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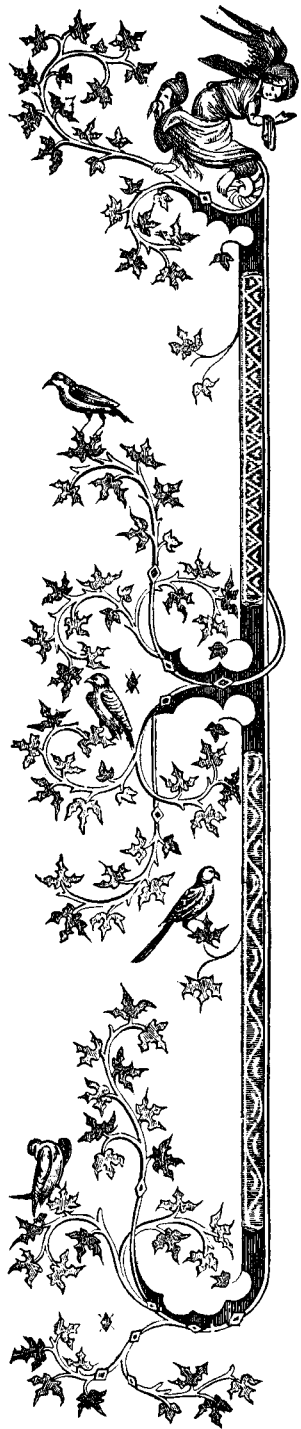
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*“... amidst the errors there shone forth men of genius,  
no less keen were their eyes,  
although they were surrounded by darkness.”*

— Petrarch

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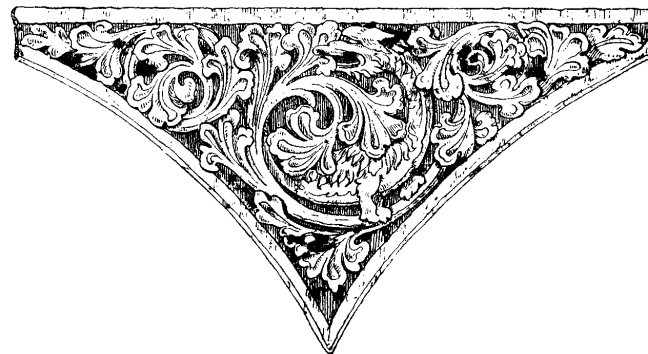
Except the knights. They were real.  
So are you.



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## Introduction



*Where did they go? And what did they take with them?*

*In the fourteenth century, the Pope declared the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon – better known as “the Knights Templar” – to be heretics. Their lands and lives were forfeit. But when the Inquisition came to claim the riches rumored to be held in the Orders coffers, they found... nothing.*

*Thirty knights were missing when the Inquisition came.*

*Where did they go? And what did they take with them?*

They are the seed of almost all modern conspiracy theory. From this one mystery spring the Masons, the Illuminati, the Merovingians, the Rosicrucians, the Golden Dawn and almost every other occult society of the modern era. I’m talking, of course, about the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. The Templars. And the seed of all modern conspiracies is their fabled treasure.

There are hundreds of books about the Templars. Historical books, speculative books, fantasy books, and even science fiction books. Many have hoped to find where the Templars went and what they took with them. This book is one of them.

*Thirty* is a roleplaying game. With it, you play the roles of thirty Templar Knights carrying a secret treasure, lost in a magical mist, trying to find your way home. The story you tell together with your friends is the journey those thirty Knights took. This game contains everything you need to play; you won’t need any other books. Of course, if you’d like to read more about the Templars, there’s a small suggested reading section at the end of this book.

This journey is not historical, but fictional. It was created out of my imagination. I make no claims whatsoever to actually know where the Knights went, and while I do have my own private suspicions, they do not have anything to do with this game.



Really. Honest and for true.

But who were the Templars and what kind of treasure are we talking about? The answer to that question involves a little history and a little more speculation.

### QUICK CAVEAT

The history of the Templars has been chronicled by a lot of people – all of whom know a helluva lot more about the Knights than I do.

I make no claims of historical accuracy at all. None. I've done research, but nothing compared to the *vast* amounts of work done by other authors. Even making the appearance that I know more than they do about this subject is an insult to the work they've already done. If you come across something in this book that differs from something you found by another author, defer to them rather than me.

### A NOTE ON GENDER

There were no female Knights in the Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon. Sorry, ladies. Because of this annoying historical fact, the male gender is used exclusively in this book – except when referring to the GM. We're assuming she'll be offended if we don't.

On the other hand, if you want to include women in the Order, I won't show up on your doorstep with the Historicity Police. The point of the game is to have fun. If putting women in the Order helps you do that, go for it. Just don't expect it when I run the game.

### SPECIAL THANKS

I want to take a moment to thank some people who have helped me on this journey. It's been a long one - a lot longer than I thought it would be. What started off as a simple suggestion from Jess - "What happened to the thirty Knights who took the treasure from Paris?" - quickly became its own grail quest. So, a tip of the hat to these folks for helping me across the sword bridge.

**To Jess** for giving me the idea in the first place, for being the best Scholar Knight a friend could want, and for being the best Buddhist Knight I know. **To Annie** for reading the early drafts, for being my spiritual compass through the Abyss, and for being one of three people who will actually understand all the hidden humor. **To Jared** for asking me to be a part of his wedding ritual, for reminding me that beauty lies in simplicity, and for smiling and nodding when I go off on esoteric rants. **To Hyrum** for sharing his home and friendship, for putting up with my skeptical doubt, and for (unintentionally) giving me the idea for the Three Imposters. **To Eric** for giving me the Latin translation for the tombstone in Scotland. **To Sheldon** for *illuminating* conversations. **To Cheryl, Tony, and Rob** for being the first of the Thirty.

That's it. On with the game!

# Player Section



# Part 1: The Order

## HISTORY

The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem was both a chivalric and monastic order. This dual status was unheard of in the Knights' time, giving them a bit of controversy to begin with; a controversy that would grow as the Order did.

In the age of the Templars, Europe was divided into three castes: the nobility, the clergy, and the peasantry. Each caste had its own clear delineations from the others and a specific role to play in the social order. Nobles fought wars, the clergy prayed, and the peasants suffered. This was the way of things for almost one thousand years.

But then came the Knights Templar: an order of fighting clergy. Men who were trained in the arts of war but were also ordained by the Holy Church. How could this be? It was all due to the Order's founder: Hughes de Payen.

Founded near the year 1119, the Templars' chief duty was escorting the Christian faithful through the dangerous lands of the heathen Saracens to the newly captured Holy Land of Jerusalem. The world was rife with holy war. Even Christian lands were not free of blood: heresies were everywhere and the Catholic Church was trying desperately to maintain its hold.

As the Church struggled, Hughes de Payen created the Knights Templar, an order of Knights that not only had the right to bear arms, but could also perform the duties of clergy. The Knights were holy men, capable of all manner of holy rites. This gave the Templars significant influence, but it was the authorization of Pope Innocent II in 1139 that began a steady increase of power for the Order. Innocent gave the Templars complete independence, declaring they were answerable only to the Pope himself. In 1161, Pope Alexander III gave them immunity to tithes and bestowed the right to tithe upon the Templars. What began as a modest and struggling chivalric Order suddenly became a monetary power in Europe.

Kings and other nobles gave the Order lands and moneys. Those who traveled under their banner made use of the Templar's many banks. Travelers gave the Order their riches in exchange for a promissory note (and a small fee). When the travelers arrived at their destination, they exchanged their notes for coins in the bank in their destination. With this system set in place, the Templars became a financial power as great (and in some cases, greater) than any kingdom in Europe.

With this power came an incredible jealousy from the crowned heads of the West. Not only did the Templars

command the respect and imaginations of the people, but were also financially powerful and free from any demands of the Church. For many, this was too much. For a few, it demanded blood.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, 1307, King Phillip le Bel of France began a systematic and coordinated series of raids against the Knights. His authority was backed by the Avignon Pope Clement V who declared the Knights heretics, guilty of many crimes including spitting on the cross and worshipping demons. Both hoped to seize the treasures captured by the Order during the Crusades. Although they arrested hundreds of Templars, the King and Pope found no treasure. The near-legendary fortune had disappeared, leaving them with nothing but jails full of Templars.

For seven years the Order's last Grand Master, Jacque de Molay, refused to divulge the location of the Templar Treasure. Nor would he speak a single word of its contents. Finally, in 1314, de Molay was put to death. He was tied to a tall pole, covered in pitch, and burned. Legend says that when the kindling was set to fire, de Molay swore that the King of France and the Pope would meet him in Heaven, stand before God and be judged for their crimes by the end of the year.

Within a month, the Pope was dead and by the end of the year, the King of France was killed in a hunting accident.

## SPECULATION

Many theories about the demise of the Templars followed. It's easy to see why. The Templars were

legendary in their own day. They were both revered and loathed by the people, made subjects of verse and tale, but toward the end of their Order propaganda made them out to be villains who spit on the cross, practiced "obscene kisses," and worshipped the Devil. The truth of these claims is a deep part of the Templar mystery. Were the accusations true? No one may ever know.

But an even deeper mystery than their crimes lingers to this very day. Where did the Templar treasure go and what exactly was it?



Jacque de Molay

The most popular (and persuasive) answer may lie in Scotland. It is said the Templars went there to find an ally in the pagan King Robert the Bruce – who despised the Vatican and its Pope. The Bruce hoped to find allies in his war for freedom against England and who better than a knightly Order, experienced in fighting, who recently had a fall out with His Holiness?

There is much evidence to suggest this theory could be correct. There are Templar burial grounds in Scotland. The decisive Battle of Bannockburn was won by the Scots, but many have noted the presence of mounted Knights wearing unmarked shields appearing out of nowhere to assist the Scots against the English. While many historians have theorized these Knights were English nobility sympathetic to the Scottish cause (and thus wore no markings to identify themselves), others have suggested they were the Knights Templar, coming to aid the King who had given them asylum from the Inquisition.

Others have proposed the Templars fled to many places, including America, Norway, Cypress and a small island called Bornholm.

But I have a different answer. A more *fanciful* answer, perhaps, but one that *could* have happened...

### THE MASTER'S QUEST

There is every indication that the Templars knew they had been betrayed. When the King's armies arrived, the legendary treasure was gone as well as many of the Knights of the French Temple. Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master, had been kept busy the previous days with ceremonies and festivals. Because of the immediate evacuation, he must have known the King was plotting against him, and yet he refused to flee. On the twelfth of October, just one day before the arrest orders were issued, he was attending the wedding of Phillip's sister. Standing in many ceremonies beside or close to the King, knowing his Order had been betrayed, he did nothing. If the Grand Master had fled, the King would have known his plot had been discovered and may have

moved earlier. Instead, de Molay played along, keeping a straight face, making sure Phillip knew nothing. Jacques de Molay was one of the first Knights arrested.

He bought the lives of his fellow Knights with his own.

When the soldiers arrived, most of the Knights in the French Temple were gone, as was the bulk of the Order's wealth.

Where did the Knights go? And what was the treasure they took with them?

You're going to find out.

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

That's up to you.

From here, you decide on a Game Master, create Knight characters, and get on with playing the game. Here's how you do it.



## Part 2: Joining the Order

This is where you come into the picture. Your group of players tell the story of what happened to those thirty Knights and the treasure they carried. First, you need to make the thirty Knights de Molay chose for the quest, but before you do that, let's talk a little bit about the tone of the game.

### HISTORIC, ROMANTIC, MYTHIC

There are many ways to look at Knights from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. For simplicity's sake, I've boiled this down to three prevailing attitudes: historic, romantic, and mythic. When you play *Thirty*, the GM and players should agree on one perspective before making characters. Each "mode" presents the players with a different style, appealing to different players' tastes.

#### Historic

The first mode is *Historic*. This mode attempts to adhere to historical accuracy: the Knights are devout Christians, adhering to the literal truths of the Bible. They do not maintain any degree of appearance; they rarely bathe, never shave and never cut their hair. They pray seven times a day, follow the Code of the Order rigidly, and view all other faiths as heretical and dangerous to the soul.

Playing in Historic mode is challenging. Players have to put away almost all their 20<sup>th</sup> Century notions. 14<sup>th</sup> Century Christianity was rigid and unforgiving. Many Knights were xenophobic, dogmatic and intentionally ignorant. As the game progresses, they will get a chance to loosen up, but there is no reason for them to do so. This is the most challenging mode of play, but for many players, this is what they want: to play Christian Knights fighting to free the Holy Land from the heathen Saracens.

#### Romantic

If you know King Arthur from movies and other popular media, you're most familiar with the *Romantic* mode of play. The Knights are handsome, but humble. Valorous, but intelligent. They are imbued with the modern notions of freedom, equality, liberty, and faith (a man's relationship with God is a personal, not public, affair). Knights bathe on a regular basis, wear their hair the way they like and are tolerant toward others who are different than them.

A Romantic Knight would not only be tolerant to other religions, but would also find friends in different faiths. Many have speculated the Order had contact with the Hashashin, otherwise known as "the Assassins." A Romantic Knight would also venture outside the prescribed orthodoxy of the Church,



knowing that knowledge is valuable, regardless of the source, while maintaining his faith in the Resurrection. In other words, the Romantic Knight is the Knight we *want* the Templars to be: noble, honest, courageous, and intelligent.

### Mythic

There are many myths about the Knights. Some say they were a secret society of magicians, familiar with the most esoteric secrets. Others say they were in league with the Assassins, exchanging magical knowledge with that deadly brotherhood.

Mythic Knights are so much more than we would ever suspect of such a religious Order. Still devoted to upholding Christian virtues, but dabbling in the most forbidden secrets of Qabalah, Hermeticism, and Gnosticism.

When I was writing the game, I assumed players would adopt the Romantic mode. You don't need to change anything in the game to adopt either a Historic or Mythic mode. The same events happen; it's just how the Knights respond to those events that change the game.

## CREATING KNIGHTS

Each Knight has a number of values representing his physical, mental, and spiritual traits. These Traits each have a number corresponding to the strength or weakness of the Trait: the higher the number, the stronger the Trait.

### Step 1: 30 Questions

First, consider your Knight's name and history. Where does he hail from? It is important to remember that *most* of the Templars were French, although they did draw

membership from other countries (mostly England, Italy, Portugal and Spain). The fame of the Knights Templar was such that many wished to join, even the sons of nobles and rich merchants (although non-noble presence in the Order was highly uncommon).

1. What do you look like? Height, weight, hair color, eye color, etc.
2. Where were you born?
3. Have you traveled? (To where?)
4. What is one of the last things you do before going to bed?
5. Tell the story of your most prized possession.
6. What is your role in the Order?
7. Who are your friends in the Order?
8. Who are your friends outside the Order?
9. What would you consider to be your most difficult emotion to express?
10. What annoys you the most?
11. What would provoke you to anger?
12. What do you fear most?
13. How was your relationship with your parents?
14. How were you educated? (Did you go to an academy, college, or did you dabble with skills outside your caste?)
15. Have you ever fallen in love? Married? Loved and lost?
16. Why did you join the Templars? What drove you to the Order?

17. What is your primary motivation? (Money? Power? Fame? Betterment of self or others?)
18. Pick an animal that best represents your own virtues and vices.
19. Do you believe in fate, destiny, luck, or anything similar?
20. What one virtue is most important? (Why?)
21. What one vice your character can never give up? (Why?)
22. Do you believe that might makes right?
23. Do you believe that all people are equal? How about heathens such as Muslims and Jews?
24. Do you have, or have you ever had, a pet?
25. There are arguments for and against humor in Christian philosophy. How do you feel about humor?
26. What were your childhood ambitions, and how do they differ from your adult life?
27. What does "revenge" mean to you?
28. What do you want your epitaph to read?
29. Why do you believe in God?
30. If you could choose, how would you choose to die?

Remember, this is an age that knows nothing of aspirin, penicillin, or anti-biotics (or even dental care) and death is ever-present in the world. Many do not live beyond the age of thirty. To put it into context: in this day and age, the flu or an infected tooth can kill you.

## Step 2: Ranks

### Friendly Advice

The Templars were a military order and the Knights were divided by rank. In this specific instance, in the ranks listed below, every player-Knight is considered a sergeant in charge of a number of Knights (equaling up to thirty, of course). You can also divide player-Knights up differently, but this way ensures all players start on the same rank within the structure with other Knights to order around.

This is the *easiest* way to handle military rank. If you want a more complicated structure, have fun! But know that dividing players into a different command structure (with some officers and others under their command) can cause conflict. If you and your players enjoy that kind of conflict, more power to you! You know your players better than I do, so divide it up the way you see fit.

### The Banners

Normally, Knights are organized into "banners." A banner consists of a single commander and ten to twenty Brother Knights under his command. These Knights are organized into "companies" with a sergeant directly in charge of each company. Each company contains five to ten Knights. Each Knight – with all of his equipment, horses, squires, etc. – is called "a lance."

In *Thirty*, each player is a sergeant in charge of a company of Knights. The Grand Master did not assign a commander, trusting the sergeants to lead the Thirty together.

Because the Knights are a military organization, there are ranks within the Order. Ranks in the Thirty are listed below:



### *Turcoplier: Banner Officer*

The Turcoplier serves as a captain of a banner. He is the highest ranking officer. The Thirty has no Banner Officer, although the sergeants may elect one during their journey.

### *Sergeant Brothers: The Fighting Officers*

Under each Turcoplier are three Sergeant Brothers. The Sergeant Brothers are in direct command of each company.

### *Brother Knights: The Rank and File*

Brother Knights are usually divided into groups of five to ten, serving under a Sergeant Brother who serves one of the two Turcopliers.

### *Standard Bearers*

Two Brothers carry the standards for the Turcoplier. This is a special honor bestowed upon a Brother who shows the greatest devotion to the Order.

## **Step 3: Traits**

Your Knight has four Traits that define him as a person. They are:

### *Strength*

Your Knight's Strength measures the amount of physical force he can muster. How much can he lift, push, pull, tear, and how hard he can hit. Whenever your Knight exerts his physical power, use Strength.

### *Prowess*

Every Knight is trained to be a warrior and Prowess is your Knight's ability with the sword and other weapons. Whenever your Knight engages in armed combat, use Prowess.

### *Knowledge*

Templars were scholars as well as warriors. They were literate, well-read, and curious. The Order demanded fully-educated members (they would not accept children). Knights were modest and faithful, but they were also men of the world.

### *Fortitude*

A Knight's Fortitude tells how resilient and hearty he is. How much damage he can take, how long he can march before needing rest, how much damage he can take before he falls unconscious.

### *Honor*

Honor represents your Knight's ability to convey his integrity and honesty. The more honorable he appears, the more likely others will trust him. If a Knight uses his Honor Trait to lie – and others know it – he will lose Fraternitas (see below).

Your Knight cannot be the best at everything; some Knights are stronger than others while some are more resilient and others are just plain smarter than most. To represent this, your Knight's Traits have numbers assigned to them: the higher the number, the better the Trait. These numbers are called "Ranks." If your Knight has a Rank 5 Strength, it means he is very strong. So strong, in fact, legends of his potency are known throughout Christendom.

**One of your Traits is Rank 5**

**Two of your Traits are Rank 3**

**The last two Traits are Rank 2**

However, there's one important thing to remember: if your group has five or fewer Knights, no two Knights may have the same Trait at Rank 5. Having Rank 5 in a Trait means you are The Best in your company. You are the Strongest, you are the Best Fighter, you are the Most Knowledgeable, you are the Most Fortitudinous, or the Most Honorable. Everyone else is just lesser than you.

Decide amongst yourselves who will have the Rank 5 Traits or divide it up randomly. Draw lots from a hat, each one marked with one of the Traits. The person who draws the Strength lot gets the Rank 5 Strength, the person who draws the Prowess lot gets the Rank 5 Prowess, etc.

If your group is more than 5, some of you must either be part of a different company or two of you must start with Rank 4 in the same Trait. In other words, neither of you are "the Best."

You can increase your Traits, but only over time. More on that later.

## **Step 4: The Code**

The Brotherhood follows a system of chivalry called "the Code." By this system, they maintain strict morals and valor in the face of death. Upon becoming Brothers, all Knights swear to maintain the Code, even if it should mean their deaths.

Your Knight is famous for one of these virtues. Pick one virtue and add it to the end of your name. You will be known as "James the Merciful," or "Charles the Forgiving." Also, when you act within the theme of your virtue, you add points to the Fraternitas Pool (more on that later).

If you'd like to add a Virtue not found here, go ahead and do so. For example, there is no Charity Virtue.

If you'd like your Knight to be known for his Charity, talk it over with your GM.

### *Chastity*

A chaste Knight knows the difference between love and lust. One is a bond blessed by God and the other is the loins yearning for each other.

### *Compassion*

A compassionate Knight helps those who are less fortunate than himself. He seeks to end the suffering of others, giving of himself what he can when he can.

### *Forgiveness*

A forgiving Knight recognizes that humans make mistakes and treats others as he would want to be treated if he had made the same mistake.

### *Honesty*

An honest Knight knows that a lie – no matter how small – always murders someone in the world. Truth is the virtue that makes men trust each other. There is no room on the battlefield for lies.

### *Mercy*

A merciful Knight forgives his enemies and those who wrong him. He knows the true duty of a Knight isn't to kill, but to protect. A Knight only kills when he must, not when it pleases him.

### *Justice*

A just Knight recognizes that laws were made to protect everyone and metes out justice with a fair and even hand. Justice is blind to everything but justice. No man is above the law, not even those who enforce it.





### *Obedience*

An obedient Knight knows he is not the most important person in the world. He is willing to put himself under the command of others who are more skillful and knowledgeable for the greater good of the Order.

### *Temperance*

A temperate Knight acts with forethought and discretion. He does not act rashly. He restrains the passions of his heart, acting thoughtfully, not emotionally. He maintains his tempers (and appetites) rather than indulging them.

