has been living off its treasury, and that's almost empty.

Assume that it requires 2000 silver pennies a year to maintain the Covenant. Thus, even if the characters spend no money on improvements, the Covenant can only support itself for three more years. The Covenant clearly needs a source of income. It shouldn't take the characters long to find out that they no longer have the power to tax mundanes or sell magic items. If the characters ask Azenis for suggestions, he gives

them a map to the lair of a dragon (see Chapter Four). If characters don't ask, you can have him suggest it anyway, when he realizes that the Covenant needs funds (for example, if the characters delay buying new lab equipment).

Covenant Inhabitants

Many Covenant inhabitants have died or aged greatly since the characters last saw them three years ago. Azenis and Kakithric are unchanged. They are described in the Appendix. Triandin is dead and now a ghost; he's also described in the Appendix. The other changed Covenant inhabitants are described here.

ANDREW

Andrew is still alive and still the Captain of his shrinking turb. Although he won't admit it even to himself, he has lost the capacity to fight or command effectively. He's so senile that he can no longer plan, nor even remember battle tactics. His muscles are wasting away and though he still carries his pole axe wherever he goes, he's too weak to wield it in combat.

Andrew

Characteristics: Intelligence (forgetful) -2, Perception (weak eyes) -1, Strength (atrophied muscles) -1, Stamina (enduring) +1, Presence (dirty) -3, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness (slow reflexes) -2

Age: 50 (apparent and physical age is 62)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Tough (+3 to Soak; already added below) +1, Missing Ear (-1 to hearing rolls) -1, Decrepit -2

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 3, Scan (forest) 2, Search (for people) 2, Athletics (wrestling) 2, Dodge (missiles) 3, Charisma (Grog) 4, Survival (forest) 1, Brawl (strikes) 3, Storytelling (his adventures) 2, Drinking (keeping wits) 2, Leadership (combat) 1, Pole Axe Attack (standing ground) 4, Pole Axe Parry (beasts) 3, Shortsword Attack (small spaces) 2, Fantastic Beast Lore (giants) 2, Faerie Lore (festivals) 1

Decrepitude: 1

Confidence: 1

Reputation: Senile (covenfolk) 1, Loyal (Magi) 1

Personality Traits: Loyal +3, Brave +2, Proud +2, Gruff +1, Forgetful +1

Weapons and Armor: Pole Axe, Shortsword, Scale Mail Hauberk

Pole Axe Totals: n/a

Sword Totals: First Strike -3, Attack +6, Damage +5

Encumbrance: 5

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), Soak +13 (19 Action), Fatigue -6

Bouvette

Characteristics: Intelligence -2 (senile), Perception (paranoid) +1, Strength (decrepit) -2, Stamina (enfeebled) -2, Presence (unkempt) -2, Communication (rambling) -3, Dexterity (gawky limbs) -2, Quickness (slow reactions) -2

Age: 42 (apparent and physical age is 54)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Educated +1, Obsessed (with Covenant finances) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 4, Speak Latin (numbers) 3, Scribe Latin (numbers) 3, Alertness (covenfolk) 2, Guile (lying about finances) 2, Folk Ken (covenfolk) 2, Pretend (to be calm) 2, Bargain (with peasants) 4, Diplomacy (Covenant politics) 2, Intimidation (Grog) 3, Chirurgy (bind wounds) 2, Cooking (vegetables) 3

Confidence: 1

Reputation: Insane (covenfolk) 1

Personality Traits: Paranoid +3, Rambling +2, Stressed +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2



Andrew



Bouvette

Andrew resists any suggestion that he's unfit to lead. He's still respected by the Grogg and covenfolk, for the heroic deeds of his younger days (about which Andrew talks constantly).

Appearance: Andrew looks like he's been through more than enough to kill most people. His ear is missing, his hands are scarred and his face is rough and weathered. He's bald, thin and wrinkled. He walks with a limp and his breathing comes in wheezes. He's often unkempt and unshaven.

Roleplaying Tips: Talk about the good old days. Forget things (like visitors' names).

BOUVETTE

Bouvette is still the Covenant Autocrat. In theory, she still manages the day-to-day affairs of Lux ex Tenebris, and commands the eight remaining covenfolk. In truth, Bouvette is incapable of managing anything. She is insane.

Bouvette's condition is mainly a result of the stress of the past three years. Because she was the Covenant Autocrat, she considered everything that went wrong to be her fault. She didn't know how to stop the decay of the walls or equipment, and each expenditure for repairs made her more terrified that the Covenant's poverty would be discovered. Eventually the stress, and her own premature aging, drove her over the edge.

Lux ex Tenebris' Grogg

Characteristics: Intelligence (senile) -1, Perception (near-sighted) -2, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence (scarred) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity (stumbling) -1, Quickness (slow pace) -2

Age: 34-48 (apparent and physical age is 34-60)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (battle cries) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 2, Scan (from Covenant) 2, Brawl (strikes) 2, Drinking (guzzle) 3, Hand Axe Attack (in formation) 3, Knight Shield Parry (thrusting weapons) 2

Confidence: 0

Reputation: Dispirited 1

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Andrew) +2, Laconic +2, Listless +2

Weapons and Armor: Hand Axe, Knight Shield, Ring Mail Hauberk

Hand Axe Totals: First Strike +0, Attack +4, Damage +10

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +5

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -5 (1 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action), Fatigue -3



Lamar

She now lives only to hide the state of the Covenant's finances. She's paranoid and is hostile to anyone who asks for money or asks about the financial state of the Covenant. She has neglected all of her duties except financial ones (although she still occasionally orders the covenfolk around, usually with an angry scream).

Although most in the Covenant realize Bouvette is insane, no one except Azenis knows the sorry state of the Covenant's treasury. Most believe Bouvette's hoarding the treasure out of spite, or that she's stealing from the treasury.

Appearance: Bouvette is a small woman with wild gray hair. She has wide eyes which wander from one person to another. She dresses sloppily.

Roleplaying Tips: Look quickly from one person to another. Ramble incoherently when someone asks you a question you can't answer. Scream at covenfolk every once in a while for no apparent reason.

LUX EX TENEBRIS' GROGS (10)

The Covenant's 10 remaining Groggs are badly aged. They are dispirited and listless; they spend their time whispering to each other of a curse on the Covenant. They're still loyal to Andrew because he represents the Covenant's glorious past.

TAPPEL

Tappel is unchanged from Chapter One.

LAMAR

Lamar is dead and buried in the graveyard (see the boxed insert, area 10). As he was not given a Christian burial, his ghost can be raised by magical means. His ghost knows nothing of any importance. As far as he knows, he died in his sleep, of natural causes.

Lux ex Tenebris and Lands

This insert describes the Covenant and the areas around it. Descriptions are detailed enough to run the Saga.

Lux ex Tenebris changes quite a bit from the time the characters first see it in Chapter One to when they take its Oath in Chapter Three. For each of the areas of Lux ex Tenebris, there are two descriptions: the first for the area during Chapter One and the second for the area at the beginning of Chapter Three. After Chapter Three the appearance of areas depends on how the characters restore the Covenant.

For the layout of the Covenant, see the *Lux ex Tenebris* map.

LUX EX TENEBRIS

1. Entry Hall

C1: This is a waiting area where the Magi greet their visitors. It has an old but sturdy main door and a few functional tables and chairs. The hall is a little dusty.

C3: Everything in the room is severely decayed. The main door is beginning to rot, several of the tables and chairs are broken or badly worn, and dust and cobwebs cover large parts of the room. Although there are paths through the dust where the covenfolk walk, the room itself looks like it hasn't been cleaned in years.

2. Guest Rooms

C1: Unless they object, this is where the characters stay during Chapter One. The rooms are somewhat spartan but the furniture is clean and of good quality. There are two beds in each room.

C3: No one has stayed here or cleaned these rooms since the characters left. Anything they left behind is still here. All of the rooms are covered with a thick layer of dust.

3. Storerooms

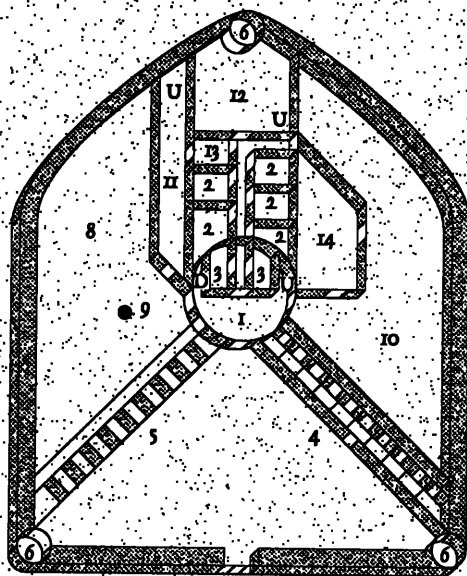
C1: These are storerooms for the Covenant's supply of torches, rope, candles, silverware and other items. The items are worn but usable. The rooms are somewhat disorganized.

C3: The rooms are completely disorganized. None of the covenfolk know where to find anything that's stored here, so most of them have given up looking. There are still a few useful items here, but they're almost impossible to find among the piles of garbage and rubble.

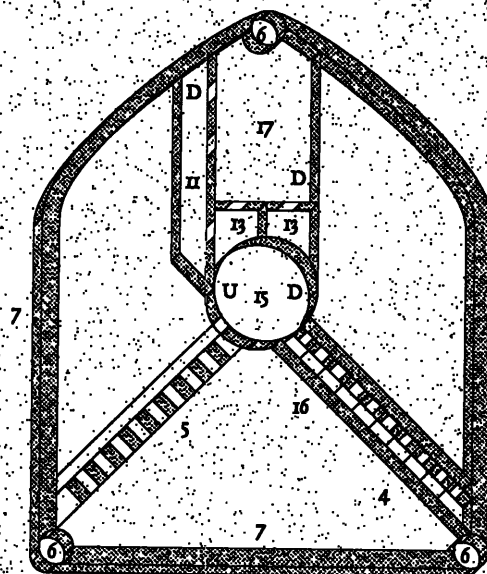
4. Covenfolk Quarters

C1: These are the bedrooms of those who cook, clean and otherwise maintain the Covenant. The rooms in use are neat and well kept-up, but there are a few dust-covered rooms that no one has used in a long time. There are 15

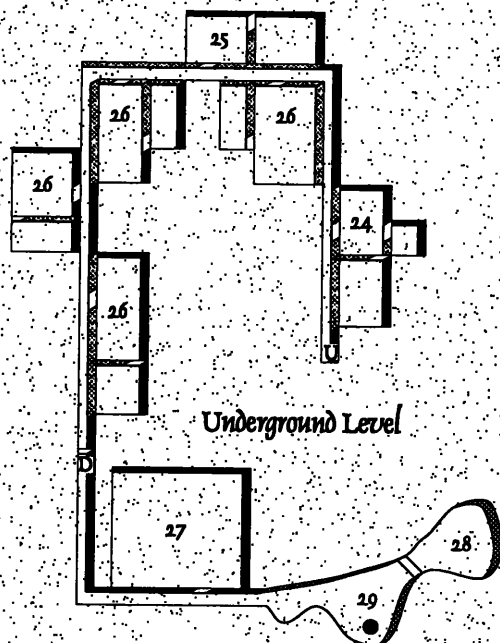
Lux Ex Tenebris



Level 1

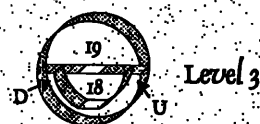


Level 2

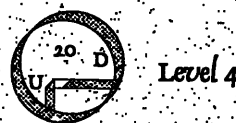


Underground Level

U Stairs Up
D Stairs Down
□ 5 Paces



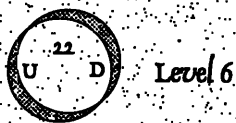
Level 3



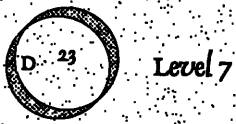
Level 4



Level 5



Level 6



Level 7

covenfolk living in eight rooms here; Bouvette, Lamar and the Grog's live elsewhere.

C3: There are now eight covenfolk living in five of these rooms. The rest of the rooms have become garbage dumps for the Covenant. They're filled with rotting food and broken items, and are infested with rats and flies. Even the occupied rooms are disorganized and dirty. Few people enter this hall besides the covenfolk, and the covenfolk rarely leave the area.

5. Grog Barracks

C1: These are the rooms of the Covenant's 20 Grog's. The rooms contain little of value, but the furniture is still functional, even in the few rooms that are unoccupied. Grog's occasionally spend off-duty time training in the courtyard next to their barracks. Andrew lives here.

C3: The Covenant's 10 remaining Grog's still live here, as does the now-senile Andrew. Much of the Grog's' arms and armor are worn and broken. The Grog's' morale has dropped as they've aged and as they've watched their comrades die. They're now largely resigned and hopeless.

6. Watch Towers

C1: These three towers are 30 feet high. From them anyone can get a good view of the surrounding countryside. There's a Grog at each tower at all times. Each tower has a large bell so that Grog's can sound the alarm.

C3: In theory, there's still a Grog at each tower, but in practice there's usually a Grog at only one or two of the towers at any given time. The bells still work, but no one has heard them in so long that they're likely to be slow to react.

7. Outer Wall

C1: The wall has a walkway going completely around it. There's a Grog patrolling this walkway at all times, checking on the Grog's in the towers.

C3: Grog's occasionally patrol this walkway, although the walkway has crumbled so badly that in places it's dangerous to walk on.

8. Gardens

C1: There's a large vegetable garden here, used to grow fresh food for the Covenant. Although the garden has become overgrown in the years since the gardener died, some of the kitchen staff still tend the garden and collect its produce.

C3: The garden is now untended and choked with weeds. There are still a few vegetables here, but covenfolk no longer bother to collect them.

9. Well

C1: This small stone well provides the Covenant with water.

C3: No change.

10. Graveyard

C1: This is where covenfolk and Grog's are buried. The plots are neatly laid out, with a small headpiece for most, showing dates of birth and death. The oldest marked death date, found on a Perception + Search simple roll of 6+, is 100 years ago. None of the covenfolk or Grog's have been given a Church burial.

C3: The graveyard is overgrown with weeds. There are about 20 more graves here, those of covenfolk and Grog's who were aged to death by Azenis' use of the Shroud. The covenfolk grew tired of making headstones, so only half of them have the standard marker; others are marked only with small wooden crosses stuck in the ground. Characters looking for anything unusual must make a Perception + Search simple roll of 7+ to notice the crosses. Characters who take the trouble to count the number of graves at different death dates notice that the number of deaths in the past three years is about three to four times the typical number of deaths for any three-year period in the past.

11. Kitchen

C1: Food for the mess hall is prepared here. This area is well-maintained, although slightly cluttered. Many different types of foods are prepared and served.

C3: The kitchen is cluttered and mostly unused, but it's still one of the better maintained places in the Covenant. There is little food stored here, mainly because food has a tendency to rot quickly in the Covenant. The covenfolk buy food a little bit at a time from neighboring peasants. Covenfolk still cook for the Magi and Grog's, but food is bland and often spoiled.

12. Mess Hall

C1: This is where the Grog's, covenfolk and (sometimes) Magi eat. This is also the social hub of the Covenant; people come here at all hours to trade rumors and socialize. The covenfolk keep the mess hall clean.

C3: This is still the main eating area and social hub of the Covenant. Now, however, there is less choice of food and less social energy. This is the only area where Grog's and covenfolk meet, but they now only talk about who's going to die next. The mess hall is filled with dirt and attracts rats.

13. Private Dining Areas

C1: These are rooms where Magi can dine alone, or where they can dine privately with guests or each other. The rooms are dusty and seldom used.

C3: No change.

14. Infirmary

C1: This is where Groggs and covenfolk recuperate from illness and injury. There is a surgeon among the covenfolk who maintains this area.

C3: The surgeon is dead, but this area is still maintained because of the amount of illness and death in the past few years. Covenfolk and Groggs are usually sent here when they have little hope of recovery; when they die, they are easily transported outside for burial.

15. Council Chamber

C1: This is the meeting chamber of the Covenant's Magi. A large round stone table is in the center of the room, and 10 sturdy wooden chairs encircle the table. The Code of Hermes is engraved on one section of the wall and the Oath of Covenant (see earlier in this chapter) is engraved on another. The room is sparse but elegant. The door to the stairway that leads to this room is locked and only Magi and a few trusted covenfolk have keys.

C3: The Council Chamber has weathered the decay well. Although the room is dusty and dirty, the table and chairs look no more worn than they did three years ago. The door isn't usually locked anymore, but the lock still works.

16. Workshops

C1: These are workshops once used by specialists employed at the Covenant. There is a smithy, an armory and a place where a falconer kept his birds. The smithy and armory still have a few (standard expense) useful arms and armor pieces, but the shops themselves are long neglected.

C3: The shops are covered with dust. A few of the tools might still be useful to a specialist but any once-usable arms or armor pieces have rusted away.

17. Great Hall

C1: This is the great hall, where the entire Covenant gathers on special occasions. It hasn't been used for years. There are some valuable silver candlesticks and some dinnerware here.

C3: The area is very dusty, but the furniture isn't worn or broken yet, and the silver is still here. By tradition, new Magi are welcomed into the Covenant with a feast in the great hall; if the characters want to arrange this, however, they have to do it themselves.

18. Treasury

C1: The treasury has many chests and drawers of different sizes, all stacked neatly in rows. Most of these are empty. Only a few small chests remain. Together they hold about 10,500 silver pennies worth of gold and silver. The treasury is locked and Bouvette, the Covenant Autocrat, has the only key. She handles all Covenant payments personally. See Chapter One for a description of Bouvette.

Hanging on the wall here are keys to the Council Chamber (area 15) and to the Shifting Passages (area 28).

C3: The treasury has dwindled to 4500 silver pennies. It's still locked and Bouvette still holds the only key. See earlier in this chapter for a description of Bouvette and for details on the Covenant's financial state.

19. Autocrat's Quarters

C1: This is the bedroom and workroom of Bouvette, the Covenant Autocrat. All financial records of the Covenant for the last 20 years are kept here, in locked cabinets. Everything is painstakingly recorded and organized, including the precise amount of silver left in the treasury and the expenses of all the Covenant's Magi. If anyone searches these files, make a Perception + Search simple roll. A roll of 6+ reveals that until five or six years ago, Azenis frequently requested travel expenses. A roll of 9+ reveals that Azenis' last "travel expense" was unusually large, about 1500 silver pennies. This was the money he paid to the Golden Wurm for the map to the Holy Shroud. Bouvette knows about the expense but doesn't know what Azenis used the money for. She refuses to let anyone see the records.

Bouvette's bedroom and personal space are compulsively neat and orderly.

C3: The records are still locked away, although Bouvette stopped keeping them about a year ago (at which point the records show the Covenant had about 6500 silver pennies). The rest of the area is dirty and messy, with clothes, paper, ink and moldy food piled everywhere. The records are still informative (results of Perception + Search rolls are as above), but Bouvette still refuses to let anyone see them or enter the treasury. See earlier in Chapter Three for a description of Bouvette and the Covenant's financial status.

20. Mundane Library

C1: The Covenant's mundane library is excellent. Lamar, the librarian, lives in the room next to the mundane library and takes great pride in its upkeep. The library has Knowledges at the following levels: Hermes History 3, Hermetic Law 2, Hermes Lore 3, Magic Theory 5, Church

Lore 2, Faerie Lore 4, Fantastic Beast Lore 3, Legend Lore 5, Occult Lore 4 and Humanities 1.

C3: Lamar is dead and without his care the library has begun to decay. Nothing has been lost yet, but unless someone starts taking care of the books soon, the library loses one point of one of its Knowledges per Season.

21. Arcane Library

C1: The arcane library of *Lux ex Tenebris* is well-known within the Order and for good reason. Lamar maintains the arcane library, as he does the mundane library.

The library has the following Art scores: Creo 12, Intéllego 14, Muto 10, Rego 6, Perdo 8, Animál 9, Aquam 6, Auram 8, Córpoem 15, Herbam 12, Ignem 8, Imágonem 12, Mentem 7, Terram 19 and Vim 14. It has 300 Levels of spells. Choose your own or use the following list: *Chamber of Spring Breezes* (CrAu 15), *The Surgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20), *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15), *Preternatural Growth and Shrinking* (MuCo 20), *Lamp Without Flame* (CrIg 10), *Invisibility of the Standing Wizard* (Pelm 15), *Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit* (PeMe 20), *Wall of Protecting Stone* (CrTe 25), *The Miner's Keen Eye* (InTe 20), *Tracks of the Faerie Glow* (InTe 25), *Edge of the Razor* (MuTe 5), *Rusted Decay of Ten Score Years* (PeTe 15), *Shell of Opaque Mysteries* (CrVi 30), *Change the Nature of Vis* (MuVi 10), *Sense of the Lingering Magic* (InVi 30), *Aegis of the Hearth* (ReVi 25).

C3: Without care, the library has begun to decay. Unless a full-time librarian is hired to care for the books, the library loses one point of one Art each Season, and one spell each year.

22. Azenis' Laboratory

C1: This is the first room of Azenis' sanctum. The stairs from the arcane library end at a trap door which leads into this room. The door is locked and clearly marked with Azenis' Sigil. Only Tappel and Azenis have keys.

Azenis has used his *Waiting Spell* (Rego Vim 25) to construct a magical defense against intruders. If anyone except Azenis or Tappel enters this room, a noise like the wail of a banshee sounds. This has no magical effect, but it's loud enough to alert or awaken Azenis. At the same time, the spell *Grip of the Choking Hand* (Perdo Córpoem 10) affects the intruder. Once these spells are set off, they no longer function until Azenis recasts the *Waiting Spell*.

The laboratory is filled with expensive equipment which is obviously in use, but it's difficult to discern exactly what Azenis is doing here. An Intelligence + Magic Theory simple roll of 15+ reveals that Azenis is experimenting with some sort of non-Hermetic supernatural power; a roll of 18+ reveals (from Azenis' notes) that this power is Divine.

Azenis keeps the Holy Shroud with him at all times, so the characters can't find the source of this Divine energy without him.

Any search of the lab turns up, on a Perception + Search simple roll of 9+, nine pawns of Vim vis and 14 pawns of Terram vis. On a roll of 11+, investigators find Benvolius' old notes. An Intelligence + Magic Theory simple roll of 10+ lets a character realize that Benvolius was trying to incorporate different types of supernatural power into Hermetic theory.

The lab has no windows. The stairs leading to Azenis' quarters end in a door which is usually locked. Tappel never enters Azenis' quarters; Azenis eats his meals in his lab.

C3: Azenis' magical safeguards are still intact. His lab equipment is now beginning to break down, but he continues to work on the Holy Shroud. Azenis' vis and Benvolius' notes are still here. Triandin's private grimoire, containing all of his spells, is also here.

If Azenis feels threatened by the characters, he may increase his magical defenses in this area, perhaps by linking *Bane of the Decrepit Body* (Perdo Córpoem 25) to another *Waiting Spell*.

23. Azenis' Quarters

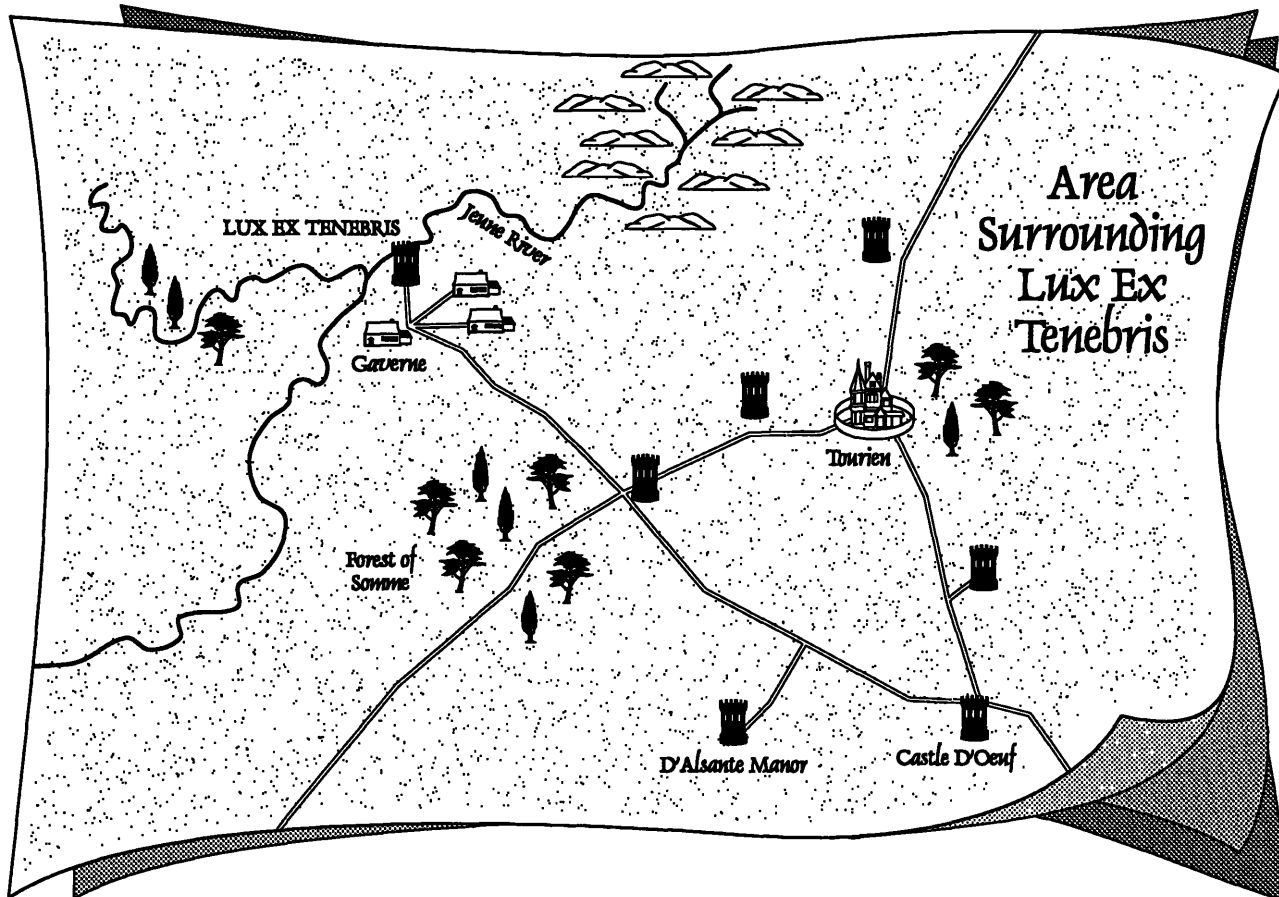
C1: This is Azenis' bedroom. He spends most of his time in the laboratory, but comes here to sleep and occasionally speak with his Familiar. There are several small barred windows in this room, through which Azenis can observe the Covenant grounds. The windows are large enough so that a creature of Size -2 or smaller (such as Kakithric) can squeeze through; no one of Size -1 or larger can fit through the bars.

Azenis has set up magical defenses in this room as in his lab. If anyone except Azenis or Kakithric enters this room, the spell *Well Without Light* (Perdo Ignem 25) is triggered. At the same time, a scream loud enough to alert or awaken Azenis sounds. Azenis normally has *Vision of Heat's Light* (Intéllego Ignem 20) cast on himself, which allows him to see somewhat in darkness. Kakithric often perches on the tower, just outside one of this room's windows. Those entering the room may have to sneak by the vulture.