### *Valor*

A valorous Knight does not fear death. He is sworn to protect the righteous from the wicked, the helpless from the ruthless. He is more than willing to throw himself in front of danger, acting selflessly.

## **Step 5: Backgrounds**

No one is born a Knight. All Brothers were once part of the mundane world before joining the Order. Before that time, your Knight was trained in an academy or by a private tutor or just picked up skills on his own. These skills and abilities are called "Backgrounds."

Each Background represents a Knight who dedicated a significant portion of his life to a single study or lifestyle. For example, a Knight could have a Scholar Background, having studied with a man of learning during his youth. Another Knight may have the Courtier Background after serving as a representative with his father's court. Because Knights generally came from the noble caste, a Knight's Backgrounds should represent a classical education

rather than skills a churl (peasant) would undertake.

Backgrounds make a Knight unique – an invaluable part of the command. Because the players take roles as Knights commanding the Thirty, they bring special talents to the command structure. Losing even *one* Knight from the chain of command weakens the entire unit.

When you create your Knight, you should carefully consider the Backgrounds below. Each brings a benefit to the group. Once a Knight chooses a Background, no other Knight may choose it. For example, if one of the Knights chooses "Swordsman," you may not have another Swordsman in the circle of command. (Your Game Master may wish to fudge this rule – but that's up to her.)

Each Background opens up specific benefits to a Knight. Choose your Background wisely and make certain your group of Knights has a good number of the Backgrounds covered. Each one contributes an important element to the larger group. Having too many of one Background will make you very strong in one particular area, but weaker in others.

If you think of another Background that's different than the ones below, ask your Game Master's permission to use it. Who knows, she just might be in a charitable mood.

Each Background has a **Strength** and a **Weakness**. These are roleplaying guidelines to help you flesh out your Knight's character.

### *Clergy*

You serve as the head priest of the Thirty, administering to their spiritual needs. Without you, their souls would be lost in doubt and temptation.

**Strength:** As a clergyman, you are well-versed in matters of faith. You can recognize the unholy and sometimes even sense its presence. You are also aware of miracles. You may have even seen one or been a part of one. They are very rare, however, because the Lord has removed Himself from the world. Prayers are spoken in the name of Jesus in hopes that He will appeal to the Heavenly Father to move His hand.

**Weakness:** You must maintain the purity of your soul, even more than your Brother Knights. You are the source of their faith and if you stray even a little, their own souls will feel the strain. Adhere to the Virtues the Code teaches. Cleave to them dearly. They will guide you through this strange journey.

### *Courtier*

Knights came from the highest echelons of the nobility, serving the needs of the courts of kings. Before you were a Templar, you learned the fine arts of diplomacy and etiquette, enabling you to speak confidently and convincingly.

**Strength:** Because of your upbringing, you have a sense of what people want and need. This means you can measure motive better than your Brother Knights (who are typically trusting Christian souls). You, on the other hand, are a bit more realistic about the ways of the world and know how to motivate people on a base level.

**Weakness:** Because you are so aware of need, you are also easily tempted by the desires of the flesh. The world you left behind was one of wine, women and song. It is so easy to fall back into that lifestyle, to give up the Code you and your

Brothers vowed to uphold. So easy...

### *Craftsman*

You were not born into nobility, but to a merchant family with enough money to buy you a place in the Templars. Because of that, you bring a particular skill or talent to the Order that sons of noblemen do not have. You are a carpenter or a silversmith, a shipwright or a blacksmith. While you may not have a nobleman's refinement, your handiness more than makes up for it.

**Strength:** Spending your youth with other craftsmen has taught you how to use your hands and mind in practical matters. You know how to tie knots, how to hammer nails, how to mend torn seams, how to repair saddles and re-shoe horses. You aren't ashamed of these skills; they make you a valuable part of the Thirty.

**Weakness:** You are less sophisticated than your Brothers, being a complete foreigner to higher learning and society. You prefer to have your work speak for you rather than have to defend your points of view.

### *Heathen*

You are one of the converted. You originally belonged to a different faith, but the noble example of the Templars taught you a new way to look at life. Since then, you have served the Order with devotion and fidelity, and for the most part, the Brothers have overlooked your heathen past.

**Strength:** Because of your days before joining the Order, you have knowledge your Brothers do not have. You are familiar with foreign



cultures and probably speak many languages. You know their creeds and morals, how to impress and offend them.

**Weakness:** You can never escape your past and your Brothers may treat you as an equal, but you often feel that you may never truly be seen as such in their eyes.

#### *Scholar*

You've studied in a University or with a private tutor, learning all of history's secrets. You know the past as well as you do the present. More importantly, you know the most important lesson the past has to teach: that those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it.

**Strength:** You've read books forbidden by the Church, experienced things no one in Christendom even suspects exist. Your knowledge can assist you when speaking to foreign cultures, making you an ideal translator of words and ideas. Without you, your faithful (but ignorant) Brothers would suffer dearly.

**Weakness:** Your education has made you a worldly soul. Because of what you know, your faith is often sorely lacking. Your skeptical mind sometimes eclipses your faith and it shows. You are logical and rational and reasonable... traits that fly in the face of a modest, humble Knight who often must simply do what he's told.

#### *Sergeant*

You train soldiers. You teach them how to stay alive, how to fight, how to kill, and when they should show mercy. You've studied tactics and strategies and you know what kind of discipline it takes to keep a unit of men together. The Knights turn

to you when it is time to fight because they know as long as you are alive, they cannot die.

**Strength:** The men look to the clergy for faith, but look to you for strength, and you are empowered by that. As long as your men believe in you, you will never fail them. No matter the wound, no matter the pain... no matter what. Nothing can hurt you as long as the men believe in you. Nothing.

**Weakness:** As your journey through this mysterious place grows longer, the men wish more and more to go home. When their confidence in your ability to bring them home fades, so does your ability to protect them.

#### *Swordsman*

Of all the Knights, you are the one who knows the sword best. While the Sergeant knows the most about warfare, when the battle comes, everyone knows you will be the one who will gain the most glory. You are Achilles reborn: the unstoppable warrior who marches into battle and walks out unscathed.

**Strength:** You are the best warrior in the Thirty. Everybody knows it. You've devoted your entire life to the sword and when other men see you practice your devotion, it catches their breath. No man is your better. All who have claimed otherwise have been proven wrong. This is how you serve the Order: by bringing your devotion to the battlefield to fight the enemies of the Lord.

**Weakness:** Having spent your entire life studying swordplay, you are woefully weak in other areas. Also, your pride sometimes outshines your modesty. Your vanity

can get the better of you and you've been known to refuse the help of others, even charging blindly into battle relying on your own strengths rather than complimenting the strengths of your Brothers.

#### **Creating Your Own Backgrounds**

*This list is far from exhaustive. If you and your players can think of more Backgrounds, throw them in.*

*Just make sure each has a Theme, Strength and a Weakness. And make sure no Background trumps another.*

*I was hesitant in adding the Heathen Background in because he and the Scholar can step on each other's toes, but it was something a lot of playtesters asked for. Also, it opens up the (very Romantic) option of having a Buddhist or Sufi Templar convert. And that can be nothing but fun (although, I do invoke the highly liberal and subjective definition of the word "fun," just in case anybody's really paying attention to these sidebars).*

*Also, someone asked "Who would win in a fight between the Swordsman Knight and the Rank 5 Prowess Knight? Yes, the contrast is there intentionally and these two should be rivals. Have fun with that, too!"*

#### **Step 6: Skills**

Skills represent specific knowledge and talents you've picked up along the way. While a Background represents a wide scope of knowledge, Skills are much more specialized.

You have 15 points to spend on Skills. Like Traits, each Skill has a Rank: a number representing your ability in that Skill. A low number represents passing knowledge or

aptitude while a high number represents a greater degree of acumen.

You may only have up to Rank 3 in any Skills at this time. You may increase your Skills later.

The following is a list of sample Skills. If you don't find what you're looking for here, make up your own (with the GM's approval, of course).

There are four Skills your Knight automatically has at Rank 1: Battle, Read, Ride, and Sword. These Skills do not count toward your 15 point total; you can have them for free (thank me later).

#### *Battle*

Your Knight automatically has Rank 1 in this Skill. It is the ability to navigate through a large-scale battle successfully, to maintain calm and recognize the signs and signals of a battle's direction.

#### *Read*

I assume every Knight knows how to read, therefore, every Knight has a Rank 1 in this Skill and needs no further Ranks in it (this does not count toward your total of 15). If you don't want your Knight to be literate, don't write this Skill on your sheet, however, you get no points back from being illiterate.

#### *Ride*

Your Knight automatically has Rank 1 in this Skill. That's because he was trained to be a mounted fighting machine. If you don't want your Knight to have this Skill, just cross it off your sheet, but you get no points back from losing it.



# Part 3: Game

## Sword

Your Knight automatically has Rank 1 in this Skill. Every Knight has an automatic Rank 1 in Sword Skill. Again, you don't have to, but you gain no benefit from not having it.

## Alchemy

You have understanding of the secret art of alchemy. This means you not only understand the principles of turning lead into gold (although, you've never seen it work yourself), but you also know many "natural agents" in the world. You can recognize things like mercury, know how to work with silver, and would even know orichalcum if you saw it (not that you ever have, but you may one day).

## Awareness

A high Awareness allows you to notice small details and be ready for surprises.

## Chirurgy

Chirurgy is the art of mending wounds.

## Courtesy

Knowing the proper thing to do is always handy; Courtesy can get you out of sticky situations.

## Folklore

Knowing old wives tales can save a Knight's life. Knowledge of the faerie folk and other things that haunt the forests of the world is covered with this Skill.

## Hunting

When food gets low, there's only one way to get more. Hunting also represents knowing how to survive during the hunt, how to tell directions out in the wilderness, and how to keep warm at night.

## Orate

Making speeches is sometimes necessary for Knights, especially officers.

## Religion

This Skill not only gives you knowledge of the Catholic faith, but knowledge of other faiths as well. You may know the secrets of Islam, the Gnostic heresy, or another faith.

## Swimming

Nobody ever takes Swimming...

## Weapon

Knights are familiar with all sorts of weapons: swords, maces, axes, lances. You already have Rank 1 in Sword, but if you would like Rank 1 in any other weapon, this is the Skill to take. There are six kinds of Weapon Skills: Axe, Bow, Knife, Lance, Mace, and Sword.

## Step 7: Fraternitas ("Brotherhood")

*Fraternitas* is the keystone that holds the Order together. The Knights are bound by the blood they've spilled together; nothing can tear them apart. Your Knight begins the game with a Fraternitas Rank of 1. We'll talk about how to use Fraternitas in the next section.

## Gear

When they left, all thirty Knights rode out with almost identical gear. The Knights were forbidden to take any squires or servants. They were to go alone.

1 horse and feed for 1 week, 2 swords, 1 helmet, 1 suit of traveling armor, 1 shield, 1 knife, 1 other weapon, 2 wine skins, meager rations for 10 days, tent and stakes, cooking equipment, small iron cross, family heirloom or personal item

All right, let's talk about the game system.

## TASK RESOLUTION

Whenever your Knight wants to take an action, have him roll a number of **six-sided dice** equal to his most appropriate Trait + his most appropriate Skill. The higher you roll, the more successful your Knight's result.

## SAMPLE TARGET NUMBERS

5 = Easy

10 = Simple

**15 = Difficult (Default)**

20 = Hard

25 = Very Hard

30 = Nigh Impossible

*For example, my Knight wants to jump on his horse. The GM tells me this is a Strength + Ride roll.*

*I look at my character sheet and see my Strength is 3 and my Ride is 2. This means I roll 5 dice (3+2) and add up the total. The higher I roll, the better the result.*

The degree of your success is based on your roll. The Game Master sets a Difficulty for your chosen task and your roll determines if you succeeded.

If your Knight meets his Difficulty, he is successful in his task. If he does not, then the GM will let you know what happens.

## BACKGROUNDS

Whenever your Knight takes an action that would fall under his Background, roll an additional die. This is your Background Die, and it should be a different color than the rest of the dice.

If the circumstances apply to your Background's Strength, any dice that roll lower than your Background Die roll what your Background Die rolled. If the circumstances apply to your Background's Weakness, any dice that roll higher than your Background Die roll what your Background Die rolled.

*For example, my Knight has the Swordsman Background. I'm in a sword fight with another Knight (a Saracen). Whenever I use my sword, I roll an additional die (mine is colored red and white). Any dice that roll lower than my Background Die count as whatever my Background Die rolled. In other words, if my Background Die rolls a 4, any dice that roll 1, 2, or 3 count as 4s.*

## RANK 5 TRAITS

If your Knight has a Rank 5 Trait, he is The Best in your company.

Once per game, you can invoke your Rank 5 Trait. You announce "I'm the Best." When you do this, you don't roll any dice: you automatically roll the highest possible result.

For example, my Knight has a Rank 5 Strength. He is The Strongest in his company. Once per game, instead of rolling, I can announce, "I'm the Best." When I do, all my dice roll 6. I count them up and announce to the GM my roll.

This ability may only be used once per game, once per Trait **regardless of how many Knights have a Rank 5 in that Trait**. If two Knights are The Best in a single Trait, and one announces "I'm the Best," the other cannot invoke this ability for the rest of the current game session.

**WARNING: Some NPCs outside the Thirty are also "the Best." If they invoke their Rank 5 Trait, no Knight may invoke his until the next game!**

## PENALTIES

There may come a time when circumstances work against you. It may be that you're trying to track someone through the rain or you're trying to climb with a broken arm or that you're trying to fight a man on horseback with a spear without any weapon of your own. Whatever the case may be, you're trying to complete a task at less than desired circumstances. In this case, the GM applies a **penalty** to your task.

A penalty increases the Difficulty by at least 5 and sometimes even more.

Multiple penalties can increase the Difficulty even further. Trying to climb a steep cliff is hard enough (call it a 15 Difficulty), but add on to it that it's raining (+5) and you have a broken arm (+5) and it's too dark to see (+5) and you've got yourself an incredibly difficult task ( $15+5+5+5 = 30$ ).

## FRATERNITAS

If you trust the men around you, if you know they'd do anything for you, you know in your heart that you'd do anything for them. That is what gives men the strength to do the kinds of things we hear from the war stories of these old heroes.

*Fraternitas* is based on the notion that morale builds over time. The longer men have served together, the stronger the bond between them becomes. When a new man enters the group, when a Knight is fresh and without experience, the men in the company don't trust him. They don't know how he'll react to violence. They don't know if he'll freeze when the moment of truth arrives. They don't know if he'll throw himself on another Brother if he's wounded... they just don't know. He's got to earn their trust slowly and with his actions. Words mean nothing on a battlefield. It's all what you do.

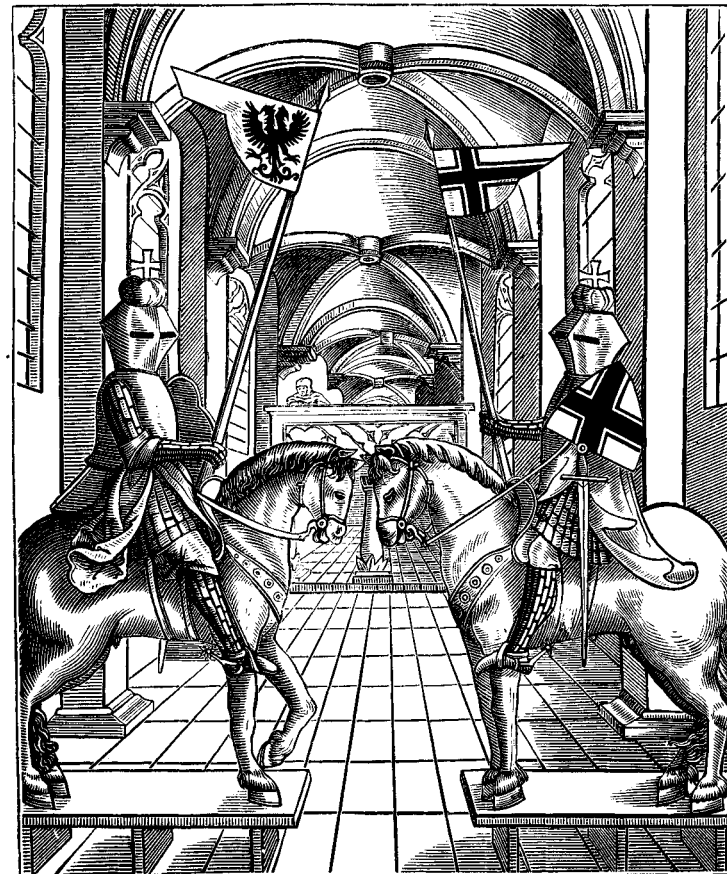
## The Fraternitas Pool

To represent this environmental psychology, each Knight has a Fraternitas Trait. His Fraternitas begins at Rank 1. At the beginning of each game session, the GM puts a bowl in the center of the table. It should be big enough to hold more than a few dice. This is the Fraternitas Pool. The GM gives each player a number of dice equal to his Fraternitas Rank. The player can either keep this die for

himself or add it to the Pool. If he has more than one Fraternitas Rank (see below), he can add as many Dice as he likes to the Pool; he doesn't have to add them all.

If the Knight keeps the Fraternitas Die for himself, he may use it at any time to add to any roll he makes during the game. However, the dice from the Fraternitas Pool may be used by *any* Knight at any time during the game. Any member of the squad may pull any number of dice from the pool to use as he sees fit. When a die is used, it's gone. It isn't replaced in the Pool or a Knight's private Pool.

During the game session, if a Knight takes an action that somehow serves the unit, the GM gives him one to three Fraternitas Dice, depending on the act. If he scavenges some food for the unit, pulls a wounded Brother out of the fire, runs across the enemy lines to deliver a vital message, or even finds the enemy's plans on an empty field, he's done something to aid the unit and deserves Fraternitas Dice. The GM gives the Knight the Fraternitas Dice and the Knight decides how many to add to the Pool.



He may add as many or as few (including none) to the Pool. His choice.

At the end of the game session, any Fraternitas Dice in the Pool are divided equally among the Knights. These dice can be used as bonus XP (explained later in the game). The remainder are discarded.

### Gaining Fraternitas

For every month of real time (or 3 – 4 sessions), the Fraternitas of each Knight increases by 1. That is, the rookies all begin to get a sense of each other and feel more comfortable. Their morale increases and instead of adding just one die to the Pool, each can add up to 2 dice to the Pool. After another month, when their Fraternitas increases to 3, each Knight can add up to 3 dice to the Pool, then 4 and so on. As a general rule, the Fraternitas Rank of each group cannot exceed the number of Knights in a group. For example, if you have a unit of 5 Knights, the Fraternitas of each Knight cannot exceed 5.

### Losing Fraternitas

Whenever a Knight dies, the Fraternitas of each Knight who watched his death decreases by one. This may reduce the Fraternitas Rank of some Knights to zero (it cannot go below zero).

Whenever a Knight displays an act of cowardice or otherwise harms the good of the unit to protect himself, every Knight who witnesses the act loses a Fraternitas Rank.

Yes, the Knight who caused the loss of Fraternitas “sees” his own act and loses Fraternitas himself.

Your GM may find other reasons why your Knight would lose Fraternitas.

### The Ultimate Sacrifice

The only time a Knight’s death adds to the Fraternitas of the group rather than subtracting from it is when his death saves lives. If a Knight runs out into the middle of the battlefield to pull a fallen Brother out of harm’s way and manages to get himself killed in the process – but saves his buddy’s life – his death isn’t for nothing. He gave his life for one of his own.

When a Knight makes the ultimate sacrifice, he adds his own Fraternitas Rank to the Pool immediately. Also, everyone who witnessed the act adds one to their Fraternitas Rank.

Other circumstances may invoke the “Ultimate Sacrifice Clause.” For example, if a Knight dies under torture, refusing to give up his Brothers or his faith, his fellow Knights are bolstered by his courage. There are many other examples... just remember, it’s a *heroic death* that counts.

### The New Guy

When a new Knight enters the Order, he enters it with a Fraternitas Rank of 1. He’s fresh fish and the other troops don’t know what to think of him yet. This means he adds one die to the Fraternitas Pool at the beginning of the game.

During the course of the game, he’ll have to prove his worth to the other troops. Also, because he’s less experienced than the other Knights, they’ll have to coddle him for the first few months while he figures out just how horrible this mess he’s gotten himself into really is. He needs the other Knights to keep him alive while they’re bogged down with a new guy who doesn’t know one end of his rifle from the other.

At the end of each game session, Fraternitas is divvied up as usual: equally among the Knights. Because the fresh fish only contributed one die at the beginning, the amount of Fraternitas to go around is less. What’s more, he’s pulling out just as many dice as they are, so he’s adding little to the pot but pulling out just as much.

New guys. You just gotta teach ‘em. Otherwise, they just get themselves killed.

### The Effects of Fraternitas

This system encourages and discourages specific behaviors. It makes Knight characters act like Knights. Nobody wants to let the Order down. Nobody wants the unit to lose a tangible benefit. When a Knight acts like a Knight, the unit is empowered by the act. When he acts stupidly or selfishly, he harms the Fraternitas of the group.

Using Fraternitas gives players a *reason* to put their characters at risk. They rush into a battlefield, fight for each other, and even die for each other. That’s what being a Knight is all about. It isn’t wanton killing: it’s fighting to save lives.



### The Code and Fraternitas

Socrates wrote that men should demonstrate virtue in the sight of other men. This way, they encourage others to act the same, demonstrating that one is not alone in his desire to do right. When a Knight supports the Code within sight of their Brothers, it encourages his Brothers to do the same. Needless to say, this bolsters Fraternitas.

When your Brother Knight upholds one of the Virtues, he gets a Fraternitas Die from the GM. He may choose to add these dice to the Pool or keep them for himself. If it is the Virtue he is famous for, the GM gives him *three* Fraternitas Dice.

Now that we’re done with talking about inner conflict, let’s talk about external conflict.

## CONTESTED ROLLS

If your Knight is in contest with another character, compare your rolls. Whoever rolled the highest wins the contest. This could be as simple as arm wrestling, debating, or fighting. Again, the higher your roll is over your opponent's roll, the more spectacular your success is.

And speaking of fighting...

## FIGHTING

If your Knight gets in a fight, work out the details with this mechanic.

### Rounds

Combat is divided into rounds. Each round, each character can do *two things*. Move, pick up a flask, attack another character in the fight, whatever. You can do *two things*.

### Initiative

Everyone involved in the combat rolls a number of dice equal to their Prowess. Whomever rolls highest goes first, followed by the next highest roll, and so on.

### Actions

If a Knight attacks someone else, both combatants roll dice, adding together the appropriate Trait (in this case, Prowess) and Skills. They also add in a Background Die, if it's applicable. The winner is the one who rolls higher.

If the attacker wins, he causes Wounds. If the defender wins, he dodges the blow.

### No Weapon

If your Knight has no weapon in hand, he cannot use any Skills to defend himself and must rely only on his Prowess.

## Wounds

When the attacker causes Wounds, he looks at the difference between his roll and his opponent's roll. A successful hit automatically causes one Wound. For every 5 points he rolled higher than his opponent (round down), he gives his opponent one *additional* Wound.

### Wounded Skills

Keep track of Wounds on your character sheet. Assign each Wound to a Skill. Every Skill may only be Wounded once. If a Skill is Wounded, you may still use it, but you gain no dice from it.

### Wounded Traits

If you must place a Wound somewhere and you have no unWounded Skills, you must now begin assigning Wounds to Traits. That's when your Knight is in real trouble. If a Trait is Wounded, you may not take any actions that use the Trait.

### Dying

Eventually, you'll get a Wound and have no more unwounded Skills or Traits. Your character drops and will die within a number of Rounds equal to his Fortitude.

### Healing

If a Wounded Knight rests one evening with proper care, the next morning, all his Wounds disappear... except one.

"Proper care" requires a Chirurgery roll at TN 15. The Knight should also be sleeping peacefully (out of his armor, under cover, preferably with a warm blanket... or warm company).

If a Knight does not receive proper care, he only heals once per month.

## Weapons and Armor

Weapons act like Backgrounds: they keep your rolls high. Every weapon has a Damage Value. Whenever you roll Wounds and your dice roll lower than your weapon's Damage Value, that die counts as the weapon's Damage Value.

Armor, on the other hand, protects you from hits. Armor has Armor Value (redundant; sorry). Any dice that roll less than your Armor Die roll equal to your Armor Die.

| DAMAGE VALUES |   | ARMOR VALUES |   |
|---------------|---|--------------|---|
| Hand          | 0 | None         | 0 |
| Knife         | 1 | Leather      | 1 |
| Mace          | 1 | Chain        | 2 |
| Bow           | 2 | Plate        | 3 |
| Sword         | 3 |              |   |
| Lance         | 4 |              |   |

### Designer's Note

*This system makes a mounted, charging Knight very dangerous. Good. He should be.*

*Cavalry was the most dangerous thing on the battlefield during the era of the crusades. The Thirty may be only human, but they are still Knights: the medieval equivalent of a Sherman tank. They are all but unstoppable. Only specially trained soldiers knew how to take down a Knight, and even then, it usually took more than three to do it.*

*The Thirty have few advantages on their side. We may as well make the advantages they do have worth having.*

## CHARACTER GROWTH

Your Knight's Traits and Skills will increase over time. They'll also decrease if you are careless, or, if other circumstances come into play.

(I can't say anything else on that matter. It's a secret.)

At the end of each game session, your Knight receives one Advancement Point and a number of Fraternitas Dice. You don't so much lose your Fraternitas Dice, but each point of Fraternitas gives you a bonus Advancement Point to use at the end of a game session. Spend Advancement Points like this:

Increase a Trait: 10 x Current Rank to increase a Trait

Increase a Skill: Current Rank in Advancement Points to increase a Trait.

New Skill: 5 Advancement Points.

Fraternitas: Spend 10 Fraternitas to increase it by 1 Rank.

## CONCLUSION

You now know everything you need to know to ride into the Mist. The rest of this book contains the secrets of the game that you probably don't want to read. Unless, of course, you're the GM.

[illegible]

# Part 1: The Long Walk Home

Midnight, October 5. One week before the King of France sends his soldiers to arrest the Knights, de Molay gathers together thirty of his most trusted Knights. He sends them on a quest – one he hoped he could undertake himself – but now knows he cannot.

De Molay is a wise man, a courageous man, a virtuous man. He has learned that Hell has taken control of the Church, and thus, the civilized world. He knows the world is wounded, and deeply. This quest, he hopes, will heal the world's pain. Using a pagan ritual, he will send his beloved Knights through the crystal Spheres suggested by the philosopher, Ptolemy.

Claudius Ptolemy supposed that the planets are floating on crystal spheres. The further into the universe one traveled, the closer the traveler would come to the outermost sphere... the residence of God. Others have supposed man may travel these spheres, and if he is wise, courageous and virtuous, he

may touch that outermost sphere and see the face of God.

This is the quest Jacque de Molay wanted to take himself... but now, he must stay behind and do what he must to save his fellow Brother Knights. Instead, he is sending thirty of his most trusted Knights, hoping that they will be able to move through the Spheres and heal the world's pain.

*The Long Walk Home* is a multi-part campaign taking the Knights from the World of Forms, through the Deep Anthropic Principle, all the way up to the Prime Mover.

What does that mean? It means the Knights have left the Earth and they're climbing a stairway to Heaven so they can meet God.

De Molay intended to leave the physical plane of Earth, move up through the astral plane and through the Ten Spheres that separate Heaven from the Earth. As the Knights move through the Spheres, the people, places and things they

encounter are only reflections of the Spheres; in other words, the Spheres themselves are communicating to the Knights in a manner the Knights will understand.

Everything the Knights experience – every person, every thing, every place, every action – is a symbol. A metaphor. These things do not actually exist *except* in the Spheres. Just as the Spheres are shaped by the Knights' own knowledge, so will they be healed by the Knights' virtue.

The topmost Sphere – where the Prime Mover resides – is what the Knights understand to be Heaven. This is the source of all Light. This primal energy descends from the Tenth Sphere through the other Spheres. It falls through the Spheres of Primal Aspects, down into the Spheres of Ideas, and finally, down to where we find it, in the Sphere of Forms.

Not too long ago, someone (or something) corrupted the purity of the Spheres, essentially shutting off the gates so the Light could not enter into our world. Cutting off the Light it isolated our world from the pure, healing energies it needs to survive. The world suffered and starved, dying without the Light it needed to renew it.

(Some refer to the Light as “the Word.” This is an equally valid definition and will be used interchangeably in this document.)

Effects of this event can be seen in history. The fall of the Roman Empire, the beginning of the Dark Ages, the rise of the Inquisition, the corruption of the Catholic Church, the Crusades, the massacre of the Cathars... all these things are direct responses to the world being without the Light.

For more than one thousand years, the world had been living in darkness, unable to heal the wound that festered in its soul. Jacque de Molay hoped to bring the Light back to the world. Unfortunately, an old enemy had different plans.

The creature responsible for cutting off the world from the Word was a thing known to de Molay as “Baphomet.” This beast was one of many horrors lurking on the edge of the world, waiting to crawl up from the dank underbelly of Creation and claim the world as their own. Baphomet was the cleverest of the lot, and it was Baphomet's plot that brought de Molay to his conclusion.

When it discovered the Templars were planning to undo what it had done, Baphomet possessed the King of France and urged the Pope to disband the Knights, declaring them





heretics, destroying them for imagined crimes. He lured the Pope with temptations of fortune and threatened him with the Templars' already significant power. The Pope caved under Baphomet's pressure to destroy the Order... but not before the Grand Master could send his thirty Knights into the Mist, out of this world and into the next, with the blind hope that they may be able to purify what Baphomet had corrupted and bring the Word back to the world.

In order to do so, the Knights must work their way all the way up through each Sphere, unlocking them as they go. But none of this will matter if the Tenth Sphere, the House of God, remains locked. No energy will flow down until the Knights make it to the top.

Will they? That's up to you and your players.

#### CLARIFICATIONS

All of this may seem a little deep. A bit "out there." Let's take a slow walk through four important questions, answering them in the plainest language possible.

#### The Mist

At the beginning of the campaign, de Molay will order his Knights to ride into a mysterious mist he calls forth with a song.

The song he sings is in a language they did not understand (the Scholar might: TN 20; it's Hebrew). The Mist surrounding them is not natural. It is like a living thing, the way it moves. When his voice disappears, the Mist parts, and they are elsewhere. No longer in Paris, but on a hilltop, overlooking a valley below. Green grasses, wet with morning dew. Just beside

them, a tall tree unlike any they have seen before.

The Mist has moved them. That much is certain. But what is it?

When the Knights entered the Mist, they were moving from Earth, the First Sphere, to the second Sphere. Merlin moved Arthur's army across Britain in a single night. The story tells of the army marching through a thick fog with the men ordered to be silent and not say a word... and to never look back.

It is *this* Mist the Brothers rode into. The Mist-between-Worlds. Whenever the Knights move from one world to another, the Mist will come, embrace them, and move them on.

The Knights are on more than a physical journey: they're on a metaphysical, spiritual journey like they've never known. A vision-quest. They've wandered into the schema of reality with only one way to go.

They're walking the spine of reality. The Mist is the Road-Between-Worlds, a place that transforms the world around them, and thus, changes the Knights themselves. This is a place of High Magic. Alchemical energies abound. The Knights entered the Mists as mundane and vulgar beings, but as they travel, they are becoming something else.

#### Where Are the Knights?

The Knights are currently in a place best defined as "the astral plane." This is where human minds go when they Dream. Not just dream, but Dream. The deepest sleep that reaches into a place Jung will later call "the collective unconscious." This is the first step on their journey

back home through a space where ideas are more powerful than forms; a sluiceway of idea energy flowing down from a primal source to the world of shapes. They are on the symbolic plane. This place where all things are true, even false things.

As they go further, they will move away from the world of shapes and forms (that's where they came from) and move closer to the world of ideas. More specifically, they'll move closer to The World of the Big Idea. As they do, things will become more abstract, more iconic. This includes themselves. As they move forward, they will lose "what they are" and begin to gain "what they mean." Again, this is some pretty deep stuff, but don't worry, we've got it all mapped out for you.

Many cultures have explored this region of imagination, giving us different maps. De Molay has given the Knights a map, but they'll encounter another later in the campaign. As the Knights move from Sphere to Sphere, they'll encounter creatures of not just physical, but spiritual and symbolic consequence. They must take care here. A single slip and they'll fall off into an even more dangerous world.

The Map is Man's most current understanding of this place, but it isn't entirely accurate. This place belongs to no faith or religion mankind knows. It belongs to itself... although it was created by man's imagination, Man does not own it.

Once, he did, but not anymore. And that is one of the greatest dangers (and challenges) waiting for the Knights.

#### How do the Knights Get Home?

This is an ordeal. The Knights will have to walk through Hell and back (literally) to get home again. They'll have to unlock secret paths. However, as they move from World to World, they'll find themselves transformed by what they find. They will no longer be the men they were when they first rode into the Mist.

Sooner or later, the Knights will start asking questions. Why should we return home? What is waiting for us there? Why not stay here? Here, where the world is full of adventure, mystery and discovery.

The answer is simple. The Grand Master gave them a box. Within that box is a map and a letter. The map explains where they are (sort of) and letter explains why they are there. Eventually, the Knights will read the note. When they do, not only will they understand why the Grand Master sent them away, but why they must eventually return.

#### "You Really Expect Me to Play 24 NPCs?!?"

Here you are with four to six players. The average party size. That leaves you with twenty-four to twenty-six NPCs tagging along. How do you do this? Trust me; it's easier than you might think.

The NPC Knights should be more than just background noise for the player Knights. Each of the Knights listed here has some kind of particular skill or talent that will make him useful to the players. Each Brother is a potential resource of both roleplaying and problem solving. Each Knight has a background, grew up in a particular region, has a particular amount of

pride and dignity. They shouldn't be used as cannon fodder, even though most of them will quite willingly throw themselves in front of danger to protect a fellow Knight.

Having more than two dozen NPCs also provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate exactly how dangerous the situation is. Players who lose characters can pull from the roster for a new character... but this whittles down the Thirty's numbers, and thus, its chances for survival and returning home. For every Knight lost, the Thirty loses a vital resource. Not only that, but they lose a Brother; they lose a fellow Knight, and quite possibly, a friend.

And that's the most important part of your job in this game:

### You must make these NPCs the player characters' best friends.

If all these NPCs are nothing more than just sheets and scores, if they are nothing other than hit point shields for the players to hide behind, that's all they'll ever be. But if you put life and breath into every Brother, giving him a past and a family and friends and a voice... then the players will feel every loss. It'll hit them like a hammer to the chest. Just hitting the players with a Fraternitas loss isn't enough. They have to feel it when one of The Thirty falls.

#### Reality and Truth

The Brothers have a means to find their way back. I'm talking about the Map. The Scholar can read the map and knows what it's referencing.



## Part 2: The Spheres

The first and most important thing to know about where the Knights are and where they're going is that the Knights are moving away from the World where things are *real* and moving closer to a World where things are *true*.

The Sphere the Knights came from – the real world – is one of *forms* where things have little or no meaning. The Spheres they're walking in now also have shapes and forms, but these are far more abstract. In this place, what things *mean* are far more important how they *seem*.

Of course, the Knights think their objective is to get home immediately. Unfortunately, this is no longer possible. The Knights have begun a spiritual and symbolic journey, and to turn back now is dangerous. They must continue on, moving through the Map.

As the Knights move from Sphere to Sphere, they'll encounter different realities and different truths, based on the nature of the Sphere they travel. We'll look at each Sphere, the sights the Knights will encounter, and some guidelines for making each Sphere unique.

### SPHERE I: THE WORLD OF FORMS

This is where it all begins. Here, in our own world. The Knights are arriving from all over Christendom upon command from the Grand Master himself. One by one, they arrive in the Templars' "round church" in Paris. As each Knight

approaches, he notices there are no walls around the monastery, although there are a few guards.

When the Knights arrive, their horses are taken and they are led to the common room. There, they may rest from their long journeys. There is a scheduled meal in the afternoon, scheduled prayer afterward, and scheduled training after that. The Knights have a very busy day ahead of them. While they are not allowed to speak during meals or prayer, they are encouraged to get to know each other during practice.

#### *Silence is Golden*

*Oftentimes, in new campaigns, players are a little shy. They haven't figured out their characters quite yet and they don't have much to say.*

*The silence periods during meal and prayer are an opportunity for you to take care of that.*

*In our modern society, we despise silence. The moment we get up, we turn on the TV. When we're in the shower, we play music. While we drive to work, we listen to the radio.*

*At work, we play CDs. Even if it's just background noise, we're always surrounded by sound.*

*You may want to go through a few silent minutes of eating and prayer. Just two or three minutes ought to do it. Keep them quiet. They may describe their characters' actions, but only in hushed and humble whispers, only audible to you.*

*Make sure the room is as silent as possible. Then, finally, when they get outside, get swords and shields in their hands, they can finally break that silence.*

*Trust me. They'll be happy to gab.*

*After practice, it's time for more prayer; eating, practice, and more prayer. Then, finally, there's sleep in a large common room with twenty-nine other Knights. That's pretty much a Knight's day.*

### That Night

About ten o'clock, the thirty Knights in the large common room are roused from their beds. They are told by one of the Grand Master's aides to get their gear together and meet in the courtyard. Once there, they find their *destrier* (war horses) and their gear. Also standing in the courtyard is Jacque de Molay.

The Grand Master says nothing to them. As good Knights, they will not speak until spoken to. He walks up to each one, stares him in the eye for a good long minute, then asks a specific question about the Code. He listens to each Knight carefully. When he is satisfied with their answer, he moves on to the next.

Finally, when all Knights have met face-to-face with the Grand Master, he gives one of them a small locked box (about 4" x 4") and a key. Then, he turns away from them.

"You will ride," he says, his back to the Knights. "Ride through the mists."

This should strike the Knights as odd; there is no mist.

"Ride until you can no longer hear the sound of my voice."

A moment of silence... then, the Grand Master begins a song.

As he sings, the Knights notice the temperature drop. Steam escapes their mouths as they listen to the Grand Master's song. Then, the Knights notice a mist has formed in the courtyard. It slips over their feet, creeps up their thighs. Eventually, it is so thick, no Knight can see further than his grasp.

The Knights remember the Grand Master's last command...

*Ride through the mists. Ride until you can no longer hear the sound of my voice."*

If the player-Knights need a clue, NPC Knights mount their horses. When all Knights are mounted, they begin to ride.

Some may expect to ride straight into the wall, but it doesn't happen. They ride, expecting to hear the *clip-clop-clip-clop* of their horses' hooves on Paris' cobblestone streets, but it doesn't happen. Slowly, the Grand Master's voice grows more faint. Finally, it's gone.

And the Mist fades...

### SPHERE II: THE LAND OF LIGHTS

This place is the closest to home, the place where dreamers meet their dreams, mingle, get drunk and wake up together with hangovers. Some call it the astral plane. Others call it the Kingdom of Dreams. Some even call it "the Lacuna." It is where every waking human wanders when their minds are at rest.

But it is more than just every waking mind. Every idea, every thought, every dream takes physical

form here. Even the ideas of places, persons and things have a real form in this world. There is a manifestation of Jacque de Molay here, but not his actual form. Instead, the *idea* of the Grand Master is here: the perfect idea of the perfect Grand Master. He is everything the Knights expect him to be. The ideal version. Not the *real* version, but the *ideal*. So, anyone who actually *knew* the Grand Master will sense there is something wrong with him... or, perhaps, something a bit too *right*.

Every creature from history and myth is here. Krakens, hippogriffs, dragons... they are *all* here. Even creatures from myths the Knights do not know: the mantitu, Jenny Green-Teeth, bakemono, pennaggolan, and Bashthraka all have residences in this place. Anything ever imagined. Stumble across them at your own risk.

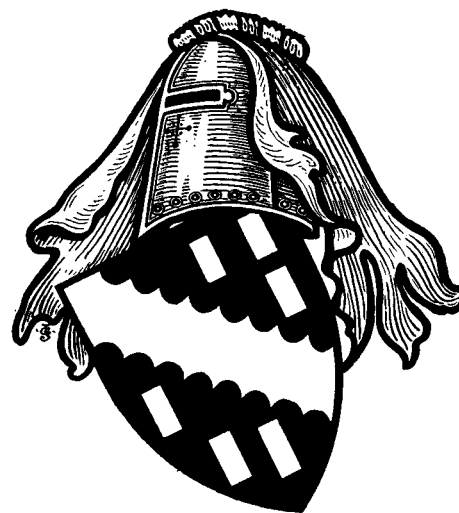
The inhabitants themselves are at various levels of consciousness. Some are very aware where they are and can even direct the Knights.

Others are painfully ignorant of their surroundings, little more than dreamers lost in their own imaginations.

The Land of Lights is the gateway into higher realities. One cannot pass through here with a literal mind, with a literal understanding of reality. Those who think religion is fact rather than truth may go mad here. This is the realm of imagination. Everything we believe, everything we hope, everything we know, everything we fear. Every discipline – from science and physics to poetry and prose – is rooted in imagination. It is the one thing that makes us different from every other creature on the planet. The Map is more than just "higher planes of existence." The Knights will discover this. One step at a time.

### Alvaray & The Cythaphalleon

When the Knights enter this World from the Mists, it is a place of deep night, the sky filled with a moon larger than they've ever seen before. The moon's silver light shines down



on the world, giving everything a touch of its hue. The grasses look metallic, the lake looks like its bottom is lined with silver coins. Even the trees, swaying gently in the wind, look like their leaves could be used for currency.

Atop a high hill, looking down at a small village down below, the Knights can ride down to the village, or try another direction. At the bottom of the hill, roads lead away to what appears to be the northwest, northeast, and north. These three roads are Roman in structure: they're built to last.

The village below is called Alvaray (ahl-VAH-ray). Its inhabitants are friendly and welcome the strangers with great hospitality. The Lord Mayor of the town is Tomas d'Auvergne. He is a giant of a man with a big beard and a bigger smile. He tells them the local inn is almost full, but the Knights can stay in the common room if they like. A celebration is underway as his wife just gave birth to triplets. He is quite drunk and gives each of the Knights a hearty hug when he meets them.

"Thirty strangers for my three sons!" he bellows. "Ten blessings for each little head! A fortunate thing, indeed!"

The Knights can choose to stay in the village or move on if they wish. But, here are some things they notice:

The Moon never moves. It remains at the pinnacle, as if this world was in perpetual midnight.

The people of the village are not entirely at their best. Their wits seem a little off. This could be explained by the drink they're all

indulging in, or it could be something else. (Most don't even know where they are, let alone the significance of where they are.)

The Knights are free to leave whenever they like. no one will ask them to stay any longer than they desire. They will be warned to tread carefully along the roads. "You never know what you might find out there under the Moon."

If the Knights do spend a while in the village, they'll discover some kind of creature threatening the villagers. It could be a werewolf or a vampire. Perhaps something more exotic... like a cythaphalleon.



What's a cythaphalleon (*kith-fall-eon*)? It's a nasty critter that eats eyes. Specifically, the eyes of children. It takes the shape of smoke, slithers into the households of sleeping families, takes its awful form in the poor boy or girl's room and sucks out the eyes with its awful, oozing, toothy mouth. Its skin is pallid and it has no eyes of its own. Its mouth is like a gaping wound across its face – from ear to ear. It has tiny bat ears and long

fingers that end in iron nails. Its legs are twisted and it moves poorly. Its naked body shines in the moonlight when the Knights find it. It bleeds worms and other insects when cut. They swarm about it to protect it, biting and stinging the Knights when they wound it. The Knights can drive the creature away, but they cannot destroy it. Multiple wounds cause it to turn to mist and fly away.