C3: Azenis' defenses are still intact. If he feels threatened, he may reinforce them.

24. Triandin's Sanctum

C1: Triandin lives and works here. His lab equipment is somewhat worn, but still usable. He's experimenting with Terram vis. Triandin's sanctum also includes a jewel-working shop, and a small private library with a few books on Classical myths and other humanities (Legend Lore 2).



If Triandin becomes good friends with one or more of the characters, he may invite them into his sanctum.

C3: Triandin is dead and his lab has been stripped. Azenis cannibalized Triandin's equipment to replace the decaying pieces of his own lab, and also took Triandin's private grimoire. Triandin's mundane books and jewel-working equipment are intact but decaying rapidly.

25. Benvolius' Sanctum

C1: Like the other former sancta here, Benvolius' sanctum contains living quarters and a laboratory. Unlike the other sancta, Benvolius' lab has been stripped of usable equipment and of all his notes. If characters use Intéllego spells to investigate the lab, see Chapter Five.

C3: What little equipment remains in the lab is now completely broken and useless.

26. Other Sancta

C1: There are four other former sancta here, each of which contains living quarters and a lab. Most of the labs still have usable, though old, equipment; Magi may do research here without a penalty to their Lab Totals.

C3: The equipment has become worn and broken, so that it is now inadequate for laboratory research. Magi who do research here suffer a -3 penalty to their Lab Totals.

27. Magi's Tombs

C1: These are the tombs of the Covenant's former members. Although no ghosts are present at the moment, the ghost of many Magi may be summoned magically. The dead do not enjoy being disturbed and do not look kindly upon mortals disturbing them.

C3: Triandin is buried here, although his ghost can travel anywhere in the Covenant. Benvolius is also buried here, and, if summoned, can be questioned about his previous research.

28. Shifting Caverns

C1: The underground section of the Covenant changes here from man-made to natural cavern. These caves are highly Magical (Aura of five) but are also highly unstable. According to Covenant legend, they shift in unpredictable ways, so that those who explore them cannot retrace their tracks, becoming lost in the labyrinth. After losing many young and brave (foolhardy?) Magi to these caverns, the Magi of Lux ex Tenebris sealed them up and declared them off limits. If the characters ask anyone in the Covenant, including Azenis and Triandin, about the caverns they are warned against entering. The key to the door is in the treasury.

Since they are not a part of this Saga, the shifting caverns are not detailed here. If you want to run a side story,

you can have the characters explore the area. They might find an entrance to Antrum (subterranean Arcadia), they might encounter the wandering ghosts of previous explorers, or they might discover massive caverns of crystal and rock. If you don't want to tell a story set here and characters enter this area, you can have them wander in circles or announce that they explore the caverns completely, only to find dead ends. The caverns can shift later at your discretion.

C3: No change.

29. Pool of Clay

C1: Just before the entrance to the shifting caverns is a small pool about four feet in diameter and one and a half feet deep. This is the Covenant's only regular source of raw vis. The pool is empty most of the time, but water slowly drops into it from a stalactite above. The water eventually forms into magical clay, composing Terram vis. Ten pawns are produced a year. All of the Covenant's Magi know about this vis supply. By tradition, it is divided equally among them.

C3: No change.

SURROUNDING AREAS

See the *Area Surrounding Lux ex Tenebris* map for the lay of the land.

1. Lux ex Tenebris

The Covenant is located just south of the Jeune River.

2. Gaverne

This is one of the small villages located near the Covenant. The peasants of this village don't fear Magi as much as other peasants and they sometimes sell grain and other foods to the Covenant. At one time the Magi recruited covenfolk from this village and several older covenfolk still have relatives here.

The peasants are free but poor. There is little to buy here besides food and rough clothing. The peasants pay one of the Baron's knights for use of the land.

3. Forest of Somme

This is a thickly wooded area which contains a number of wild beasts, bandits and hermits. It isn't a Faerie forest, but some parts of it have a Magical Aura, and may contain creatures of Magic or Fay. If you want to tell the first Grog story (see above), the bandits could live here, using the forest to hide from the Baron's soldiers.

4. D'Alsante Manor

D'Alsante Manor is the home of Christophe and Francois D'Alsante. It is a small castle with a simple wall encircling it. A few poor knights, vassals of the D'Alsantes, live here, as do several men-at-arms. During Chapter One, Francois D'Alsante lives here as well. As he grows older, he becomes disturbed. He begins to have strange dreams and feels that he's done something wrong, but doesn't know what. By the beginning of Chapter Two Francois remembers his crime and confesses it just before he dies.

On Francois' death and in the absence of Christophe, the task of running D'Alsante Manor falls to Giscard's wife (Christophe's mother), Marie. Marie fears and distrusts Magi. It is she who pressures the Bishop to investigate the Order upon Francois' death. She refuses to speak to any Magi or envoys of Lux ex Tenebris who visit D'Alsante Manor, believing them to be servants of the Devil.

5. Tourien

Tourien is a walled city of five thousand inhabitants. Although it is best known for its theatres and entertainment, there are many craftsmen and merchants here as well, and city shops sell most mundane items, such as torches, rope, weapons, armor, glassware and jewelry. There are also a fair number of stone masons here, looking for work after having completed repairs on city walls. This is the best place to buy supplies for the Covenant.

Tourien is ostensibly ruled by a Mayor, elected by the town's propertied citizens. In truth, Bishop Guillet holds power. The Bishop is wealthy and influential, and no one in the city is willing to stand against him. In both name and fact, Tourien is independent of Baron D'Oeuf. Although the city remains on good terms with the Baron, its citizens are proud of their independence and are careful to maintain their own city guard, so they don't have to rely on the Baron for military assistance.

Bishop Guillet hears of any unusual purchases or events in Tourien, and Baron D'Oeuf, through the Bishop or his own contacts, hears of events as well.

6. Castle D'Oeuf

Castle D'Oeuf is the home of Eustace, Baron D'Oeuf. It is a large keep with four outer guard towers, an outer wall that's 10 paces high, and a central tower. The castle is guarded by about 60 men-at-arms and 20 knights, all loyal and alert. Castle D'Oeuf is surrounded by cultivated land, where the Baron's serfs work. The Baron's subjects, both nobles and commoners, are generally well-treated and satisfied with his leadership, although some younger knights wish the Baron was more aggressive.



DRAGON

CHAPTER FOUR

Develi looked at the Golden Wyrn and tried not to lose control. The morning sunlight made the Wyrn's golden scales glitter and shine, so that they seemed to move in a beautiful golden dance. It was easy to become lost in the dance, to become so fascinated that she could do nothing but stare. Develi fought the temptation and forced herself to listen to the Wyrn.

"And what will you do now that you have found me?" asked the Wyrn, in her low and rumbling voice.

Damn good question, thought Develi. She and her Groggs had come with weapons and spells, planning to kill her if they could. But one look at her convinced Develi that the Golden Wyrn was far beyond their power to destroy. Even if half the Groggs weren't now standing helpless staring at her, their weapons would never pierce her scales.

As Develi considered her response, her scout Sleeve spoke up. "O great dragon, you are more beautiful than anything we could imagine. We are blessed just to gaze upon you."

Develi glanced at Sleeve in annoyance; this was her job. But the dragon didn't seem displeased, so she let him pile it on. "Your scales are more brilliant than the most sparkling gold," he continued. "Nay, even more brilliant than sunlight. We will happily die after seeing them."

The dragon rumbled in her throat. "And you had no thought of taking my gold?"

"Oh, no no, of course not! Who would dream of such a thing?" responded Sleeve in shock.

"Don't lay it on so thick," Develi thought, "the Wyrn isn't stupid."

But the Wyrn only rumbled again, and said, "That's too bad. Because if you were interested in my treasure, we could make a deal..."

SUMMARY

The characters, in need of a source of income for their Covenant, are advised by Azenis to seek the hoard of the Golden Wyrms, a dragon famed for her greed and wealth. Azenis gives the characters a map to the Wyrms' lair, near the village of Abederne, high in the Swiss Alps. While traveling, the characters may discover that the dragon's treasure is cursed and may also discover that Azenis has visited the Wyrms before.

If the characters attack the Golden Wyrms, she fights fiercely and probably does great damage to the group. If the characters steal from the dragon, they may gain some of her treasure, but anything they take is later subject to her curse. If the characters talk to her, they find her to be a creature of great nobility and wisdom. She is dying of old age and is deeply worried about the fate of her soon-to-be son, who is due to hatch soon and will be too young to defend himself after she's dead. The Wyrms is willing to part with some of her treasure in exchange for a Magus "baby-sitter" for her egg. If the characters agree, they secure a valuable ally and a steady source of income.

THEME

In this chapter the Saga's theme is embodied by Impathis, the Golden Wyrms. Impathis is dying. She knows that if she clings to life and refuses to plan for her demise, her death will truly mean the loss of everything. To have any hope of keeping what is dear to her, she must accept her own death. She must speak with her ancient enemy, mankind, and must give up some of her hoard so that her son might live and inherit her treasure. Impathis faces death with more wisdom and dignity than any other Storyguide character in this Saga.

Background: The Golden Wyrms

Impathis is over a thousand years old. She was originally named the Golden Wyrms because of her beautiful scales, but scholars later attributed her name to her love of coins and to the legendary size of her hoard.

Impathis discovered early in her life that she loved the sparkle of precious metals and gems. Shortly after the fall of Rome, she also discovered that some men owned large quantities of gold and silver, which they put to no good use. Though some was used for aesthetic purposes, most of the metals were just passed from one person to the next, with little appreciation for their beauty. She decided that mankind did not deserve these wondrous pieces of earth, and began to demand them as tribute.

For centuries the various kings, warlords and chieftains who ruled the area near her lair brought gold and silver to Impathis. In those days Impathis was proud and angry, and showed no mercy to those who defied her. Whole cities were burnt before people realized it was wiser to submit. As the

Golden Wyrms' hoard grew, so did her reputation for greed and wealth. Knights came from many lands to slay her and win her treasure, but none were able to defeat her. Indeed, these knights added to her hoard, for many of them were wealthy and carried valuable items into battle against her. She saved their bodies and their riches.

One of these knights was named Erald. Sir Erald had found a map which marked the location of the Holy Shroud in the Holy Land, and he was on his way to Jerusalem to bring the Shroud back to Europe. While crossing the Alps, he was distracted by rumors of the dragon's treasure and detoured to her lair. Some say God punished him for his greed, making him fall before the dragon. In any case, Impathis killed Erald and took ownership of his possessions.

For many centuries the map remained in the dragon's lair, as Impathis grew older and less active, and as her name was forgotten by mankind. Finally, when Impathis was near death, Azenis heard of Erald's quest and discovered the location of the Wyrms' lair. He traveled there and bought Erald's map from the dragon. Impathis neither knew nor cared what the map led to and was happy to sell it for a few coins. Azenis, meanwhile, had the means to his immortality.

Research

The characters may read up on the Golden Wyrms before they begin their travels. Have each character who spends a few days in the library make a Fantastic Beast Lore or Legend Lore simple roll. Information equivalent to and lower than the roll made is shown on the following chart:

Roll of	Information
6+	The Golden Wyrms is often spoken of in the chronicles of the fifth to ninth centuries, but is rarely mentioned thereafter.
7+	She is said to be extremely greedy and extremely rich.
8+	Her lair is said to be in the Swiss Alps (or wherever better suits your Saga).
9+	Her name is variously rendered as Empathe, Inpathesse and Impoth.
10+	She is said to be wise and cultured, and enjoys speaking with scholars.
12+	She is supposedly able to curse those who steal from her hoard.
13+	She is called the Golden Wyrms because of her beautiful golden scales. These are so entrancing that when sunlight reflects off them, many can do nothing but stare in awe. If you like, you can allow characters who visit other libraries to roll again for further information.

Advice

During the restoration of Lux ex Tenebris, characters realize the Covenant needs a source of income. Azenis realizes this before the characters join, but is too busy and too selfish to do anything about it. If the characters ask for his advice or if financial hardships affect Azenis personally, he gives the characters a suggestion.

Azenis tells the characters that he knows of a dragon called the Golden Wyrm. On a Fantastic Beast Lore simple roll of 9+, characters have heard of the dragon and know that the size of her hoard is legendary. Although the path to her lair is not commonly known, Azenis has a map which he says he believes leads to the dragon. He claims to be ignorant of any special weakness she has or of any way to surprise her, but he's sure the characters can somehow defeat her and bring her treasure back to the Covenant. Azenis gives the characters the map and tells them to have a safe journey. If the characters are reluctant to go, Azenis tells them the dragon hasn't been heard from in a long time, and might be dead. If the characters are afraid to fight her, they can at least poke their heads in her cave and see if she's still breathing.

Although Azenis sounds callous, he wants the characters to succeed. If they press him he tells them what he knows of the Golden Wyrm. He knows that her name is Impathis, that

her lair is in the side of a cliff, that she is very old (even for a dragon), that she sleeps most of the time, and that she's said to value gold and silver above all else. He doesn't mention that he's dealt with her before, claiming to know these things only from legend. If you like, you can have Azenis lend the characters some small item which might aid them in dealing with Impathis, such as a cloak which offers protection against dragonfire, or a pair of boots which help one to move silently. Under no circumstance does Azenis come with the characters; he's much too smart for that.

Azenis doesn't mind if the characters want to spend some time inventing magical items to prepare for their trip. He also doesn't object if the characters suggest stealing from or negotiating with Impathis, rather than slaying her. He isn't even set on Impathis at all; if the characters have some other idea for a source of income, that's fine with him. However, the more Covenant poverty affects Azenis (such as a delay in getting new lab equipment), the more he demands that characters find cash — soon.

Azenis' map (see the *Journey to the Lair of the Golden Wyrm* map) shows the location of the Golden Wyrm in the Swiss Alps. If your Saga isn't set near the Alps you may want to change the mountain range to one closer to the Covenant. Maps of the village of Abederne (on the *Journey* map), which is near the lair, and of the Wyrm's lair itself are provided.



The Journey

The characters travel to the Swiss Alps to find the lair of the Golden Wyrms. Trails and passes are difficult; you may even want to rule that travel is only possible in the summer (though keep in mind that characters may want to travel this way again; see below). Though some in the mountains may have heard of the Golden Wyrms, no one knows where her lair is. The region where the characters' map shows her lair to be appears as uninhabited mountains on all other maps.

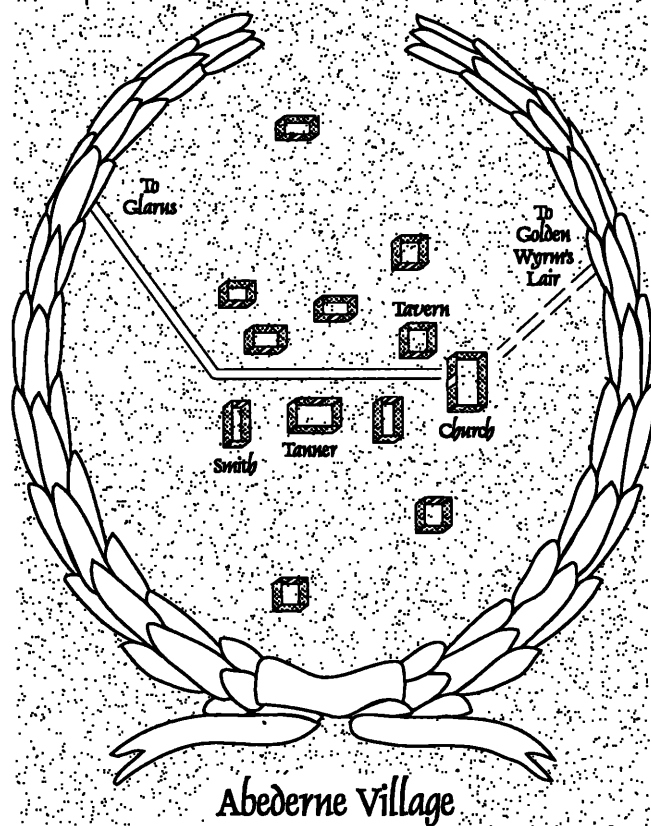
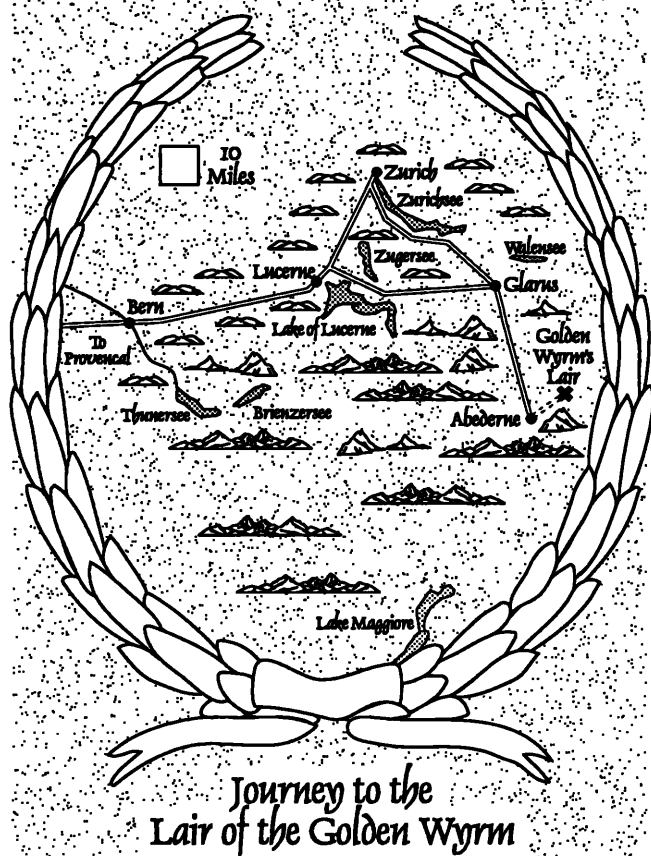
The locals have heard of Abederne, though, which according to Azenis' map is the village closest to the Golden Wyrms. Few recall why, but Abederne is known for miles around as a village of thieves and crooks. Locals may warn characters not to trust anyone in town. If characters take the trouble of tracking down the source of this reputation, perhaps by finding a knowledgeable elder, they're told it stems from an incident about 30 years ago, when the villagers bought many things from other towns with "faerie gold": gold which vanished once the buyer left.

Unless you want to add encounters, the characters reach Abederne without any incident, except for the warnings described above. Abederne is a farming village of about 200 people, located high in the Alps and far from any city. In order to get to the Wyrms' lair, characters must pass through or circle around this village. If characters attempt to sneak around the village, have them make Stealth + Dexterity stress rolls against the Perception + Alertness of the villagers, with modifiers depending on how much of a detour the characters make. If they detour far enough, they can be sure of avoiding the villagers, but they may have to make Climb stress rolls as this route takes them off the mountain path. Failed Climb rolls could mean long delays, while Botches could result in injuries. If the characters walk directly into the village, they're noticed and met at the town's center by five or six prominent locals, who demand to know their business.

The people of Abederne are suspicious of strangers. Thirty years ago, an Italian thief who discovered the location of the Golden Wyrms' lair came to their town. He raised the village's hopes with tales of dragon's gold and delivered on his promises, for he succeeded in stealing treasure from Impathis. After a brief absence, the Italian returned to Abederne, loaded with gold and jewels. In gratitude for the village's hospitality, he spent his gold generously before returning south.

For a year after the thief left, the people of Abederne lived like kings. With gold stolen from Impathis they bought expensive furnishings, fine jewelry and good food. But they were eventually victims of the Golden Wyrms' curse. A year after it was stolen, the gold vanished and reappeared in the Wyrms' lair. The people of Abederne fell from royalty to peasantry in one night. Not only did they lose all the gold they had saved, but they were perceived as cheats and outlaws by everyone whom they'd done business with. They villagers were forced to repay what disappeared, forced to pay a heavy fine, and were never trusted again. The people of Abederne curse the





thief who brought this fate upon them. They don't know whether the dragon really exists or not, but they ridicule anyone who mentions her name.

As if that wasn't enough, the villagers had another foul experience with a stranger, about five years ago. Azenis, on his way to the dragon's lair, passed through the village. When he told the villagers of his destination, they insulted him and treated him poorly. He became angry and used magic against them, causing a young man to grow old and die before their eyes. The villagers ran from the stranger, and now despise all foreigners and Magi.

If the characters walk into town and announce that they are foreign Magi looking for the Golden Wyrms, they don't get a warm reception. The villagers insult and harass them, perhaps throwing rocks or even shooting arrows if the characters respond with hostility. Of course, the villagers are not warriors and retreat in the face of any display of magic or fighting prowess. Even if characters are cordial, once they mention the Golden Wyrms, it is extremely difficult to befriend the villagers. Offering money only makes matters worse. Offering the villagers material goods might placate them, though, as might persistent and successful attempts at Charm or Charisma.

If the characters don't mention the Golden Wyrms, they can befriend the villagers (even if they reveal that they are Magi). The villagers are suspicious of strangers, but with enough tact and a moderate amount of silver, they can be won over. Tactful

Abederne Villagers (200)

Characteristics: Intelligence (cagey) +1, Perception 0, Strength 0, Stamina (hardy) +1, Presence (unkempt) -1, Communication (loud) -1, Dexterity (agile) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 1-50

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Swiss German (farming words) 4, Speak French (money) 2, Alertness (strangers) 1, Climb (mountains) 3, Folk Ken (farmers) 2, Animal Handling (goats) 3, Brawl (throws) 1, Self Bow Attack (long distance) 1, Quarterstaff Attack (on hillsides) 1, Quarterstaff Parry (on hillsides) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Dishonest 3

Personality Traits: Suspicious (of strangers) +3, Hard-Working +2, Frustrated +2

Weapons and Armor: Quarterstaff, Self Bow

Quarterstaff Totals: First +6, Attack +4, Damage +5, Parry Defense +8

Self Bow Totals: Rate +4 (1), Attack +1, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +1 (5 Action), Fatigue +1

questions about the villagers' poverty can bring out the story of the Italian thief. Further sympathizing might get villagers to talk about Azenis. Though the villagers don't know the Magus' name, they describe Azenis as a "very old, thin man with bony hands." They say he traveled with two middle-aged men wielding hand axes and knight shields, and that for the whole time that he was at the village, a vulture circled overhead. (Azenis visited the village with two Lux ex Tenebris Groggs. They're both dead now).

Once the characters have befriended the villagers, they can admit their intention to find the Golden Wyrms without making the villagers openly hostile (although a renewal of suspicion is likely). The villagers know little about the location of the dragon's lair, except the general direction that the thief took and the fact that he was gone for about a day and a half. After the characters return from the lair, the villagers refuse to accept payment or to do business with them.

Since the characters may be coming through this village often, they'll eventually have to deal with the villagers, one way or another. If the characters use a minimum amount of force to fend off any attacks, and continue to make peaceful overtures, even initially hostile villagers may soften to Magi, letting them pass unmolested. However, if the characters are needlessly violent, any conflict with the villagers escalates. The villagers may forbid the characters to pass through again, or may even set ambushes for them. Although the villagers are unpopular with their neighbors, large-scale destruction of the village or the killing of dozens of villagers does not go unnoticed (or unpunished) by others of the country.

The Lair

The journey to the dragon's lair is uneventful but difficult. The distance from the village is only six miles, but the trail is rough and steep. Horses and mules cannot make the trip. On foot, the trip takes four hours, plus one extra hour for each person in the group who misses a Fatigue + Climbing simple roll of 6+. The final destination, the lair of the Golden Wyrms, is a huge cave in the side of a sheer cliff. The cave is about 30 feet wide and 30 feet high, and about 40 feet up the cliff face. There are a few gold and silver coins scattered at the bottom of the cliff.

In order to climb the cliff, characters must make four Dexterity + Climbing stress rolls of 8+, one for each 10 feet of the cliff. A Botch means a character falls and takes damage depending on how far he's climbed (1d10+1 per two feet, as per standard rules). A failed roll means a character doesn't climb any further for a few minutes, but is still hanging on and can keep climbing afterward. Characters with special climbing equipment may get bonuses of up to +4 to their rolls. Climbing down is easier; the necessary Dexterity + Climbing roll is only 6+. If a rope is lowered from the cave entrance, any characters climbing up or down gain a +3 bonus to their rolls.

The floor of the cave slopes slightly downward from front to back. As shown on the map of the lair, it also curves and widens to form a large oval chamber where the dragon rests.

Coins and other small treasures litter the entrance floor, and the main chamber is piled high with coins, chairs, knives, forks and jewelry, all made of silver and gold. A few suits of armor poke out from under the piles. See The Hoard, below, for details on the treasure.

Impathis is lying amidst the chamber's piles. Those failing a Perception + Scan stress roll of 7+ do not immediately notice her amidst the darkness and the camouflage of the hoard. Those who Botch completely fail to notice her until she moves. See Impathis, the Golden Wyrms, for a description of the dragon.

When the characters arrive at the lair, Impathis is asleep. She spends most of her time sleeping these days. However, even asleep she is sensitive to unusual sounds and smells, and may be awake by the time the characters find her. If the characters make no effort to be quiet as they ascend the cliff and enter her lair, she awakens automatically.

If the characters try to move quietly, have them make Dexterity + Stealth stress rolls as soon as they enter the cave. If these all beat a stress roll by Impathis, she remains asleep. Otherwise, she awakes. When the characters enter the main chamber, they automatically awaken Impathis unless they somehow mask their scent. If they do, they must once again make Dexterity + Stealth stress rolls (this time beating Impathis' stress roll + Perception) to avoid waking her. If she's still asleep, the characters can steal some of her treasure, though this treasure is affected by her curse (see Chapter Four). If anyone touches Impathis or casts a spell on her, she immediately awakens. If anyone touches or casts a spell upon her egg, she again awakens.

Impathis' egg is a silver-shelled oval, about three feet long and two feet wide. A Spontaneous Intéllego Animal spell of Level 10+ reveals that it is about nine months from hatching. Impathis guards this egg with her life and if she's awake lets no one near it. The egg is very fragile. Without magic, it's nearly impossible to transport without breaking.

When Impathis detects the characters and wakes up, she does not immediately act. She first tries to locate the characters through sound and scent, and then opens her eyes to make sure that her egg is in no danger. Once she's satisfied that her egg is safe, she confronts the characters. However, she doesn't necessarily attack them. In fact, she avoids combat if at all possible. She wants to find out who they are and why they're here. If they're here to attack her, she can kill them or scare them away, as she chooses. But if the characters turn out to be trustworthy, she may consider offering them the guardianship of her egg. See Speaking with the Wyrms for a description of her conversation.