That's when the Knights learn the cythaphalleon cannot be defeated by normal means. Instead, they must find its resting place. Cythaphalleon sleep in graves. They turn to smoke, ooze down into the earth and devour the corpse in the grave, then rest in the corpse's place. Cythaphalleon like resting in particularly handsome graves, so they often seek out the most expensive tomb they can find. This particular critter rests in the tomb of the Lord Mayor's father. He won't be too happy with that.

Once the right tomb is found, the Cythaphalleon must be bound inside the coffin with blessed iron chains. They *must* be made from iron and blessed by a priest. Once the chains are in place, the cythaphalleon cannot escape the coffin. It will slowly starve to death, banging against the chains, wailing an unholy sound as it does. As an additional price to kill the cythaphalleon, a righteous man must pray over the coffin while it is trapped inside. Every moment of silence weakens the chains. If too much time goes by without prayer, the cythaphalleon may escape.

If the Knights do help the villagers, they'll earn their gratitude (and gain a whole bunch of Fraternitas to boot). The villagers cannot help

them in any way (other than supplying the Knights with food and water), although they can direct the Knights toward the largest city they know about. The City of Lights, just a few leagues to the north, is their best bet to find a guide to this strange land.

### The Magician

A man staying in the village inn is Edward Derby. Derby is an occultist from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (time works very differently here) and he has been waiting for the Knights for three days. He's also known as "Lord Strange," a title he'll use while here in the Sphere. He prefers using the title to his own name because "You never know who may be listening."

Strange explains to the Knights that this place is the realm of the unconscious, the place where all minds visit when they dream. His form here, in fact, is his dream-self. "The important thing to understand," he explains to the Knights, "is that you are actually *here*. Not dreaming, not connected



Edward Derby, Lord Strange



to the world with an astral cord, but actually *here*.” If the Knights press him for an explanation, he will tell them, “I don’t understand it myself, but it is important. I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

Of course, he’s lying. Not out of maliciousness, but because he is sworn to help and protect the Knights even at the risk of his own life. That oath means he must lie to them. He cannot tell them too much, but can only guide them through this dangerous terrain. Strange has deep connections with the Knights – one of them is his ancestor – and for five hundred years, his family has prepared for this moment. He is here to guide them, but he cannot solve their dilemma. They must do that themselves.

**Edward Derby, Lord Strange**  
Strength 2

Prowess 2

Knowledge 5

Fortitude 3

Honor 3

*Skills: Read 4 (Norman French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew), Ride 1, Sword 1, Alchemy 4, Awareness 2, Courtesy 1, Folklore 3, Religion 2*

*Background: Magician*

*Strange begins with no Fraternitas: he has to prove himself to the Knights. If he comes along on the trip, he draws from the Fraternitas Pool, but has to spend at least three sessions before he earns a Rank 1 Fraternitas.*

*Strange is also a traveler here, but unlike the Knights, he’s not physically traveling. Instead, he’s projecting his consciousness into*

*the astral plane. While not physically here, he can still be harmed, injured, and even killed. However, he can also immediately retreat back to the real world in a moment’s notice, reappearing later if the Knights need him.*

*Lord Strange is actually a member of a secret society devoted to protecting the Queen from occult espionage. John Dee asked Lord Strange to join the organization and when he accepted, the good Doctor gave him an orichalcum ring; a small item of immense power. Orichalcum is the result of the ultimate alchemical process: changing lead into gold. Each member of the secret society wears one.*

*I can hear now the obvious question of “what does it do?” Well, it doesn’t really “do” anything. It’s a symbol of purity. Here, in this place, it stands for that ultimate transformation. It makes Edward Derby the perfect guide for the Knights on this journey. In other words, what it does is not half as important as what it means.*

*Use Lord Strange as a kind of in-character guide to help the Knights out when they need it. He’s a smart fellow. The Knights should pay attention to him. He knows where they are and how to help them home.*

### The City of Lights

It begins to rain as the Knights approach the City of Lights. The air is filled with the smell of weather and the static charge of a thunderstorm. As the rain falls, it is warm. The water never turns cold. It feels more like a hot bath than a storm. Lightning strikes across the sky, illuminating the surroundings.

The city before them shines its lights into the sky, reflecting off the gathering clouds. It appears the light from the city could reach right up and touch the Moon.

As they reach the gates, they find them open to any and all. People are moving in and out of the city at will. No guards or soldiers are evident and the people seem happy and relaxed.

The city itself is a marvel: more beautiful than any city the Knights have ever seen. Some Brothers present have traveled to the Middle East and may have even seen the incredible city of Baghdad. This place feels the same. A City of One Thousand Stories. It is the archetypal city. The city we all know exists somewhere in our brightest dreams. There are magicians and alchemists, scientists, mathematicians, scholars of all sorts.

Yes, that means the Knights can find someone who can read their Map and tell them where they are. If you want them to, that is. There are plenty of ways to keep the Knights in the dark a little longer.

The King of the City is a tall, slender fellow. He has no name. Refer to him as “Your Majesty,” if you please. Gaining audience with the King is no mean trick. On the plus side, the Knights are a rather curious sight and will invoke the city’s guards.

What’s that, you say? “I thought you said there are no guards.” Ah, no, my friend. I said “No guards or soldiers are evident.” The City has the means to protect itself. They just aren’t obvious to the naked eye. The City is guarded by stone statues. These statues look like soldiers and

gargoyles. As soon as the City is threatened, they come to life and apprehend whomever (or whatever) threatens it. If the Knights make *any* threatening move toward the City’s inhabitants, stone statues all around them will come to life, gargoyles will fly from the rooftops, and before they know it, the Thirty will be surrounded by supernatural guardsmen.

Remember: the duty of the guardsmen is to *protect* the City and its inhabitants. As soon as the Knights (or whomever it is that threatens the City) are apprehended, they are taken to the prison and held there until it is time for judgment.

If the Knights behave themselves, they’ll do just fine. They can walk the City’s streets, buy, sell and barter with the merchants, walk down the red light district and find themselves in all kinds of city adventures. Eventually, words of their deeds will reach the King. When that happens, they are brought before him and asked what they are doing in his City. Their answers are important.

### The Queen of Dreams

The Queen of Dreams is not present when the Knights address the King. Her throne is empty and no one mentions her.

(Depending on how merciful you feel, Strange can advise them not to mention the Queen. Or, you can allow them to stumble across this on their own.)

The Queen is wounded. Not in a physical way, but spiritually. She is not in the castle, but wandering in the wilderness. Any mention of her will upset the King, bringing on a dreadful melancholy. The skies will



darken, rain falls even harder, and lightning strikes the tallest tower in the castle.

Mentioning the Queen draws the King's wrath, but a carefully worded apology (and an offer to find her) will resolve the issue. However, the King will not recover from his melancholy and will slump in his throne, burdened by his loss and sadness.

A search for the Queen is an obvious way to solve the King's dark mood. The Knights should get this right off (especially when lightning strikes). If they don't, Strange will suggest it. At the mention of Knights going out to find the Queen, the King will brighten a little and wish them luck, giving the Knights his blessing.

"Do not presume success," he warns. "She has been gone... so long... I cannot even remember..."

In fact, the Queen has been missing for several thousand years (remember, time works differently here). Where she is and how the Knights can find her will be detailed below. But, before they can find her, they must first meet an old friend and an old enemy.

### The Grand Master & The Old Man on the Mountain

After the Knights leave the City to find the Queen, they pass into the Great Forest lingering to the West. The road leading out to the Forest is wide and open. The rain falls, but eventually peters out.

Halfway to the Forest, the Knights see two men sitting on the side of the road. They sit on either side of a small table: a chessboard. One of them wears the white and red tabard of the Knights Templar. He sits in a

white chair with the sun emblazoned on the chair's crown. The second man is swarthy; obviously not of European descent. He is dressed in traditional Muslim clothes, wears a thick beard, and sits in a black chair with the crescent moon on the crest of his chair.

These two are Jacque de Molay and Hassan I Sabbah. And they're playing chess.

As they approach, the Grand Master will recognize them, smile and honor their bended knees. He will tell them to rise and introduce "My friend, Hassan." They've been playing chess for quite a while now, switching sides from black to white as they do.

The two of them are friendly, but not too friendly. If pressed about why they are together, they both answer, "Because nobody else plays chess."

De Molay eventually tells the Knights the reason he's here is because he has to tell them something. It's a story and they should pay close attention because not everything in the story is what it appears to be.

"No," Hassan corrects. "*Nothing* is as it appears to be. Nothing is true. All is permitted."

De Molay nods and begins his tale.

\* \* \*

Once upon a time, there was a King who went out on a crusade, leaving his wife and unborn child behind. While off on the Crusade, he killed many Saracen Knights, but one of them was a

King himself and had a beautiful wife. The King's lust overcame him and he slept with the fallen King's wife, leaving her behind to return home. But he never returned.

When word of her husband's death reached her in Europe, his wife fled the castle, vowing her son would never be a Knight. She sold everything she had and moved to the country where she raised her son as a farmer. Well, one day, that boy was out working in the field when two Knights came riding up together. The boy saw them and thought they were angels and said so as they passed.

"We are not angels," said the Knights. "We are Knights, serving Arthur, the King in Camelot." Well, the boy ran home and told his mother that more than anything else, he wanted to be a Knight. His mother almost died when she heard the request. She put him on an ass, gave him a pot for a helmet and a broom handle for a lance and said, "Begone and be a Knight!" hoping he would become discouraged and return.

The ass took our young hero off toward his adventure, and lo should he see Camelot itself, with a Knight clad all in black standing before the drawbridge.

"Arthur is a coward!" the black Knight cursed. "He will not face me!"

Well, our hero knew next to nothing about being a Knight, but he knew an insult when he heard it. And as soon as he did, he challenged the black Knight to a duel. The black Knight laughed at the boy. "I do not fight with children riding asses!" he decried. Our hero didn't take kindly to that, either, and so he threw his lance at the black Knight.

The lance - which was really a broom handle, after all - flew true and struck the black Knight through the eye socket of his helmet. It pierced his eye and killed him on the spot. Our hero took up the black Knight's armor and put it on along with his weapons. Then, he climbed up on the black Knight's horse - **and knowing how to start it but not how to stop it** - he kicked the horse and began on his adventure.

Now, our young Knight rode forth, not knowing where he was going or what he was doing. And when he met with a monk on the road, the old man told him that he was once a Knight, but now long since retired. "I will teach you the ways of being a Knight," the old monk told our young friend, and he taught him the most important virtues of chivalry: obedience, temperance, and valor.

One year later, after many adventures with his monk advisor, he came across a castle swathed in a mysterious mist.



He entered the castle and ate with the lord. All through the meal, he noticed the lord was in great pain, but knowing that a Knight never speaks unless spoken to, he refrained from saying anything. The meal continued and the lord's pain grew more obvious, but as much as he wanted to ask, "What ails you, my Lord?" he said nothing, obeying the Code.

In the morning, as he left the castle, the drawbridge clipped the heels of his horse. He turned to look, but the castle was gone. The old monk told our hero that the castle was the home of the Fisher King, the man responsible for the Holy Grail. "What happened?" our hero asked. The old monk explained.

"The Fisher King used to guard the Grail, but he lost it because he was too proud, too vain. Now, the only way to heal the Fisher King is to show him a spontaneous act of compassion."

"You mean, I was supposed to say something?" our hero asked.

The monk nodded. "Yes. And because you didn't, you failed the adventure and may never try it again."

"But that isn't fair!" our hero objected.

The monk shrugged. "That's the law of God."

"Then I hate God!" our hero screamed, shaking his fist at the sky. He rode off, throwing aside

the Code and his love of our Lord.

Many years passed and our hero became a villain, defeating Knights everywhere he went. He cursed them and called them fools for believing in chivalry and the laws of God. He became the most dangerous Knight in the world, defeating all of Arthur's greatest Knights. Then, one day, he met a Knight on the road... a Saracen Knight. He challenged this Knight as well, and when their lances met, neither could throw the other off his horse.

Finally, after many broken lances, the two Knights agreed to rest under a tall, shady tree. When they took their helmets off... they noticed something odd. The two of them looked like brothers. Night and Day, Sun and Moon. This Saracen Knight was the son born from the coupling of our hero's father and the Saracen Queen, come looking for his father. Our hero, not knowing the fate of his father, could tell him nothing. But knowledge of a brother brought joy to his heart. For so long, there was only sorrow and hate, but now, a single shaft of hope shown through.

Just then, a thick mist swirled around them. As they looked up, they saw a castle appear - the castle of the Fisher King. Our hero bounded up, bringing his brother with him. He did not say why, for he hoped his brother would accomplish the adventure,

and if he knew the secret, he could not give the Fisher King a spontaneous act of compassion.

They sat down to dinner with the wounded monarch, and as the dinner progressed, neither Knight said a word. The King groaned quietly in his seat, but our hero's brother, being a good and true Knight, said nothing, waiting to be spoken to before he uttered a word.

Finally, as the dinner was drawing to a close, our hero knew the chance to complete the adventure was nearly gone. So, he said out loud, "My King, what ails you? Is there anything I can do to ease your pain?"

At the sound of those words, a bell tolled and the castle's windows opened wide and light filled the room. The old monk was there, hiding in the shadows, but now revealed by the light. And a young maiden entered the room, carrying the Holy Grail.

Our Knight turned to the old monk. "I do not understand," he said. "I thought I could not accomplish the adventure."

The old monk smiled. "That was the Law of God," he said. "But you - you have changed the Law of God."

The two Knights approached the Fisher King and looking upon him, they saw his wound was healed. He touched both of their faces and smiled. "You have done this for me," he said. "Both of you." The two brothers

looked at him and recognized the features of his face and the glow in his eyes, and at that moment, knew who the King was.

"And now," he told them, "I must go... and give the responsibility of guarding the Grail to you."

He closed his eyes and with those words, he died.

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After his little story, the Grand Master has nothing more to say. His companion, however, has one small bit of advice.

"Nothing is true. All is permitted."

### ***Secret Meanings***

*The Knights could interpret the Grand Master's story in two ways: the exoteric and the esoteric.*

*The exoteric method of interpretation takes the story at face value. In other words, they interpret it literally. It is a historical tale of a Knight who faces many trials and eventually redeems himself.*

*The esoteric method of interpretation requires a bit more study and understanding. This is a version of the Percifal myth from the Arthurian canon. When interpreting this story, remember that everything means something. Percifal is a fool, like the Tarot card of the same name. He knows how to start the horse, but not how to stop it. The fool is full of energy and drive, willing to throw himself into situations he doesn't understand, knowing with certainty that all will be well in the end.*

*He is the son of the Fisher King, but what does that mean? Who guards the Grail? To whom does the Grail belong? The Grail belongs to humanity; all men are the Fisher King. This is a dark time in history, when men are treated like slaves, the Church's rule is tyrannical, teaching ignorance, terror and fear. From his light we are all saved. The Grail is lost to men and must be found again.*

*What is the Grail? Man's connection to the Divine. It is man's connection to God, the Divinity within himself. It has been lost and it must be found again.*

*Returning the Grail to the world is their ultimate goal. It will transform them. But it is not a physical object they will return, but something much more powerful. And to do it, they're going to change the Laws of God.*

*Meanwhile, the game the Grand Master and the Old Man on the Mountain are playing has its own esoteric meaning. Whenever a piece is captured, it is not removed from the board. Instead, it turns to the opposing color and is placed on the opposite side. Black pawns turn white, and white pawns turn black. The game can only end when all the pieces find stalemate.*

### **The Forest**

Moving forward, the Thirty will eventually come to the Forest. This is not just a forest, it is *The Forest*. And the Knights will find all sorts of danger in here.

### *The Bandits*

The Knights are ambushed by a small bandit gang. Not enough to threaten them, just enough to get the Knights on their guard. If the

Knights do take casualties, it should be a minor affair.

The Bandits are led by a man calling himself the Bandit King. He is a proud, regal, handsome fellow with a quick wit and a dashing smile. He calls off the attack as soon as he recognizes the Knights as men of the cloth. Then, he apologizes before taking his men back into The Forest.

These are the archetypal bandits. They are every bandit gang from every story ever told that had bandits. They are a laughing, jovial group who rob wealthy nobles and return the money to the poor.

(Or, The Poor, as the case may be.)

Derby will recognize them right off and will assist with any misunderstandings. "After all," he says, "we wouldn't want one legend killing off another now, would we?"

### *The Wolf*

The sky grows dark, the air turns cold. The trees look like slender strangers peering from the darkness... and something is following them.

The Wolf is not a mongrel; it is everything humanity fears. It stands taller than an elephant, moves faster than a jaguar and has the cunning of the Primal Predator. Its breath is hot enough to scald skin and its eyes can melt the courage of even the bravest men.

When it attacks, The Wolf rolls seven dice.

If The Wolf kills or seriously injures a Knight, it will snatch it up in its jaws and run off into The Forest. They will never see the Knight again.

Only five Knights can attack The Wolf at a time. It can take a total of seven Wounds before it can no longer attack. Once that happens, it retreats, heading off into the darkness of The Forest, howling as it goes.

The Wolf does have a lair. A successful Hunting Roll (TN 25) will find it. While hunting the beast, remind the Knights that they're wandering off the path. They should only need a single reminder to understand the significance of that. The Wolf can only be killed in its own Lair.

### *The Maiden, the Hag, and the Dragon*

Moving further through The Forest, the Knights hear the sound of thunder on the horizon. Then, they feel a tremor under their feet.

More thunder. Another tremor. The smell of burning wood.

Yes, a Dragon.

The Dragon's appearance is very specific here (and symbolically important). It is coiled like a serpent. Its head is like a snake's head, complete with lashing tongue and forked teeth. When it strikes, it delivers a poisonous blow that will kill just about any man. A single bite from the Dragon will knock down a Knight. His only salvation is calling his Rank 5 Fortitude. (And he can only do that once per game.)

The Dragon attacks and defends with ten dice. It has four attacks per round:

One bite (poison)

Two claws (three Wounds)

One tail (two Wounds)

It has twenty Wounds. The Knights don't stand a chance. There is a good side to all this. It doesn't breathe fire.

The Dragon isn't really concerned with the Knights, however, it is more concerned with the Maiden running away from it. The Maiden runs half-naked, her exposed arms and legs ragged with scrapes and bruises. She runs across the path moments before the Dragon appears.

She knows nothing. Can barely speak. She's out of breath and terrified. The Knights, of course, must defend her against the Dragon.

The Dragon will fight and kill any Knight that comes close to it. Only five Knights may attack it at a time. If they gain twenty Wounds on the Dragon, it retreats into the Forest, moving across the forest floor like liquid lightning. It licks its wounds, then returns the next day.

### *"He Died, Even For You."*

*During playtest, one of the Knights presented a cross to the Dragon as a kind of holy symbol. I let him get away with it because it was pretty damn brave and because he invoked the right language. "The Savior suffered and died, even for you, beast of flame!" That was good enough for me. He scared the Dragon away. Reward creative play and courageous acts and your players will come up with new ones.*

The Maiden, on the other hand, does not know who she is. She only knows that she's running from the serpent. That's what she calls it. "The serpent." Not "the Dragon."

Meanwhile, while the Dragon is gone, a Hag will show up. She has a

basket of rotten apples and a foul tongue. She speaks in obscenity and profanity. She curses the Knights and “the slut” that they protect. “She fornicates with the Dragon!” she exclaims, albeit with slightly stronger language. “She’s a whore! A harlot! A tramp!” She throws apples at the Maiden and they squish like soft handfuls of muck.

Treating the old woman with disrespect will get a Knight a face-full of rotten apple. Treating her with dignity will get you something else entirely. She will quietly thank the Knight that compliments her (she likes to be called “Little Grandmother”) and she will give him an apple. If the Knight gives the apple to the Maiden, she takes it, takes a bite out of it, then she and the Hag disappear.

Shortly thereafter, the Dragon returns, except this time, he has the Maiden with him. They walk together, side by side. The Maiden is holding a fresh apple. She smiles at the Knights and thanks them for healing her. “I must return to my empty throne,” she says.

### ***“I Eat It.”***

*There’s a real possibility some Knight may eat one of the Crone’s apples. If he does, take him aside and away from the rest of the group. Explain to him who she is and what the Dragon is. Then, return him to the group. He may not know how to solve the puzzle, but at least he has a clue. Or, you may choose some other consequence to eating one of Eve’s apples. Apply the appropriate consequence according to your own style and the character.*

Then, the Dragon lowers his head and she puts her foot on it. He lifts his head up, lifting her up, and they

both disappear into the midnight sky above the Knights.

The key here is uniting the Maiden and the Hag. Both of them are Eve and the Dragon is the Serpent of the Garden. Baphomet has separated Eve into two beings: Wisdom and Innocence. Until they are united, this Sphere will remain locked against the *light*. When they are reunited, the locks will open and the *light* can come through. Not yet, of course. The Knights still have eight more locks to get to before the *light* can shine down on Earth.

### **Baphomet**

And then there’s the issue of this showing up.

Baphomet’s first appearance to the Knights should be monumental. Save it for the perfect moment. Save it for when the Knights first get their asses kicked: either by the Dragon or the Wolf. Or perhaps on the street of the City of Lights after they’ve encountered their third Jesus (one from each of the Gospels). Save it for a moment when the Knights are completely unprepared.

Baphomet appears as illustrated below. It is a creature with a horned head, black wings, female breasts, cloven hooves and a terrible, terrible voice. Like rusted razor blades pulled down the meat between your toes. Baphomet is responsible for the world’s injury. It has suffered since then, the injury festering like metaphysical gangrene, spreading its stink and puss and infection all across humanity. A wound so powerful, it destroyed the planet that used to reside between Mars and Jupiter. A wound so awful, it spawned the black plague, the Inquisition, and

the current war of faith raging across the world.

No man remembers the event. The world is it is, as it was, as it ever will be. There is no planet between Mars and Jupiter – it has always been that way. A gap. A crevice. An abyss between those two worlds.

Remember that detail. We’ll be visiting it again very soon.

It is a tall figure – taller than any man, but not as tall as the Wolf. Attacking Baphomet does no good. It is not something that can be destroyed by sword or spear or apple. At least, not yet. More sophisticated weaponry is needed to destroy this festering sore of a creature. The Knights are not yet capable enough to wield such weapons.



No, all the Knights can do now is suffer Baphomet’s taunts of triumph and intimidation. “You have no idea

what you are doing,” it tells them. “You trust *him*?” and he points at Edward Derby. “Derby is one of my best beloved slaves!”

Derby, of course, will deny any association with Baphomet. Whether or not the Knights believe this is up to them.

Then, as quickly as Baphomet appeared, it disappears, leaving the Knights to pass on to the next Sphere.

### **SPHERE III: THE UNFINISHED TOWER**

Moving into this Sphere, the Knights feel a transition. The air in Sphere II is wet and full of the smells one expects in a forest. Now, the air is stale... dry. And there are sounds. Sounds the Knights should be very familiar with by now... the sounds of battle.

Over a dry ridge of yellow, dying grass is a vast battlefield. Looking down from here, the Knights can see the entire valley is filled with warriors. No Earthly battle ever looked like this. The sheer size of it alone should make even the most valourous Knight pause for a moment. Thousands and thousands and thousands of warriors are here: fighting, bleeding, killing, dying.

In the middle of the battlefield is a tall tower reaching up high into the clouds. The tower is unfinished. More than that, it looks like the top part has broken away and fallen off. All round the tower, the warriors continue their bloody battle, but it looks as if there are really no sides. There are no common banners, no common colors. No tactics. Just men fighting men. Fighting, bleeding, killing, dying.

As soon as any of the Knights try to speak to one another, they'll notice something disturbing. None of them can make any kind of articulate sound.

(In playtest, I spoke over the players in loud gibberish whenever they tried speaking in-character. They quickly got the point.)

Another element. As long as the Knights are here, they cannot tell a lie. None of them. Nor can anyone else. This is a place of Truth, regardless of its wound. All things are True here, even false things. Just as the Old Man said.

Finally, once the wound is healed (and all this gibberish goes away), everyone can understand everyone else; there is no need for translators. It isn't that everyone is speaking in the same language; it's that everyone can *understand* everyone else's language.

But healing the wound of this place won't be easy. The Knights may think stopping the battle is the key. They're wrong. The battle is only a symptom of the real problem.

### ***"I Can't Lie to You."***

*There are no lies in this place. That means Derby cannot lie to the Knights. Unfortunately, he also cannot tell them things they must discover for themselves. If they ask a question that's too leading, he has to say, "I can't lie to you, but I cannot answer that question. That's something you must discover on your own."*

### **The Battle**

The Knights cannot stop the battle below with violence; there just aren't enough of them.

If they try charging directly into the battle, if they do not make conscious efforts to remain together, they will become separated. The battle is too large, too chaotic, too enraged to navigate successfully (Knights need to make a Prowess roll of 30 in order to keep contact with other Knights).

The battle is filled with warriors from every culture: Zulus, Celts, Romans, Apache, Chinese, Japanese, Persians... they are all here. They fight each other, they fight themselves. Blood, blood, blood.

There is no language, only the clamor and alarum of battle. The Knights cannot speak to anyone – not that any of them are listening. And while language may not work, symbols are a different matter (writing or speaking the word "sword" amounts to gibberish, but drawing a picture of one is just fine).

(My Knights tried fighting their way to the ruined tower. This did not work and they lost Knights because of it.)

If your Knights come up with creative ways of dealing with the battle, let them try. Pulling individual warriors out of the fight, then trying to communicate to him is a good start, but this could take a long time. Another method (used by one of my Knights) is standing on the edge of the battle – no armor, no sword, no shield – with his hand held in a symbol of peace. One warrior saw him, paused... and got killed. But another saw him, paused... and stepped out of the battle. He took the Knight's hand... and could understand what he was saying.

Again, a long, painful method, but each warrior who steps out can pull another. Like a virus (and the thoughts of language as a virus spring to mind), the peaceful spread through the battle. After many hours, the fighting is over. The dead are gathered, individual groups begin to form, camps are erected, and the sun sets on the battlefield. At last.

### ***The Warrior Camps***

*Once the battle is over, the Knights watch the different camps form around the tower. They may want to go to the camps and talk to the warriors, exchanging stories, cultures, faiths. Take this opportunity to show the Knights the world is a lot larger than they think.*

### **The Tower**

Inside the Tower, the situation is entirely different. It is the Library, a vast storehouse of knowledge. As the Knights' eyes adjust to the dim light, they see hallways upon hallways of books. Endless rows and shelves reaching as high as the tallest parapets. The Tower is definitely larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

(No, there are no librarians with floppy hats, long scarves, all "teeth and curls.")

Walking through the Library are silent monks, carrying loads of books, putting the fallen and misplaced books back where they belong. This place is almost completely silent... only the sound of the monks moving across stone floors, the sound of books sliding into place.

The hallways between the shelves are wide – nearly ten feet in width. As soon as the Knights enter the Tower, a librarian approaches them, putting his finger on Shis lips, giving them the signal to "shush."

(Incidentally, this is also a magical symbol. You can look that one up on your own; some secrets are best discovered rather than unveiled.)

If the Knights inquire about the monks' faith, Frater Umberto nods slowly and closes his eyes, patiently. "We are of all faiths here. Muslim, Catholic, Protestant." (The Knights have no idea what that means, but Derby does.)

No words may be spoken in The Tower. That isn't to say that Knights cannot speak, rather, they should not speak. Eventually, the Master Librarian finds them and leads them to another section of the Tower. He introduces himself as Frater Umberto and asks them why



they are visiting the Tower. When he hears their tale, he nods, scratches his chin, and asks for their assistance. It seems someone in the Tower is murdering librarians and burning books.

### *The Secret*

A demon called Astaroth has possessed one of the librarians: a monk named Barisisa. The demon is kin with Baphomet and has been put here to ensure the Tower falls and the Knights fail in their quest. The demon may pass all number of tests, including kissing the cross, reciting the Ten Commandments, etc. This is because Ignorance currently rules the Church; the Church's symbols have no power against it.

Astaroth is a demon whose power is fueled by ignorance. He must be defeated with wisdom. The reason he was able to enter the Library at all was Barisisa's weakness. The monk wanted knowledge and was

willing to do anything to get it. Astaroth smelled the monk's desire all the way from Hell. He tempted the monk, then possessed him, giving him all the wisdom he would ever need. Now the Knights and monks must find a way to release Barsisa from his bondage.

Astaroth will hold on to Barsisa, threatening to tear the monk apart if they even touch him. Barsisa made a deal with Astaroth and that deal must be kept. If asked, the demon will detail the specifics of the bargain; he must do so, in fact.

"Barsisa asked for wisdom at any price. I gave him that. I have read every book ever written. And now, I am within him, the keeper of wisdom."

A foolish, vague bargain. There is little room for leverage there.

The Knights may come to the conclusion that they have to kill Barsisa to free him from the bargain. This is one way to do it,

but it also leaves Astaroth free on the Third Sphere. He is the keeper of the gate here, and the gate will only be open if Astaroth is defeated. If asked, he will admit this, too. He has to: no one can lie here, except for demons. That's one clue the Knights should pick up: the monks lie. Men cannot lie in this place, but demons can.

As soon as the Knights begin to move on that conclusion, something odd happens. All the monks turn to face the Knights, their faces as blank as a still pond. They smile and step toward the Knights, their hands out, fingers curled like dying spiders.

Yes, it's true. *All* the monks are possessed by demons. All but one. But, we'll get to him in a moment.

Fighting the monks is no longer an option. The Knights must now kill or die.

### *The Demons*

*The demons possessing the monks will fight until their material bodies are destroyed. They use the following Traits:*

*Strength: 6*

*Prowess: 6*

*Knowledge: 6*

*Fortitude: 6*

*The demons have no Honor*

*Wounds: The Demons can take 6 Wounds before falling.*

There are thirteen monks in the Library. Twelve of them are possessed by demons. The last one, the Master Librarian, is down in the basement. He's locked behind a door. If the Knights happen to find him before the demons reveal their true nature, they will say that *he* is a

demon they trapped who is trying to get himself free.

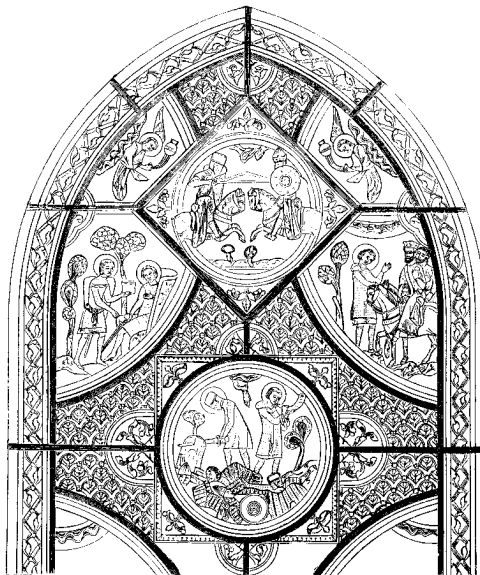
Once the demons are dispatched, the Knights need to free the Master Librarian. He'll also need some help with the Library. Knights may volunteer to stay behind to clean up the mess (demon entrails are *nasty*) and re-sort the volumes. Sergeants may want to leave a few Knights behind.

Once the mystery of the Tower is completed and the Master Librarian freed, the Knights may move on. Before they leave, the Master Librarian gives them some advice. "Words are symbols. Language is a system of symbols. Some words are larger than others – and I do not mean because they have more letters. Oftentimes, the smallest words are the largest."

If the Knights ask for an example, he smiles. "If" he says. "The second largest word. But the largest?" His smile grows wider. "The largest word... is 'I.'"

"Gods are too large to be contained by words. The *idea* of a God is too grand to fit in a single shape. The larger the God, the more abstract it must be. Gods are abstract ideas clothed in the codes of language. Gods can only live in stories. Some say that when the faith in a God dies, the God dies. That isn't true. When the *stories* die, the God dies. As long as stories remain, Gods survive. When the stories die, when we no longer understand the symbols of the God, the God dies. If the understanding of the stories changes, the God changes."

He nods and looks at the Knights. "You don't understand this, yet. But you will."





## The Wounded God

The wasteland surrounding the Fallen Tower stretches out before the Knights in every direction. There is no clue which way they should go. Whichever way they choose, they eventually come to a steep climb. Their horses cannot make it. They'll either have to abandon their cavalry or try another direction.

The other direction leads them to a thick swamp that swallows horses. Another direction leads to a steep crevasse. Yes, they have to ditch the horses.

Finally, on the other side of the obstacle, the Knights see a lone tree standing beside a well. As they come closer, they see a man hanging on the tree. The tree is twisted and old. The well is empty.

This is Woton, otherwise known as the Gangleri, the Allfather, Wuodan, Wothan and Gothan, otherwise known as Odin. He hangs on the tree, his left eye little more than a wet, angry sore. A spear pierces his side and the tree; it is his spear that holds him in place. His wounds are bleeding. He is impossibly thin, impossibly old and nearly dead.

If the Knights try to take him down, his head snaps up. "No!" he screams at them. "Leave me be!" If the Knights continue conversation with him, he will explain his predicament.

"I am Woton," he tells them. "And I am here so I might save my people. I suffer that they may live. I am here so I may learn the words that made the world."

Woton is talking about the Runes, twenty-three words that his people believe are the keystones to reality.

He's bringing light to the world, reconnecting it to the primal powers that created it in the first place.

"Just as you are now," he tells the Knights. "This journey I am on. It is the same as yours."

If the Knights get confused, he clarifies the point. "You are on a journey, moving through the Underworld. Through *Niflheim*. Just as I will do. It took me three days to heal the world. I had to hang on this tree for three days, then lay dead for three days, then fight my way back to the world for three days. Three threes. Nine days. I suspect it will take you a bit longer."

"Why?" the Knights may ask.

"Because I'm a God and you're not. Also, the world's wound is far greater than when I did this." He laughs on the tree.

Finally, as the Knights leave, Woton coughs. "Remember this," he says. "Gods are like mercury. Like quicksilver. They change as your belief in them changes. As your understanding changes. One moment, it's an old man on a tree. The next, it's a young man on a cross."

He laughs through the coughs. "And remember, you aren't the first to do this. To walk this road. And you won't be the last."

A light shines then, and Woton is gone.

## Mountain Pass

The Road leading from this Sphere to the next is a mountain pass. When the Knights approach it, they see a carving on the wall of the pass: a Knight walking with bare feet and hands on a narrow bridge that looks like an upturned sword.

The passage leads up high through heavy snow. The turns are so tight, they can't see what's ahead of them, but with every turn, they gain a new view of the land below them. Every turn is a new sight, a new vista. They have no idea where they are going; they have to trust that they are going in the right direction. The pass is small; a single wrong step throws them off to the crevasse below. If they fall off the road, they fall all the way down.

As the Knights reach the end of the mountain pass, they feel rain on their helmets and their heads. Just drops, first. Then, as the path begins its descent, the rain falls harder. Harder. Finally, when they reach the end of the pass, they look down upon a torrential rainstorm, a long beach, and a ship moored out in the sea. There's a man standing at the edge of the sea, a lantern in his hand, held up high...

## SPHERE IV: THE STORM

As the Knights leave the Mountain Pass, they approach the man on the edge of the sea. He's dressed in a grey robe with a hood over his head and a lantern held high, as if signaling to them. He nods at them and welcomes them. "I've been waiting," he says. If the Knights ask him how long, he pulls his cowl down over his eyes. "Long enough."

## Rain

*Never let up on this. The rain is thick, coming down in sheets. It hits the Knights from every direction, slamming them hard. Thunder, lightning. The cold, wet feeling down your back. Wet boots, wet gloves, wet hair; wet, wet, wet.*

*Think of all the ways rain gets in the way of doing anything. You can't see, you can't hear, you can't stand up straight. It's cold. You shiver. Your teeth chatter. Rain, rain, rain.*

*Never let up.*

He gathers them in the boat and takes them out to the ship waiting on the waters. Regardless of their number, all the Knights fit inside the small dingy. If asked about it, the old man laughs. "What did you expect?" he asks.

## The Ship

The ship is a Roman trireme. It flies no flag. It has a single mast and no oars. There is no crew on deck. The old man steps across the deck, almost falling over from the force of the rain. He tells the Knights to weigh anchor. Then, he goes to the wheel. "We will begin," he says.

"It is my duty," the old man says, "to get you across this sea to the other side." He pauses, coughing in the rain. "But we have a few ports we must stop at first."

If the Knights ask, the name of the ship is "Victory."

The old man, who serves as the Captain of the ship, is blind. He navigates the storm without sight. "I know the way," he says. "I don't need my eyes to show me."

"You came here across the Devil's Path," he says. "From Honor to Victory. You will face many temptations. Temptations of the heart. That is this place and why the storms began before you arrived. Because of the way you chose to get here. Whenever anyone takes the Devil's Path, the storm comes."

If pressed about what else he knows, the man reveals only this.

"You need to bring the light back to the world," he says. "The world suffers. There is no light."

### Lightning Strike

Just as he says that, lightning strikes the ship. It smashes into the mast and splinters it right down to the base. The ship is on fire. The Knights need to act fast or their transportation will go down in flames.

#### Dealing with Fire

*The fire spreads quickly. A ship is made of wood, pushed by sails made of canvas, held together by nails and tar. There is nothing more dangerous on a ship than fire.*

*There are three fires on the ship. Each fire is "Fire: Rank 4."*

*Every round, each Sergeant can command a number of men to deal with the fire. A group of up to five Knights can work on a fire. Each Knight gives the Sergeant a die to roll.*

*Every round, each group of Knights needs to roll at least one 4. If it doesn't the fire grows to Rank 5. Every successive failure to deal with the fire makes it grow one Rank. Every success decreases the fire's Rank by 1.*

*At the end of each Round, count the number of Fire Ranks present. That number is the amount of structural damage done to the ship. The ship has 50 Structure Points. If the ship loses all its Structure Points, it sinks.*

*To keep this little catastrophe from turning into a tiresome dice rolling chore, make the Knights describe exactly how they're putting out the fire. Rain helps, but not enough. The more creative their answers, the*

*more bonus dice you give them. The less creative their answers, the less bonus dice they get. In fact, uncreative answers should increase the fire even more.*

*Use your good judgment. If your players didn't trust you, they wouldn't make you the GM.*

Once the fire is dealt with, the Captain announces they have to make port for repairs. An island appears ahead. "That'll do," he says. "We were headed that direction anyway."

### The Island

The island gives no comfort from the rain. It is a jungle island, full of tropical fruits, birds and other creatures. There is no immediate sign of habitation. Many of the Knights will be needed to chop wood and carry it back to the ship.



How many? The more Knights they use, the faster the ship gets repaired.

Oh, and it hasn't stopped raining. It will *never* stop raining. Everything is wet. But here on the island, the rain isn't cold. It is warm... almost like a moist caress. Less of a bother and more of a soothing massage.

The Knights will want to explore the island, especially after they discover stone carvings of dolphins, doves and swans. Large standing stones. Groves of pomegranates. Not to mention that several of the Knights have gone missing during their wood-cutting duties.

("Rain!")

Before the rest of the Knights go looking for their missing brothers, the Captain gives them a warning. "This is a place of deep passions. Emotion rules here, not logic and not reason. A man can forget his duty here. Even forget who he is. His heart can swell up and swallow everything he once held certain. Be careful."

### Cytherea

The Knights begin searching the island. They come across ruined temples filled with pagan imagery and totems. The most common statue is what we call "the Venus of Willendorf." You know the one: the squat, round figure with amplified female features. There is no head, only the body. In one of the shrines, the Knights encounter a beautiful young woman sitting alone, surrounded by shattered statues. The shrine seems to be built into a small spring, long since dried up. The thing is now a mud pit. Lying at her feet is the body of a beautiful boy, naked and bloody. This is Cytherea. The shrine is built on the shore of

the Acidalia spring. She's crying over the boy's body, but her tears are lost in the rain.

("Rain!")

When the Knights approach her, she looks up, her eyes red. She looks thin and threadbare, almost a skeleton with skin pinned on. Her obvious beauty has been permanently scarred by grief. The boy is Atunis, recently murdered on another part of the island. As it turns out, Cytherea shares Atunis with another beauty – Persephassa – each of them having the boy six months of the year. Whenever Persephassa must turn him over, she murders him. Then, at the end of the six months, he is recovered by Persephassa. She gives him a magic elixir that brings him back to life and he leaves with her. Cytherea tells the Knights, "If you can bring that potion to me, I will reward you as only a Goddess can."

Then, she gives one of the Knights (the handsome one) a wreath of olive branches. "If you should encounter any dangers in my cousin's kingdom, this will protect you."

### Cytherea's Wreath

*The wreath protects anyone who holds it from harm. Any harm. There are five blossoms on the wreath. Whenever its powers are called upon, one of the blossoms withers and falls from the wreath. When the blossoms are gone, the wreath can aid the Knights no further.*

### Strange's Advice: The Orphic Mystery

The tale of Orpheus' descent into the Underworld is one of the most famous Greek myths. However, like most Greek myths, the story's true beauty doesn't rest in the literal, or



*exoteric* reading – but in the *esoteric* understanding of the story.

Orpheus, the world's best harper (bard) and worshipper of Dionysus, loses his wife on their wedding day. He decides to pack his bags and head on down to Hades to get her back. When he gets there, Hades himself – the King of Hell – tells him, “Welcome to the Underworld! You'll be staying for quite some time.” Orpheus has other plans. Not only does Orpheus demand that Hades let him go, but he also demands the King of the Underworld let his wife go as well. When Hades asks why he should let them go, Orpheus – knowing his strengths – answers with a song.

Now, Orpheus is the best harper in the world, and so when he plays his lute, he makes all the souls in the Underworld weep. He causes chaos in Hades' perfect, orderly kingdom. In order to restore his kingdom, Hades demands Orpheus leave and his bride will follow him. “But,” the King says, “you cannot look back. If you take even one glance back, she will return to me.”

Orpheus agrees and begins walking out. It doesn't take long for his tragic hero mind to start asking questions. “Where is my love? Why isn't she leaving with me? I bet Hades tricked me! And when I get up to the world, I'll be the laughing stock of Greece! Tricked by the densest God in the whole Pantheon! (Except for Ares, of course.) And so, with all this doubt in his head... Orpheus... looks... back...

And what he sees is Eurodyce, his beloved wife, falling back into Hades' kingdom, lost to him forever. He goes insane and runs away. He refuses to worship

Dionysus and turns to Apollo instead. While by a shrine to Dionysus, he gets attacked by a group of Thracian Maenads (foreign barbarian worshippers of Dionysus) because he refuses to give the God of Wine and Song the proper tribute, claiming that he will only worship Apollo. These juiced up wild women tore him to pieces and threw him into the river. His head was buried near the shrine and, in some myths, is rumored to survive as an oracle.

Now, how do you look at this little tale esoterically? Easy. We look at what the story *means* rather than what it *says*.

Orpheus is a harper – a Greek bard. A master of prose, poetry and song. A worshipper of Dionysus, the young harper suffers a tragic loss: the death of his wife. The death of love. Full of remorse, he plummets into despair (the Underworld). All around him is death-death-death. No hope. No light. Only darkness. He has hit the emotional bottom and anyone who has suffered from any kind of depression will tell you – hell, *I'll* tell you – that it's harder than hell to dig yourself out of that.