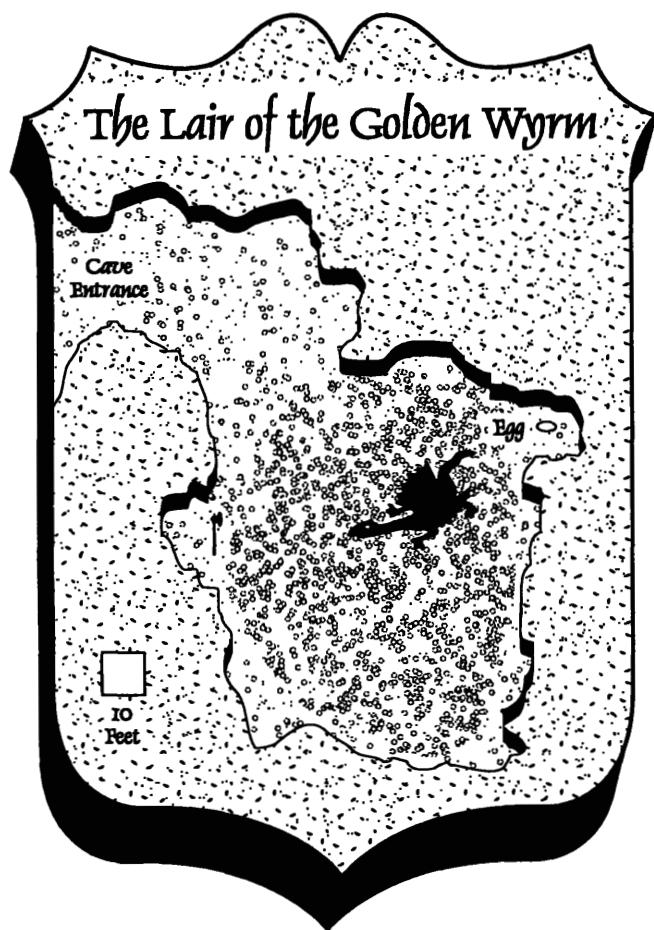
If the characters attack Impathis, she fights for her life and for her egg's safety. She prefers to fight outside her lair, where the beauty of her scales may transfix her opponents, where her wings can generate wind to knock her opponents down, and where she can breathe fire without damaging her treasure or her egg. However, if she has to she'll fight in her lair, using her claws and teeth and then, if necessary, her fiery breath. Where-

ever she fights, she tries to keep herself between her opponents and her egg.

If they haven't realized it before they enter her lair, characters should quickly come to the conclusion that fighting Impathis is a bad idea. She's obviously a creature of tremendous magical and physical power; young Magi should know better than to attack her, so don't be afraid to kill one or more of them if they try it. If the characters do kill her and take her treasure, see Chapter Four for the effects of her curse. If they surrender after fighting her, she may be merciful.

SPEAKING WITH THE WYRM

Because they choose to or because they're loud, characters may eventually find themselves speaking to the Golden Wyrmling. As long as her egg is not threatened, Impathis is reasonable and willing to talk. If the characters have tried to steal from her, she is displeased, but not to the point of attacking. She questions the characters on their identity and purpose, saying things like, "I am old and my sleep is dear to me. I would know who disturbs it and why" and "Did you come here hoping to steal of my treasures? Are these things still valuable to man?" She may even engage in scholarly discussions with characters who are so inclined, asking them history's perspective on long-dead kings or kingdoms.



The reason she talks to characters is to decide if they're trustworthy and competent. Although she no longer cares if humans hurt her, she's worried about her egg. When she dies and it hatches, there will be no one to protect the young dragon from greedy and violent knights. She needs guardians for her son, and is so desperate that she's even willing to give the job to humans, provided she's convinced of their goodwill and competence.

If the characters are honest or at least emulate it, they pass Impathis' test. She may even forgive any minor transgressions. If the characters also prove themselves Magi, Impathis is sufficiently impressed to offer them the job. However, she's careful about how she makes the offer. She doesn't want to reveal her impending death or the existence of her egg until she's sure that the characters will accept her offer. Thus she makes her offer one part at a time. First she hints that she might be willing to part with some of her hoard, saying, "If you are truly interested in my treasure, perhaps we could come to an arrangement." If the characters show interest, she says, "I would have one Magus remain with me for each season, to perform a service. If you cannot spare this time, we need talk no further." Only if the characters seem interested in these terms does Impathis make the following offer:

"You may have heard that those of my kind do not age, that we are immortal. This is not true. We are among the oldest of creatures, but death comes to us all. I am very old, and soon shall pass away.

"This must be and I have no regrets. But I have one worry: my offspring, my soon-to-be son, will hatch in less than a year. When I die, he will have no protector against the bloodthirsty knights who will hunt him, and no defense against the greedy thieves who would take the wondrous earth I have collected for him. I sense that you, although human, are honorable, and because you are Magi I know that you are strong enough to preserve him. I ask that for the next 30 years, until my son is old enough to fend for himself, one Magus remain here to protect and care for him. In exchange I will allow you to remove a small part of my hoard each year."

The amount that Impathis offers is up to you. Twenty-five hundred silver pennies per year is a reasonable amount. That's enough to cover the expenses of the Covenant plus a little extra. It's also an amount that Impathis can pay for 30 years without seriously depleting her hoard. If Impathis takes a great liking to the characters, she may offer more. If she dislikes them and only offers this stipend because she has no alternative, she may offer less. In either case, her offer is "take-it-or-leave-it." The Golden Wyrmling is far too dignified to haggle.

If the characters refuse Impathis' offer, she gravely warns them not to steal her treasure after she dies. She forbodes, "For oft those who treat others ill, are ill-treated themselves." This is a veiled reference to her curse, which, Impathis knows, will continue after her death. She does not mention the curse directly. She's afraid that if the characters know of its existence, they might find a way to overcome it. If the characters protest their innocence and say they have no such intention, Impathis lets them leave peacefully.

If the characters accept Impathis' offer, she insists that the agreement begin at once and that a Magus remain with her. Although a Magus' presence is not necessary as long as Impathis lives, she doesn't know when she will die, so wants someone there and as soon as possible. She's happy to have others as well, but insists that at least one Magus stay with her. Impathis allows the characters to take their first payment in advance, if they wish.

If the characters suggest that Impathis or her offspring might move to the Covenant, she refuses. Aside from the difficulty of transporting and storing her hoard, Impathis wants her offspring to grow up here, far from human civilization. It's bad enough that her son has to be guarded by humans; to be surrounded by large groups of them would be demeaning and unhealthy.

If the characters accept her offer but give Impathis reason to suspect their trustworthiness, she may warn them, as above, not to betray her. Again, she doesn't speak of the curse directly.

If the characters ask Impathis about her curse, or raise the possibility that her treasure will return to her lair, she tells them about her curse and assures them that any treasure freely given is not subject to it.

If the characters ask Impathis about a Magus who visited her five years ago, she freely tells them everything she knows. Azenis came to her lair and asked her if she had the body of Sir Erald, a knight who came to slay her centuries ago. The Magus wanted a map that Sir Erald was carrying, and when she discovered she did have his body, buried under mounds of silver, she sold it to him for gold coins (the equivalent of 1500 silver pennies), plus some other small pieces of silver (see The Hoard). Impathis has no grudge against Azenis, since he treated her fairly, but has no reason to protect him. She neither knows nor cares what the map led to. All she knows about Sir Erald is his name, and that he was one of a string of knights in the eighth century who tried to kill and rob her. She can describe Azenis but knows nothing about him, not even his name. She considers the whole matter unimportant and doesn't mention it unless the characters bring it up.

THE HOARD

The hoard of the Golden Wyrn consists mainly of centuries-old silver and gold coins. Though most of the coins are no longer in circulation, the metal in them is still valuable. The coins are piled throughout the main chamber. Scattered among the coins is a variety of silver and gold rings, statuettes, candlesticks and other valuable items, along with the skeletons of several knights who came to slay Impathis. Some of the skeletons still wear jewelry and armor.

Anyone carefully searching the hoard may find, on a Perception + Search simple roll of 9+, a set of silver candlesticks engraved with the emblem of Lux ex Tenebris. Near the candlesticks are gold coins (worth 1500 silver pennies), made in (relatively) modern times. This is the treasure that Azenis paid Impathis, and she says as much if asked.

The total wealth of the hoard is tremendous. Although the value of some of these items may depend on when and where they're sold, a good figure for the total value is 500,000 silver pennies. Characters who have a chance to look around the hoard and who make an Intelligence + Evaluate simple roll of 8+ can successfully estimate this value.

This wealth is not easily portable. About half the value of the hoard is in silver, the other in gold. Although silver coins are mixed with gold, anyone who has time can separate the two. Assume that one gold coin is worth 10 silver pennies, and that 50 coins encumbers a person by one point. For example, a character who takes 250 gold coins from the hoard, worth a total of 2500 silver pennies, adds five points to her Load total.

Options

This chapter is an important part of the Saga: it demonstrates the theme and provides characters with a way to keep their Covenant afloat. However, as it's written, the chapter allows characters to gain access to a tremendous amount of wealth. Once Impathis dies, by violence or old age, characters are left sitting on a king's ransom. Of course, the dragon's curse (see Chapter Four) makes it unlikely that characters can use more than a fraction of the hoard, but you may decide that you don't even want characters near that much money.

There are several ways this chapter can be modified to make the dragon's hoard less accessible. The simplest way is to have some powerful entity take the treasure when Impathis dies. The hoard is large enough to attract rivals that are out of the characters' league. If an army, a powerful Covenant or another large dragon were to arrive at the cave and claim the hoard, the characters would have little choice but to acquiesce. If you decide to do this, you may want to disregard Impathis' curse; that allows characters to keep what they can escape with, which may be enough to support the Covenant for awhile.

Another option is to make the hoard smaller. The hoard is designed to be as large as it is so characters can support their Covenant for many years without taking a great share of the treasure. That way Impathis can pass most of her treasure on to her son. However, you can decide that she's willing to give away most or all of her treasure to keep her son alive. In that case the hoard can be much smaller.

A third possibility is to keep Impathis alive. Perhaps she isn't dying, but needs Magi for some other reason, perhaps to teach her son Hermetic magic, to help her negotiate with another Covenant, or to hunt down faeries who are stealing her treasure. Any of these story ideas allows Impathis to pay Magi for their services, without giving characters access to the whole hoard. These stories don't closely follow the theme of the Saga, but still suit other chapters.



IMPATHIS, THE GOLDEN WYRM

Impathis is an ancient and dying dragon. In her younger years, she was active in the affairs of men, feeding on their animals, collecting tribute from their leaders, and defeating those who came to kill her. Now she's dying, of weariness and old age. In her wisdom she realizes it's time to leave the world.

Her one worry is her son. Her latest egg will soon hatch, and when she dies there will be no one to look after him. She wants him to inherit her treasure, but without a guardian believes he would have little chance against thieves and knights.

Impathis is noble and wise. She deals fairly with people and expects them to deal fairly with her. She is fierce when angered and has no compassion for those who would harm her or her offspring.

Appearance: Impathis is 50 feet long from head to tail. She has a massive body with two huge wings folded to her side. Her neck and legs are large as well, but relatively short. She is completely covered with sparkling golden scales which brilliantly reflect any light. In flight and in combat, her body moves with tremendous power and grace.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak very low and slowly. Occasionally rumble deep in your throat. Have a grand sense of perspective; don't concern yourself with trivia. Act with dignity.

Repayment

In this part of the story, the characters are "repaid" for their previous treatment of the Golden Wurm. If they reached an agreement with her, she keeps her end of the bargain, and allows the characters to remove a certain amount of treasure from her hoard each year, in exchange for remaining in her lair and guarding her offspring. She soon dies, and when the egg hatches the characters must raise a baby dragon on their own.

If, earlier in this chapter, the characters killed or stole from Impathis, they are subject to her curse. Any treasure they took from her vanishes and reappears in her lair, one year after it was stolen. If the characters haven't spent this treasure yet, they are merely left bankrupt. If they have spent it, this money has undoubtedly found its way into the treasuries of every powerful noble and merchant in the area. These people are furious when their treasure vanishes, and it doesn't take them long to trace the "faerie gold" back to the Covenant. They quickly raise an army and besiege the Covenant. With a lot of promises and smooth talking, the characters may escape with their lives and their Covenant intact.

The Saga's theme emerges in this part of the Saga in the death of Impathis and the hatching of her child. Impathis is wondrous and powerful, but like all old things she passes away. Her offspring begins life being ugly and weak, but like many new creatures has great potential.

Impathis, the Golden Wyrn

Magic Might: 55

Vital Statistics: Size +8, Intelligence (wise) +6, Perception +6 (keen-eyed), Strength (massive) +10, Stamina (enduring) +6, Presence (sparkling scales) +6, Communication (smooth speech) +4, Dexterity 0, Quickness (lumbering) -3

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Wise +6, Weary +5, Forgiving +4, Noble +3, Greedy +3, Dignified +3

Reputation: Greedy (scholars) 7, Rich (scholars) 7

Confidence: 6

Combat Totals:

Bite*: First Strike +4, Attack +8, Damage +32

Claws*: First Strike +5, Attack +6, Damage +25

Breath*: First Strike +6, Attack +12**, Damage +20/+45

*each Round Impathis can attack with a bite and two claws, or with fiery breath

**can be dodged but not parried

Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1/-1, -3/-3, -5/-5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), **Soak** +25 (31 Action), **Fatigue** +6

Encumbrance: 0

Powers:

Fiery Breath, CrIg 45, 5 points — Causes +45 damage if directed at a single target (up to five paces away), or +20 damage to all targets within five paces and within a 60° arc of Impathis' head.

Sparkling Scales, ReMe 20, 0 points — Impathis' golden scales appear so beautiful that anyone who gazes on her in sunlight (or its equivalent) must make a Stamina stress roll of 9+ or stand transfixed, unable to do anything except stare in fascination. Unless the roll is Botched, a victim may roll each Round to recover. Once one roll is successful, no further rolls are necessary. On a Botch, the victim stands in awe until Impathis takes action against him or her.

Curse of the Treacherous Gold, ReTe 45, 0 points — Any treasure stolen from Impathis disappears one year after the theft and reappears in her lair. This power persists for up to 30 years after Impathis' death. She can choose to undo this power over part of her hoard (thus she can willingly give treasure away).

Fly, ReAn 30, 0 points — Impathis can fly. When she flies, the wind created by her wings is so great that with each Round, anyone within 10 paces must make a Strength + Size stress roll of 7+ to remain standing. If the roll is Botched, the victim falls and suffers +5 Damage. In this wind, all melee Attack rolls on Impathis are at -3 and all missiles and thrown weapon Attack rolls are at -6 (even if the Strength + Size roll to remain standing succeeds).

Vis: The Golden Wyrn's scales contain 30 pawns of Rego vis. Her heart contains 20 pawns of Ignem vis.

DRAGON-SITTING OR DRAGON'S CURSE

This part of the tale is divided into two parts, *Dragon-Sitting* and *Dragon's Curse*. The first part describes the characters' stories if they end up baby-sitting Impathis' son. The second part describes the effects of Impathis' curse. The characters probably experience only one of these courses. If the characters make an agreement with Impathis, run them through *Dragon-Sitting*. If they kill her, steal from her, or wait until she's dead to take her treasure, run them through *Dragon's Curse*.

It's possible for characters to experience both curse and dragon-sitting. For example, characters might start out as the victims of the Wyrn's curse, but then return to her lair after her death and find her dragonet. If they decide to stay and raise the creature, their stories are told first in *Dragon's Curse*, and then in *Dragon-Sitting*. Or the characters might reach an agreement with Impathis, but betray her after she dies and take her hoard. In this case, their stories are told first in *Dragon-Sitting*, and then in *Dragon's Curse*.

It's worth noting that if characters are sufficiently clever and unscrupulous, they can betray Impathis without becoming subject to her curse. When Impathis reaches an agreement with the characters, she exempts part of her hoard from her curse. For example, if she agrees to pay 2500 silver pennies a year for 30 years, she removes her curse from 75,000 silver pennies. Although she tells the characters to remove only 2500 per year, there's nothing stopping characters from taking all 75,000 at once, and leaving Impathis' son to die (or even killing him). If the characters take more than 75,000, the curse affects that extra treasure.

The curse lasts for 30 years, at which time Impathis' offspring, if he's still alive, acquires the power to bestow his own curse (see *Dragon-Sitting: The Dragonet's Growth*).

Dragon-Sitting

Because she isn't sure when she'll die, Impathis insists that a Magus reside with her as soon as possible, and that her offspring be guarded constantly by one or more Magi until the dragonet is 30. Once a Magus agrees to stay with her, Impathis relaxes. She and the Magus stand guard together for six months, when she dies.



The Golden Wyrn spends most of that time sleeping. As she gets closer to death, she becomes more and more lethargic. When the characters find her she spends about 20 hours a day sleeping. Over the next few months she sleeps more and more. A Season after the characters have found her, she awakens only once every few days. Just before her death, at the end of two Seasons, she awakens only once a week. While she sleeps, Impathis breathes very slowly and her heart barely beats.

Although her sleep is in some ways very deep, Impathis is still somewhat aware of her surroundings. The characters can wake her simply by calling her name, and if her lair is invaded or her egg threatened she also awakens. She retains all of her powers and abilities until she dies. When she dies, her scales and bones become hard and brittle, the fire in her heart goes out, and her insides rot away. Although Impathis asks that her scales and bones be left to stand, her scales are worth 30 pawns of Rego vis even after she dies. The Ignem vis in her heart is lost if she dies of old age.

If characters wish to speak with Impathis during her waking moments, she consents. She is a creature of rare age and wisdom, and the characters can learn much from her. Though she's not awake often enough to formally teach a Knowledge, she often speaks sadly of things long gone by: of dead gods, lost knowledge and cities passed. It's up to you to determine whether her words are important. Perhaps a Magus interested in the Old Ones can learn from what she has to say.

While the characters are in the dragon's lair, they're free to make themselves comfortable. They may want to build a small

The Dragonet at Hatching

Magic Might: 25

Vital Statistics: Size -1, Intelligence (ignorant) -3, Perception (keen-eyed) +1, Strength (thin) -1, Stamina (hardy) +3, Presence (green) -3, Communication n/a, Dexterity (agile climber) +1, Quickness 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Hungry +4, Curious +3, Active +3

Reputation: None

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Bite*: First Strike +5, Attack +4, Damage +6

Claws*: First Strike +6, Attack +3, Damage +2

*each Round the dragonet can attack with either a bite or two claws

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), **Soak** +6 (12 Action), **Fatigue** +2

Encumbrance: 0

Vis: The dragonet's heart contains 5 pawns of Ignem vis

At hatching, the dragonet looks like a large, ugly lizard. He's about six feet long, with four stubby legs and two small, useless wings. His scales are dark green.

shelter nearby, rather than sleep in the cave. Impathis asks that the guarding Magus be near enough to protect the egg, but doesn't require that characters live with her. Although it would take a lot of money and labor to set up a magical lab in the area, Magi can easily bring books from the Covenant and study from them while guarding the egg. Other characters can practice their skills here.

The Hatching

About a Season after Impathis dies, three Seasons after the characters initially encounter her, the egg hatches. The hatching takes about 20 minutes. It starts when the egg begins to rock back and forth, just slightly at first, then more and more. Small cracks appear, and as they widen their ends meet. Small holes then appear where cracks started, as the dragonet's claws poke through the shell. Finally, large segments of the shell fall away, as a young, slimy reptile rips open his prison and sees the world for the first time. As Impathis foresaw, the young dragonet is male.

The dragonet begins life hungry. As soon as he hatches, he begins looking for food. If the characters don't provide a meal, the dragonet may try to eat one of them. At this stage the dragonet is probably not a threat to the characters, but may be

difficult to subdue without injury. Depending on how much food the characters have nearby, the newborn may be satisfied with some of their supplies, but characters eventually need to buy meat for him or let him hunt. The dragonet is an adequate hunter, even at hatching, but unless he's restrained he may wander into dangerous territory (such as Abederne) in search of food.

The Dragonet's Growth

The hatchling is born with few powers. In time, if he's fed and kept safe, his physical and magical abilities mature. He begins flying after one year, can breathe fire at two (First Strike +5, Attack +5 [can be dodged, but not parried], Damage +6/+15, Range of two paces), and can bestow the *Curse of the Treacherous Gold* (see *Impathis, the Golden Wyrn*, above) at 30. If taught, he can learn any human language by age five (his Communication score begins at -2). For every five years until he's 30, the dragonet gains two points of Magic Might, Soak and vis, one point of Size, Intelligence, Strength and Presence, one Body Level, one Fatigue Level, and two points of Damage with his claws, bite and fiery breath. Every 10 years until he's 30, the dragonet gains one point of Perception, Stamina and Communication, and one point with his claw, bite and fiery breath.



Greedy Faerie Dwarfs

Attack rolls. Gradually, the hatchling grows from an ugly oversized lizard into a powerful dragon covered with beautiful golden scales.

As the dragon grows in magical and physical power, his personality also develops. At birth and for years afterward, he's simply hungry and curious. He can learn to recognize people, avoid certain types of food and even follow simple commands, but he can't understand complicated ideas or engage in any kind of conversation. As the dragonet learns to speak, he acquires new traits, becoming less of an animal and more of a cognitive being.

Describing the older dragonet's personality is beyond the scope of this work. If the dragonet survives its 30-year youth, he may become an important character in your Saga. His personality depends on the stories you tell. If the dragon remains friendly and is grateful for the characters' "parenting," the Covenant has a powerful ally as it moves into Summer and Autumn. The dragon might help the characters in battles against their rivals, or the characters might come to the dragon's aid if he's threatened. This option allows characters to continue to profit from the hoard, assuming they continue to help the dragon in one way or another.

On the other hand, the dragon might turn against the characters, attacking or driving them out. He might blame them for his mother's death, or for the "theft" of his hoard. In this case, you can tell stories in which the characters fight the dragon, either for his treasure, for revenge or in self-defense. Alternatively, you can invent some personality between these two extremes. Perhaps the dragon is friendly but greedy, and sells his services to the Covenant for a high price.

No matter how you want the dragon to turn out, try to base his personality at least partly on his upbringing. Find events in his relationship with the characters that might explain his present temperament. For example, if the dragon is ill-tempered, is it because one of the characters ignored or mistreated him? Perhaps he was treated too well, and becomes spoiled. If the characters (and players) believe they made the dragon what he is, your Saga has more continuity and texture.

Story Ideas

Most of this Saga focuses on events near Lux ex Tenebris. If you want to maintain that focus, find out which characters are dragon-sitting and leave them out of the action. However, if you want to take a break from the Saga's main storyline, you can tell stories set at the dragon's lair. Below are a few story ideas, which can be used as brief episodes or expanded into full adventures.

Story Idea: A knight arrives at the lair to challenge the Golden Wyrms to battle. He is quite surprised to find her dead and humans inhabiting her lair, but greets the characters and congratulates them on slaying the dragon. Once the knight discovers the dragonet, he refuses to leave without killing it. He argues with the characters, pointing out the horrible slaughter that Impathis caused centuries ago, and arguing that her son is likely to follow in her footsteps. If the characters still oppose

him, the knight takes up arms. He is a man of True Faith, so may not easily be defeated.

Story Idea: A group of faerie dwarfs tunnels into the dragon's lair. The dwarfs are friendly, but claim that some of the dragon's gold was originally theirs. Now that the dragon is dead they've come to take it back. If the characters refuse to turn over the treasure, the dwarfs may become hostile. If the characters do give away the gold, the dragonet may remember this later, convinced that the characters betrayed him. The Golden Wyrms' curse is still active, so if the dwarfs take too much gold, it returns to the lair after a year. When this happens, the dwarfs return enraged, believing the characters have cheated them.

Story Idea: An old man arrives at the dragon's lair and speaks with the characters. He claims to be a scholar interested in dragonkind, and asks permission to study the dragonet. The old man is actually a Flambeau Magus who wants to impress other Flambeaus by bonding a dragon as his Familiar. If the characters discover this and confront him, the Magus admits his intention and offers to pay the characters for the dragonet. Do the characters sell the baby, or do they risk offending a powerful Magus?

Story Idea: A minor demon in the shape of a snake begins causing trouble in Abederne. Several villagers see it killing goats and poisoning water. The villagers believe the dragonet is the demon, and begin harassing and attacking the characters who protect him. To keep the peace, the characters must find and kill the snake-demon. How did it get to the village in the first place? Perhaps there are diabolists at work.

Dragon's Curse

Any treasure taken from the Golden Wyrms' hoard without her permission is subject to her curse. A Spontaneous Intellego Vim spell of Level 10+ reveals that there is some magical enchantment on such treasure, but only laboratory investigation can discover the nature of the enchantment. See the section *Investigating an Enchantment*, in *Ars Magica*, if a Magus wishes to spend a Season testing one of the coins; the curse is a Level 45 enchantment.

If you are a benevolent Storyguide and your players don't think of casting spells on the coins, you may want to give their characters a chance to discover the curse. On the journey back to the Covenant, an innkeeper might refuse the characters' gold, or distrusts them for offering it. Perhaps similar coins were spent at the village 30 years ago when the Golden Wyrms' hoard was robbed, and those coins vanished months later. If the characters probe deeply enough, they might at least become wary of spending too much, too soon. Such an informative encounter is easy to insert into the Saga if characters become friendly with the villagers of Abederne, but it's possible to tell the story in other towns as well.

Of course, if you want you can skip this helpful story and allow characters to remain blissfully ignorant of the treasure's curse. The sudden discovery of the curse a year later may be a moment you won't want to miss.

Removal

Once the characters discover the curse, whether or not it's taken effect yet, they may look for a way to remove it. One way is to get Impathis' permission to spend the gold, which she might be willing to give even to characters who have attacked her. However, if the characters don't want to chance that, or if Impathis is already dead, the characters have to look for some other means to remove the curse.

The characters can use *Disenchant* (Perdo Vim Gen) or *Wind of Mundane Silence* (Perdo Vim Gen), if they have versions that are powerful enough to remove a Level 45 enchantment. Unfortunately, neither Azenis nor the Lux ex Tenebris library has these spells, and it's unlikely that one of the players' characters has a version that powerful at her disposal. An attempt to copy a sufficiently powerful version of one of these spells can lead to a story set in some other Tribunal. If you don't want to tell such a story, you can simply say that characters know of no such spells.

It's up to you whether or not there's another way to remove the curse. If there isn't, the characters may have to give up on the hoard and look for another source of income. If there is another way to remove the curse, the characters might have to read legends of the Golden Wyrms to find out what it is, and then undertake another quest to implement it. For example, an obscure book in a faraway library might report that the Wyrms' treasure remains cursed until it's washed in a faerie pool (or perhaps in holy water). After finding the book, the characters have to find a friendly Faerie forest (or large church). Whatever the means of the curse's removal, it should be sufficiently difficult to accomplish, ensuring that characters can only lift it from some of the treasure each year. That way characters have a source of income, but don't have too much wealth or power.

If the characters detect the curse but can't remove it, they may try to get around its effects by exchanging cursed gold in a faraway place. That way they are gone by the time the gold vanishes. It's up to you to decide how well this strategy works, but keep in mind that this is exactly the sort of behavior which inspires mundane hatred for the Order. The cheating characters are probably severely punished if they're caught by the Quaesitoris.

Curse Effects

Unless the characters remove the curse, any stolen treasure vanishes one year after being taken from the Wyrms' lair. Depending on how much treasure the characters took and how much they have spent, the effects of the curse range from bad to catastrophic. If the characters haven't spent any of the dragon's gold, it vanishes from their treasury and they're a lot poorer than they were. If the characters guess at the gold's return, they may go back to the lair, steal the gold again and try to remove the curse (see *Removal*).

If the characters have spent the gold, they're in a lot of trouble. Anything that the characters spent has been spread among the major mundane powers of the region. Some of it has found its way to the coffers of the Church, some to the pockets

of merchants, some to Baron D'Oeuf's treasury, and some to the treasuries of the Baron's knights. When all this wealth disappears in one night, everyone becomes furious. It doesn't take long to track the missing wealth back to the Covenant, and everyone assumes the Magi deliberately cheated them.

The intensity of the people's anger depends on how much of the gold the Covenant has spent. If it's spent less than 1000 pennies, Baron D'Oeuf may content himself with declaring the Magi outlaws, jailing them on sight, and forbidding any commerce with them until they make reparations. If the characters have spent more than that, the Baron raises an army. He takes 40 knights and 80 men-at-arms (see Chapter Seven for statistics) and arrives at the Covenant walls within two weeks. With him rides Bishop Guillet and representatives of many of the more powerful merchants in Tourien. They refuse any parley until they've laid siege to the Covenant.

At this point, the characters have three options, none of which are very promising. They can fight, they can run or they can talk.

Fighting is probably the worst thing the characters can do. The Baron's knights are many and well-armed, while the characters' Groggs are few and of questionable loyalty, especially if they too were paid in disappearing gold. Some of the knights carry holy relics, so even magic may not defeat them. Even if the characters defeat the army, what then? All of mundane society hates them. They can't run a functioning Covenant in the middle of an angry populace. If further armies don't destroy the Covenant, a lack of supplies will. Even fellow Magi are likely to turn against the characters, punishing them for bringing mundane wrath upon the Order.

Running from the army is not a promising option, either. Although running probably keeps the characters safe in the short-term, it brings new problems. Azenis refuses to leave or allow the characters to leave. Although they can sneak out without his knowledge, abandoning their Pontifex is highly irresponsible and a violation of the characters' Oath to the Covenant. If he can, Azenis has the Quaesitoris punish the characters. Second, even if the characters avoid Hermetic justice, the Baron's army is still looking for them. Azenis has to deal with the army one way or another, and the best way for him to do so is to sell the characters out. He pleads innocence to the characters' crimes, and in exchange for his safety allows the army to raid the Magi's labs, even giving them magical help in locating the characters (Azenis has several spells which can be useful for this). The army posts guards at the Covenant in the event of the characters' return and sets out looking for them. Until the characters face their "crimes," they can't return to their Covenant or safely join another.

The last option, talking to the invading army, doesn't look too promising, but it's the best chance the characters have. Baron D'Oeuf refuses to talk until he's in a position of power. He agrees to parley as soon as his troops surround the Covenant. At this point, anything the characters say is greeted with suspicion. The mundanes are not likely to believe the truth, and even if they do, they still hold the Covenant responsible. The mundanes distrust promises of wealth, but they listen,

mainly because they want their gold back more than they want to sack the Covenant. If they have enough cash, the characters can eventually convince the army to accept, in common silver, twice the value of what was lost. Once the characters agree to pay this, those with the army who lost money approach, tell the characters how much they lost, and expect to receive double.

The difficulty with this process, of course, is that it's nearly impossible to know exactly how much everyone lost. Not all the knights are sure how many of the coins they had, and many of the ones who do know deliberately inflate their estimates. Some of those who lost money aren't here, either, so their portions are collected by others who may or may not know how much was lost, and who may or may not have the others' best interests at heart. Unless the characters can figure out some foolproof way to distribute the money (keeping in mind that they're not trusted, making public use of magic highly unpopular), the characters end up paying four times the dragon's gold that they spent. Even then many accuse them of dishonesty.

Keep in mind that the army only accepts common coins; it's at least a year before the people begin to take "wizard's gold" again, even if the curse is lifted. If the characters don't have enough silver, they have to give the army something else. Depending on what they have, the characters can sell some of the Grog's arms and armor, sell their lab equipment, or even sell some of the covenfolk into serfdom (although the last is probably illegal, and certainly cruel). If the characters have useful magical talents or spells, they might barter those in exchange for some claims. Azenis refuses to contribute anything, saying this whole mess is the characters' affair.

Although the destruction of the Covenant should be a realistic threat in this part of the chapter, it shouldn't become a reality. The army's demands should be something the Covenant, with great sacrifice and difficulty, can meet. The characters should lose more than what they've bought with the dragon's gold, but they shouldn't lose everything.

Even after the characters pay back the treasure, they have a Reputation for being Untrustworthy (rated three).



DECAY

CHAPTER FIVE

Olendur watched Azenis carefully. He didn't expect Azenis to attack a fellow Magus, not here, not with so many witnesses. But he didn't know why Azenis was calling them together, so he kept a close eye on him. Develi, Morganus and Jstaff were already in the Council Chamber, having responded to the summons. The only ones missing were the two visiting Quaesitoris: Severine and her filius, Stratus Enor.

If Azenis was going to attack anyone, it would be Severine. Although Olendur and the others had initiated the complaint against Azenis, Severine was the only one with the authority to punish him. And in the past few days, she'd relentlessly gathered evidence against him. Olendur didn't know what had previously passed between Severine and Azenis, but from her diligence in pursuing the investigation he suspected she had a personal vendetta. Though that might be unjust, Olendur didn't care. All he cared about was stopping Azenis from destroying the Covenant.

In any case, Olendur wasn't worried about Severine. She was as old and as powerful as Azenis. Even by herself, she might be a match for him, and if Azenis tried anything he'd have five other Magi against him as well. Besides, he wouldn't dare move against such a politically powerful figure. She was backed by all of House Quaesitor.

Olendur heard footsteps on the stairs to the Covenant Chamber. Severine, he guessed, with her filius soon to follow. But he was wrong. The tall, thin form of Stratus Enor appeared in the doorway. He was white and his lip trembled.

"Severine is dead," he announced quietly. He looked from one Magus to another as though disoriented.

Olendur stared in disbelief, but Azenis didn't even bother to feign surprise. "I know," he said. "Now listen to me. . ."

SUMMARY

In this chapter, the characters discover the truth about Azenis and the Holy Shroud. Some time after they join the Covenant, the characters realize their efforts to restore Lux ex Tenebris are failing. New lab equipment quickly becomes worn, new Groggs and covenfolk age and die rapidly, and building improvements quickly decay. The characters may investigate these strange phenomena in many different ways, from trading rumors with the ghost of Triandin, to doing magical research, to visiting foreign libraries. Eventually they realize Azenis is responsible, that he has twisted the Holy Shroud to give himself eternal life, and that this has caused the accelerated decay of the Covenant. Azenis all but admits to his crimes, but refuses to desist and defies the characters to oppose him.

If the characters complain to the Order, Severine, the Quaesitor who punished the characters in Chapter Two, arrives at Lux ex Tenebris to investigate their complaint. With her are two assistants: her filius Stratus Enor, and the Magus Istaff of House Flambeau. Severine is sympathetic to the characters' complaint and spends hours questioning Azenis. Eventually, just as she seems ready to raise charges against him, she dies in her sleep. Azenis hints that he's responsible for her murder and threatens the characters and visitors. Stratus Enor caves in to these threats and flees Lux ex Tenebris, taking Istaff with him.

THEME

The Saga's theme arises in three ways in this chapter. The first is in the continuing decay of Lux ex Tenebris. The characters are trying to restore the Covenant, but because it hasn't fully died yet, it can't be reborn. Azenis represents the past life of the Covenant. His continued existence robs the Covenant of its chance for rebirth. In order for new life to begin, the old must pass away.

The Saga's theme also emerges in Severine's death and Stratus Enor's reaction to it. Severine's death gives Stratus Enor his first chance at a life of his own. He doesn't have to be dominated by her anymore. He can stand up to Azenis on his own. Stratus Enor gives up this opportunity, though. Without someone to tell him what to do, he becomes confused and afraid, and backs down in the face of Azenis' threats.

Istaff, the Flambeau assistant to Severine, also embodies this Saga's theme. Although Istaff doesn't suffer any loss in this chapter, her attitudes delve into the acceptance of death. Istaff is fascinated by death, but she's not grim or morbid. On the contrary, she's happy and spontaneous. She's as fascinated by life as she is by death; she sees them as separate halves of a complete whole. Thus Istaff is an example of how one can accept death without losing hope or falling into despair.



TIMING

The events of the first part of this chapter, in which the characters investigate the Covenant's decay, may be interspersed with events in Chapters Three and Four. The timing of the investigation depends mainly on the actions of the characters. They may investigate the decay as soon as they arrive at Lux ex Tenebris, or may wait until the Covenant is falling apart before they realize there's a problem.

Although the pace of the investigation is up to the characters, you should help set it. Don't let the characters fail completely, and don't let them discover everything at once. If they're getting nowhere, give them a few free hints, perhaps through Kakithric or Triandin. If they seem to be doing too well, throw in a few red herrings or make one of their journeys especially long. Allow them to come to their answer one piece at a time. Not only is that more dramatic and satisfying, but it suits the rest of the Saga.

Ultimately, the characters should recognize the mystery of the Covenant's decay as they finish the restorations of Chapter Three, and after meeting Impathis in Chapter Four. If the characters are affected by the dragon's curse, it's important that the curse be lifted before or during the events of Chapter Five. Since the events of Chapters Six, Seven and Eight follow soon after those of Five, any loose ends from earlier chapters still dangle at the conclusion of the Saga, and tying them up then might be anticlimactic.

The second part of this chapter — Severine's visit — can be timed with events in the beginning of Chapter Six. It adds continuity to the Saga if rumors of Christophe's return are heard during Severine's visit. Otherwise, they can be heard soon afterward.

Signs of Decay

Chapter Three describes the decrepit state of the Covenant when the characters join. It's obvious that the Covenant is old and dying. What's not obvious is that this decay is due to the life-draining power of Azenis' Holy Shroud. He's warped the holy item so that it keeps him alive, but in order to do so it drains life from everything around it.

As described in the Appendix, the Shroud causes objects and people to age faster than normal. All objects decay at five times normal speed. People over 35 also age five times faster than normal. However, because the Shroud works by magnifying existing decay, anyone who's 35 or younger (which may include most or all of the characters) ages at a normal rate, and is not affected by the Shroud.

If a character is over 35, roll for Aging once a Season, plus once more during Winter. Make the rolls yourself, and don't tell a player that her character is growing older until a roll is failed and a Characteristic point is lost or a Decrepitude point is gained. When a character loses more than one Characteristic point or gains more than one Decrepitude point in a year, she may realize she's being affected by magic.

Almost all of the Covenant's original Grog and covenfolk are over 35. If you don't want to bother rolling Aging for each one each Season, assume that one of the original covenfolk and one of the original Grog dies each Season. The Grog and covenfolk suspect that some evil has befallen them, but don't understand what or why, and despair of ever finding a solution. New Grog and covenfolk don't age or die quickly unless they're over 35.

If one of the characters is over 35, she undoubtedly notices her decay. Otherwise, she may realize that something is wrong by recognizing the premature aging of the covenfolk and Covenant. The rapid aging and deaths of the covenfolk and Grog is certainly suspicious. Covenant inhabitants have noticed this, and some have formed their own theories (see Chapter Three). However, it's hard to be sure that this is unnatural. Since the Shroud only affects those over 35, there are no young people in the Covenant who look old. There are only old people who look much older. Furthermore, all deaths appear to be natural. There's no sign of magic on the bodies. Still, the sheer number of premature deaths probably makes characters suspicious.

If the characters look for premature decay among physical objects at the Covenant, they find it. However, depending on what the characters look at, it may take some time before they're sure that decay is accelerated. For example, a chair which would normally last 10 years only lasts two at the Covenant, but it might take a year before the characters are sure the chair is more worn than it should be.

If characters don't think of looking for signs of physical decay, it might take them more than a year to realize what's going on. Let characters realize what's happening gradually. Tell a few disparate stories which might help them realize the truth. For example, characters might discover that their new lab equipment wears out easily. They might suspect the glassworker, from whom they bought it, of supplying them with shoddy merchandise. Perhaps a Season later, covenfolk ask the Magi to find a faerie who's been spoiling the Covenant food. The cooks know the faerie is there, because food only a few days old keeps turning foul. Later still, an archway that a builder declared safe might collapse on a Grog or Companion. The characters might think it a murder attempt or curse. Eventually, however, they should put these signs together and realize the entire Covenant is falling apart. It shouldn't take more than two years to realize this.

Investigating the Decay

Once characters realize the Covenant is decaying, they probably try to find out why. They can piece together some of the mystery by magical research and can find clues by speaking with Covenant inhabitants. In order to solve the mystery completely, they must travel outside the Covenant, to the libraries where Azenis did his research on the Shroud.

The first phase of the investigation, wherein characters remain at Lux ex Tenebris, is fully detailed below. The second phase, wherein characters leave the Covenant and travel to Hermetic libraries, is open-ended to allow you complete storytelling freedom. Depending on how involved you want this quest to be, this part of the story can range from a simple story of a journey, to a long and involved quest to a half-dozen libraries.

INVESTIGATING: MAGIC

Probably the most straightforward way to investigate the decay is through magic. The decay, although unnaturally accelerated, is a natural process. It cannot be reversed and none of the objects or people affected by it radiate magic. Spells such as *Wizard's Subtle Touch* (Intéllego Vim 5) reveal nothing out of the ordinary. Second Sight and Magic Sensitivity, likewise, reveal nothing unusual about surroundings, although a Perception + Sense Holiness simple roll of 16+ detects holiness in the vicinity of Azenis' lab. Other talents, such as Divination or Visions, might be useful for detecting the Shroud's effects, and powerful demons or faeries might be able to give characters clues (though such creatures don't share their knowledge without a price). A Spontaneous Intéllego Vim spell of Level 25+, cast anywhere in the Covenant, reveals that there is some sort of supernatural effect causing everything to decay, but further information cannot be gained without laboratory research.

If any Magus spends a Season at Lux ex Tenebris investigating the decay, roll a stress die and add the Magus' Intéllego Vim Lab Total. If the total is greater than 20, the Magus learns the decay affects all objects and all people of middle age and older (i.e., older than 35). The Magus also learns that the decay is localized to the Covenant and seems to be centered on the central tower. The research reveals nothing about the cause of the decay or of ways to prevent or reverse it. Further lab research reveals nothing else.

Clues at the Covenant

In addition to information that can be gained from laboratory research, there are several other clues at the Covenant. The characters can speak with one of the older Covenant inhabitants, they can search the remains of Benvolius' lab (the Magus who did the original research of combining Divine and Hermetic power), or they can read over the decaying books of the Covenant's library.

Speaking with Covenfolk

If characters interview old covenfolk, they learn little. Most Grog and covenfolk know nothing that the characters don't. If the characters are having trouble with their investigation and you want to help them, you can say that one of the old Grog traveled with Azenis to some of the libraries where he did research (see *Investigating: Library Research*). If the characters are doing particularly well and you want to slow them down,

you can throw them a red herring by having one of the Grog tell them a legend of an ancient curse or a powerful enemy. However, it's probably best to have covenfolk tell characters that they don't know what's causing the decay. They've been hoping the characters would know, and if the characters demonstrate ignorance, Covenant morale diminishes further.

There are three Covenant inhabitants, however, who do know something that the characters don't. The first, of course, is Azenis. He's completely unhelpful and surly if questioned. He denies any accusations, but otherwise claims ignorance and apathy. See *Azenis' Reaction*, below, if the characters press their questions.

The second inhabitant that characters might speak to is Triandin's ghost. Triandin doesn't know what's causing the decay (in fact, he doesn't know for sure that it's anything supernatural), but does have some useful information about Azenis. Although Triandin is helpful and willing to tell all he knows, he doesn't know what would be useful, so doesn't tell characters anything that they don't ask about.

Triandin knows a lot about Azenis, or at least a lot more than the characters do. He knows that Azenis specializes in the Arts of Intéllego and Córpoem, and that he's very old. He knows that until about five years before the characters joined the Covenant, Azenis led an active life and did a lot of traveling. He knows the names of a few of the libraries Azenis visited, particularly in his last few active years (see *Library Research*, below). Triandin also knows the circumstances by which Azenis became Pontifex. If asked, he tells the following story:

"Before Azenis, the Magus Ceremin was our Pontifex. Ceremin was a good man: a lover of art and civilization, a Jerbiton Magus like I was. Ceremin and Azenis never got along. They often argued over the disposition of the laboratory notes of our late sodalis Benvolius, a brilliant and justly-famed Bonisagus Magus who lived here in decades past. Azenis was interested in Benvolius' research and wanted to take his notes, but Ceremin felt they should be kept in the Covenant library where all could have access to them. I don't know what Benvolius was doing; in truth Azenis was the only one of us interested in his research, but Ceremin felt it was wrong to allow another Magus to lay claim to Covenant property. Their dispute was long-lasting and bitter.

"When Ceremin eventually died, Azenis and I were the only Magi left at Lux ex Tenebris. By tradition the post of Pontifex goes to a Jerbiton Magus who's willing to undertake the onerous duty of leading the Covenant and dealing with the outside world. Since I was eager to rebuild the Covenant, to bring in new blood and restore it to Spring, I asked for the post. But Azenis overruled me and claimed the post for himself. This the Charter allowed him to do, as he was older than I. His first act was to take all of Benvolius' notes. His next was to forbid any new members into the Covenant. Ever since then he has totally neglected his duties as Pontifex, and allowed the Covenant to fall into ruin. For years I pleaded with him to let me restore the Covenant. But he only stayed in his tower, letting the Covenant fall apart around him. Except for recruiting you, he has done nothing for Lux ex Tenebris. He robbed me of the chance to restore this place, and now only God knows if I will find my rest."

Triandin is still bitter toward Azenis, for denying him the opportunity to rebuild the Covenant, but also for his ghostly existence. Triandin doesn't know why he cannot rest. He assumed he was unable to leave this world until Lux ex Tenebris was restored, but doesn't understand why the arrival of the characters hasn't allowed him his rest. If the characters tell Triandin about the decay of the Covenant, he realizes that he cannot rest until the decay is reversed.

The last inhabitant of Lux ex Tenebris that characters can talk to is Kakithric, Azenis' vulture Familiar. Kakithric loves to taunt the characters about their impending death, and may hint that he knows what's causing the decay. He does know, but doesn't betray Azenis. Instead, he does his best to infuriate the characters, telling them as little as possible, hinting that he knows much more. This also infuriates Azenis, who wishes that his familiar would keep his beak shut. Use Kakithric to give characters a hint if they need one, but don't have him spill the beans. If the characters try to read Kakithric's mind or force him to talk, Azenis immediately learns of it. See *Azenis' Reaction* below.

Benvolius' Lab

Another place where characters can find clues to the decay and Shroud is Benvolius' old lab (area 25). Although Azenis has stripped it of any useful or revealing equipment, the lab itself still bears some marks of Benvolius' work. Benvolius was interested in finding a universal theory of the supernatural, a way to incorporate Divine, Faerie and Infernal powers into

Hermetic theory. Though he never completely succeeded, his research was quite useful in Azenis' attempts to warp the Shroud to Hermetic magic.

Benvolius worked with all types of supernatural power. Some parts of his lab are Divine, while others are Infernal (each detected on a Sense Holiness & Unholiness simple roll of 12+). The spell *Sense of the Lingering Magic* (Intéllego Vim 30) reveals that Infernal, Divine and Faerie magic have all been used here. Other Intéllego spells may be used to discover the nature of Benvolius' research. However, since Benvolius died almost 10 years ago, the spell *Eyes of the Past* (Intéllego Imágonem 20) is not helpful. Most of the time, Benvolius' lab has a Magic Aura rating of four, the same as the rest of the Covenant, but if you like you can decide that his experiments have caused parts of the lab to acquire a Divine, Infernal or Faerie Aura at certain times (such as holy/unholy days, or days of Faerie festivals).

The combined powers in Benvolius' lab and Azenis' apparent interest in the Magus' work should suggest to characters that Azenis is working with powers beyond the Hermetic.

The Covenant's Library

The Covenant's library can be referenced for clues to the mysterious decay. Although many of the books are well-used, some books and pages are particularly worn, and even marked up. Pages on faerie immortality (in the Faerie Lore section), unicorns (Fantastic Beast Lore), religious relics (Church Lore), old age (Medicine), bargaining with demons (Occult Lore) and



fountains of youth (Legend Lore) are all heavily dog-eared. (Characters who use one of the relevant sections of the library for a Season, and for any purpose, notice the worn pages on a Perception simple roll of 8+. Characters who specifically search the library for worn pages notice them on a Perception + Search simple roll of 6+.) These are the books that Azenis used when he began his research on immortality. The legends that the books report on are unremarkable, but any character who makes an Intelligence + appropriate Lore simple roll of 8+ knows of the best library wherein to follow up these legends. These are the libraries Azenis visited.

Financial Records

An additional reference wherein characters might find useful information on Azenis and the Covenant's decay is the Covenant's financial records (see Chapter Three, area 19). The financial records describe Azenis' traveling expenses. The records might give characters a clue to his visit with Impathis, or they might list the libraries he visited during his research on the Shroud.

INVESTIGATING: LIBRARY RESEARCH

By investigating at Lux ex Tenebris, the characters gain several clues to the existence of the Shroud and the cause of the decay. However, in order to solve the mystery and prove that Azenis is responsible, characters must travel to other Covenants, the Covenants where Azenis and Severine researched legends of immortality. As described above, there are several ways that characters might discover the locations of these Covenants. They can come across the worn pages in the Covenant library, Triandin's ghost can tell them of Azenis' most recent travels, an old Grog might have traveled with Azenis, or Azenis' destinations might be recorded with his travel expenses in the Covenant's financial records. Since traveling to other Covenants is a necessary step in finding out the truth about Azenis and the Holy Shroud, ensure that characters discover the locations of these other libraries.

The number and locations of these other Covenants depend on where you set this Saga and on how much you want characters to travel. If you want to keep this section short and simple, characters can make one journey to a famous library (perhaps the Covenant of Doissetep). Azenis may have done most of his research there. On the other hand, if you want to draw out the quest, you can make the characters cover Mythic Europe before they find all that they need. Perhaps Azenis disguised his tracks, or did a lot of traveling before putting all the pieces together. This story provides a good excuse for making characters travel, and offers a good opportunity to run events involving the whole Order of Hermes.

At the Covenant libraries visited, characters discover the information described below. Some of these clues require a Season of research and an appropriate Knowledge roll to uncover. Others merely require good terms with Covenant

Magi or library staff (appropriate Presence or Communication rolls). In cases which require a Season of research, characters must have some idea of the general topic they're researching.

- Azenis did research on legends of longevity and immortality. He stopped coming about five to 10 years ago.
- Severine also did research on legends of longevity and immortality. She still shows up on occasion.
- Azenis and Severine knew each other and often did research together, but apparently had a falling out.
- Benvolius was working on a unified theory of the supernatural, a way to unite Faerie, Divine and Infernal power with Hermetic magic.

• The Holy Shroud is said to have such great preservative powers that one who wears it never ages, nor is affected by any disease or poison. It also supposedly grants great protection against physical attack (requires a Season of study and a Legend Lore or Church Lore simple roll of 8+). These powers are only granted to those with True Faith.

• The Holy Shroud loses its powers for two days each year, between Good Friday and Easter Sunday (requires a Season of study and a Legend Lore or Church Lore simple roll of 10+).

• A famous knight named Erald discovered the location of the Holy Shroud in the Holy Land and set out to recover it, but was never heard from again (requires a Legend Lore simple roll of 7+).

• During the eighth century, many knights were drawn by the legendary treasure of the Golden Wyrms, and tried to slay her. Among these was a knight named Sir Erald (requires a Legend Lore or Fantastic Beast Lore simple roll of 11+).

Below are some story ideas for characters who do this research:

Story Idea: While characters are doing research, a young apprentice comes to them and begs them to take her away from the Covenant. She claims she's being held there against her will and is being mistreated by her master. She asks the characters to help her escape, or at least help her find a more humane teacher. If the characters help her, they may find themselves the enemies of a powerful Magus who accuses them of stealing his apprentice. If they let her suffer, she may later regard them with ill will.

Story Idea: In order to cover his tracks, Azenis cast a spell (*Grant the Hidden Quest*, Rego Mentem 40; see description of Azenis in the Appendix) on one of the Covenant librarians, commanding him to prevent any other Magi from doing research on immortality. The librarian does whatever he can to make the characters fail in their research efforts, perhaps "misplacing" books they need or framing them for theft in order to get them thrown out of the Covenant. Observant characters may notice Azenis' Wizard's Sigil when questioning the librarian. If the characters discover and prove that Azenis enchanted the librarian, the other Magi of the Covenant are angry and may help the characters appeal to the Quaesitoris.

Story Idea: While the characters are doing research on immortality, Severine shows up to use the same books. She immediately assumes characters are working for Azenis and



tries to get them thrown out of the Covenant. If the characters have a good rapport with the Magi of the Covenant, they may be able to remain. If the characters can convince Severine that they're on her side, the second part of this chapter may begin (see *Petitioning the Quaesitoris*).

Azenis' Reaction

In the first part of this chapter, the characters realize there is some malevolent magic affecting the Covenant, track its source to Azenis, and uncover evidence implicating him. Azenis may realize what the characters are up to. If the characters confront him, he is certainly aware of their suspicions. But even if the characters stay out of his way, Azenis may realize they're onto him. Although he rarely leaves his lab, he gets Covenant gossip from Kakithric and occasionally uses his spells to spy on areas of the Covenant. If the characters take long trips to faraway Covenants, if they interrogate Kakithric, or if they spend a lot of time searching Benvolius' lab, Azenis realizes they're on his trail.

Unless the characters openly act against him, however, Azenis does nothing except watch them. He doesn't particularly want them to discover the truth, but is not afraid of the possibility. He doesn't think they can prove anything, and even if they can, he's confident he can intimidate them into obedience. As he sees it, he's already won by getting the characters to join the Covenant. They're under his power now, whether they realize it or not.

This is also Azenis' attitude if he's confronted. He denies any wrongdoing but doesn't go to any trouble to make his denials plausible. He says things like, *"No, I'm not responsible for the decay, but if I were there wouldn't be anything you could do about it."* If Azenis realizes the characters are close to the truth, he tries to get an Arcane Connection to one of them, so he can use his spells to spy on them. Unless they do something drastic, however, Azenis does nothing else.

If the characters try to leave the Covenant permanently, if they break into Azenis' sanctum, or if they attack Azenis or Kakithric, Azenis acts more purposefully. If the characters threaten to leave, Azenis refuses to permit it. He points out that they have sworn eternal loyalty to Lux ex Tenebris, and that the Order would not look kindly upon their forsaking that Oath, particularly considering the circumstances of their departure from their last Covenant. Azenis' intent is to intimidate the characters, and what he says is true. Without proof of Azenis' crimes, the characters have a hard time joining another Covenant. If this prospect is not enough to deter them, Azenis makes veiled threats. If the characters still insist on leaving, Azenis lets them go. The characters may eventually return to face Azenis (perhaps with the aid of the Quaesitoris). Otherwise they stand to lose everything they've worked for.

If the characters break into Azenis' sanctum or attack him, he fights with everything he has. See Chapter Seven for suggested battle tactics. Azenis is protected by the Holy Shroud, and if attacked in his sanctum has other defenses. He's probably able to defeat the characters. He doesn't necessarily



kill them. He punishes them depending on the seriousness of their offense. Azenis' punishment may be as light as aging the characters a few years, or as severe as death. Though Azenis doesn't normally act harshly because he's afraid of giving the characters evidence against him, he doesn't fear retribution for punishing someone who attacks him or invades his sanctum.