Now, there's something else about severe emotional trauma on the human psyche: it tends to create beautiful art. Art is not something created from contentment. People create when they *feel* something. If that's true love or despair or anxiety or joy, they create because their hearts are bursting with *emotion*. The deepest despair can produce the most profound beauty (a truth we'll learn in the next World, too). And that beauty, that Art, is what can pull us up out of the Underworld, out of our private hell, and back up into the land of the living.

The trick is: we have to stay focused. We have to stay determined. We have to stay disciplined. One false step, and down you go. Right back down into the deepest, darkest pits of despair. Orpheus played for the King of the Underworld, and he played a song that made the dead remember what it felt like to live again – to love again. The dead remind us that not everyone has the ability to pull themselves up out of Hell. Sometimes, a loved one has to come in and show us the way out.

Reminds me of a story. There's this guy, walking down the street. Suddenly, he falls into a hole. (Stop me if you've heard this one.) A priest comes by and he calls up, “Hey father! Can you help me out here?” The priest writes him a prayer and throws it in. The second guy, a doctor comes by. The guy in the hole says, “Hey! Can you help me out?” The doctor writes him a prescription, throws it in and keeps walking. Then, a friend comes by. The guy in the hole says, “Hey! Buddy! Can you help me out?” The friend jumps in the hole. The guy says, “What did you do that for? Now we're *both* down here!” But the friend says, “Yeah, but I've been down here before and I know the way out.”

The typical picture of Hades is a herd of people, standing perfectly still. They're emotionless zombies, standing around. The guys being tortured in Hades – like poor Sisyphus, pushing his rock forever up a hill – they had to do something *terrible* to get into that position. Orpheus wins his way out of Hades because of his passion. Because of his love. Because of his Art. It is only his own self-doubt that foils

him in the end. And when he fails to rescue Eurodyce, the best part of him stays behind; he doesn't escape Hades, either. He's still down there, even when the wild women tear him apart. He's still there – or, at least, his heart is.

When Orpheus gives up on all the gods but Apollo, he's giving up on everything except the Sun God: the god of logic and reason. He's lost his heart, he's lost his passion, he's lost his soul. The Thracian Maenads tear him apart because he refuses to pay tribute to Dionysus. He won't acknowledge passion. He won't acknowledge love.

This is the true meaning of the Orpheus myth. Or, at least, the true meaning as I understand it. You may pull something else out of it. That's cool: that's what myths are for. For each of us to find something that helps us understand our own condition. To me, Orpheus represents both sides of despair. What happens when we use it properly and what happens when we let it overcome us. Keep this in mind when the Knights go to get the potion – and especially when they move on to Sphere V.

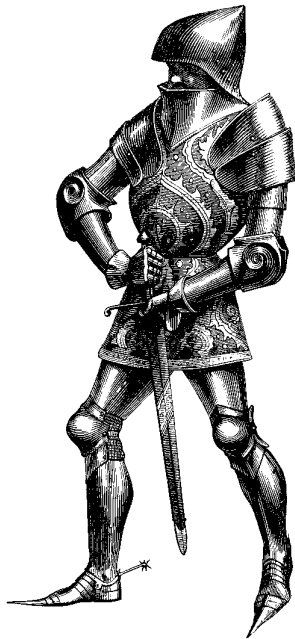
If the Knights ask which way they should go, she answers, “Any way is fine. You'll find it. Just as you always do.” She won't give them any more information than that.

No matter which way the Knights go, they'll eventually find the right cave – although, they could bump into another encounter before they finish this one, so let's deal with that first.

### The Thunder Knight

As the Knights move across the island, they eventually come to a clearing. In the middle of that clearing is a castle, surrounded by a moat. Standing before the moat is a large stone beside a well. There's a golden basin beside the well.

If a Knight pours the water from the basin onto the large stone (standing as tall as one of the Knights), they'll notice the stone is hollow. Water flows into the hollow stone and thunder rocks the clearing. Lightning blinds the Knights, but they hear a drawbridge falling.



When their sight is cleared, a black Knight stands on the other side of the moat. He's on horseback with lance, his face concealed by his black helm. His shield is blank, carrying no insignia.

The Knights can see and hear three women behind the castle's portcullis. They look like drowned cats, their eyes peering hopefully through the rain. The Knight demands they leave immediately. "Pouring water on the stone is a demand for a challenge!" he tells them, his voice booming like the thunder around him.

If the Knights challenge him, he demands the right of single combat. No Knight would deny him this right; doing so takes ten dice out of the Fraternitas Pool. (Give the players a warning before you do this. It's a hefty penalty and you should give them a chance to reconsider.)

### The Thunder Knight

Strength: 4  
Prowess: 5  
Knowledge: 3  
Fortitude: 3  
Honor: 1

Sword: 3  
Lance: 5  
Read: 2  
Ride: 4

If a Knight defeats the Thunder Knight, the portcullis will raise and the three ladies will rush out to him. They embrace him and offer to clean his wounds. As they do, the storm will rise up with epic force, throwing Knights around the clearing, into trees, through the underbrush, and out of sight of their brother. They'll hear the sound of a falling portcullis and the storm will ebb (but not too much), leaving them alone with the fallen Thunder Knight.

If they bother to take a look, they'll notice that the Thunder Knight is actually one of their missing

Brothers. He may be dead, he may be still alive; that's up to you and your sense of mercy.

The only way to get into the castle is for someone to pour water into the stone again. If he does, the same thing happens: thunder, lightning and a black Knight riding forth from the castle. He demands to challenge whomever has poured the water from the golden basin. He will not answer to his name, nor will he treat with any robber Knights here to steal the ladies' virtue. Meanwhile, the ladies weep and wail about being held captive – from behind the portcullis, of course.

This whole sequence continues – with each Knight being defeated and becoming the Thunder Knight – until the brothers figure out a way to deal with it. They may sneak into the castle, but that's a pretty dishonorable act and should invoke losing Fraternitas (4 should suffice). They may try some trick of keeping the winner of the duel with them, like tying a rope to their champion and pulling him back after he defeats his opponent. This won't work; the storm that rises up after his victory throws *everyone* around. Lightning may even strike, burning the rope to a crisp.

Your Knights may come up with another solution. Give them a chance if it is an honorable and clever solution. The best one my group came up with was asking the Black Knight for hospitality. A courteous Knight never turns down such an honorable request. Once inside, the Knights can sit down to dinner and through conversation remind their Brother who he is and what quest he is on. Or, they can try to hammer him over the head and

drag him out. The most honorable solution will earn them Fraternitas; less honorable solutions will lose it. A typical reward should be three Fraternitas Dice.

Remember: the Knight has forgotten his name. He is the Thunder Knight now and only answers to that title. He has succumbed to the raw, untamed emotion of the Sphere. The proper victory here is victory over *emotion*. Emotion has no name. Lust has no name. Lust is the yearning of the loins for each other. Love is a slow, growing thing developed over time. Love is created by respect and honor. Lust is an immediate thing. We see a face and figure that appeals to us: we feel lust. We don't need names to satiate our lust. But love is different. Love comes from admiration and respect. The Knights need to use that. If they do, they will learn that lust is shaped into love. Lust is defeated, not with force, but by taming its desires, shaping them... and *naming* them.

### Disenchanting the Castle

Once within the castle, the Knights must disenchant it. This is typical Arthurian stuff and any educated Knight will know what they must do. There are three tests. A Knight must pass each one. Once that happens, their hypnotized brother – and the ladies of the castle – will no longer be under the castle's spell.

One Knight must undergo all three tests. They are three rooms within the castle: you can only get to Room Three from Room Two and you can only get to Room Two through Room One. The Knights can try banging through walls all they want; it's magic.



You can inform the Knights of these tasks in a few ways. Lord Strange knows these things and can not only direct them, but can also give them advice. Or, you can feed information to one of the more educated Knights and have a player give the other Knights the knowledge they need. Or, you can just throw the tasks at your players blind and watch them fumble to overcome them. It's up to you. You're the best gauge of your players' abilities.

Finally, to make sure there's a sense of "What's going on in there?", make sure each Knight performs the tasks *alone*. Take the player aside and do all three tasks out of sight. That way, if he fails, the other Knights won't know what awaits them.

#### *The Perilous Bed*

A Knight enters an empty chamber. In the center of the chamber is a plush bed. It is comfortable and warm. Soon after the Knight gets comfortable... the bed begins leaping around the room. If the Knight falls out of the bed, laughter bellows out and the bed comes to a stop. If the same Knight tries to enter the bed a second time, it will not move; he has failed this test.

If the Knight maintains his hold and remains in the bed (three Difficulty 15 Strength tests), the bed comes to a rest. But a sinister voice whispers, "It isn't over yet!" Just then, spears and swords fly from the dark corners of the room. The bed begins leaping about the room *again*. The weapons have Prowess 3 and each delivers a Wound. The weapons try striking the Knight three times, then fall lifeless to the floor (a total of three attacks).

"It isn't over yet!" the sinister voice says again. Now, a chimera emerges from the dark corner of the room. All the chimera's Traits are 4 and it has 4 Wounds. The Knight must defeat the chimera without leaving the bed.

If a Knight overcomes the Perilous Bed, it comes to a rest, rolling across the floor on its golden rollers. The Knight – probably lying in a bundle of bloody sheets – is attended by the ladies of the castle who will miraculously heal all his Wounds – even if he is nigh unto death. They will then thank him and disappear.

#### *Meaning of the Perilous Bed*

*The best explanation I ever heard of this rather common Arthurian trial was from Joseph Campbell. He explained, "the perilous bed is man's understanding of the female temperament." One day, it's this way. The next day, it's another way. Back and forth, back and forth. But if you are patient and you persevere, the pleasures are worth the suffering.*

*Now, while I don't like disagreeing with Mr. Campbell, I honestly feel the opposite could also be true here.*

*The male temperament is just as difficult to figure out for our fairer counterparts. The end result, of course, is that we've all just got to hold on. If we're patient and if we persevere, the pleasures are worth the suffering.*

#### *The Sword Bridge*

A pathway through the castle ends. A wide cave opens up. Below is a torrent; a raging river, flowing straight under the castle. Across the torrent is a sword, nearly twenty-four feet long, blade up. The Knight must cross the chasm on the blade.

He best do it with his hands and his feet.

As he crosses the sword bridge, his hands, knees and feet are cut deep by the blade. More than that, the pain causes visions. He hallucinates. The things he sees depend on each Knight's personality and background, but they all maintain a common theme: temperance.

Any Knight attempting to cross the bridge must make three successful Fortitude tests at TN 20. If Temperance is his chosen Virtue, he may roll three additional dice for this test.

#### *Meaning of the Sword Bridge*

*Raging water below, a razor's edge to walk upon. This is the creative journey. Writing, painting, sculpting, music... every creative endeavor is walking the razor's edge. Our world is full of distractions. The creative act is a painful one, but the alternative is drowning in distractions and desires. We can finish that screenplay or we can watch TV. We can rehearse that riff one more time or we can go out with friends. We can finish that knitting project or go out to eat. Walking the razor's edge. That's what the creative life is. That's what each and every one of us do each and every day.*

#### *The True Queen*

Finally, the third task. When Percival underwent this ordeal, he was on his way to rescue Queen Gwenevere. He was faced with *three* Queens and told to choose which was the real one. Each of them looked identical; it was impossible for him to tell with his eyes.

Of course, that meant that he closed his eyes and let his heart decide. This is the Sphere of Emotion and Intuition, after all.

Your Knight must do the same. Look at his background. Pull something from there. As a default, you can use the Grand Master, Jacque de Molay. There are three Grand Masters and the Knight must decide which is true from the false. A little impersonal, but it works in a pinch.

#### *The Disenchantment*

Once the castle has been disenchanting, the ladies rush forth and embrace the Knights. (The Knights may blush, but Derby certainly will not.) They thank them vociferously and offer them tokens of appreciation. Being Knights under the vow of celibacy, they'll obviously refuse... at least once.

The castle is free. The ladies are free. And the Knights are free... to continue on their journey. After a night of rest and relaxation at the castle, of course.

A very... *chaste* and *celibate* night.

#### *Semele's Son*

("Rain!")

The jungle of the island gives way to an ancient ruin. Within that ruin is a beautiful man, surrounded by other beautiful people. Together, they recline on Greek couches covered with pillows, and drink wine. Cheeses and grapes are everywhere. The beautiful man wears a wreath of fire on his head. He sees the Knights and he bids them to enter and join with his feast.

"Trust me," he says, "I am not here to tempt you, but to offer you the hospitality of my home... or, what's



left of it.” If they continue to be suspicious, he laughs. “I promise you, upon my mother’s name, that if you stay, you may leave whenever you wish.”

If asked to swear in the Lord’s name – which, in playtest, happened a few times – he laughs. “In the name of God? Which God? Zeus? Apollo? Neptune? Hades? Trust me, my mother’s name is much holier than all of theirs.”

What is his mother’s name?  
“Semele. And I am the only Olympian who may claim birth from a mortal mother’s womb. That is why I have no desire to trick or beguile you, my friends. For I know what it is to be mortal. Zeus? He hasn’t a clue. That’s why he acts like such a child. And that’s why I love you so, all of you. Not despite your faults and foibles, but because of them. They make you so... *human.*”

The Knights may trust him, they may not. If they sit and eat with him, he will be friendly, courteous, and generous. If they decide they don’t trust him and want to leave, he will task them with this: “I know of your quest. And I know how to help you. I *want* to help you. Please, if you won’t sit with me, at least hear my advice.”

“This place,” he says, pointing to the raging storm outside his little ruined shrine, “has been wounded for some time. I mean, just look at it.” He pauses, taking a drink of wine. “But I’ve long known the secret to taming it. Unfortunately, the secret has been lost because one of your own has transformed it into something else. Something ugly.”

He pauses, leans forward. “The road of excess leads to the palace of

wisdom.’ One of you will say that. I forget his name.”

(Derby may pipe up here. “William Blake,” he’ll say. The beautiful man smiles. “Yes. Dear William...” and pauses, his eyes very sad.)

“The key is *hedone*,” Semele’s son continues. “This beautiful word no longer means what it did when I was ruler of Maenads. Then, it was a joyous word, a fine word, a magical word.”

(Derby leans forward when he mentions “magic.”)

“You see, the *hedone* were those who sought pleasure. But they did not seek pleasure for its own sake and they did not overindulge their... well, shall I say ‘indulgences.’ Moderation was the key. If you drank too much wine,” he says, gesturing to the wine bottle, “you will become sick. And sickness is not pleasure. If you eat too much,” he says, taking a grape into his mouth, “you become sick, and sickness is not pleasure. If you love too much,” he says, pausing to caress a woman’s cheek, “you will become sick. And sickness is not pleasure.”

He looks at the Knights. “The search for *hedonikos*. This is what I taught your people. The proper pursuit of pleasure. Unfortunately, someone came along and turned me into... well, *him!*” He points across the way and the Knights see *another* shrine in the rain. This one is much better maintained. Within it, a fat man sits in a distinctly Roman shrine, surrounded by beautiful women and men engaged in various acts of sexual depravity. His mouth overflows with food and wine and he chortles, his fat body jiggling.

“That fat swine,” Semele’s son curses. “Took my name and my place. Made me into something... vulgar. And ugly.”

The rains and mists form again and the shrine is gone.

“I hope,” he tells the Knights, “that one of the things you carry back with you to your world is this moment. Knowledge of what I used to be,” he pauses, gesturing at the fat man, “and what I became. I hope you will carry this with you.” He lowers his eyes. “I do love you. All of you.” Then, he looks at their faces again. “And I miss you.”

A tear reaches his eye then. “You should go now,” he says. “But I will give you one last piece of advice. When you reach the Underworld in your search for my sister’s potion... do not eat or drink anything offered to you. If you do, you will be compelled to stay behind and will not be able to continue with your brothers on their journey.”

“Also, you will need this.” He hands them three jugs. “One is filled with milk and honey. The second with wine. The third with water, blessed by my priests. You will need this when you reach the great stone beyond Persephassa’s Grove. Pour them, one by one, on the stone. Then, wait for the ferryman.”

He raises a glass to them. “I salute you, brave Brothers. And I hope I have given you a small bit of wisdom on your journey.”

And with that, his palace fades away into the rain.

### **Why So Much Greek?**

*Why not more Persian symbolism? Or Chinese, or Japanese or Native American?*

*Because the Knights encounter symbols from their own culture, within the context of their own understanding. Symbols are not universal... okay, they are universal, but they’re understood differently by different cultures. The symbol is the same, but the expression of that symbol is different.*

*In Buddhist traditions, there are no Gods, but there are Buddhas. Buddhas act differently from Gods, but they are still expressions of infinity. The Native American spirits of Coyote, Buffalo and Crow might not fit the exact definition of “God,” but they fill the same need for those cultures.*

*These symbols are expressions of truths clothed in a language the Knights can understand. If you have Knights familiar with foreign traditions, feel free to pull symbols and metaphors from those traditions. I chose these because a Western audience would be familiar with them, but during playtest, one of my players was very familiar with Eastern esoteric thought, and his Knight was the same. I used many Eastern symbols to communicate with him, specifically.*

*The lesson here: know your players. Know how to communicate with them. I don’t know your players, so I’m using Gods and symbols that communicate to me... and hopefully communicate to you as well.*

### **Into the Underworld**

The Knights eventually find a cave that smells of death and everything



associated with it. The tunnel leads downward with steep steps. The Knights will need to take care here – a single misstep and they'll fall straight down. (You may want to illustrate this with a non-player-Knight.)

Once they reach the bottom, they find a vast and seemingly endless plain. There is a tall grove of trees far away. As they approach the grove, they hear voices stirring among the trees.

"Help me."

"Forgive me."

"Save me."

This is Persephassa's grove. The pitiful voices beg for help, but will say no more.

Beyond the grove is a river. This is the Phlegethon. It pours into a deep marsh where the other rivers meet. There is also a large stone sitting on the edge of the marsh. If the Knights do as they were told, pouring the milk and honey, wine, and water on the stone, a boatman will appear on the marsh. The Knights should recognize him: he is the blind captain of their ship.

"I am Charon," he says to them. "I will bring you where you wish to go. But, I must be paid." The Knights must pay him *something*. Any sacrifice should suffice, but it should have worth to the Knights. Once Charon's payment has been made, he brings them across the marsh toward their destination: the Palace of Hades.

Along the way, the Knights will see Cerberus waiting on the shore. This three-headed beast growls at them. "Why are you here. You do not belong here." Presenting Cytherea's

olive wreath will get them past Cerberus, but it still despises their presence.

"Do not lose your protection, sweet morsels," it says. "Many a hero's bones lie in this place and I have supped on their meat and marrow. How I long to do it again."

Cerberus follows them as they keep moving toward the Palace. Across the Asphodel Fields, they encounter a vast horde of still, lifeless men and women, standing still, looking up at the black sky. There are no stars, no moon, no clouds, no nothing. Only complete blackness. They weep softly to themselves. There is nothing here. No rocks, no shrubs, no water. Nothing. Only the oblivion of infinity.

### **"Don't I Know You?"**

*During this part of the trip, the Knights can bump into all kinds of people. Odysseus, Achilles, Eurodyce... let your imagination roll. Some more educated Knights may even be looking for people to talk to. Have fun with it.*

### **Persephassa and the Potion**

Eventually, the Knights make it all the way up to Hades' Palace. Within is the God of Death with his part-time wife, Persephassa. And from here, the Knights have to figure out a way to convince Persephassa to give up the potion.

Or not.

Here's the thing. Both you and I know your players are going to try something right out of left field. You never can tell with those players. So, instead of giving you one solid, concrete path to success, let's try something different. I'll give you the circumstances and

we'll assume your players will try something that neither you nor I ever counted on. Then, it's up to you to judge whether or not they succeed.

It's okay. I trust you. So do they. Otherwise, they wouldn't have made you the GM.

Persephassa doesn't like being down here. In fact, she hates it. The only respite she gets is Atunis' company. She got tricked to come down here (look up the Persephassa myth) and she resents it. The Knights can play on that. Persephassa may even be willing to trade. If one of the Knights (a handsome one, please) wants to take Atunis' place, she can be persuaded to give up the potion. (And a whole heaping horde of Fraternitas dice should go into the pool for such a sacrifice.)

Hades knows his "wife" doesn't like being down here, but what's a God to do? She is one of the Most Beautiful Women in the World (there's a few of them running around). If you were the God of Death, wouldn't *you* trick a MBWiW to spend four months of the year in your Kingdom? Don't forget: Atunis is down in Hades' realm the same time Persephassa is, so she hangs out with that guy while she's down here. That wasn't part of the original deal. If the Knights can play on Hades' jealousy, that could get things shaking.

Violence *may* be out of the question. Depends on how the Knights pull it off. But I really can't think of a good way to pull that one off. Your Knights might, so be ready for it.

If the idea they come up with is a good one, reward them. If it's a bad one, punish them. This is the God of Death. He can pull off a lot of different punishments. And he isn't merciful. Look at poor Tantalus and Sisyphus, for Zeus' sake.

### **Return from the Underworld**

How the Knights get out of the Underworld is just as important as they get in. Hades does not have to tell them; how the Knights treat him will influence his attitude toward them. It will also influence his *Kingdom's* attitude toward them. The Underworld can be friendly and it can be horrific. Wise Knights should know getting out of here depends a lot on how they treat the lord of the realm. It could be as simple as walking up a long pathway and not looking back, or it could be as difficult as swimming through a sea of feces. It's all up to them.

Bringing the potion to Cytherea changes things. The potion in her hand, Cytherea puts it to Atunis' lips. His wounds close, his eyes flutter, his lips breathe. He's restored to life...

... and the rain stops. Everything is damp, the whole world still wet, but the rain is over.

Cytherea thanks the Knights and honors her promise. "There is still some potion left," she says. She hands the Knights the half filled flask. "Here. Take this with you. May it guide you on your quest."