Petitioning the Quaesitoris

Since accusing Azenis is useless, leaving him is profitless, and attacking him is dangerous, there seems little that characters can do to him. One option is to seek outside help. If the characters ask advice from anyone in the Order, they are probably told to petition the Quaesitoris for an investigation. Azenis has broken the laws of the Order, and if the characters can prove it, he will be cast out. If Azenis discovers that the characters are planning to appeal to a Quaesitor, he tries to intimidate them into dropping their petition, but if they ignore him he doesn't stop them.

Any complaint made to a Quaesitor is immediately referred to Severine. Although she may not be the senior Quaesitor in the area, she's old and well-respected. She's familiar with the characters and Azenis, and she's let it be known that she's interested in investigating any violations at Lux ex Tenebris. No one challenges her claim to jurisdiction.

The characters may be surprised to find Severine sympathetic to their cause. She's eager to hear anything detrimental the characters have to say about Azenis, and she's more than willing to travel to Lux ex Tenebris to gather evidence against him. She may even explain to characters that she has always suspected Azenis and that she largely blames him for the offense which led to the characters' exile. As soon as Severine can prepare for the journey, she marches off to Lux ex Tenebris. With her travels her filius Stratus Enor, a Flambeau Magus named Istaff and six Groggs.

The real reason that Severine travels to Lux ex Tenebris is to learn the secrets of immortality. She's growing older and more desperate each year, and Azenis' longevity convinces her that he holds the secret to eternal life. She intends to use the characters' complaints, and her authority as a Quaesitor, to browbeat Azenis into giving up his secret. The more the characters tell her, the bigger a bargaining chip she has against Azenis.

If the characters don't ask the Quaesitoris for aid, Severine arrives anyway. Perhaps she's so desperate that she's willing to risk her credibility on an unprovoked investigation of Azenis. Perhaps rumors of the decay have reached the Order and Severine volunteers to follow them up. Whatever the reason, she arrives, along with Stratus Enor, Istaff and six Groggs. If the characters haven't petitioned Severine, she's initially hostile toward them, believing they're on Azenis' side. She can be won over if the characters convince her that they oppose Azenis.

SEVERINE'S VISIT

As soon as Severine arrives, she demands an audience with Azenis. Azenis agrees to talk with her, though doesn't hide his anger at the interruption. Azenis and Severine meet in the Covenant Council Chamber (area 15), alone. Stratus Enor and three of Severine's Grog stand watch outside the doors, making sure that no one eavesdrops. Azenis' spell *The Invisible Eye Revealed* detects any spells of Level 30 or lower that are used to spy on him. If the characters are persistent and clever enough, they might be able to overhear the conversation.

Azenis and Severine argue loudly for two hours. Severine demands that Azenis hand over the secret of immortality. She threatens him with a Wizard's March unless he obeys. Azenis initially denies any knowledge of such a secret, but when he sees that Severine doesn't believe him he changes tactics. He threatens Severine, saying that if she tries to call a Wizard's March against him, he'll expose her, showing her superiors that she's acting against him for selfish and corrupt reasons. The two of them trade insults and accusations for a while, and then Severine leaves, vowing to gather evidence against Azenis. Azenis returns to his sanctum.

Once Severine has spoken with Azenis, she speaks to the characters. She doesn't tell them that Azenis admitted anything, since she still hopes to pressure him into giving up his secrets. Instead she tells characters that Azenis denied everything. She says she doesn't believe him, and wants to begin collecting evidence against him. If the characters want, they can spend the next few days cooperating with Severine in her investigation. She interviews surviving covenfolk, looks at the results of magical research, searches Benvolius' lab, speaks to Triandin's ghost, and does anything else appropriate that the characters suggest. She doesn't confront Azenis directly, such as by entering his sanctum or capturing his Familiar.

Although Severine heads the investigation, Stratus Enor and Istaff help. Stratus Enor is completely subservient to Severine; he does whatever she tells him to do and nothing else. Istaff is more independent. She sometimes questions Severine's orders or comes up with ideas of her own. Istaff is quite friendly and approachable. She's probably the only one of the visitors that the characters might make friends with; Stratus Enor has no personality of his own and Severine is imperious and dogmatic even when she's on the characters' side.

SEVERINE'S DEATH

While Severine conducts her investigation, Azenis spies on her magically. He has a lock of her hair from long ago, when they were allies, and uses his *Eye of the Sage* (Intellego Corporem 30) spell to see what she's doing. When he sees that she's continuing to press her investigation, he realizes that nothing will convince her to leave him alone, and decides to kill her. Two days after she arrives, he uses the Holy Shroud and his Arcane Connection to add years to her life while she sleeps. She dies of old age.

The morning after she dies, Azenis emerges from his sanctum. He asks that all characters and visitors be assembled in the Council Chamber so he can address them. He doesn't bother to feign surprise when informed of Severine's death. Once the characters assemble, Azenis delivers the following speech:

"I am the greatest Magus alive. In my long life I have faced many enemies and many challenges. I have now overcome every challenge, every rivalry, and all those who have opposed me are dead. I am supreme. If I so chose, I could kill all of you right now."

"Severine sought to harm me. She had no idea of my power. She was stupid and pathetic, and, like all failures, she deserved her death. Her petty investigation is now over, and you, Stratus Enor, have no reason to remain at this Covenant."

If you want, you can have Azenis go on to single out any characters, particularly those outspoken against him, for mockery and intimidation. Azenis doesn't openly admit that he murdered Severine, nor that he's responsible for the decay of the Covenant, but his manner makes it clear that he's the culprit and that he doesn't think anyone can do anything about it. He wants the characters to realize that he killed Severine (he thinks that will help intimidate them), but he's cautious enough not to admit it outright.

If the characters attack Azenis during or right after this speech, Istaff may join them, but Stratus Enor doesn't. See above for Azenis' reaction to an attack.

The Visitors' Reaction

Stratus Enor is completely stunned by Severine's death and by Azenis's mockery of her. All his life Severine has told him what to do. Now that she's gone he's completely helpless. He stammers and hesitates and eventually caves in to Azenis' demands. He leaves Lux ex Tenebris. Though Istaff is not afraid and thinks the investigation should continue, she has no authority to continue it on her own. She leaves with Stratus Enor. They take Severine's body and her Grog with them.

If the characters have some sort of plan to resist Azenis, they might be able to get Istaff to stay. She doesn't like Azenis, and though she knows he's powerful, she isn't afraid of him. Although Azenis tells her to leave with Stratus Enor, he doesn't check up on her, so she could easily pretend to leave and stay hidden in the Covenant.

Stratus Enor, on the other hand, is terrified. He definitely leaves. If the characters talk to him before he leaves, they can get him to agree to anything that doesn't involve remaining. For example, if they insist, Stratus Enor agrees to report Severine's death to other Quaesitoris. He even agrees to take a letter from the characters to a senior Quaesitor. However, he's so dazed when the characters talk to him that it's not clear that he'll do what he promises.

Istaff of House Flambeau

Istaff is an unusual Magus. Like many of House Flambeau, she's deeply learned in the Art of Perdo and is fascinated by death and decay. Unlike most of her fellow Flambeau, Istaff is

Istaff of House Flambeau

Characteristics: Intelligence +3 (shrewd), Perception (sharp) +2, Strength (rounded shoulders) -1, Stamina 0, Presence (attractive) +1, Communication (humorous) +2, Dexterity 0, Quickness (fast) +1

Age: 38

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Affinity (Perdo) +4, Strong Personality +1, Carefree (+5 to resist despair) +1, Common Sense +1, Wild Magic (extra Botch roll) -2, Noncombatant -2, Small Frame (one fewer Body and Fatigue level) -3

Abilities: Speak Own Language (cheering people up) 4, Speak Latin (puns) 5, Scribe Latin (skim texts) 3, Finesse (speed) 1, Penetration (Perdo) 3, Alertness (forests) 1, Dodge (thrusting weapons) 3, Charm (young people) 3, *Certamen* (Perdo) 2, *Parma Magica* (Córpoem) 5, Concentration (ignoring pain) 2, Sing (love songs) 2, Etiquette (with Flambeau) 2, Hermes History (politics) 3, Hermes Lore (House Flambeau) 3, Magic Theory (learning spells) 6, Magic Affinity — Perdo (Herbam) 4

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Jovial 3

Personality Traits: Jovial +5, Humorous +4, Spontaneous +4, Warm +3, Rebellious +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 11, Intéllego 6, Muto 6, Perdo 14, Rego 4, Animál 4, Aquam 3, Auram 4, Córpoem 6, Herbam 6, Ignem 9, Imágonem 2, Mentem 5, Terram 7, Vim 3

Spell Casting Speed: +3

Twilight Points: 1

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Soothe Pains of the Beast* (CrAn 20) +15, *Growth of the Creeping Things* (MuAn 10) +10, *Alleviate the Serpent's Bite* (PeAn 10) +22, *Cripple the Howling Wolf* (PeAn 15) +22, *Parching Wind* (PeAq 10) +21, *Curse of the Desert* (PeAq 25) +21, *The Surgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20) +17, *Incantation of the Milky Eyes* (PeCo 20) +24, *The Great Rot* (PeHe 25) +24, *Arc of Fiery Ribbons* (CrIg 25) +20, *Ward Against Heat and Flames* (Relg 25) +13, *Illusion of Altered Image* (Mulm 10) +8, *Return of Mental Lucidity* (CrMe 20) +16, *Calm the Motion of the Heart* (PeMe 15) +23, *Rusted Decay of Ten Score Years* (PeTe 15) +25, *Wind of Mundane Silence* (PeVi 25) +21

Wizard's Sigil: A soft chuckle

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +5 (11 Action), Soak -1 (5 Action), Fatigue +0

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

interested in life and creation. She's well-versed in the Art of Creo and knows many life-giving and life-preserving spells. For Istaff, this is not a contradiction. As she sees it, every life must come to an end, and every death makes room for rebirth. Creo and Perdo are different walks along the same path. She knows and uses both.

Her philosophical acceptance of death makes Istaff a content person. She doesn't have anything to lose. She goes through life doing what interests her and doesn't worry too much about the consequences. Some senior and sober Flambeau dislike her lack of seriousness, but many Magi (especially Flambeau) find it charming.

Istaff laughs and smiles often, even at death and decay, but doesn't laugh out of mockery. She simply doesn't take things seriously. She's as likely to laugh at her own misfortune as that of others. She sometimes stops laughing when she's interested in a puzzle or a problem; when this happens, her face assumes a look of intense concentration, which is broken by a smile only when she finds a solution. One problem that interests her is the accelerated decay of Lux ex Tenebris. She's fascinated by this and has a great intellectual interest in finding out what its source is.

Istaff is brought to Lux ex Tenebris because Severine wants a Flambeau Magus to help intimidate Azenis. Istaff was somewhat amused at the prospect of being a "hired sword," but agreed to come because she'd heard of the Covenant's strange decay. She isn't particularly loyal to Severine.



Istaff

Severine's Grog (6)

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception (keen-eyed) +1, Strength (broad shoulders) +1, Stamina (stalwart) +1, Presence (unshaven) -1, Communication (guttural voice) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 15-25

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (battle cries) 4, Alertness (ambushes) 2, Brawl (throws) 2, Drinking (not passing out) 1, Shortsword Attack (in formation) 3, Knight Shield Parry (thrusting weapons) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Loyal 1

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Severine) +2, Gruff +2

Weapons and Armor: Shortsword, Knight Shield, Full Ring Mail

Short Sword Totals: First Strike +1, Attack +7, Damage +8

Knight Shield Totals: Parry Defense +6

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), Soak +9 (15 Action), Fatigue -3

Severine brought these Grog as her bodyguards. They're loyal to her and stay close to her unless she orders otherwise.

Appearance: Istaff is a small, thin woman with piercing blue eyes and long dark hair. Her face is attractive, made more so by her perpetual smile. She dresses in comfortable, casual clothes.

Roleplaying Tips: Be active and friendly in conversation. Don't take things seriously. Don't apologize. Smile.

EPILOGUE

Azenis murders Severine to frighten his opponents. He wants Stratus Enor and the characters to become so afraid of him that they won't dare act against him. Azenis is at least partly successful. Stratus Enor leaves with his tail between his legs, whimpering for guidance from his dead *parens*. Whether Azenis is completely successful is up to the characters. They can allow themselves to be intimidated by Azenis or can continue to resist him.

If the characters accept or pretend to accept Azenis' rule, he does nothing to harm them. However, if he believes they were in league with Severine, he keeps a close eye on them with his spells. He may surreptitiously try to get a few hairs or fingernails from the characters, to establish an Arcane Connection for his *Intéllego* spells.

If the characters want to resist Azenis, they have few options. As before, accusing Azenis is pointless, leaving him is profitless, and attacking him is suicidal. The characters may decide to get out a message to another Quaesitor (perhaps via Stratus Enor or Istaff), or if they've done enough library research to discover that the Holy Shroud won't protect Azenis on Good Friday, they may decide to wait and attack him then.



RETURN

CHAPTER SIX

"Witch!"

"Diabolist!"

"Devil!"

The shouts of the peasants greeted Develi and her companions as they walked through the village. Though she'd heard them many times before, the insults still stung. Develi wanted to burn them or at least scare them into silence, but she knew she'd better not. With the Covenant falling apart the way it was, the last thing she needed was trouble with mundanes.

"Yer time is comin'!"

"Witch!"

The Groggs around her moved closer, but Develi wasn't afraid. She'd dealt with superstitious peasants before. Even as they were calling out to her, they made room for her to pass. And if they didn't, a well-placed pilum of fire would burn a path through them.

"He's comin' back!"

"Two weeks!"

"He'll make ye pay!"

Now what were they talking about? Not the Second Coming, surely. They weren't that crazy. Develi stopped. "Who's coming?" she asked the crowd.

The peasants laughed at her reaction. A dirty, toothless old woman stepped out of the crowd. "Christophe's comin', witch. He's comin' back from the Crusades. And he's nae goin' tae like what you been doin' on his land. He's comin' back to start a Crusade right here, is what they says." She burst into laughter.

Develi kept walking. It was ridiculous to be worried. Develi remembered Christophe. He was a bully and a braggart. Perhaps he was coming back, but it didn't matter. These ignorant peasants aside, the Covenant had built up a good reputation among the important mundanes of the area. "They would never follow him against us," she thought. "Would they?"

SUMMARY

The characters hear of the return of Christophe D'Alsante, the arrogant young knight who went off on Crusade in Chapter One. Although the Crusade was not completely successful, Christophe has become famous for his leadership and fighting prowess, and he's returning to a hero's welcome. The characters may also hear that Christophe is interested in holy relics.

Christophe arrives at Castle D'Oeuf with many of the knights who left with him, knights who are technically Baron D'Oeuf's vassals but who are now loyal to Christophe. Baron D'Oeuf and Bishop Guillet welcome Christophe back, hoping he'll now settle down and not disturb the political scene. Christophe, however, has other ideas. He proclaims to the knights of the Barony that his Crusade is not yet complete. He says he's on a quest to find the Holy Shroud and that he's tracked it from the Holy Land to the Covenant Lux ex Tenebris. He rouses the crowd into action against the Magi and they soon move off to besiege the Covenant. The Baron and Bishop reluctantly accompany them.

After Christophe's speech, popular favor swings against Lux ex Tenebris, so anyone associated with the Covenant is in danger. If characters survive harassment offered by Christophe's henchmen and speak with the knight personally, they find he's changed. He's experienced a religious conversion and is now a knight of true faith and honor. He treats the characters well and may believe them if they blame Azenis for the theft of the Shroud. He may even accept an alliance with them. However, he does not call off his army's march on the Covenant.

TIMING

This chapter is set soon after Severine's death and Stratus Enor's flight. Future chapters work best if Christophe arrives at Lux ex Tenebris on or shortly before Good Friday, so, if possible, you should time his arrival at Castle D'Oeuf for late winter.

THEME

The Saga's theme emerges in Christophe's religious conversion and subsequent change of personality. If the characters assume Christophe is the same as before and don't consider the possibility of his rebirth, they miss the chance to make him an ally.

The Rumors

About a month before Christophe arrives at Castle D'Oeuf, rumors of his return circulate. If the Covenant has any contacts in Tourien, Castle D'Oeuf, or any of the surrounding manors or villages, the characters hear these rumors. If the Covenant is exceptionally well-informed, characters may hear all of them. You might want to impart rumors one at a time, making characters follow them up in order to get more information. (Keep in mind, though, that rumors are notoriously difficult to verify. By looking for more information, characters can hear more rumors, but shouldn't be certain which are true). At the least characters learn Christophe is a hero of the Crusades, that he's returning to the area, and that his return is causing a great stir.

Choose the rumors you want characters to hear. Offer a mix of truth and falsehood.

- *He's comin' back, he is! I heard he's comin' on the [exact date of Christophe's return] (true).*
- *He's comin' back, he is! I heard he's comin' on the [any number of false dates up to two weeks off in either direction]. (false)*
- *They says he carries the Laird's Holy Shroud with him. He's puttin' it in the Church in Tourien, where all us can pray tae it. (false)*
- *I heard that he's nae happy with the way our good Baron's been runnin' the lands. He's nae comin' tae the Castle tae pay homage, I says, he's comin' tae take it. (false)*
- *He's nae just a fighter, he's a man of God. They says he spent time in the Holy Land, nae just fightin' the Saracen, but lookin' for holy things. (true)*
- *The Baron mayhap be fearin' his return, but he's hidin' it well. He's plannin' a fest for him, just as he did when he left. (true, although it won't happen)*
- *And when he's here, they'll be nae more false faith. He's comin' to clean out the blasphemers and heretics, just as he did in the Holy Lands. (false)*
- *His men hae been to Hell and back with him. They'd follow him 'gainst the Baron himself, though the Baron be their true laird. (true)*
- *He's comin' back sooner than ye think. They says he's marchin' his men mighty fast, even through the mountain snows. (true).*
- *He's barely stoppin' here, they says. He's goin' straight off tae fight the accursed Moors soon as he's back. (false)*
- *God Himself speaks to him, or so they says. Angels come tae him in his dreams. (partly true)*
- *Once the Saracens made him sae angry that he cast aside his sword and he ripped them tae pieces with his bare hands. (false)*
- *The evil Saracens hated him for fightin' their knights, and they had their wizard folk curse him with a terrible disease. Only the grace of the Laird saved him. (mostly false)*

Christophe's Story

Christophe set out on his Crusade full of anger and hatred. He took the Cross because he sought the violence and slaughter of battle, and because he wanted revenge on the Saracens for the death of his father. For several years, he fought for Christendom in the Holy Land. Though he was not known as a brilliant (or even average) tactician, his tremendous strength and striking appearance quickly won him a position of leadership. The knights under his command gave him their undying loyalty, and he taught them to be brave in battle and merciless to the enemies of God. His fame spread far.

As the years wore on and the Christians, despite Christophe's efforts, failed to recapture Jerusalem, there was talk of a truce. Many of the Christians were tired of the war and wanted to go home; some of the more religious were also worried about the destruction of holy relics that might result from a pitched battle within the walls of the city. At one meeting of Crusade leaders, Christophe denounced supporters of peace, calling them cowards and ridiculing their concern for holy relics. Soon afterward, Christophe, who had never succumbed to illness in all of his life, was suddenly stricken by a strange disease. For many days he lay in bed, feverish and delirious. The other knights saw this as a sign from God, and soon made peace with the Saracens. Christophe, meanwhile, grew closer to death. Neither prayer nor medicine had any effect. Finally, in desperation, the

Christian doctors attending him sent for a well-known Saracen physician. The Saracen cured Christophe.

When he awoke, Christophe was a changed man. He declared he had received a vision from God, in which an angel laid out his life before him. All of his pride, anger and sinfulness were made obvious, and he despaired for he saw he was going to die and knew Satan would claim his soul.

But the angel told him to rejoice in the mercy of God. The angel said that it was God's will that he be brought back to life, given another chance to follow the path of righteousness. The angel commanded Christophe to undertake a quest to find holy relics and return them to the Church. Finally, the angel said that in order to show Christophe humility and to demonstrate that God loves even unbelievers, Christophe would be delivered to new life by a Saracen. Christophe humbly accepted the angel's words and awoke. True to his word, Christophe gave up his anger and hatred, and began looking for the holy relics of legend.

As peace was being negotiated, Christophe spent several months tracking down minor items of Divine power. He discovered several holy relics, including a finger bone of Saint Paul, which he fixed into the hilt of his sword. His chief goal, however, became finding the Holy Shroud, for all the legends he read suggested it was nearby. He finally learned where the Shroud was buried, but when he found the place, he discovered it had already been excavated. The local villagers knew nothing of the Shroud, but did know the name of a knight who had been



The Righteous Dominion

The *Ars Magica* supplement *Pax Dei* describes the power of the Divine made manifest on earth. The Righteous Dominion is that power embodied by crusading armies (see *Pax Dei*, p. 25). Each knight in Christophe's army carries a Divine Aura of one, and the whole army bears a rating of three. Magi casting spells on a knight or the army are assumed to be in a Divine Aura, rated one or three, respectively (see *Ars Magica*, p. 308). Each knight receives a +2 bonus to Attack and Damage rolls to strike those not of the Church. They can make Perception + Scan rolls against an Ease Factor of six to spot and instinctively recognize infidels. They receive a +5 bonus to rolls on the *Wound Recovery Chart* (*Ars Magica*, p. 160) to recover from injuries inflicted by the infidel. They receive a +2 Righteous or Brave Personality Trait (or two is added to such an existing Trait), and they are quick to anger (but do not lose sense of reason).

The mobile army carries its Aura with it. That Divine Aura of three overcomes any Magical Aura it encounters, including that of Lux ex Tenebris (however, as the crusading army arrives during Easter, the Divine Aura arising from that occasion itself overcomes the Covenant's Magic Aura).

Pax Dei discusses the Righteous Aura fully, and offers further information on how that Aura can affect Magi and Covenant, but those other rules are not essential to this story.

digging in the spot some years ago. His name was Francois D'Alsante.

Christophe was perplexed by evidence that his uncle had taken the Holy Shroud. He understood why his uncle might have searched for the Shroud, but didn't know why he would keep its existence a secret. Christophe then decided to return to D'Alsante Manor. If his family knew nothing of the Shroud, perhaps he might find some clue in his uncle's ledgers or personal belongings. Still leading his band of knights, Christophe set out for Castle D'Oeuf.

The Return

Christophe D'Alsante arrives at Castle D'Oeuf with 40 knights and 40 men-at-arms (see Chapter Seven for descriptions). His banner is clearly visible as he marches to the castle, but he arrives without ceremony. His men are exhausted from traveling and most go to sleep soon after entering the castle.

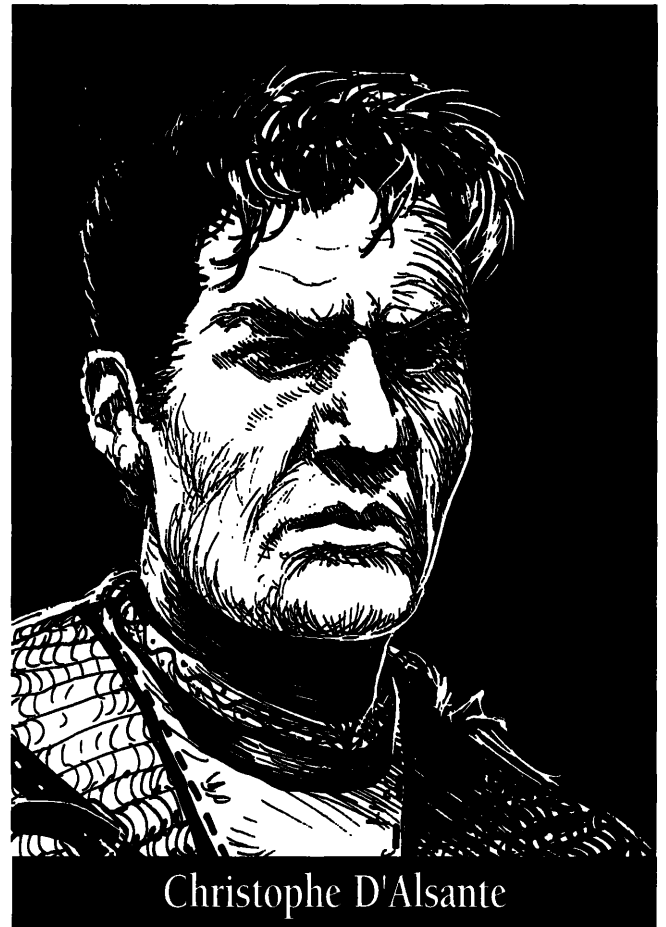
Christophe, on the other hand, meets with Baron D'Oeuf and Bishop Guillet, telling them the story of his travels. The Bishop tells Christophe of the charges that the dying Francois made against the Magi of Lux ex Tenebris. Hearing this, Christophe immediately realizes the truth: that Francois was bewitched into bringing the Holy Shroud to Lux ex Tenebris. He decides to march on Lux ex Tenebris and retake the Shroud by force. Baron D'Oeuf and Bishop Guillet are both uncomfort-

able with this plan, the Baron because he doesn't like conflict and the Bishop because he doesn't like conflict with the Order. They advise Christophe to reconsider.

Not heeding the advice, Christophe, the next day, gives a speech to all inhabitants of Castle D'Oeuf. He accuses Lux ex Tenebris of stealing the Holy Shroud and swears not to rest until it's returned to the Church. The speech rouses the people. Christophe's popularity soars and the Baron's knights agree to follow him on his quest. Having little choice, Baron D'Oeuf and Bishop Guillet support Christophe.

In a few days, news of Christophe's speech spreads to Tourien, and in a few more days news spreads to the surrounding countryside. The characters also hear of Christophe's return and his plans, either from their contacts in mundane society or from Groggs who happen to be buying supplies.

At this point, anyone openly affiliated with the Covenant is in danger. There is great popular support for Christophe and public condemnation of Magi. When the news first breaks, the greatest threat is from overzealous commoners. These peasants may insult or harass characters who have well-known ties to the Covenant; if the characters live in the city, their homes may be vandalized. Merchants who normally do business with the Covenant may refuse to sell them anything more, either out of anger or fear. Anyone who refuses to cave in to public pressure and continues to support the Covenant may be the target of a lynch mob. Even if characters escape persecution, their friends might be vulnerable. Characters must decide whether to expose themselves by rescuing mundane contacts.



Christophe D'Alsante

Later on, characters may face an even greater threat, from Christophe's knights, some of whom travel a few days ahead of the main army. In contrast to the commoners, who only make unplanned attacks on visible targets, Christophe's knights are thorough and persistent. They relentlessly follow up any rumors of Covenant support, hunting down sympathizers and, after some softening up, bringing them to Christophe. Many of these advance knights are as proud and hot-tempered as Christophe used to be, and enjoy beating up those weaker than themselves. They may torture "unimportant" people, such as Groggs, in order to get information about the location of Magi or Companions. They may even assault those who surrender and who willingly seek audience with Christophe. See Chapter Seven for the statistics of these knights. They usually travel in bands of three to five, but can get reinforcements if they expect serious resistance.

Characters may successfully fight off some advance knights, but Christophe has an army coming. The characters may flee before the army, be taken by advance knights to face Christophe, or may willingly approach the knight.