### **The Potion**

*It has six doses left. Three doses will bring a man back to life. One dose will heal any wound. Make sure the Knights use it wisely.*



## SPHERE V: THE GATEWAY

*Man reaches his highest when he is struck down low.*

— The Lost Notebooks of Lord Strange

Once the Knights have disenchanted the castle, once they've gotten the potion, once they've met with Dionysus, it is time for them to leave the Sphere. They return to the Victory... and find it changed. It is no longer the ship they came here upon, but instead, the same man who met them in the Underworld awaits them here.



"Come along," he tells them. "We must away. Your journey awaits."

If they ask what happened to him or where they are going, he will answer, "I am Charon. And I'm taking you to Hell."

The waters turn dark. The sky turns black and full of smoke. The Knights cough. Only on the field of battle has the air been so... so unclean.

The sky changes, the sea changes... and the Knights change. Their white tabards disappear, replaced with dirty cotton trousers and smocks.

Swords are gone. And on their left breasts are small, red crosses.

Then, the Knights are not on a boat. They are not with the Captain/Charon. They are standing on a cold field, their feet freezing in a muddy field. Standing in a line. German words are all around them — *and they understand perfectly.*

### The Camp

They know their names. They know where they are. They are dirty, filthy half-breeds in a place where the showers have no water. They are beaten, punished and humiliated for no reason other than inhumane amusement and pure cruelty.

The memory of who they were still flickers in their minds, but the all-too-present knowledge of what they are is in the forefront.

They were Knights, fighting the infidel for the God-given right to hold the Holy Land, the birthplace of Christ. And here, they are these pitiful creatures who don't even believe in Christ. This half-breed race that *killed Christ*. They deserve all the punishment they get.

This is the Fifth Sphere. The Celestial Sphere of the Sun. The brightest star in the sky. The closest star. The one we can reach. *The one we can reach.* But there is no sun here. Only black clouds, soot, smoke, dust and pain.

The Knights are under strict observation. If they do not behave properly, harsh punishment will come to them. After all, they killed the messiah. These dirty money-changers. They get what they deserve. They're only half-men anyway. Look at them. Starving. Toothless. Barely able to stand.

Killing them would be putting them out of their misery.

The Knights look upon the guards and see dark reflections of themselves. Holy warriors, driven by faith.

### Derby's Advice

*The Knights must learn something here. They're being tested. If any of them find Derby (and they should) and ask him what's going on, he will answer them.*

"This is all wrong," he says.

"This... this Sphere represents the highest man can reach. It's name is Tipharet. It means 'Beauty.' But this isn't beauty. This is..." his emotion cannot be contained. Tears fall through the filth on his face. "I don't know where we are."

(Remember: Derby is from the late 1800's. He honestly doesn't know anything about this place.)

"Gold," he explains further. "Gold is what all alchemists seek. To transform lead into gold. But it means more than that. Transforming a base material into a pure material. We assume that the magician is transformed with the lead. The Great Work. That's what all magicians seek. To transform ourselves from lead... to gold."

*He collapses, as if the weight of his words is too much.*

"My life... has been in pursuit of this. This journey we are on now. I've waited for it my whole life. I knew I would find you in my dream. I knew it. My father's father knew it.

*Knew that I would be the one to find you and help you. But this," he looks at the camp. "This was supposed to be our destination. The Sphere where the human soul is*

*tested and changed... from lead into gold. But look at this. This is..."*

*He has no more words. His despair has devoured his heart.*

*Also, as a GM choice, you may want to make an issue out of Derby's orichalcum ring. He has it or he doesn't; both have powerful meanings. If Derby's ring is not here, it is a symbolic statement of the vast wound infecting the place.*

*The ring stands for alchemical transformation; if Derby does not have it, it means transformation may not be possible here. If Derby does have it, losing the ring is a powerful symbol: that the transformed soul can be taken away as easily as a little strange ring.*

*By the way, Derby does not have a small red cross on his chest. Instead, he has a pentagram.*

The wound here is deep, but the Knights are here to heal it. Derby is right: this is the highest Sphere men can attain. It is here they are finally transformed from base and vulgar materials into something pure and holy. But what can be holy here in this place of industrialized mass murder?

At one point, one or more of the Knights will see something. Something that will change them forever.

It may be when a young prisoner falters and a guard makes a move to punish him. An old man throws himself on a younger prisoner, begging the guard to punish him instead. Why would an old man do this?

"Because he has a better chance of living through this than I do. And he should have every chance he gets."

It may be when the gas is turned on and when the guards look through the window, there among the bodies are two people (a man and a woman; a woman and a woman; a man and a man) holding each other. Weeping and kissing and holding each other, making promises, and saying goodbye.

It may be a moment when a guard beats a prisoner within an inch of his life, and as the prisoner is dragged away, you can hear the prisoner whisper, "I forgive you... I forgive you..."

It may be a guard who sneaks food out of the mess to give to one of the prisoners. Sneaking out food, knowing that if he's caught, he'll be killed. Tortured, humiliated, then killed. But he does it anyway.

It may be a guard who doesn't beat a prisoner as hard as he should. Only appearing to do so. And on his lips are the words, "Please... please... don't say a word..."

It may be any of these things. It may be all of them. But the Knights will see it. Hopefully, one or more of them will be part of it.

But this one little incident takes place in the middle of a sea of horrors. Guards raping the new and pretty female prisoners. Guards beating the older, smaller, weaker prisoners. Prisoners turning on each other under the threat of beatings or death. Friends and family betraying each other for a crumb of moldy bread. This is the Fifth Sphere. The Gold Sphere. The Sphere of the Sun. And it is the darkest the Knights have seen yet.

After a few days in this environment, the Boatman appears. He is outside the gates. He stands

there, silent and waiting. He says nothing until approached by the Knights. He's not only the boatman, but the guardian of this place.

In order to leave this Sphere, the Knights have to demonstrate a particular understanding. They have to show they understand that it is during his darkest hours that man's soul shines brightest. That in this world, even the most base and cowardly creatures are still capable of kindness and compassion, no matter how far down in their consciousness they've buried it.

That even in the most profane act, there is still something sacred.

Once the Knights understand this, the gates of the prison open and the Knights are allowed to leave. But there's a problem...

#### **"As far as we go..."**

As they reach the gates, a few of the Knights stop. So does Derby. "We cannot go further," he tells them. This is as far as we can go."

When the Knights ask why, he tells them, "This is the highest Sphere men can reach. A few of you are worthy to pass on. The rest of us, we have to stay behind."

Derby continues. "I can't go any further because I'm not actually here. This is only my dream-aspect. I'm lucky I got to come along this far. But you'll see me again. I'll be further up the road. I won't recognize you, but you'll recognize me."

He does give them some advice about their next steps:

*"The next Sphere is Jupiter; the Father of the Gods. The Light filtered through that Sphere...it's God. I mean, it's all God, but in that*

*place, it's where our vision of God... damn, this is difficult to explain. The energy there, it's the primal paternal energy. You'll run into maternal energy later; but the Sphere of the Father... I don't know what you'll find there. Things have been getting more abstract the further we go, but after this Sphere... this is the last Sphere men can understand.*

*"After the Jupiter Sphere, you'll move to the maternal Sphere.*

#### **Moving On**

*The Knights cannot move on because they are not worthy to do so. In order for a Knight to move on from this point, he must have at least one Trait at Rank 5. If he does not, he cannot go on. Decide how many Knights this affects or roll randomly.*

*From this point on, at least one Knight will not be able to go on. See each Sphere for the proper requirements.*

Once they leave the gates, their tabards take the place of the rags on their bodies and they move on...

#### **SPHERE VI: CITY OF ANGELS**

... to the next Sphere. Night looms over Los Angeles, the stars hidden behind yellow smog. The Knights appear on Santa Monica Boulevard, just behind the Nuart Theater. Every Saturday night, at Midnight, it shows *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. It switches out Fridays. Tonight, it's *The Princess Bride*.

The Knights appear in ratty clothes, smelling like sewers. Their beards and long hair have returned. Some have tennis shoes on, wrapped in duct tape to keep from falling apart.

Others wear six layers of clothes. One of them leans on a shopping cart full of junk. Down the alleyway, a man is trying to stand, coughing as he does. He has a pistol in his hand and he's slipping in the puddles the recent rain left behind.

If the Knights approach, he holds up a badge. "I'm a cop," he says. "Stay back." His hair is slick on his pale forehead. He looks like he's been out in the rain all night. His touch is cold. Ice cold. He's also wearing the same ring they saw Edward Derby wearing. His voice is distantly familiar. If the Knights address him as "Derby," or "Lord Strange," he'll take a step back. Explanations are in order.

His badge says he's Detective William Walker of the Los Angeles PD. He explains himself. "I was... chasing..." he pauses, bends over, trying to catch his breath. "This..." he pauses again.

Walker is chasing someone, but he doesn't want to tell the truth. The fact of the matter is, William Walker is chasing a monster. He barely believes it himself.

#### **William Walker, Lord Strange**

*Strength 3*

*Prowess 3*

*Knowledge 3*

*Fortitude 3*

*Honor 3*

*Skills: Read 2 (English, Latin), Pistol 4, Investigation 4, Stealth 3, Alchemy 1, Awareness 1*

*Background: Cop*

### Walker's Story

He was born William Derby, the son of Geoff and Jessica Derby. He's the inheritor of the Lord Strange title, but never knew it until recently. When William's mother found out her husband was involved in a secret society that protected the English Crown from occult terrorism, she fled with her son, leaving her husband in England. Shortly thereafter, Geoff Derby was killed, leaving no immediate heir and the role of Lord Strange went unclaimed for thirty years.



William (now with his mother's maiden name) never knew of his heritage. He got married and had a daughter. On her sixth birthday, she was abducted, raped, and murdered. It was too much for Walker's wife, Nancy. She took her own life months later.

When William's mother passed a year later, he was going through her papers and learned his father's

name. He went to England, learned that he was the inheritor of an estate and a title, and began researching his father's past. It was unbelievable... his father fighting ghosts and werewolves? Unbelievable.

A few days after his arrival, he was attacked by a vampire. He survived, but the vampire's blood is in his system. He wasn't a vampire, but he was forever tainted. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Lord Strange, protector of the English Throne, had become a danger to it.

He packed up his father's library and moved back to Los Angeles. Since then, he's tried to live up to his father's example, tried to earn the right to call himself "Lord Strange." It hasn't been easy. He can see and sense other supernatural creatures. He uses this advantage to get close enough to kill them. The "magic books" his father left him have given him a small degree of esoteric prowess, but he chiefly

relies on his supernatural speed, strength and senses. And a magic gun. His .45 automatic is engraved with runes and it barks a golden fire, not bullets.

He's currently on the hunt for another creature. It appears as a tall, gaunt figure in an immaculate black suit. Looking upon its sinister grin is almost unbearable. It calls itself "Mister Finger," and it abducts children, making them little slaves.

Walker can't ask the Knights for help. He just can't. He thinks they're LA homeless. One of the Knights may recognize the ring he's wearing on his left hand: it's the same ring Edward Derby was wearing. If the Knights can convince him of what they are, he'll eventually understand. He isn't like Derby. He's very new at this "magician" thing. He's a far better cop than a Lord Strange.

### Why Not Call the Cops?

*This is a fair question. Once the Knights and Walker find the man responsible for all this, why don't they call in the SWAT team?*

*Walker's answer:*

*"Because they don't know what they're dealing with. Bullets and tear gas and all that... it isn't going to do any good. He'll laugh and rip them to shreds. I can't tell them it's a vampire – they'll think I'm nuts. Yeah, I might get killed, but at least it'll only be me."*

*Typical gamer answer: "But if you bring someone in and show them it's a vampire, they'll believe you."*

*Walker's reply: "I tried that once. I got fired and put in a mental institution. Six months. And there was a vampire hunting there. I'm there with no weapons, no spells, no*

*nothing. And I'm doped out of my mind and I have to deal with a vampire. No, sir. I've tried that. This way is better. Trust me."*

### A Children's Tale

Walker *thinks* the creature is a vampire, but it behaves strangely. He knows it has moved during the daylight hours. "That's not impossible, but really difficult." Nor did it fear the alchemical fire from Walker's pistol.

In truth, the creature is not a vampire, but a thing from *somewhere else*. It is one of Baphomet's demons, a fiend of indulgence.

Walker was following a story about an urban myth developing among Los Angeles orphanages. The stories were frighteningly similar, all involving a tall gaunt figure and a pale woman in blue. The children call them "Bloody Mary and Mister Finger." Walker recalls the story as it was told to him:

*"The kids, they're terrified. They think these two murdered Jesus, drank his blood and ate his heart. Now, they want to kill God, but before they do, they have to get an army of children, because a child's soul is pure and innocent. Not a lot... I mean, a kid's soul, it has less sin, you know what I mean? So, these two, they take children, eat their souls, and turn them into vampires."*

### The Grinning Man & the Blue Woman

*You may already be familiar with these two.*

*In all myth, there is a source, a seed. A singular place where it all began.*

*It is here.*

Hunting down these two creatures will not be easy. Mister Finger has holed himself up in an abandoned Masonic Lodge on Ventura Boulevard. Every night, he goes out into Los Angeles and finds a homeless family. (Santa Monica has very liberal transient laws, making it a Mecca for the homeless.) He kills the parents and takes the children back to his Lodge.

Once there, he performs an elaborate ritual in the heart of the Lodge's Temple, paralyzing the child, putting the body/soul half in this world and half in the other place. Then, he places the child's body beneath the floorboards... still alive, still aware. There are currently two hundred and twelve children under the floor. Some of them are dead, some of them are partly alive. All of them are irrevocably insane.

The ritual is slowly killing the city, corrupting its innocence. You can feel it on every street corner. Feel it when you hear a gunshot that everyone ignores, feel it when a dirty little child asks for money and gets ignored, feel it when you lock your doors and windows before you lay down in bed at night. The Night Stalker knew this energy and so did the Zodiac Killer. Rodney King felt it when it cracked his skull. Its power is too strong, only gaining strength. Every child sacrificed here feeds it, helps it take another step into our world...

Walker knows the creature has been stalking Santa Monica. He also knows "Mister Finger" is bringing the children toward the south, but he doesn't know where. His plan is to find Finger, follow him to where he's keeping the children, and bust him there. It's a good plan... if

Finger was anything remotely resembling a human being.

### The Lodge

The Lodge is on one of the busiest streets in Venice. Fortunately, nobody sees anything in Los Angeles. (Trust me on this one.) Finger is inside along with all the children he's driven insane. The Lodge is a three-story building with a long stairway leading up to the second floor and no visible entrance to the first floor. No windows, no doors.

Finger is in the attic, the third floor. He is not a vampire. The building is filled with children, all standing perfectly still, immaculately groomed, white eyed and smiling. They talk in a childish way about "daddy." If threatened – or if anyone threatens "daddy" – they will attack. Their teeth and nails are razor sharp. Like little shark dolls, they attack Walker and the Knights. Mercilessly. Biting off fingers, going for the eyes, ripping off noses. Fifteen of them wait for the Knights.

### Finger's Little Girls

*Strength 3*

*Prowess 1*

*Knowledge 1*

*Fortitude 3*

*Skills: Teeth 3, Claws 3, Hold On 2*

*Background: Child Monster*

*Finger's children have no Honor Trait. They cannot be reasoned with. They are all completely insane and devoted to their father.*

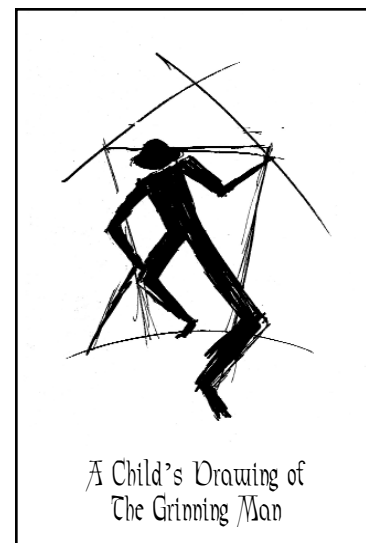
*The children attack with their Strength + Claws. They have no expertise with weapons of any kind.*

If the Knights pay attention, they'll notice the girls don't want to kill them, only debilitate them. Mister Finger wants them alive. Both them and Walker. He wants the Knights for what they are and he wants Walker for what he is.

### Finger's Motive

Finger wants the Knights and Lord Strange. He wants their souls. Thanks to his ritual, this building is now a monument to pain, sorrow and suffering. He's going to cap it off with the souls of the Knights who walked up the Celestial Spheres and the soul of the man who guided them there.

You see, "Mister Finger" is an agent of Baphomet, and he's here specifically to stop the Knights' progress. He's from the other side, the nether realm, the place where Baphomet came from one thousand years ago. And Baphomet is going to make sure the Knights and Lord Strange do not repair the damage it has done to the Spheres.



This whole thing is a trap. And Walker just walked the Knights straight into it.

Handle the scene as you like – doubtless our ingenious players will come up with strategies neither you nor I could ever anticipate. Just remember that Mister Finger is diabolical. He'll stop at nothing to thwart the Knights' progress. Baphomet has ordered them killed, but Finger is more ambitious than that. He wants their souls on sticks with teriyaki sauce.

Finger has a little girl in the attic (she hasn't gone through the ritual yet) and he isn't above using her to get what he wants. Walker is a widower and a man who has lost his only child. He will do anything to protect that little girl's life. Use that.

Let me reiterate that. Walker is a man who lost his only child to a serial killer. Put yourself in his shoes. What would you do to save this little girl from a supernatural boogeyman? Think about that for a little while and you'll get the idea.

Also use the Knights' own virtues as weapons. Their sense of chivalry, honor, and duty are weapons Finger can turn against them.

### The Grinning Man

*Assigning Traits to the Grinning Man is a little ridiculous. He cannot be harmed by mundane means. Guns, knives and other weapons do him no harm. He bleeds, but the wound closes. He's knocked back by the impact, but gets back up as if slapped by a child.*

*If violence is perpetrated against him, he smiles, and then returns the favor. He always strikes with six dice. Who knows, the Knights may get lucky.*

*The only weapon that can harm Finger is the gun in Walker's hand. The weapon is enchanted; it belches alchemical fire. This can harm Finger. A shot through the head will dispatch him from this plane back to where he came from. That will require a roll of at least 30. Every other wound is superficial. And don't forget: Walker's magic gun is a revolver.*

*Of course, your players will find other ways to harm him. Let them. One player suggested the healing potion might harm him; the symbolic power of healing vs. the symbolic power of pain. I liked the idea and gave it to them.*

### Leaving the Sphere

Finger's "death" does not undo his work; they'll have to burn the place down, using the symbol of fire to undo the magic that was made here. This, of course, will bring lots of officials. Walker and the Knights will have to get away from the spot quickly without bringing attention to themselves.

There's a scene to show the Knights here. William Walker, holding a little, naked girl, wrapped up in his suit jacket. She's cold, hungry and terrified. He holds her with the kind of gentle strength only a father has.

Only a father. Derby's words...

*The energy there, it's the primal paternal energy. You'll run into maternal energy later, but the Sphere of the Father... I don't know what you'll find there.*

The words echo through the dark, wet streets. Walker looks up at them. "I'll take care of her," he says. "I'll make sure she makes it to..." he pauses. "Wait. Where are you..."

And like that, they're gone.

**SPHERE VII: GANG WAR**  
Heat. That's the first thing the Knights feel. The pressing heat of summer. Almost immediately, sweat breaks out on their skin. The Knights are now clean shaven, dapper, and dressed to the nines. Neon lights up the sky. Tuxedos and canes. A limousine pulls up to the curb. From it steps a woman in the shortest dress the Knights have ever seen. She's also wearing the same ring they've seen Derby and Walker wearing. Her hair is cut short and she smiles.

"Pleased to meet you gentlemen," she says, winking. "I'm Abigail Astarte Derby. You can call me Abby. I hear you boys need a ride."

Abby knows what's going on with the Knights. She's been waiting for them. She even has some answers for them – if they know the right questions. There's another man in the limo. He is tall, slender, full bearded. His long hair goes down his back in a ponytail.

"This is Snake," she says, introducing him. "And no, that isn't a nickname. He's Snake. As in, the Serpent of the Garden.

He nods, tips his hat and sips champagne. "You may call me Jormungandr, if you prefer," he says.

If the Knights ask how she knows who they are, she laughs. "Because, darling, I *summoned* you! I mean, it's a coincidence you were going to be here anyway, but we all know about coincidences, don't we?"

Abby explains what's going on: "It's a war. A magical war between the Lodges. Over here, on our side, we've got the forces of good and

light, and over there, on their side, it's the forces of darkness and evil."

### The Lady Strange

The situation is actually a little more complicated than that. What Abby *isn't* telling them is that she's on the losing side. Her opponent, a man calling himself "Maveth," has invoked her true name. In doing so, he's also invoked the myth associated with it. "Maveth" is actually Arthur Glastonbury, an occultist from a rival Lodge. Abby and Arthur have been secret lovers for almost a year, playing an elaborate flirtatious game.

"Astarte" is another name for Anath, a Hebrew war-sex-goddess. One of the stories surrounding Anath concerns a God named Maveth (you starting to get the picture?). Maveth stole the Sun and Moon, bringing them down to Sheol, refusing to let them go unless Anath was sent to him. The God El, chief of the Gods, was afraid to send his most beautiful daughter to Sheol, but Anath was not afraid. She put on her armor, took up her weapons and went

down to Sheol to do battle with Maveth.

When she got there, she found the hordes of Sheol waiting for her. Knowing that even she could not defeat them all – she who once killed one thousand enemies in a single battle – she instead challenged Maveth to a game of chance. If Anath should win, the Sun and Moon would return to the sky for one month. If Maveth should win, Anath would be his. Maveth agreed, not knowing that the game was one Anath could not lose. She had practiced this game with her warriors over countless battles and she won every game.