If characters are taken to see Christophe, he treats them well and rebukes any knights who may have hurt them. He tells them that he knows they've stolen the Holy Shroud, but he's not unduly harsh or accusatory. He says something like, "My uncle

named you as the thieves of the Lord's Holy Shroud. I cannot allow you to keep what rightfully belongs to the Church." If the characters tell him something (such as the truth) that makes sense and coincides with what he knows, he may believe them, saying, *"You are unrepentant wizards and therefore damned in the eyes of God. But I have learned that there is honor and Christian virtue even among unbelievers. What you say makes sense, and I will trust that you speak the truth."*

If characters come to Christophe openly, he does not take them into custody (*"It would be unchivalrous to do otherwise"*). If the characters ask, Christophe may tell them about his divine vision. If characters convince him that Azenis is his only enemy, Christophe may even ally and plan strategy with them. However, under no circumstance does Christophe reconsider his decision to besiege the Covenant. He explains: *"This is my holy quest. No power on earth will convince me to compromise it."* If the characters desire they may join the army, but Christophe won't delay or call off the attack. See the Appendix for a description of Christophe.

Christophe marches on the Covenant, either as the characters' ally or enemy. His 40 knights and 40 men-at-arms are joined by 60 of the Baron's knights, and 100 of his men-at-arms. Filled with religious zeal, the army marches on the Covenant. Chapter Seven begins when they arrive.



DEATH

CHAPTER SEVEN

When the lights went out, Arnia rolled right. She was initially afraid she'd been blinded, but the whispered curses of her Groggs assured her that everyone, presumably even Azenis, was in darkness. She hoped the Magi could lift it, but that wasn't her job.

Arnia had never fought in pitch darkness before, but in her outlaw days she'd often fought by moonlight. The principles should be the same. Keep quiet. Keep your ears open. Arnia began moving forward, thanking her stars that she wasn't wearing clanky, metal armor.

She heard a low, desperate wail to her left. It sounded like Gurden. *"He should know better than to make a sound,"* she thought. Still, she wondered what made him cry out like that, a man who had stood before a thousand-year-old dragon without quaking. He was too far for her to help him. She hoped one of her other Groggs was there.

Cautiously, she moved forward again. She heard a strange snorting and stomping just ahead, as though some large animal was walking about. Then she heard what was an unmistakable whinny and clomping of hooves.

"A horse! How the hell did a horse get in here?" she thought. She could clearly hear it, so moved forward with her sword extended high enough to touch any rider. *"If he's one of us, let him say so,"* she reasoned. But the horse had no rider. Her sword passed through air as she moved up against the creature. She poked it to get it out of the way.

The horse spun and attacked. Its front hoof smashed into her leg, breaking her left knee, and as she doubled up as its mouth came down on her shoulder. She felt a sharp stab of pain as its fangs bit through her leather armor and sunk into her skin. *"What kind of horse is this?"* she mentally screamed.

Arnia tore away from the creature's bite, losing more skin in the process. She hopped to the side, balancing on her right leg, and faced the direction of the beast's sounds. It seemed confused. It clomped this way and that, looking for her. *"Good: it can't see in the dark."* Arnia put both hands on her bastard sword and crouched as low as she could, putting all her weight on her good leg. She could hear the horse, still snorting and whinnying. Now it was walking directly toward her. When it was almost upon her, Arnia sprung upward with all her might, aiming at what she desperately hoped was the beast's heart. A frenzied equine scream told her she guessed right. The hooves went up again, bruising her chest, but when she tore out her sword the beast fled. Slowly, Arnia started limping forward.

Suddenly, she heard another low wail behind her. It sounded like Renald. *"Wrong direction for the Hell-horse,"* she thought. *"What's going on?"*

Arnia heard a soft, evil laugh off to her right. As she spun to face it, a strange sensation came over her. The strength drained out of her muscles, and her skin sagged. She lifted her hand to her face and felt deep wrinkles spread over her cheek. She touched her mouth and two of her teeth fell out. As her flesh began to rot, she realized why the others were wailing.

SUMMARY

This chapter describes the characters' final confrontation with Azenis. Although the timing and circumstances of this confrontation are based on the actions of the characters, this chapter outlines some events that may help you respond to likely actions.

At the beginning of the chapter, Christophe's army surrounds the Covenant and demands the return of the Holy Shroud. Azenis refuses to give it up. The characters may take sides with one or the other, or they may try to stay in the middle. In any case, Christophe believes the Holy Shroud is powerless between Good Friday and Easter, so his army attacks as soon as the sun sets on Good Friday. In truth, only the Shroud's protective capacity fails on Good Friday; its ability to age and destroy persists. When the army invades, Azenis uses the Shroud to age and kill Christophe, then to age and destroy

everything in the area. The characters are caught in this destruction and must fight Azenis to save themselves and the Covenant. Azenis is a powerful Magus, but with imaginative tactics the characters may defeat him. In the battle, the Holy Shroud is torn and loses its powers.

The Crusading army scatters to avoid the circle of decay created by Azenis, regrouping some distance from the Covenant. The army is demoralized by Christophe's death and takes no action until Easter day.

TIMING

This chapter works best if Christophe's army arrives at the Covenant on or shortly before Good Friday. The failure of the Shroud's protective properties on Good Friday provides good reason for the timing of the final battle. If it's difficult to work this timing into your Saga, you can have the Shroud's protective capabilities fail for some other reason. Perhaps Azenis has warped the Shroud so much that its connection to Divine power is lost. Christophe might know this through a dream, and might attack just as Azenis uses the warped Shroud to begin his circle of decay. In any case, it's best to have the final confrontation — between characters, Christophe and Azenis — take place at one time.



Crusader Knights (40)

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength (strong arms) +2, Stamina (iron will) +2, Presence (noble chin) +1, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness (ponderous) -1

Age: 20-40

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (battle cries) 4, Speak Arabic (small talk) 2, Alertness (ambushes) 2, Charisma (peasants) 2, Brawl (throws) 2, Ride (combat) 3, Bastard Sword Attack (in formation) 4, Kite Shield Parry (in formation) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Religious 3

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Christophe) +3, Religious +2, Brave +2, Aggressive +2

Weapons and Armor: Bastard Sword, Kite Shield, Full Chain Mail

Bastard Sword Totals (1h): First Strike +1, Attack +7, Damage +14

Kite Shield Totals: Parry Defense +8 (14 Action)

Encumbrance: 6

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -7 (-1 Action), Soak +16 (22 Action), Fatigue -4

These are the knights who fought with Christophe in the Holy Land. They are fanatically religious and completely loyal to Christophe. As Crusaders, they bear a Righteous Dominion as discussed in Chapter Six.

THEME

There is no rebirth in this chapter, but there's plenty of death. Both Azenis and Christophe probably die. One or more of the characters may also die in battle with Azenis. The Covenant (including the characters) is aged and decayed by the power of the Shroud, and the Shroud itself is destroyed. In summary, this is a chapter of death, loss and destruction. This is the Saga's great death, the final destruction necessary for the Covenant's rebirth. Don't be afraid to make the characters lose things they value (including their youth). You can give some lost treasures back in Chapter Eight (but not so many that the drama of loss is undermined).

Before Good Friday

The characters may have good reason to attack Azenis before Christophe arrives. They probably know Azenis is responsible for the death and decay of their Covenant, and may realize that he's not going to change his ways. Furthermore, characters may fear that unless they get the Shroud from Azenis, Christophe's army will destroy their Covenant. Given

this, the characters may attack Azenis before Christophe's arrival on Good Friday.

Before Good Friday, the protective properties of the Shroud are intact. Azenis also spends most of his time in his sanctum (areas 22 to 23 in Chapter Three), where he has strong defenses. See the Appendix for descriptions of Azenis and the Shroud, and look below for a description of Azenis' favorite battle tactics.

Before Good Friday, Azenis can probably defeat the characters. If he does defeat them, he may not kill all, but he probably kills at least one to set an example to the rest, aging others as punishment for turning against him. He doesn't want to destroy the Covenant completely, but has no mercy for those who defy him. If the characters defeat Azenis despite his protections, they avoid the effects of the circle of decay described below, and have a chance to establish good relations with the Crusaders when they arrive. The Shroud is still torn, but when it's restored (see Chapter Eight) the Crusaders are grateful to the characters for defeating Azenis.

Before Good Friday, the characters may also have good reason to attack Christophe and his army. If they haven't spoken with Christophe, the characters may believe that he and his army intend to destroy the Covenant. The characters may

Non-Crusader Knights (60)

Characteristics: Intelligence (pragmatic) +1, Perception 0, Strength (strong arms) +1, Stamina 0, Presence (noble chin) +1, Communication 0, Dexterity (agile) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 20-40

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (courtesies) 5, Alertness (ambushes) 2, Folk Ken (nobility) 2, Brawl (strikes) 1, Ride (parades) 3, Broad Sword Attack (in tournaments) 3, Knight Shield Parry (in tournaments) 2, Etiquette (among nobility) 2, Intrigue (the Baron's Court) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Pragmatic 3

Personality Traits: Loyal (to Baron) +1, Jealous (of Crusaders) +2, Realistic +2, Brave +1

Weapons and Armor: Broad Sword, Knight Shield, Full Ring Mail

Broad Sword (1h) Totals: First Strike +2, Attack +8, Damage +10

Kite Shield Totals: Parry Defense +6 (12 Action)

Encumbrance: 4

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -4 (2 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -4

These are vassals of Baron D'Oeuf. They are less religious and less loyal to Christophe than the Crusaders, but they believe in Christophe and they're eager to prove their bravery.

try to defeat the army while it marches on Lux ex Tenebris, or may try to assassinate Christophe himself.

Attacks have to be well-planned to succeed. The army is large, well-armed, well-motivated and bears Divine power. The Crusaders are also smart enough to avoid ambushes and strong enough to defeat head-on assaults. Attempts to assassinate Christophe run into the same problems. In addition to his high Strength and Stamina, Christophe has three Faith Points, a three-Point holy relic, and receives the powers of the Righteous Dominion.

If characters do succeed in defeating the army or assassinating Christophe, the Crusaders are only delayed. Driven by faith, they regroup and continue marching on Lux ex Tenebris.

If the characters are defeated or captured by Christophe's army, Christophe probably treats them well. See Chapter Six and the Appendix for his manners and motivations.

If the characters negotiate with the Crusaders rather than attack them, they may be ill-treated by Christophe's lieutenants, but may be well-received by Christophe himself. See Chapter Six for more details on these negotiations.

Just because premature attacks against Christophe and Azenis are likely to fail doesn't mean the characters can't do anything before Good Friday. The characters should know that a battle is coming. Just because they can't fight it right away doesn't mean they can't prepare for it. The characters can spend the days or weeks before Good Friday gathering raw vis, cementing the loyalty of Groggs, planning possible attacks, and perhaps even testing out Azenis' or the Crusaders' defenses. They may not even know who they're going to fight, but that doesn't mean they can't be ready.

The Crusaders' Actions

Based on legends of the Holy Shroud, Christophe believes it is powerless between sunset on Good Friday and sunrise on Easter Sunday. He plans to attack the Covenant during that time. If the characters have allied with him, Christophe may discuss these plans with them, but won't change his mind. He doesn't trust the characters enough to give up what may be a brief and rare opportunity. He plans to enter the Covenant on the night of Good Friday. His army may encircle the Covenant hours or days before then, but until Good Friday, it doesn't attack.

Christophe also feels he must give Azenis the chance to repent and return the Holy Shroud. Thus, on sunset he plans to announce to the Covenant his intention to take the Shroud, planning to give Azenis a brief chance to give it up voluntarily. If the characters are allied with Christophe, they may be able to convince him to extend this deadline, perhaps giving them enough time to defeat Azenis on their own. Christophe won't attack Azenis without giving him warning, but he's reluctant to extend the deadline more than he has to. At most, characters can buy themselves an hour.

Men-At-Arms (140)

Characteristics: Intelligence 0, Perception 0, Strength 0, Stamina (stalwart) +1, Presence (dirty) -1, Communication 0, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Age: 15-40

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (small talk) 4, Dodge (thrusting weapons) 3, Brawl (strikes) 1, Drinking (guzzle) 1, Shortsword Attack (holding ground) 2, Self Bow Attack (from high ground) 2

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Loyal 1

Personality Traits: Loyal +2, Brave +1

Weapons and Armor: Shortsword, Self Bow, Ring Mail Hauber

Short Sword Totals: First Strike +1, Attack +6, Damage +6

Self Bow Totals: Rate 1, Attack +2, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -1 (5 Action), Soak +8 (14 Action), Fatigue -2

Forty of these men-at-arms fought with Christophe in the Holy Land; the other 100 are from Castle D'Oeuf. They are loyal and reasonably brave.

When the sun begins to set, Christophe approaches the gates of the Covenant. In a booming voice, he delivers his speech. If the characters are his allies and have agreed to let him into the Covenant, he addresses Azenis personally. Otherwise, he addresses all of the Magi of Lux ex Tenebris.

"Azenis (or Wizards) of Lux ex Tenebris, you have offended Almighty God. You have broken the Lord's Commandment, Thou Shalt Not Steal. And you are guilty of an even greater sin, the sin of sacrilege. For you have stolen the Holy Shroud, the burial cloth of Christ, a relic which rightfully belongs to Christ's Holy Church. You have enchanted a holy knight with your magicks in order to gain this holy relic, and you have used it for vile and wizardly purposes. For your sins, you number among the damned."

"But rejoice, for though your crimes are great, the forgiveness of the Lord is immeasurable. If you now return the Holy Shroud and repent of your evil ways, you may be forgiven. I grant you until the sun finishes setting to save your soul(s)."

If the Shroud isn't presented to him soon, Christophe and his army assault the Covenant. If the characters let them in, they come peacefully (though warily). If the gates are closed, they storm the place.

Don't bother to figure out the location and movement of the attackers in great detail. Covenant Groggs are probably greatly outnumbered, which should be clear to everyone; there's plenty for everyone to fight at any given moment. If you like, you can run a few individual combats between characters and Crusaders, but these should be cut short by Azenis' actions, below.

SUNSET

About 10 minutes passes from the time the sun reaches the horizon (when Christophe makes his announcement) to when the sun falls beneath the horizon (when Christophe's army enters the Covenant). Any spells cast the previous day with a Duration of Sunset last until the end of sunset. Any spells cast during sunset last until the following sunrise. Thus there is 10 minutes of "overlap" for spells which are cast each day. This applies to *Parma Magicae* as well. The characters' (and Azenis') *Parma Magicae* expire at the end of sunset, unless they renew them in the preceding 10 minutes. It takes about a minute (without interruptions) to renew a *Parma Magica*.

These rules on the timing of sunset might be crucial to the battle with Azenis. Make the players aware of them, if they aren't already. The characters may decide to attack Azenis at the beginning of sunset, hoping to prevent him from restoring his *Parma Magica* and other spells in the next 10 minutes, or might choose to restore their own *Parma Magicae*, risking that Azenis does the same. If the characters attack Azenis before his *Parma* is restored, the characters also attack without restored *Parmae*.

The Shroud's protective and preservative powers cease at the beginning of sunset. The characters probably don't know the exact timing of this, even if they have done research on the Shroud and know that its powers ease at sunset.



Azenis

Azenis' Actions

Azenis is in his living quarters (area 23) at sunset on Good Friday. He sees Christophe from his tower, and hears his speech. While Christophe waits, Azenis renews his *Parma Magica*, *Gift of the Bear's Fortitude* and *Vision of Heat's Light*, so they last after sunset (if given the chance). When Christophe orders his army into the Covenant, Azenis takes action.

Azenis can see Christophe from his tower, so can use the Shroud's power of *Bane of the Decrepit Body* against the knight. Christophe's Faith doesn't protect him from the effects of the Shroud. He grows old. His hair whitens and falls out, his skin wrinkles and rots away, and his bones dry up. Within three Rounds, Christophe is dead. Because he's dressed in full chain mail armor, his aging may not be apparent until he dies.

Christophe's sudden collapse confuses many in the invading army, but his lieutenants have enough confidence and support to continue moving forward. What happens next, however, completely demoralizes the Crusaders. Once Christophe is dead, Azenis uses the most frightening power of the Shroud to create a circle of decay around the entire Covenant. Anything in a half-mile circle of Azenis begins to age and die. Covenant buildings begin to crumble, grass and trees rot, furniture and equipment wears out, and people in and out of the Covenant begin to age. Those who have already started to show the effects of age (i.e., those over 35) are more severely affected: they age one year each Round. An Aging roll is made every Round. Those who haven't made Aging rolls yet (i.e., those 35 or under) age one Season each Round. See the Appendix for more detail on this power of the Shroud.

With this counterattack the surviving Crusaders flee the Covenant. As armies go, this one is well-disciplined, but when its soldiers see their weapons and armor rust in their hands, and feel their skin crack with age, they lose all order. Even Christophe, if he's still alive, can't stop the army from fleeing.

The decay also affects the characters. They have a choice between fleeing with the Crusading army or staying to fight Azenis. If they flee, there's no one to stop Azenis from maintaining the circle of decay. Characters continue to age until they're a half-mile from the Covenant, which, depending on how fast they move, could prove fatal.

In any case, with Azenis' spell, *Lux ex Tenebris* is reduced to a pile of rubble. If the characters stay to face Azenis, he ceases concentrating on the circle of decay and the characters no longer age. Thus, those who risk their lives may save them, while those who try to save their lives may lose them.

When Azenis creates the circle of decay, characters might be on good terms with him, but that doesn't matter. Azenis knows he's vulnerable over the next two days and sees an invading army coming to kill him. He wants to kill the soldiers or drive them away, and doesn't care who he has to sacrifice to do it.

If characters react when the sun sets, events described above may happen slightly differently. If the characters invade Azenis' sanctum before the Crusaders enter the Covenant,

Horse (formerly a statuette)

Vital Statistics: Size +2, Cunning -2, Perception 0, Strength +3, Stamina +4, Presence n/a, Communication n/a, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Reputation: None

Personality Traits: Spirited +3

Confidence: 0

Combat Totals:

Hooves: First Strike +4, Attack +4/+9*, Damage +7/+12*

Dodge Defense +0 (6 Action), Soak +7 (13 Action),

Fatigue n/a

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: None

Powers: None

Vis: None

*if *Steed of Vengeance* is cast

Azenis might not have a chance to kill Christophe. Once Azenis realizes his sanctum is invaded, however, he begins the circle of decay. This scares away the Crusaders even if Christophe is still alive.

Once the characters get through Azenis' defenses and attack him directly, he stops concentrating on the circle of decay.

Battle with Azenis

To save themselves and their Covenant from being aged to death, the characters must attack Azenis. This battle is the finale of the Saga. It should be a pitched combat, filled with excitement and danger.

Before you tell the story of the battle, carefully read over Azenis' defenses and combat spells, then decide what tactics he uses. Choose strategies and spells which make for an exciting fight, but be careful not to make Azenis too powerful. He should be strong enough to hurt the characters (and perhaps kill one) but not strong enough to destroy them completely. Don't be afraid to change Azenis' list of spells, or give the characters some help in the battle against him in order to give the characters an edge. One or more Crusaders might help the characters fight Azenis, or Triandin's ghost might help. In any case, keep in mind that although you don't want the characters to win this final combat too easily, you don't want them to lose either.

If Azenis is attacked anywhere but his sanctum, he casts *Leap of Homecoming* (Rego Córpoem 35) at first opportunity. This spell returns him to his sanctum. If Azenis is attacked in his sanctum, he fights to the death. If he has a chance, he may cast *The Surgeon's Healing Touch* (Creo Córpoem 20) to heal himself, but doesn't cast any spell to escape. He doesn't stop fighting until he or the characters are dead.

One of Azenis' possible tactics is to wait in his living quarters for characters to enter. When they do, his spell *Well Without Light* (Perdo Ignem 25) is automatically triggered (as part of the chamber's defenses). This spell completely darkens a 20-pace area. Characters fighting Azenis in this darkness suffer a -5 penalty to Attack, Defense, Damage and Soak rolls. Azenis' spell *Vision of Heat's Light* lets him see the characters, so he can cast spells on them without penalty.

Azenis' most effective combat spell is *Clenching Grasp of the Crushed Heart* (Perdo Córpoem 40). If possible, he hides in the darkness and kills characters one by one with this spell. If you think this spell is too deadly, you can decide that Azenis doesn't know it, in which case he uses *Bane of the Decrepit Body* (Perdo Córpoem 25), to age the characters to death. Azenis may also use *Rusted Decay of Ten Score Years* (Perdo Terram 20) to neutralize weapons, *Rampart of Protecting Earth* (Creo Terram 20) to delay or separate characters, or *Invisibility of the Standing Wizard* (Perdo Imágonem 15) to hide if his darkness is dispelled. If possible, Azenis casts his spells silently (-10 to casting rolls), so that characters don't know where he is.

In addition to dealing with Azenis personally, characters who fight him may have to deal with his minions. Azenis has two small statuettes with him, one of a horse and the other of a bear. He has cast *Statue to Animal* (Muto Terram 25) on these statuettes, so that when he gives a command word they grow to full-size and obey his orders. If Azenis needs to distract the characters so that he can continue casting spells, he may use these statues. If he has a chance, Azenis casts *Steed of Vengeance* (Muto Animál 20) on the horse to make it more dangerous. See the boxed inserts for the animals' combat statistics.

Kakithric may also join in the fight, on Azenis' behalf. Kakithric can cast Córpoem spells of Level 5, at the cost of one Magic Point per spell; his most effective combat spell is *Invocation of Weariness* (Perdo Córpoem 5). Neither Kakithric nor Azenis' animals can see in the dark. See the Appendix for the Familiar's profile.

Brown Bear (formerly a statuette)

Vital Statistics: Size +2, Cunning +1, Perception +3, Strength +4, Stamina +8, Presence n/a, Communication n/a, Dexterity 0, Quickness 0

Reputation: 0

Personality Traits: Ferocious +3

Confidence: 0

Combat Totals:

Maul: First Strike +6, Attack +12, Damage +16

Tackle: First Strike +6, Attack +6, Damage +14

Dodge Defense +3 (9 Action), Soak +25 (31 Action),

Fatigue n/a

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Encumbrance: 0

Abilities: None

Powers: None

Vis: None



Azenis wears the Holy Shroud. Although it doesn't protect him after sunset, it's hard to kill him without damaging it. Assume that anything powerful enough to harm Azenis also rips the Shroud. In its normal state the Shroud is nearly indestructible, but between Good Friday and Easter any rip in the Shroud ruins it. Thus when Azenis is killed, all of the Shroud's magical powers are lost.

With the death of Azenis, Triandin goes to his final rest.

Aftermath

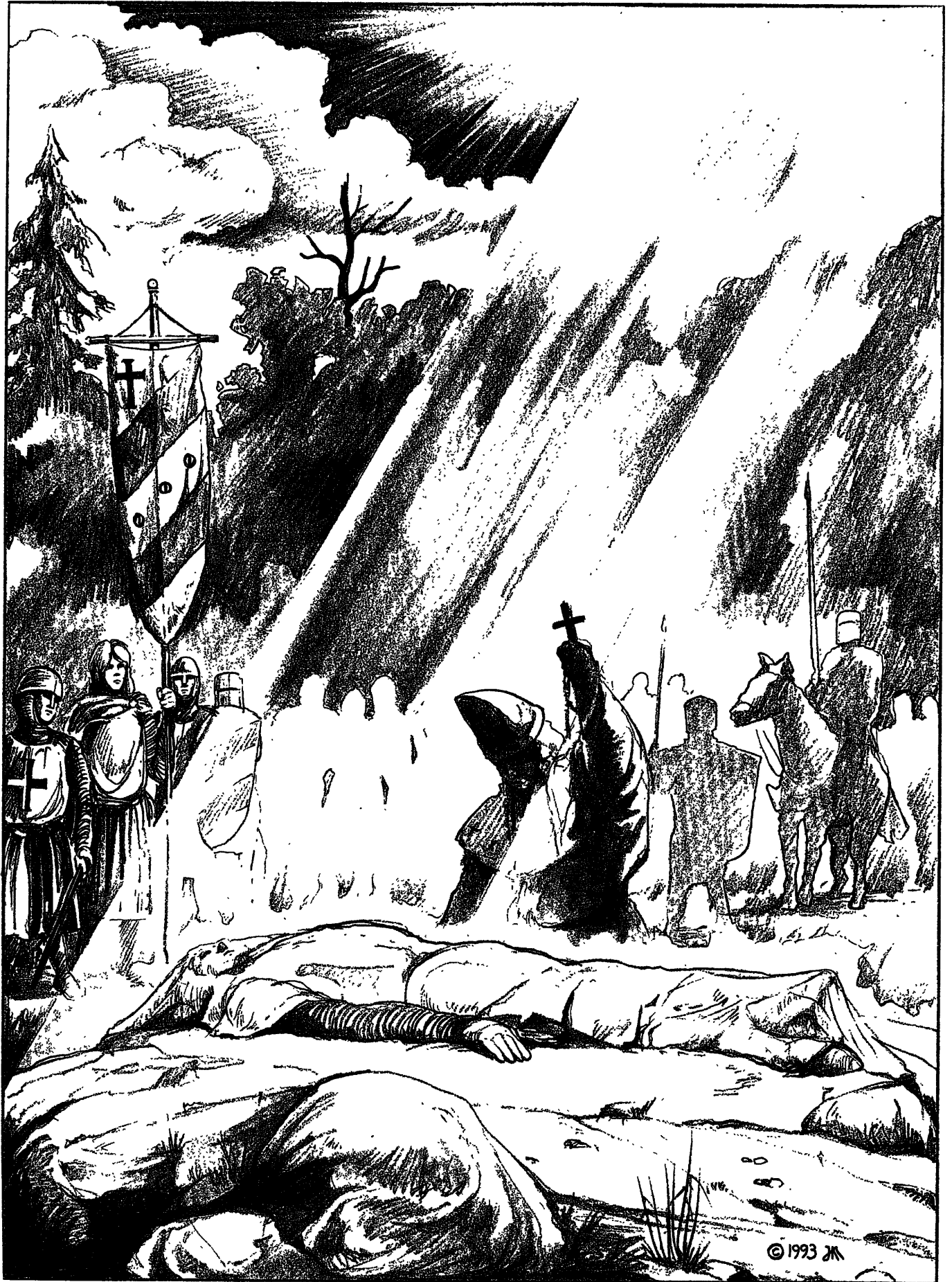
The end result of this confrontation is probably the death of Azenis, the destruction of the Shroud, and the scattering of Christophe's army. Christophe may also be dead.

Whether Christophe is dead or not, his army is demoralized. They regroup after fleeing from the Covenant. When they realize they've lost years of their lives they become despondent. They remain in the vicinity of the Covenant but don't take any action except to defend themselves. They refuse to negotiate with the characters until Easter. If Christophe is dead, lesser leaders may fight among themselves for control of the army. If Christophe lives, he's uncharacteristically passive and the

Baron's knights grumble under his leadership. In either case, the army is broken and ineffective. It remains that way until Easter morning. See Chapter Eight for the events of Easter morning.

During the period between the battle with Azenis and Easter morning, the characters can heal themselves and begin to restore their Covenant. The characters have undoubtedly defeated Azenis, but morale at the Covenant is low. The Shroud has probably caused significant decay to Covenant and covenfolk, and covenfolk aren't at ease with a Crusading army outside (assuming the characters do not immediately turn the Shroud over to the routed Crusaders as soon as Azenis is defeated).

If the characters flee from Azenis or are defeated by him, the Saga takes an unexpected turn. Azenis is still alive and still draining life from the area around Lux ex Tenebris. He might be killed by remaining Crusaders, but if he isn't killed in the next two days, he has the Shroud's protection for another year. Fleeing characters can try to rebuild Lux ex Tenebris after Azenis moves elsewhere (if he moves at all), and dead characters can be replaced with new ones, who join in the hunt for Azenis.



REBIRTH

CHAPTER EIGHT

From the Covenant walls, Gedeon looked down on the Crusaders. "Far too many," he thought. "If they attacked, we'd never hold them back."

For the moment, the Crusaders seemed content to wait while their leader spoke with Morganus. But that didn't cheer Gedeon. "Even if they leave us be, the Covenant is dead. Gurden, Renald, Arnia, Thalea, Tun and Olendur are all dead, Develi is so badly aged that she won't show her face, and the Covenant itself is practically in ruins. We finally killed Azenis, but at what cost?" Gedeon looked down at his own wrinkled body. Two days ago he'd been a strong young man with a full life ahead of him. Now he'd be lucky to last another two years. His wasted arms couldn't lift his sword anymore and his voice was a coarse whisper. Even his laugh was nothing but old man's dry croak.

Gedeon looked at the field again. The leader of the Crusaders, Bishop Guillet, was praying over the body of Christophe D'Alsante, which was covered with the tattered pieces of the Holy Shroud. Suddenly a bright light shone down from above, onto the Holy Shroud. As Gedeon watched, the pieces of the Shroud grew together and cast a light of their own. Then the light expanded. It grew to cover all the Crusaders. Everywhere it touched, it brought rebirth. Plants and grasses sprang up, rusty swords shone like new, and old men grew young again. As the light traveled still further, to cover the Covenant, Gedeon felt the strength return to his limbs. His skin grew clear and taut. Gedeon laughed, with the healthy, full-throated laugh of a young man.

SUMMARY

This chapter describes the rebirth of Lux ex Tenebris. On Easter morning, the formerly routed Crusaders return to the Covenant. They are filled with new hope and are led by a revitalized leader, Bishop Guillet. The Bishop asks for the Holy Shroud. If and when it is brought to him, he lays it on the body of Christophe. Christophe's body returns to youth but remains lifeless, the knight's soul floating up to Heaven. The Shroud is restored to wholeness and regains its Divine powers. It is no longer warped to Hermetic magic. As the holiday's Divine Aura sweeps across the Covenant, the aging and decay caused by the Shroud is undone. Buildings are restored, plants grow again, and the prematurely aged regain their youth. The Covenant is now in Spring.

THEME

This chapter is about rebirth. The Bishop "sees the light" and becomes truly religious, the Crusaders recover their lost morale, the Shroud is restored to completeness, and the unnatural decay of the Covenant is reversed. This is the Saga's great renewal, which contrasts the widespread death of Chapter Seven.

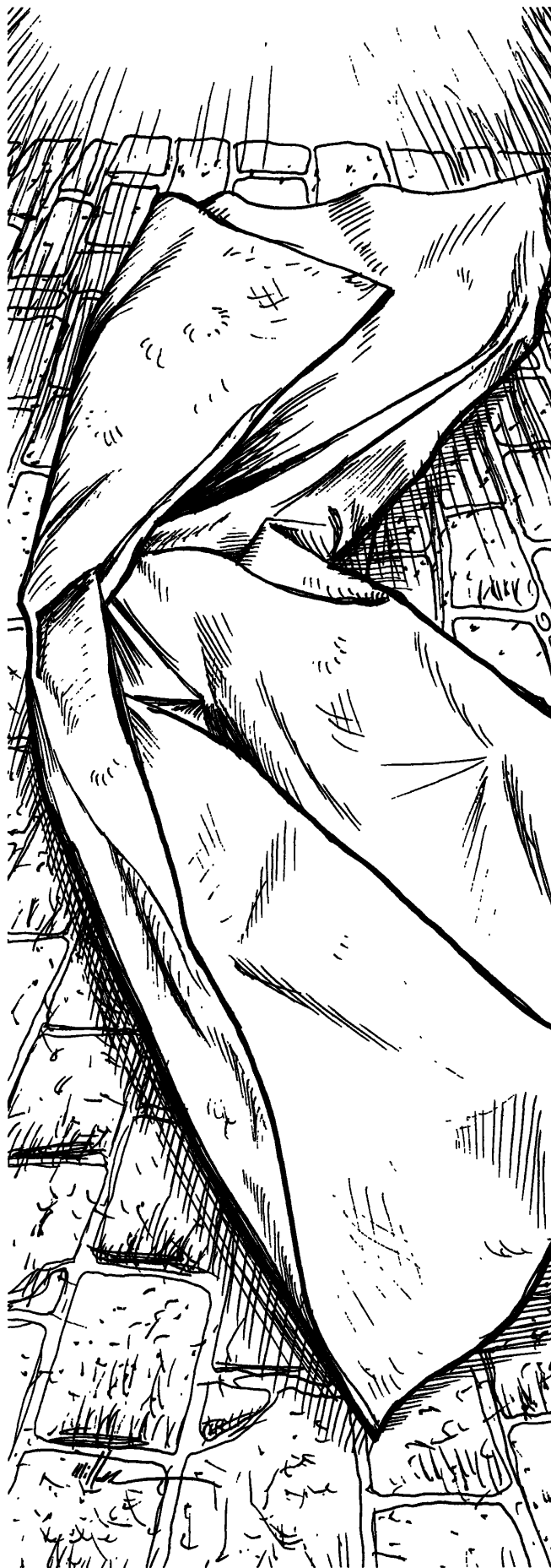
The Miracle

Holy Saturday is dark and cloudy, but the new year begins with a blue sky (according to medieval reckoning, Easter marks the beginning of a new year). As the sun rises, the Covenant's Magic Aura fades. Within a few minutes a Dominion Aura, rated four, floods the Covenant and surrounding lands.

Meanwhile, the Crusaders recover their mission and purpose. If Christophe is still alive, he suddenly recovers his former vision and energy during Easter morning Mass. He calls to his people with profound words, speaking of the Resurrection of Christ. After Mass he leads his reinvigorated soldiers to the Covenant (they retain their Righteous Dominion powers, but now benefit from a Divine Aura of four, even as individuals). Impassioned but not violent, the army stands before the gates of Lux ex Tenebris and asks for the return of the Holy Shroud.

If Christophe is dead, Bishop Guillet takes his place. Although he joined and served the Church more out of a passion for power than for God, while saying Easter Mass Guillet is suddenly transformed into a man of True Faith. He virtually glows with the light of the Holy Spirit and his sermon is moving. He leads the army to the Covenant and asks for the return of the Holy Shroud.

Unless the characters want to fight (in which case the Crusaders oblige them), they must bring the remains of the Shroud to the Crusaders. If Christophe is dead, the Bishop accepts the Shroud and asks that Christophe's body be brought before him. The Bishop lays the ripped Shroud on top of Christophe and kneels to pray. A light shines from the sky to the Shroud. Those who make Second Sight simple rolls of 9+



see Christophe's spirit floating up to Heaven. His body is restored to its youth, but he remains deceased. The Shroud is also restored to completeness. It is once again a pure holy relic.

The Divine light expands to cover the whole area, and wherever it touches it reverses the aging and decay wrought by Azenis' use of the Shroud. Grass and trees in the area grow again, the Covenant's buildings are restored, and the characters' and covenfolk's unnatural aging is reversed. This miracle doesn't raise the dead or replace destroyed items, but it does restore youth (restoring Characteristic points and eliminating Decrepitude points) lost to the Shroud. It doesn't affect natural aging or aging caused by Azenis' spells.

If Kakithric is still alive, he dies here. He can be seen falling from the sky. As he falls, the holy light shines upon him and he is transformed into an eagle. His fall slows, he opens his wings for all to see, and flies off.

If Christophe is still alive, he prays over the Shroud and the miracle occurs as above.

If you think this reversal of aging is too powerful, you can rule that the miracle only reverses the aging caused by the circle of decay that Azenis created on Good Friday. Any that happened before or after is not undone.

One drawback to the miracle is that the holy event permanently weakens the Covenant's Magic Aura. The Aura is now two instead of four. Furthermore, every year on Easter Sunday, the area completely loses its Magic Aura and acquires a Divine Aura of two. As with all things, you can change these effects if they don't suit your Saga. However, the change in Aura does harken to the Saga's theme: old power (Hermetic magic) dies as new power (the Dominion) gains strength.

If the characters defeat Azenis and approach the routed Crusaders before the army rallies to confront the Covenant, the Crusaders are immediately reinvigorated by the returned Shroud. The above miracle can therefore occur before Easter, but has more dramatic effect on Easter.

Final Touches

The conduct of the Crusading army following the miracle depends on how the characters behaved before it. If the characters allied with Christophe and the Crusaders, and let the Crusaders know Azenis was solely responsible for the theft of the Shroud, the Crusaders are likely to forgive the characters and leave. Depending on the characters' diplomatic skill, they may even be able to establish friendly relations with the Crusaders. After all, the characters killed the Crusaders' main enemy.

If the characters fought the Crusaders, they're likely to have a much tougher time of it. Although the Crusaders, being victorious and infused with faith, are predisposed toward forgiveness, they don't take well to the characters' desire to remain Magi and to remain at Lux ex Tenebris. If the characters negotiate well, they may convince the Crusaders to leave them alone. However, they might have to pay taxes to the Church, or allow a shrine to be built on the site of Christophe's death, or allow the Church to investigate them for diabolism.



Epilogue: The State of the Covenant

When the characters joined Lux ex Tenebris, it was a Winter Covenant. Now, at the close of the Saga, it has been reborn into Spring. The changes the Covenant has gone through should reflect this; the attributes of Lux ex Tenebris should change.

If you're using the Covenants sourcebook, this means that, at the end of the Saga, Lux ex Tenebris has roughly 13 positive trait points and 9 negative trait points, rather than the 17 positive and 21 negative points that it started the Saga with. Don't worry if your Covenant's attributes don't add up to these figures and don't arbitrarily change the Covenant to make it "fit." If you have to make judgments about the Covenant's attributes, keep in mind that the Covenant is now in its Spring: somewhat weak and vulnerable.

Below is an example of what Lux ex Tenebris in its Spring might look like. Naturally, your characters' Covenant may be similar or dissimilar, depending on how you tell the story.

If you don't have the Covenants book but are using the simple Covenant creation system described in *Ars Magica* (p.118), the same suggestions apply. The final Covenant should be similar to the template of a Spring Covenant, with slightly more negative than positive traits. By the rulebook's system, the Covenant at the beginning of the Saga can be described as a Winter Covenant with positive options on Aura, Arcane Library, Magical Artifacts and Aegis, and negative options on Location, Grog, Covenfolk and Sources of Vis. As a Spring Covenant it has positive options on Location, Fortress, Arcane Library and Mundane Library, and negative options on Contacts, Status, Relationships and Obligations. Again, your final Covenant may not look at all like this; the important thing is that it looks like a Spring Covenant.

Covenant Qualities Chart

<u>Trait</u>	<u>Winter</u>	<u>Spring (example)</u>
Location:	Hilly Country (0)	Hilly Country (0)
Aura:	+4 (+3)	+2 (-2)
Size:	Average (0)	Average (0)
Defenses:	Strong (+1)	Strong (+1)
Integrity:	Partial Ruin (-4)	Dilapidated (-2)
Misc:	Caves (+1)	Caves (+1)
Magi:	Leader (-1)	Normal (0)
Grog:	10, Organized, Resigned, Standard arms (-4)	15, Organized, Loyal, Standard arms (-2)
Covenfolk:	Few, deformed (-2)	Functional (0)
Contacts:	Basic information (-1)	Basic information (-1)
Hermetic Status:	Resp. but powerless (-1)	Resp. but powerless (-1)
Mundane Relations:	Little interaction (0)	Little interaction (0)
Enemies:	Grudges (-1)	Grudges (-1)
Reputation:	Neutral Reputation (0)	Abysmal Reputation (-1)
Arcane Library:	Excellent (+3)	Excellent (+3)
Magical Laboratories:	Inadequate (-2)	Standard (0)
Magical Artifacts:	Extreme (+5)	None (0)
Protected vis:	Meager supply (+1)	Meager supply (+1)
Aegis of the Hearth:	Good (+1)	Good (+1)
Misc:	Haunted (-2)	None (0)
Mundane Library:	Decaying (+2)	Excellent (+2)
Equipment:	Inferior (-1)	Standard (0)
Income:	Poor (-2)	Comfortable (0)
Mounts:	None (0)	None (0)
Obligations:	None (0)	Time (-3)
Total:	21 negative, 17 positive	13 negative, 9 positive

Future Stories

The Twelfth Night Saga ends with the rebirth of Lux ex Tenebris. You and your players can now tell the stories of a Spring Covenant struggling to grow into Summer. One way to tell these stories is to use the next Saga in the Four Seasons Tetralogy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Another way is to create your own stories. In either case, these stories probably involve new people and new places. However, in order to maintain your Saga's continuity, you might want to tell stories related to the events of this Saga. There are many opportunities for this.

One of the best opportunities for future stories involves the Holy Shroud. It now belongs to the Church, but that doesn't mean there isn't conflict over it. News of the Holy Shroud's discovery spreads, and there are many in the Church interested in having it for themselves. The existence of the Shroud might create a dispute between rival Bishops, or even between the Pope and his underlings. The characters might become involved if a faction asks for information about the Shroud, or tries to get characters to accuse Bishop Guillet of stealing it.

News of the Shroud might also spread throughout the Order of Hermes. There's no shortage of Magi like Azenis and Severine, Magi dying of old age and looking for a chance at eternal life. The characters might be pressured to steal the Shroud by one of these Magi, or might be asked by the Order to find a rogue Magus and stop him from stealing the Shroud.

Another story possibility involves Impathis' offspring. Several stories involving the dragonet are already suggested in Chapter Four; those that aren't told during the Saga can be told afterward. As the dragonet grows older and more powerful, other stories possibilities present themselves. What do the characters tell the dragon if he asks about his parents, or if he asks the characters to stop taking treasure from his lair? How do the characters discipline him if he misbehaves? What happens after 30 years, when Impathis' agreement with the characters expires?

A third possibility is a story involving the politics of the Order of Hermes. Events at the Saga's end cause a stir within the Order. Depending on how well they explain themselves and how much blame they put on Azenis, characters can be accused of stealing religious relics, angering mundanes, or even murdering a Quaesitor. The testimony of Istaff and Stratus Enor is likely to be crucial toward exonerating or condemning the characters. Characters' previous treatment of these seemingly minor characters now becomes quite important. Perhaps Stratus Enor wants something from the characters (such as help covering up Severine's corruption) in exchange for statements in their favor.

Other stories might involve the miracle which occurs in Chapter Eight. Suppose pilgrims begin showing up on the Covenant's doorstep, wanting to worship at the site of "Saint Christophe's" death. Their preaching might disturb Magi and make covenfolk uncomfortable, and characters might want to throw them out. On the other hand, the characters can secure a steady source of income by building a small shrine and charging admission. The Bishop might demand some of the profits, which can lead to an interesting and unusual business relationship between Covenant and Church.

Still another future story might center around the characters' efforts to restore their Covenant's name. Although the characters are probably innocent, the name Lux ex Tenebris has been linked to theft and sacrilege. Many locals may not know or care about the identities of individual Magi. Thus the characters may decide to accomplish some act of generosity to improve their reputation. Perhaps they decide to drive out a demon from a local desecrated Church. Perhaps they offer their services to Baron D'Oeuf (an action which might be controversial within the Order).

Whatever stories you decide to tell after Twelfth Night, they are no longer the stories of a Covenant balanced between life and death. The old Covenant has died and a new one is born. The characters are now in control of their own destiny, as members of a Spring Covenant.



THE CAST

APPENDIX



Below are descriptions of all the Storyguide characters who appear throughout the Twelfth Night Saga. Most of them change little, so the same descriptions can be used throughout the story. The two exceptions, Christophe D'Alsante and Triandin, are each described twice.

AZENIS OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Characteristics: Intelligence (scheming) +4, Perception 0, Strength (decrepit) -2, Stamina (enfeebled) -3, Presence (withered) -4, Communication (persuasive) +1, Dexterity (trembling hands) -1, Quickness (slow reflexes) -3

Age: 191 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Affinity (with death and aging) +1, Subtle Magic (no gestures necessary) +2, Self-Confident +3, Life-Linked Magic (spells fade on death of caster) -1, Minor Magic Deficiency in Creo (Creo score is halved) -2, Fragile Constitution (-2 to recovery rolls) -1, Driving Goal (immortality) -1, Compulsion (to win contests) -1, Common Fear (of old people) -2, Common Fear (of own reflection) -2

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 4, Speak Latin (persuasion) 5, Scribe Latin (skim texts) 4, Finesse (Córpoem) 4, Penetration (Córpoem) 6, Alertness (at night) 2, Search (magical labs) 3, Charm (asking for favors) 3, Guile (elaborate lies) 4, Subterfuge (bluff) 2, *Certámen* (Intéllego) 6,

Parma Magica (Mentem) 8, Concentration (ignoring pain) 5, Debate (conversation) 1, Meditation (composing thoughts) 2, Storytelling (improvisations) 2, Disguise (fooling scholars) 2, Forgery (signatures) 2, Bargain (dealing with superiors) 2, Diplomacy (politics) 2, Intimidation (subtle) 2, Intrigue (alliances) 3, Quarterstaff Attack (surprise attack) 3, Quarterstaff Parry (thrusting weapons) 3, Hermes History (tomes) 3, Hermes Lore (politics) 4, Magic Theory (potions) 12, Church Lore (relics) 3, Faerie Lore (faerie immortality) 3, Fantastic Beast Lore (unicorns) 4, Legend Lore (fountains of youth) 4, Occult Lore (bargaining with demons) 3, Medicine (old age) 3, Magic Affinity — Death and Aging (slowing aging) 5

Confidence: 6

Reputation: Powerful (House Tytalus) 4, Strange (covenfolk) 1, Decrepit 1

Personality Traits: Scheming +3, Cunning +2, Arrogant +2, Adaptable +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 10, Intéllego 26, Muto 9, Perdo 15, Rego 16, Animál 10, Aquam 8, Auram 7, Córpoem 28, Herbam 7, Ignem 15, Imágonem 13, Mentem 16, Terram 8, Vim 17

Spell Casting Speed: +1

Twilight Points: 17

Effects of Twilight: Hands are extremely thin and bony

Spells Known: *Steed of Vengeance* (MuAn 20) +16, *Lungs of the Fish* (MuAq 10) +14, *The Surgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20) +30, *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15) +56, *The Inexorable Search* (InCo 20) +51, *Tracing the Trail of Death's Stench* (InCo 20) +56, *The Eye of the Sage* (InCo 30) +51, Gift

of the Bear's Fortitude (MuCo 30) +34, Bane of the Decrepit Body (PeCo 25) +45, Clenching Grasp of the Crushed Heart (PeCo 40) +45, Leap of Homecoming (ReCo 35) +41, The Great Rot (PeHe 25) +19, Vision of Heat's Light (InIg 20) +38, Well Without Light (PeIg 25) +27, Ear for Distant Voice (InIm 20) +36, Disguise of Transformed Image (MuIm 15) +19, Invisibility of the Standing Wizard (PeIm 15) +25, Posing the Silent Question (InMe 25) +39, Loss of But a Moment's Memory (PeMe 20) +28, Grant the Hidden Quest (ReMe 40, see boxed text) +29, Rampart of Protecting Earth (CrTe 20) +10, Statue to Animal (MuTe 25) +14, Rusted Decay of Ten Score Years (PeTe 15) +20, The Invisible Eye Revealed (InVi 15) +40, Change the Nature of Vis (MuVi 10) +23, Aegis of the Hearth (ReVi 25) +30, Waiting Spell (ReVi 25) +30

Wizard's Sigil: A sign of defeat or victory. When Azenis casts a spell which doesn't affect anyone directly, trumpets sound in the distance.

Weapons and Armor: Quarterstaff

Quarterstaff Totals: First Strike +5, Attack +4, Damage +5, Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak -3/+7*/+27** (3/13*/33** Action), Fatigue -3

* Every morning and night Azenis casts Gift of the Bear's Fortitude (MuCo 30) on himself, which adds +10 to his Soak rolls until he Botches one.

** After Azenis warps the Shroud to Hermetic magic, it adds +20 to his Soak.

Like many Magi of House Tytalus, Azenis sees life as a series of contests. He thinks about people and situations tactically, always aware of his own objectives and constantly planning how to win. In his younger days, Azenis was known for his struggles against supernatural creatures and for his political scheming. Now, however, Azenis has moved beyond those petty games. He wants to win the ultimate contest. He wants to defeat death.

Azenis realized early on that every Magus in the history of the Order (with the possible exception of Tytalus) has failed the ultimate test: they all died. With this realization came the desire to win the challenge, to prove himself the greatest Magus ever. He devoted his time to researching longevity, and studying the arts of Intéllego and Córpoem in order to increase the power of his longevity potion. He eventually realized, however, that no potion could sustain him forever. For even if he could increase his knowledge of Intéllego and Córpoem, the magic of the potion would eventually consume him and drive him into final Twilight. He therefore began to search libraries for legends of immortality. This search led him to encounters with Severine and to legends of the Holy Shroud.

As he searched for eternal life, Azenis aged, and with age came the fear that his quest would never be fulfilled. Though Azenis has always been fascinated by aging and death, his fascination has now become tinged with terror. He despises seeing anyone old and is profoundly uncomfortable seeing his own aged reflection. This is true even after Azenis receives the

Grant the Hidden Quest (ReMe 40)

R: Touch/Near, D: Moon/Perm., Ritual

This spell gives a human one complex command which he must try to carry out to the best of his ability. While the spell is in effect, the subject cannot tell anyone of the spell's casting or of the quest, unless doing so is necessary to completing the task or unless the caster specifically allows it. A Stamina stress roll of 12+ resists this spell. If the task is very dangerous or is opposed to the subject's morals or beliefs, the subject gets a bonus to this Resistance roll. If the roll Botches, the target follows commands without any question.

Shroud and halts his own aging. It's as though on some level Azenis understands the inevitability of his death, even as he celebrates his immortality.

Every sunset and sunrise, Azenis casts *Gift of the Bear's Fortitude* and *Vision of Heat's Light* on himself. Every year, he casts *The Invisible Eye Revealed*. These three spells are normally in effect at all times. As soon as Azenis receives the Holy Shroud from Francois, he wears it at all times. Azenis wears the Shroud under his clothes, so characters probably don't notice it.

Appearance: Azenis is extremely old, and looks it. His eyes are sunken and his hands are so thin that they're little more than bones. His skin is wrinkled and blotchy. He has a sharp, raspy voice, but can be surprisingly persuasive and congenial when he wants to be.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak in a slow, raspy voice and keep your face impassive. Speak with niceties when you want something from the characters. Once you've got what you want (i.e., once you've "won"), don't let yourself be pestered. Ignore troublesome questions.

CHRISTOPHE D'ALSANTE (BEFORE THE CRUSADE)

Characteristics: Intelligence (slow learner) -1, Perception 0, Strength (massive chest) +5, Stamina (tough body) +4, Presence (classically handsome) +2, Communication (rousing orator) +2, Dexterity (agile) +3, Quickness (energetic) +2

Age: 20

Size: +1

Virtues and Flaws: Large (extra Fatigue and Wound levels) +2, Rage Passion +2, Hatred Passion +2, Dutybound -1, Driving Goal (the Crusade) -1, Overconfident -2

Abilities: Speak Own Language (speeches) 4, Speak Latin (prayers) 1, Athletics (competitions) 3, Charisma (knights) 2, Ride (tournaments) 4, Drinking (remaining conscious) 2, Intimidation (overt) 2, Lance Attack (tournaments) 3, Greatsword Attack (small opponents) 5, Greatsword Parry (tournaments) 3, Hatred Passion (infidels) 2, Rage Passion (tournament opponents) 2



Confidence: 3

Reputation: Hot-Tempered (commoners) 3, Powerful (knights) 3

Personality Traits: Bullying +3, Hot-Tempered +2, Arrogant +2, Brutal +1, Subtle -2, Brave +2

Weapons and Armor: Lance, Greatsword, Chain Mail Hauberk

Lance Totals: First Strike +9, Attack +8, Damage +16.

Greatsword Totals: First Strike +9, Attack +11, Damage +21, Parry Defense +7 (13 Action)

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +17 (23 Action), Fatigue +1

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Christophe D'Alsante is the son of Giscard D'Alsante and the nephew of Francois. He has inherited all the heroic skills of his father and uncle, with none of their noble virtues. His favorite activity is winning tournament competitions. He loves to hit his opponents, especially when they're smaller or weaker than he (which is often). Christophe believes it impossible for him to lose in personal combat and he is enraged at anyone who suggests or proves otherwise.

Before his Crusade, tournaments constitute Christophe's primary combat experience. His father and uncle forbade him to accompany them on their Crusade, to ensure that at least one D'Alsante remained at home.

When his uncle returns, however, Christophe is free to go to the Holy Land. He's confident he will enjoy this more challenging competition, and this opportunity to inflict injury on a grand scale.

Christophe greatly admires his Uncle Francois for his success in battle. At the festival, he stays close to Francois to hear as much as possible about the tactics of Saracens and the deeds of his father and uncle. If Francois is threatened or appears endangered, Christophe is ready to defend him immediately.

Though Christophe sometimes makes religious references to please his uncle or his audience, he's not devout. He hates the Saracens because they killed his father (not that he really needed a reason) and wants to fight them for revenge and personal glory.

Appearance: Christophe is tall and massive, with short, dark hair. His face is twisted into a scowl which lifts only when he is inflicting pain. Christophe takes great pride in his appearance. His arms and armor are always shining and spotless.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak loudly and become angry if anyone questions you or disagrees with what you say. If the topic comes up, express your hatred for Saracens, wizards, Jews, the English and commoners.

CHRISTOPHE D'ALSANTE (AFTER HIS CRUSADE)

Characteristics: Intelligence (slow learner) -1, Perception 0, Strength (massive chest) +5, Stamina (tough body) +4, Presence (classically handsome) +2, Communication (rousing orator) +2, Dexterity (agile) +3, Quickness (energetic) +2

Age: 25-27

Size: +1

Virtues and Flaws: Large (extra Fatigue and Wound levels) +2, True Faith +3, Driving Goal (finding holy relics) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (speeches) 5, Speak Latin (prayers) 2, Speak Arabic (religious words) 2, Athletics (competitions) 3, Charisma (knights) 4, Ride (combat) 6, Drinking (remaining conscious) 2, Intimidation (overt) 2, Leadership (inspiring bravery) 3, Lance Attack (combat) 5, Greatsword Attack (formation fighting) 6, Greatsword Parry (formation fighting) 6, Church Lore (Crusades) 2, Legend Lore (relics) 3

Faith Points: 3 (plus 3 additional points from relic in sword hilt)

Reputation: Hot-Tempered (commoners) 3, Strong (knights) 5, Brave (Crusaders) 5

Personality Traits: Honorable +3, Devout +3, Brave +3, Calm +2

Weapons and Armor: Lance, Greatsword, Chain Mail Hauberk

Lance Totals: First Strike +11, Attack +10, Damage +18.

Greatsword Totals: First Strike +10, Attack +12, Damage +22, Parry Defense +10 (16 Action)

Encumbrance: 3

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +17 (23 Action), Fatigue +1

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

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

Christophe D'Alsante was once an arrogant bully, but no longer. Ever since receiving his Divine vision (see Chapter Six), he has been devoutly religious. He is calm, just and humble before God. His life is now dedicated to finding holy relics and bringing them back to the Church. Although Christophe still fights, he now does so in the service of his cause rather than out of vanity and anger.

Christophe regrets his past sins, but since he knows they have been forgiven he doesn't dwell on them. If someone comments on his changed behavior or admonishes him for some past wrong, Christophe is happy to tell the story of his revelation. He usually ends this story by exhorting the listener to rejoice in the saving grace of God.

Christophe still believes that wizards and other unbelievers are sinners. But rather than hating them, he now thinks of them as lost sheep which may one day be brought back into the fold. He wishes they would see the light, but doesn't treat them badly for their blindness. He's even willing to trust and learn from them.



Although Christophe is more honorable and merciful than he was before, he's just as resolute and in many ways just as dangerous. He's a tremendous warrior with enormous strength, and allows nothing to delay or moderate his cause. Although he is compassionate, Christophe kills without hesitation if his quest demands it. To those in his way, he is a holy terror.

In Christophe's sword hilt is a finger bone of Saint Paul. This is a holy relic of three Faith Points. He has three additional Faith Points of his own.

Appearance: Christophe is tall and massive, with short dark hair. His face is kingly and his expression calm. When he makes a public appearance, his arms and armor are shining and spotless.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak in a booming voice. Listen politely to what others have to say. Speak sadly of war and joyfully of your Divine vision. Refer to God often.

EUSTACE, BARON D'OEUUF

Characteristics: Intelligence (level-headed) +2, Perception (attentive) +1, Strength 0, Stamina 0, Presence 0, Communication (hesitant speaker) -1, Dexterity (plodding step) -1, Quickness (overweight) -1

Age: 38 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Clear Thinker (+3 to resist lies and confusion) +1, Weak Self-Confidence -1, Common Fear (of conflict) -2

Abilities: Speak Own Language (etiquette) 5, Speak Norman French (etiquette) 3, Dodge (surprise attacks) 3, Folk Ken (his subjects) 3, Ride (parades) 3, Bargain (nobility) 2, Diplomacy (royalty) 2, Etiquette (at court) 4, Leadership (of Barony) 3, Broadsword Attack (duels) 2, Church Lore (Crusades) 1

Confidence: 2

Reputation: Slow to Act (nobility) 4

Personality Traits: Moderate +2, Cautious +2, Confrontational -3, Brave -1

Weapons and Armor: Broadsword

Broadsword Totals: First Strike +4, Attack +5, Damage +8

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +2 (8 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Eustace, Baron D'Oeuf, is a peaceful and unambitious man. His goal is to live comfortably in a barony that is at peace with its neighbors. Though he takes his responsibilities seriously and tries to be a good ruler, the Baron's rule is hindered by his discomfort with any kind of conflict. He tends to ignore problems or put off difficult decisions, hoping situations will resolve themselves. When forced to act, he often compromises needlessly, in a futile attempt to please everyone.



One example of the Baron's leadership failings involves Lux ex Tenebris. The Baron knows of the existence of the Covenant. Though he has no personal objection to it, he's uncomfortable having a group of wizards live so near, mainly given the threat of a Crusade against them. Thus the Baron is happy to see the Magi go. However, he's unwilling to force them out, or even hint that they should leave. Whenever the subject comes up, the Baron worries about the possibility of conflict, hopes the Magi leave on their own, and does nothing.

Despite his leadership failings, the Baron is not politically naive. He's a thoughtful man with an understanding of diplomacy and etiquette, and he's decisive enough to stay in power. If Lux ex Tenebris ever becomes a threat to his rule, the Baron acts, despite the discomfort it causes him.

The Baron's political position is supported by the advice of Bishop Guillet, a childhood friend who is now the Baron's ally. Although their friendship has recently cooled because of their differing stands on the Crusade, the Bishop still has great influence over the Baron in matters of political intrigue.

Appearance: The Baron is a short man with a round face and a visible paunch. Despite rumors to the contrary, Eustace is called the Baron D'Oeuf ("of the Egg") because of the oval shape of his lands, not because of his physique.

Roleplaying Tips: Pause before you speak. If anyone demands something that you can't agree to, change the subject. Ask other people's opinions.



Bishop Guillet

BISHOP GUILLET

Characteristics: Intelligence (shrewd) +2, Perception (astute) +1, Strength (scrawny arms) -2, Stamina (short-winded) -2, Presence 0, Communication (smooth talker) +2, Dexterity (steady hand) +1, Quickness 0

Age: 37 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: None

Abilities: Speak Own Language (flattery) 5, Speak Latin (the Mass) 5, Scribe Latin (writing letters) 4, Dodge (bladed weapons) 1, Charm (clergy) 2, Guile (lying to superiors) 3, Folk Ken (clergy) 2, Subterfuge (clergy) 3, Debate (matters of faith) 1, Ride (speed) 2, Diplomacy (tact) 2, Intimidation (underlings) 2, Intrigue (thwarting plots) 3, Church Lore (College of Cardinals) 3, Church Knowledge (authority of Bishops) 3

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Intelligent (clergy) 3

Personality Traits: Crafty +3, Brave -2, Cautious +2, Loves Politics +2

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak -2 (4 Action), Fatigue -2

Bishop Guillet is correctly known as a learned man and a capable leader. The Bishop's consummate political skill and lack of moral scruples are less well-known. Although he's too cautious to do anything truly daring, Bishop Guillet continually schemes and plots to improve his standing within the Church. His ambition is to become a cardinal, and perhaps someday Pope.

The Bishop is willing to do anything to make himself reputable, as long as there's no risk involved. He supports the Crusades, as long as he doesn't have to go on them. He associates himself with Francois D'Alsante and other returning heroes, as long as they're popular. He doesn't, however, stand up against the Order of Hermes if he can help it, fearing the risk of retaliation. The Bishop is not a brave man. He wants to advance his career, but only as long as he can safely do so.

Like Baron D'Oeuf (though for different reasons), Bishop Guillet avoids making decisions which anger any powerful figure or group. If forced to take a stand, he is as moderate as possible.

Appearance: Bishop Guillet is a short, thin man with an unassuming presence and a calm, smooth voice. He dresses in clothes befitting his station, so is easily recognizable as a person of note.

Roleplaying Tips: Choose your words carefully. Look from one person to another as you speak. Avoid being pinned down to anything definite.

KAKITHRIC, THE VULTURE

Magic Might: 10

Vital Statistics: Size -2, Intelligence (wily) +3, Perception (keen-eyed) +3, Strength (thin claws) -1, Stamina 0, Presence (shadowy) -2, Communication (croaking voice) -1, Dexterity 0, Quickness (torpid) -1

Virtues and Flaws: None

Personality Traits: Morbid +2, Cryptic +2, Foreboding +2, Cynical +1

Reputation: Evil (covenfolk) 1

Confidence: 3

Combat Totals:

Beak: First Strike +6, Attack +5, Damage +1

Body Levels: OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

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

Dodge Defense +1 (7 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Encumbrance: 0

Powers:

Reveal the Hidden, InIm 20, 0 points — When the vulture's shadow touches one who is concealed, he is revealed to all. If an invisibility power or a spell used to hide exceeds Level 20, this power does not affect the subject.

Vis: 4 Córpoem, wings

Cord Strength: Gold +1, Silver +2, Bronze +1

Bond Qualities: Attunement +5, Extended Bond (1 mile) +5, Shared Speech (Kakithric's speech is intelligible to anyone; Azenis can speak with birds) +10, Shared Senses +10, Shared Magic (Kakithric can cast Level 5 Córpoem spells; Azenis can use *Reveal the Hidden*, above) +15, At Odds -10

Kakithric is Azenis' vulture Familiar. He often perches on top of the Covenant's main tower, which makes many of the Covenant's visitors (and inhabitants) uncomfortable. He likes to make fun of Azenis' age and attempts to live forever; Kakithric believes death is inevitable for all.

Kakithric also delights in taunting the inhabitants of Lux ex Tenebris, cryptically remarking that the Covenant is doomed, or speculating on how much longer individual members have to live. The bird is universally feared and despised, perhaps most by Bouvette, the Autocrat.

Because of Kakithric's magical bond with Azenis, the vulture shares in the preservative powers of the Shroud — he, like Azenis, doesn't age. The Shroud doesn't protect him in any other way, though.

Appearance: Kakithric is an old vulture with wrinkled, twisted claws.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak in a croaking voice. Make prophecies about death, but be vague and unspecific. Laugh at people.

SEVERINE OF HOUSE QUAESITOR

Characteristics: Intelligence (sharp mind) +3, Perception (discerning eye) +1, Strength (weak grip) -3, Stamina 0, Presence (wrinkled skin) -3, Communication (commanding voice) +1, Dexterity (stooped posture) -3, Quickness (slow reflexes) -4

Age: 177 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Method Caster (+2 to Formulaic spells) +4, Magic Item (a ring which can cast *Circling Winds of Protection*, ReAu 20, three times a day) +1, Quaesitor +1, Strong-Willed (+3 to resist temptation and domination) +1, Major Deficiency in Aquam (all Aquam rolls are halved) -3, Hunchback -1, Driving Goal (immortality) -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (commands) 5, Speak Latin (commands) 5, Scribe Latin (histories) 4, Finesse (Mentem) 4, Penetration (Intéllego) 5, Alertness (noises) 3, Charisma (politics) 3, *Certámen* (Mentem) 4, *Parma Magica* (Córpoem) 6, Concentration (while questioning) 6, Debate (Hermetic Law) 6, Meditation (controlling emotions) 3, Bargain (trading spells) 2, Diplomacy (Tribunals) 3, Etiquette (Quaesitoris) 3, Intimidation (against Magi) 6, Intrigue (alliances) 1, Leadership (inspiring bravery) 3, Hermes History (the Founders) 4, Hermetic Law (Tribunals) 7, Hermes Lore (Code of Hermes) 4, Magic Theory (potions) 9, Church Lore (the Resurrection) 2, Faerie Lore (faerie immortality) 3, Fantastic Beast Lore (unicorns) 2, Legend Lore (fountains of youth) 3, Medicine (old age) 2

Confidence: 6

Reputation: Knowledgeable (Quaesitoris) 4, Dogmatic (Quaesitoris) 3

Personality Traits: Closed-Minded +2, Angry +1, Stubborn +2, Empathic -3

Techniques and Forms: Creo 18, Intéllego 20, Muto 6, Perdo 9, Rego 18, Animál 7, Aquam 6, Auram 14, Córpoem 19, Herbam 7, Ignem 10, Imágonem 17, Mentem 19, Terram 8, Vim 13

Spell Casting Speed: +0

Twilight Points: 15

Effects of Twilight: Obsession with immortality

Spells Known: *Tongue of the Beasts* (InAn 20) +29, *Viper's Gaze* (ReAn 15) +27, *Subtle Taste of Poison and Purity* (InAq 15) +28, *True Sight of the Air* (InAu 15) +36, *Whispering Winds* (InAu 15) +36, *Eyes of the Bat* (InAu 25) +36, *Broom of the Winds* (ReAu 15) +34, *Incantation of the Body Made Whole* (CrCo 45) +39, *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15) +41, *The Inexorable Search* (InCo 20) +41, *Incantation of the Milky Eyes* (PeCo 20) +30, *Rise of the Feathery Body* (ReCo 10) +39, *Lifting the Dangling Puppet* (ReCo 20) +39, *Leap of Homecoming* (ReCo 35) +39, *Converse with Plants and Trees* (InHe 25) +29, *Pilum of Fire* (CrIg 25) +30, *Words of the Flickering Flame* (InIg 25) +32,

Restoration of the Lost Image (CrIm 25) +37, *Discern Images of Truth and Falsehood* (InIm 30) +39, *The Ear for Distant Voice* (InIm 20) +39, *Eyes of the Past* (InIm 20) +39, *Summoning the Distant Images* (InIm 35) +39, *Wizard's Sidestep* (ReIm 20) +37, *Panic of the Trembling Heart* (CrMe 15) +39, *Memory of the Distant Dream* (CrMe 20) +39, *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (InMe 20) +41, *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 25) +41, *Passion's Lost Feeling* (PeMe 20) +30, *Coerce the Spirits of the Night* (ReMe 30) +39, *The Call to Slumber* (ReMe 15) +39, *Aura of Rightful Authority* (ReMe 20) +39, *Incantation of Summoning the Dead* (ReMe 25) +39, *Summon the Haunting Spirit* (ReMe 25) +39, *Wall of Protecting Stone* (CrTe 25) +28, *Perceive the Magical Scent* (InVi 20) +35, *Sense of the Lingering Magic* (InVi 30) +35, *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* (PeVi 20) +24, *Wind of Mundane Silence* (PeVi 20) +24

Wizard's Sigil: A lack of color. For example, objects and people affected by Severine's spells become slightly gray for the Duration of the spell.

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Severine has spent her life serving the Order. She is known throughout the Tribunal as a competent and knowledgeable Quaesitor, although she is regarded by many as too conservative in her interpretation of the Peripheral Code. About 15 years ago, after an accident involving her longevity potion sent her into temporary Twilight, Severine became obsessed with the idea of living forever. She spent many of the ensuing years researching legends of immortality, partly with Azenis and partly on her own. Her search and growing old age deepened her obsession, to the point where she is now willing to abuse her authority and twist her interpretation of the Code to punish those who might deny her eternal life. Though her younger self would have condemned such actions, the old Severine is completely sure of herself and never considers that what she does might be wrong.

Severine is somewhat frustrated with her filius, Stratus Enor, because he's so weak and honest, but she doesn't trust any other Magus to follow her instructions without question. She gives him tasks which she wants kept secret.

Appearance: Severine is clearly very old. Her skin is deeply wrinkled and her back is so badly bent that she must lean on her staff for support. She moves slowly but refuses any aid. Her eyes are still sharp and piercing, and her voice never wavers. She frowns angrily when her judgment is questioned or when she makes accusations against someone.

Roleplaying Tips: Speak loudly and distinctly, and look directly at whomever you're addressing. Lower your brow. If anyone dares question your authority or judgment, raise your voice in outrage. Never show mercy. Never admit that you could be wrong. Never smile.

STRATUS ENOR OF HOUSE QUAESITOR

Characteristics: Intelligence (rational) +2, Perception (carefully observant) +1, Strength 0, Stamina (durable) +1, Presence (imposing) +1, Communication (steady voice) +1, Dexterity (clumsy) -2, Quickness (lumbering) -2

Age: 43 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Method Caster (+1 on Formulaic spells) +2, Quaesitor +1, Loyalty Passion +2, Susceptibility to Rational Power (-5, double Botch rolls in any realm of Reason) -4, Weak-Willed (+3 to rolls to be fooled, intimidated or manipulated) -1, Unimaginative Learner -3

Abilities: Speak Own Language (questions) 5, Speak Latin (negotiations) 5, Scribe Latin (histories) 3, Finesse (precision) 3, Penetration (Intéllego) 2, Search (in libraries) 3, *Certamen* (Mentem) 2, *Parma Magica* (Córpoem) 5, Concentration (ignoring sounds) 3, Meditation (controlling emotions) 2, Intimidation (Magi) 1, Hermes History (House Quaesitor) 3, Hermetic Law (Tribunal etiquette) 4, Hermes Lore (politics) 3, Magic Theory (investigating items) 6, Loyalty Passion (Severine) 2

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Mediocre (Quaesitoris) 2

Personality Traits: Follower +2, Honest +2, Methodical +3, Authoritative +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 6, Intéllego 12, Muto 6, Perdo 4, Rego 8, Animál 1, Aquam 4, Auram 4, Córpoem 8, Herbam 1, Ignem 5, Imágonem 6, Mentem 8, Terram 7, Vim 7

Spell Casting Speed: +1

Twilight Points: 2

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Subtle Taste of Poison and Purity* (InAq 15) +18, *True Sight of the Air* (InAu 15) +18, *Whispering Winds* (InAu 15) +18, *Broom of the Winds* (ReAu 15) +14, *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15) +22, *Rise of the Feathery Body* (ReCo 10) +18, *Words of the Flickering Flame* (InIg 25) +19, *The Ear for Distant Voice* (InIm 20) +20, *Wizard's Sidestep* (ReIm 20) +16, *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (InMe 20) +22, *Passion's Lost Feeling* (PeMe 20) +14, *Stone Tell of the Mind that Sits* (InTe 30) +21, *Perceive the Magical Scent* (InVi 20) +21

Wizard's Sigil: A lack of emotion. For example, in Stratus Enor's version of Words of the Flickering Flame, the fire speaks in an unexpressive monotone. In his version of Whispering Winds, he has trouble hearing emotion-related words.

Weapons and Armor: None

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -2 (4 Action), Soak +1 (7 Action), Fatigue +1

Stratus Enor is totally dominated by his parens, Severine. Although it's been almost 20 years since he's been her apprentice, he still lives at her Covenant and does what she asks. Occasionally he even acts as her lab assistant. Although most

Magi would consider this a great indignity, Stratus Enor is so devoted to Severine that he considers it an honor to serve her.

Unlike Severine, Stratus Enor is an honest Quaesitor who would never abuse his power. He is worried about Severine's growing obsession with immortality, and about the questionable tasks which she asks him to perform. However, he cannot bring himself to admit that his idol is corrupt, so he obeys her, somewhat uncomfortably, in the belief that she must know things he doesn't.

Stratus Enor is very methodical and rational in his approach to problems. He has a great respect for authority (especially Hermetic, but mundane as well). His manner of making decisions is usually based on establishing which person has the right to see his request fulfilled. Stratus Enor shows little emotion, except displeasure at the rejection of authority or at the raising of irrelevant issues.

Stratus Enor makes a commanding first impression. When he believes he has authority, he speaks decisively and is unafraid to give orders. Emotional appeals do not sway him in the least. If his authority is challenged, however, he becomes unsure of himself, and, if possible, looks to Severine to confirm his authority. Due to his Weak-Willed Flaw, those trying to fool, manipulate or intimidate Stratus Enor gain a +3 modifier to their roll.

Appearance: Stratus Enor is a fairly large man, with a thin face, short hair and a short beard that's beginning to gray. He appears imposing when standing still, but his movements are clumsy and awkward.

Roleplaying Tips: Sit up straight. Speak slowly and make your points in a logical sequence. Frown if someone changes the subject or raises an irrelevant point. If you are interrupted, return to your original point when you're allowed to speak again.

TRIANDIN OF HOUSE JERBITON (BEFORE HIS DEATH)

Characteristics: Intelligence (pragmatic) +2, Perception (attentive) +2, Strength (rounded shoulders) -2, Stamina 0, Presence (genial) +1, Communication (melodic voice) +2, Dexterity (gangly) -2, Quickness (ungainly) -3

Age: 116 (at Saga beginning)

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Affinity (with healing) +2, Gentle Gift +1, Free Expression +1, Slow Caster (spells take two Rounds to cast) -3, Soft-Hearted -1

Abilities: Speak Own Language (storytelling) 5, Speak Latin (poetry) 5, Scribe Latin (poems) 3, Finesse (Terram) 3, Penetration (Terram) 3, Charm (artists) 3, Folk Ken (artists) 2, *Certámen* (Terram) 3, *Parma Magica* (Córpoem) 6, Concentration (for long periods) 3, Meditation (resting the body) 2, Acting (tragedy) 3, Storytelling (classical myths) 2, Sing (sad

songs) 3, Bargain (with jewelers) 2, Diplomacy (tact) 3, Etiquette (nobility) 3, Intrigue (gossip) 1, Quarterstaff Parry (blunt weapons) 3, Evaluate Jewelry (diamonds) 2, Craft — Jewel-Working (necklaces) 2, Hermes History (Houses) 3, Hermes Lore (history) 3, Magic Theory (enchancing items) 7, Church Lore (saints) 1, Fantastic Beast Lore (motivations) 2, Legend Lore (heroes) 3, Humanities (arts) 3, Medicine (diseases) 3, Magic Affinity — Healing (diseases) 5

Confidence: 3

Reputation: Harmless (Magi) 3, Friendly (covenfolk) 2

Personality Traits: Kind +3, Calm +2, Sad +1, Modest +1

Techniques and Forms: Creo 18, Intéllego 11, Muto 9, Perdo 5, Rego 8, Animál 9, Aquam 13, Auram 6, Córpoem 13, Herbam 4, Ignem 5, Imágonem 7, Mentem 10, Terram 23, Vim 8

Spell Casting Speed: +0

Twilight Points: 8

Effects of Twilight: None

Spells Known: *Soothe Pains of the Beast* (CrAn 20) +32, *The Gentle Beast* (ReAn 20) +17, *Mighty Torrent of Water* (CrAq 20) +31, *Gift of the Floating Wood* (ReAq 10) +21, *Chamber of Spring Breezes* (CrAu 15) +24, *Free the Accursed Body* (CrCo 25) +36, *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20) +36, *Restoration of the Defiled Body* (CrCo 25) +36, *Lamp Without Flame* (CrIg 10) +23, *Notes of a Delightful Sound* (MuIm 10) +16, *Gift of Reason* (CrMe 30) +28, *Scent of Peaceful Slumber* (ReMe 20) +18, *All Creo Terram spells up to Level 30* +41, *The Miner's Keen Eye* (InTe 20) +34, *Edge of the Razor* (MuTe 5) +32, *The Crystal Dart*



(MuTe 15) +31, *Hands of the Grasping Earth* (MuTe 15) +32, *Shell of Opaque Mysteries* (CrVi 30) +29

Wizard's Sigil: A soft sigh

Weapons and Armor: Quarterstaff

Quarterstaff Totals: Parry Defense +9 (15 Action)

Encumbrance: 0

Other Combat Totals: Dodge Defense -3 (3 Action), Soak +0 (6 Action), Fatigue +0

Like many Magi of his House, Triandin loves beauty more than he loves magic. He spends much of his time collecting poetry, singing and fashioning jewelry. Even time spent on magic is time spent in pursuit of beauty rather than power. Triandin studies Terram so he can better understand the beauty of precious jewels, and he casts spells slowly, in order to experience the poetry of each gesture and word.

Triandin also loves people more than he loves magic. He has a special talent with healing magic and he always treats people with respect and kindness. He is well-liked within the Covenant, but his behavior has led many in the Order (including Azenis) to dismiss him as a sentimental weakling.

Triandin is the only person in Lux ex Tenebris who is trying to reverse the Covenant's slide into Winter. He's deeply disturbed by its decline: by its disappearing revenues, decaying library and aging Groggs. He wants to restore the Covenant by bringing in new Magi and Groggs, but Azenis, jealous of the Covenant's resources and fearful of any threat to his power, forbids any recruitment. When the characters visit for a Season, Triandin tries to interest Magi in the Covenant, to get them to come back once Azenis is dead. Triandin doesn't believe Azenis will live much longer.

Appearance: Triandin is a small, distinguished-looking man with a short, white beard. He looks old, but healthy. He dresses in simple robes.

Roleplaying Tips: Be a good listener. Speak softly. Smile often, but not broadly, and laugh only rarely. Be especially friendly to Magi, but don't be rude to anyone.

TRIANDIN OF HOUSE JERBITON (AFTER HIS DEATH)

Spirit Might 36

For many years, as the Covenant decayed, Triandin tried to get Azenis to recruit younger Magi. Triandin desperately wanted to restore Lux ex Tenebris and believed that only an infusion of young blood could save it from stagnation and death. Azenis refused, not caring about the health of the Covenant and denying Triandin a chance to oppose him.

Triandin dies of old age the Season before the characters return to Lux ex Tenebris. However, Triandin's desire to

restore the Covenant is so strong that his soul does not rest. He returns to the world as a ghost, unable to leave until Lux ex Tenebris is reborn.

When the characters return and join the Covenant, Triandin is pleased. He is friendly to incoming characters and helps them rebuild in any way he can. He can teach any spell or magic Art that he knows, and is willing to do so as long as he believes the characters are sincere about rebuilding. Assume that with Triandin's instruction, a character can learn one of his spells as though it were written normally, and can learn an Art as though studying from a book of half Triandin's Art score.

Although Triandin is happy to see the characters, his existence as a ghost is morose and lonely. All covenfolk avoid him and he no longer finds pleasure in art or music. He is tormented by his existence and hopes that the characters will rebuild the Covenant soon so he can go to his eternal rest.

Triandin doesn't know anything about Azenis' experiments with the Shroud. He's surprised by how quickly he and the rest of the Covenant have aged, but can't say for sure that the aging is unnatural. Furthermore, he doesn't know why Azenis changed his mind about inviting the characters to join the Covenant.

Triandin can possess mortals (but never does, considering it a great evil) and can cast spells which affect the physical world (but must permanently expend a Magic Might point per magnitude of the spell cast). For more involved rules for dealing with ghosts, see *The Hidden Paths: Shamans*.

Appearance: Triandin as a ghost appears as a small, bent old man in robes. He is normally somewhat translucent, but can become opaque for short periods if he exerts himself. He can become invisible (except to those with the Second Sight Ability) at will.

Roleplaying Tips: Say little. Smile sadly during almost any conversation. Become more active if the discussion turns to rebuilding the Covenant.

THE HOLY SHROUD

The Holy Shroud appears as a simple white cloth about three feet wide and 12 feet long. It is the burial shroud of Christ, an item of great Divine might. It has several strong protective and preservative powers, described below, which it bestows only on a wearer with True Faith. These powers don't function between sunset on Good Friday and sunrise on Easter. In addition to these powers, the Holy Shroud acts as a relic with three Faith Points.

Once the Holy Shroud has been warped by Azenis to Hermetic magic, its protective and preservative powers are bestowed on anyone who wears it. In addition, the Shroud acquires two offensive magical powers, described below. The warping of the Shroud also creates a side effect.

Protective and Preservative Powers

Protection from Disease and Poison: No disease or poison, either natural or supernatural, affects the wearer of the Shroud.

Protection from Attack: The Shroud confers a +20 bonus to Soak total. This is cumulative with any other protections, such as armor.

Protection from Aging: The wearer of the Shroud does not age.

Offensive Powers

Bane of the Decrepit Body (PeCo 25): As the spell, but the Range is Special. If the wearer of the Shroud has an Arcane Connection to a victim, the Range is 300 miles. Otherwise, the Range is Sight. This power may be used a dozen times per day.

Circle of Decay (PeAn 60, PeCo 60, PeHe 60, PeTe 60): Everything within a half mile of the wearer of the Shroud immediately begins to age and decay at an accelerated rate. Buildings crumble, trees and plants rot away, and people age and die. Those already affected by Aging (i.e., anyone over 35)

age one year each Round (roll for Aging each Round). Those under 35 age one Season each Round. This power can be resisted by *Parma Magica*, but not by Faith Points. The wearer of the Shroud must concentrate in order to use this power; as soon as concentration is broken, the aging stops (although it doesn't reverse itself). This power may be used once per day.

Side Effect

Accelerated Decay: Living and non-living things in the vicinity of the Shroud age and decay faster than normal. Inanimate objects age at a rate five times normal. This applies to lab equipment, buildings, clothing, furniture and weapons: all wear out and break.

Animals and people are also affected by the Shroud. Since the Shroud works by magnifying existing decay, it doesn't affect those who have not already started to age (those who have not started making Aging rolls). For humans, this means anyone under 35 ages normally and is not adversely affected by the Shroud. Anyone over 35, however, ages at a rate five times normal. Roll for Aging once a Season, plus once more during Winter.