But the longer she gamed with Maveth, the more she admired him. He was cunning and with great wit and more than a little handsome. Eventually, her passion overcame her, and they made passionate love, making a game out of their sex, replacing the game of chance they once played. But still, Anath was more than a match for Maveth, and she eventually won back the Sun and Moon, returning them to the sky.



Abigail Derby, Lady Strange



This is the magic “Maveth” has made by invoking Abby’s true name. It is a magical duel – for the Sun and Moon – and Abby isn’t going to lose. Maveth is no stranger to her; the two were lovers for a while, but Abby felt her emotions becoming too strong. She couldn’t let this man take control of her heart.

That’s why she summoned the Knights: to give her an advantage in this magical war. For even though Maveth has invoked her true name, the end of the story is still the same: he must lose. At least, that’s what Abby thinks. Maveth, on the other hand, has different plans.

### “Where Are We?”

When the Knights ask if they are on Earth, Abby smiles. “No, dears. You’re in the Sphere of Mars. I’m on Earth.”

“Or Malkuth,” Snake adds, “if you prefer.”

Abby shushes Snake. “Don’t mind him. He’s just a bit bitter about the whole ‘Judeo-Christian’ thing.”

Snake shakes his head. “They aren’t the same, you know. Judeo-Christian. Might as well say Judeo-Muslim or Gnostic-Lutheran.” He sips from his glass – which doesn’t appear to be filled with champagne, but something else. “They aren’t the same thing.”

Abby continues. “You are on the Sphere of Mars. The God of Warfare. The God of Strategy and Tactics. This is combat. That’s why you’re here, at this time, at this moment. You’re here because both of us want you here. Maveth and me. Why he wants you here – I don’t know. But I know why I want you here. While the rest of you

make sure the story goes the way it’s supposed to go, one of you is going to help me conceive.”

This should draw blank stares. “As in ‘make a baby,’” she adds. “I have the tantric ritual ready at home. I’ve been studying for weeks.” She winks and raises her glass. “I’m sure you’ll enjoy it.”

### Recognizing Snake

*The Knights have already run into Snake – back in Sphere II. While they recognize him here, even in his human form, he does not recognize them. Or, at least, he’s pretending not to. He may also drop subtle hints that he might recognize them. He’s a tricky fellow that Snake.*

### What’s Really Going On

There is a war going on and it is between Abby and Maveth, but Abby doesn’t realize something has changed. She and Maveth are lovers and rivals, playing a game of one-upmanship. The game is mostly harmless. Mostly. They set traps for each other. Sometimes these traps are mundane, sometimes they’re magical.

As soon as the Lady is out of sight, Snake will explain: “She and Lord Maveth do this about once a month. It keeps their sex life interesting.”

However, this latest maneuver wasn’t begun by Maveth. He’s been possessed by a demon, a servant of Baphomet, a creature akin to the one the Knights battled with William Walker. The trap isn’t set for Lady Strange; it’s set for the Knights.

### Climaxes

So, now that the stage has been set, here’s everything that can go wrong.

First, Lady Strange wants a child, but she doesn’t want a husband. She also wants the father to be significant. That means she wants one of the Knights. Whether she gets what she wants is up to them. She’s a beautiful woman well versed in the tantric arts. It’ll be an experience no man (or woman) would ever forget.

Second, she believes her current game with Lord Maveth is part of their usual maneuvers. It is not. Lord Maveth is possessed by a demon who wants to destroy the Knights. If he can destroy Lady Strange as well – thus ending that meddling line of magicians – it’ll be very happy.

The demon has all of Lord Maveth’s Lodge at his disposal. That’s about thirty magicians. With a little infernal influence, Maveth can keep all of them under its control. Their eyes will gleam red with fire, their voices echoing with a thousand voices. They’ll come armed with both magical and mundane weapons, details of which you can find in the boxed text nearby.

### Possessed Occultists

*Strength 5*

*Prowess 4*

*Knowledge 1*

*Fortitude 3*

*Skills: Shotgun 4, Dodge 3, Search 3, Stealth 3*

*Background: Possessed Occultist*

*Weapons: Shotgun (3), Pistol (2)*

The first attack from Maveth’s Lodge will not be a friendly one.

They’re loaded for bear. They attack at the most inopportune moment... like when Lady Strange is compromised with a specific and detailed magical ritual involving herself and one of the Knights. They attack her Lodge, killing anyone who gets in their way. They won’t kill the Knights; Maveth wants them alive.

Getting out of the Lodge is tricky. The exits are guarded by magicians with weapons. The Knights probably don’t have weapons. Lady Strange will be distracted at best, especially when she finds out her lover is the mastermind of the attack. Maveth is a good man, she knows this, so it makes no sense that he’d be behind a slaughter like this. Something is wrong. Very wrong. And she has no explanation.

If the Knights manage to escape, Maveth makes sure they understand exactly who’s in charge. “Your ‘Maveth’ is Maveth no more,” he says. “I have his mind, his body, and his soul. All three belong to me. If you want them back, you’ll have to come and get them!”

The thing possessing Maveth wants the Knights to know this. It knows about Abby’s relationship with Maveth and knows she’ll do anything to save him. With the Knights in possession of this information, Maveth has the advantage.

### Conclusions

The Knights have a few problems they need to solve.

First, they have to protect Lady Strange. Not only is her existence in danger, but so is the existence of all future Derbys. It won’t take long to figure out that something is



following the Knights, or perhaps is even laying traps for them. That would mean someone knows about their journey and has anticipated their steps.

“We’ll handle that problem later,” she says. “First, we have to figure out what’s happened to Maveth.”

Your Knights will think of many ways to approach this. They’ll want to storm Maveth’s Lodge, set a trap for him at Strange’s Lodge, catch him between Lodges... all these solutions carry with them their own problems. Abby doesn’t want to draw the attention of the authorities (which has probably already happened with the attack on her Lodge), but she can’t let a demon go running around in Maveth’s body.

The best possible outcome is capturing Maveth and getting the demon out. Abby knows a ritual to banish demons – and it will work on this particular one – but that will require incapacitating Maveth first. If he’s conscious, he’s dangerous. The Knights have to knock him out and get him alone with Abby long enough to do the ritual.

### ***Saving the Day***

*The Knights could also just kill Maveth; this is the less-than-ideal solution and Abby won’t go for it.*

*Not unless it’s a last resort. She’s got a ritual to remove Maveth from Arthur’s body. The test the Knights have to undergo here is getting Abby close enough to Maveth.*

*Whether or not it works is up to you. It all depends on the Knights themselves; if you feel they deserve the easy success of having an NPC win the day, give it to them. Or, one of the Knights could perform the ritual.*

The Knights will find it difficult to get Maveth to leave the Lodge – he knows the Knights and Abby want to rescue Arthur – he knows they’ll have to come to him. He’s got a Lodge of possessed magicians and all his demonic powers at his command. He doesn’t care about the magicians, he doesn’t care about the Lodge; all he wants are the souls of the Knights and Lady Strange.

As a GM, you’ll have to gauge the strength of the Knights against Maveth’s forces (that’s why I’m not giving you a total number of possessed magicians). Populate the Lodge with enough forces to give the Knights a hearty challenge, but not too many. You don’t want a TPK (total party kill) on your hands. That’s no fun for anyone. A good challenge that makes the Knights feel they’re fighting for their lives will do. Then, of course, comes the final showdown... Maveth himself.

### **Lord of the Abyss**

Maveth is one of Baphomet’s lieutenants. When Arthur Glastonbury took the name “Maveth” as his secret name (as part of his magic-sex game with Abby), he invited disaster. The demon possessed him and orchestrated this elaborate plan to capture the Knights and Lady Strange.

Like Most demons, Maveth is anything but loyal to Baphomet. Baphomet ordered Maveth to kill the Knights, but Maveth hopes to capture them and devour their souls, making it even more powerful than Baphomet. And, because of her name, Maveth is also drawn to Abby. It doesn’t want to kill her –

just possess her. These are two weaknesses the Knights can play on. The Knights may even decide to summon Baphomet and reveal Maveth’s plan. This will require some fast-fast-fast talking.

Killing Arthur Glastonbury will release the demon, but the Knights should look for a different solution. Beating the body to force the demon out won’t work; the demon doesn’t feel Arthur’s pain. Also, killing the demon’s mortal shell won’t force it back whence it came; it will simply release the demon from its shell and allow it to seek another one... preferably Lady Strange.

Your Knights will come up with a clever solution... if they don’t, they’ve released a nasty demon in the world and have failed to heal this Sphere.

### **Sympathy for the Devil**

In her Lodge, on Lady Strange’s desk is a journal. She’s written something there. Something the Knights may stumble across. It’s a ritual she used to summon Snake.

Come closer.

Closer.

Behind the veil writhes a thing you dare not look upon. A thing who’s countenance would burn and blind you. Its eyes are mirrors of ego that can drive a mortal mind mad. In its belly is the venom of ages, more potent than withering itself. Its mind is full of wisdom and its belly full of poison. It coils and spits and swallows.

Do not touch it! Do not lift the veil. You know not what lies beyond. Be glad it protects us, shields us from his gaze. Be glad for small mercies. But come a little closer. Listen to its hiss. It uncoils. Welcomes us. But we are safe... for now.

It has many names. The men of the North called it Jormungandr, and it curled about the world, chewing at Ygg’s roots, squeezing the years from it. Even their greatest, most powerful warrior would fall to its poison. In Fiji, it is known as Degei, a creature who gave name and shape to the islands of its people and bore man and woman from two eggs, teaching them the secret name of fire.

This is the creature who bears the mark of the Buddha for giving him shade while he rested at the foot of the World Tree. Far to the South, the Greeks called him Okeanos, and he is the father of oceans. This is the creature who tortures Loki, spitting its venom into his eyes until the end of the world. The Egyptians called him Nehebkau, one of the oldest Gods in the Egyptian pantheon; the one who brought the divided universe together and holds it together still in its scaly coils, and as he holds the universe together, so does he hold our souls together – our ba and our ka. His name means “unite.” Later, the Egyptians would forsake him for another snake god... but you already know that tale.



The Celts associated him with Cernunnos, the Horned God, Lord of the Underworld, the one who is hunted and destroyed by his own dogs. Serpents follow his footsteps and swallow his bones, carrying them down to his dark lands deep within the earth, where they vomit him back up so he may take form and be born again in the spring. When the Christians came to England bringing the good news of the newly christened messiah, the Celts gave him the snake... the god who dies and is born again... Look closer in the *Book of Kells* and you will see him there, clad in his usual arraignments, but holding a serpent close to his heart.

In India, he wears three masks: the masks of the three Naga Kings. The first and greatest is Sheshnaga, born of the residue left over after creation, with 1,000 heads formed into a giant hood. Earth is said to rest on his hood, and his venom ends all of creation at the end of each great cycle of life. Vishnu uses him as a couch..

I remember the story of how the Gods came to the second Naga King, Vasuki, begging him to churn the cosmic sea of milk, so they could dredge up the elixir of immortality from the bottom. They wished to overthrow the demons of the world, but to do so, they needed the elixir. Vasuki agreed, but requested that he be the first to drink. The Gods tied Vasuki around the Mount

Mandara, the center of the world, and the Snake King begins stirring, but it proves too much for him, round and round and round for days and days and days. Eventually, the motion sickens him and he vomits a great cloud of poison, threatening to kill gods, demons, everything. It is Shiva who has the strength to withstand Vasuki's poison. He swallows all of it, marking his throat blue for all eternity. The Gods get their elixir, provided by the sweat of the Snake King.

The Third Naga King is Taksaka, the Snake of the Earth. His most famous exploit involved a powerful king, out hunting, who meets an ascetic in the woods. He speaks to the wise man but the ascetic makes no response. Angered, the King kills a snake and drapes it over the yogi's neck, who remains unmoved. When the ascetic's son sees what has happened, he curses the King to die, and calls upon Taksaka, the Naga King, to take revenge. Taksaka sends some Nagas, disguised as hermits, to the King, and they offer him fruit. The King takes the fruit, from which Taksaka, disguised as an insect, emerges. He stings the King, who dies instantly.

And so, it is his son's turn to take revenge. He vows vengeance on Taksaka. He uses a powerful spell, a sacred fire to consume all the world's snakes, one by one. Just as Taksaka

himself is about to be consumed by fire, a great sage intervenes and spares his life. After this, the Nagas retreat to the underworld, promising to bite only the truly evil, or those destined to die prematurely anyway.

I've also heard tales of the Nagaloka: the serpent-women. Beautiful and deadly, they could charm any man with a single glance, lure him away from any promise of loyalty. I heard these tales as a girl, and as a girl, I believed them. As I grew to womanhood, I dismissed them as fables and folklore.

I was wiser when I was younger.

\* \* \*

In the *Book of Kells*, there is an image of Christ and the Snake. In the Gospel of Mark:

*[15] And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

*[16] He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

*[17] And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*

*[18] They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

And there is Jesus, right there, and in his hand is a snake. I asked Fergal about this and he told me, "When the Celts first

learned about Jesus, they associated him with the God of the Dead. With Cernunnos. And his servant was..."

"The snake." I finished the thought for him.

And there, right there, I had an epiphany. Standing in that darkened room, I saw something I'd never seen before. I spoke out loud, half thinking, half speaking.

The Celts put the Snake in his hand. The creature that goes down into the world and comes back up again. Agent of the God of Death, his messenger and servant. Bringer of quick death. With his belly full of poison. His belly full of wisdom. For wisdom is death. The death of innocence. The quick strike of a snake. The poison it delivers transforms us... as wisdom transforms us... and if we are strong enough to survive the wisdom... we are stronger.

Antivenin. We take small doses of poison to make us stronger because too much can destroy us.

Jesus... snakes... The Snake. The Serpent. What did he say to Eve...?

*Genesis, Chapter 3:*

*[1] Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said,*



*Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

*[2] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*

*[3] But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

*[4] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*

*[5] For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

*[6] And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

*[7] And the eyes of them both were opened*

Why is Jesus associated with snake? Because Jesus was the Snake. The Biblical Prometheus, bringing fire to man. Bringing Wisdom to man.

And he was punished for it, as was Prometheus punished, as were we punished.

And when he came back, he didn't come back to die for the sins of man. He came back to bring us wisdom. His stories, his parables, his example.

And he was punished for it. Twice.

\* \* \*

For some, he is the Trickster. To those who do not know him, he is the Deceiver. To those who revere him, he is a friend.

You may come closer now. Part the veil, but slowly! Slowly...

Show him the reverence he deserves. The respect he has earned. If you do not, he will give you wisdom... so much, it will destroy you.

But here, my friend... my beloved one. With your eyes that hypnotize... I give you my hand... my wrist... my ankle...

... I ask for the wisdom you carry. I desire it. Need it. For the fire it will put in my brain and my blood.

Your fire. But only a little. Only a little...

### Snaking Away

Once the Knights have healed the Sphere (by getting rid of Maveth), Lady Strange will tell the Knights they're in deep trouble. "Something knows where you are and where you're going," she says. "You have to give whatever it is the slip."

Snake sips his champagne. "You could go through the Abyss."

Lady Strange doesn't like this idea. "That's too close to the otherworld."

Snake nods. "But it is the last place the demons will be looking. They're expecting them to follow the standard path. If they go through the Abyss, they'll be able to pass up to Chokmah (*choke-mah*)."

"But they'll get lost."

Snake shakes his head. "I'll guide them," he says. "After all, who could be a better guide through the Sphere of Lost Wisdom?"

If the Knights get too confused, Snake shows them a map (see **Abby's Map** in the Appendices). "You see, this is where you are. And this is where you need to go. In order to get there, we'll have to pass through what once was, but is no longer. The crack. The fissure. Where chaos has invaded order. Come with me. I'll show you the way."

Snake takes out a Tarot deck. "In order to do this, we'll have to go off the map." He pulls out Aleister Crowley's "black card."

"Crowley calls this the unicursal hexagram," Snake says. "And it's the key for where we want to go."

If the Knights ask where they're going, Snake answers, "Nowhere."

He draws the six-sided image in the air with an iron dagger. The image flares, floating in the air. Then, a spiral staircase flames into existence. It goes down. And down. And down.

The Knights can see nothing. It descends into Nothing. No sound, no smell, no temperature. "That's where we have to go," he says, pointing at the spiral staircase leading down into darkness.

"But I warn you," he says. "This is a dangerous place. You will be naked here. Without symbol, without metaphor, without meaning. No reason. No meaning. No thing. Nothing."

And with that, Snake changes. He melts from a human form into

something long, slick, and slender. His head shines with black scales and his eyes are endless. His tongue darts between his... he has no more lips. Slithering along the floor, he coils around the cast-iron railing of the spiral staircase.

"I need to take this form," Snake says, "to protect myself. This is my truest form. I'll need it if I'm to survive down there."

Lady Strange pulls out a map. "Here. You need to know where you're going. You need to understand it."

It's a map like they've never seen. "Each of the Spheres you've passed through are associated with a planet. You've passed through Mercury, Venus, Jupiter... this Sphere is Mars." She points out each planet as she mentions them.

"But, there's a missing planet," she says. "And a missing Sphere. An empty Sphere. A ruined Sphere."

And with that, she points at the asteroid belt. "Here. This Sphere. The planet it's associated with... it's gone."

If the Knights ask what the planet's name was, she shakes her head. "We don't know."

She pulls a card out of Snake's deck. "But here," she says, holding up one card. "Look at this. It's important."

The card she's holding up is The Fool from the Rider-Waite Tarot deck.

"This is important." She makes sure each Knight looks at it... then, she puts it away. If the Knights ask her why, she says, "I cannot tell you. If I tell you, you'll never make it to the other side."



"Come," Snake says. "It's time to go."

Lady Strange says her goodbyes then watches the Knights descend down the staircase. Just as they're about to disappear, she says, "Wait! I forgot to tell you something! Baphomet! She's..."

And with that, the Lady Strange and her world disappear.

## THE ABYSS

Down, down, down, down.  
Endlessly. Forever and ever. Down.

"This is a bad place," Snake says, hissing all the way. "The place where demons come through. There was murder here. That's how they can come through."

As they descend, the staircase becomes less sturdy. The cast-iron is rusted, the footing untrustworthy. "Everything falls apart here," Snake says. "There is nothing to hold it together."

Eventually, the staircase snaps. The Knights and Snake fall.

All.

The Way.

Down.

## Snake Explains

They don't remember landing. They're back in their old tunics and armor again. Snake notices this. "You don't mean anything anymore," he says to them. "Nothing means anything here." He slithers along. "Come. We must get to the other side."

As the Knights look around, they see ruined buildings, broken roads. As they walk, their feet crunch on empty snail shells.

"Abandoned things," Snake says. "Up from the otherside." He explains further.

"This used to be a Sphere. Not anymore. Ruined. Baphomet came up with her demons from the otherside. Came up through here. Not sure when. Cracked the crystal of the Sphere. Shattered it. Now, everything this Sphere represents is lost. We don't even know what its name was."

All around the Knights is ruin. Broken bicycles, empty bottles, junk of all kinds. And between the junk and the potted roads are patches of odd light. Not light. Something else. Something dark as light is bright. Patches of brilliant shadow.

"That's where they come up," Snake says, gesturing at the patches. "The holes in the Sphere. From the otherside."

Eventually, the Knights will ask about this "otherside." Snake explains:

"Hell," Snake says. "Absence from God. That's Hell. But more than Hell. Abandoned things. Forgotten things. Lost things. Things that were not meant to be. That should have never been."

He slithers on. "Angels, they represent what is best in you, but demons, they represent what is worst." He never pauses, keeps moving. "Light filters through. The Word filters through the crystal Spheres. But darkness can filter through, too. Each Sphere represents things. Love, hope, ambition, conflict. These things, if they are lit with noble grace, they are beautiful. Sublime. If they are dimmed by darkness, they are

awful. Terrible. That's why you are here. Too much darkness. The Word cannot find its way through. The Spheres are tainted. Corrupt. Thick with darkness. The world is weak. Fragile. Turning into *this*." Snake stops and points at a shell with his nose.

"An empty shell. No meaning. No light. Fragile. Easily broken. You have to change that. Open up the gates. Let the light back in."

If any of the Knights inquire about Snake's role in the Garden of Eden, he smiles. "I did what I was supposed to," he says. "I gave them Knowledge. So they could choose. God wanted obedience. What is obedience without choice?"

He slithers away. "I am Snake. Messenger of the Gods. Messenger of Death, bringer of Wisdom. Wisdom is Pain. Learning the Truth is Pain. Hard. Sometimes too hard."

## The Despoiled Virgin

Through the rubble and ash, the Knights eventually come across a ruined building. It has distinct

Greek architecture: pillars, stairway... it could be a temple. At the top of the building is a broken statue. At the foot of the building are remains of that statue. The Knights can make out little... a woman's figure. A helmet. A spear.

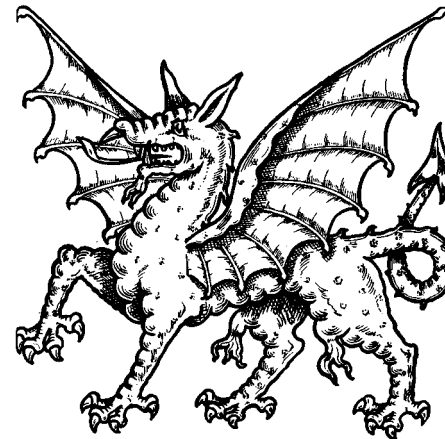
"Oh no," Snake whispers. Then, he slithers toward the building with a speed the Knights have never seen him use before. Once in the building, they can hear his moans of anguish. "NO! NONONONO!!!"

If they follow, the Knights find Snake coiled around a corpse. It is rotten and mummified. Close by is a shattered helmet and a broken spear. Snake embraces her, tears rolling down his eyes.

"I cannot," he begins, but stops. "I cannot... I cannot remember... but I know... I know..."

At this point, your players with any sense of mythology will know who Snake is embracing. When they say her name and ask, "Is it her?" your best answer is: "Who?"

They'll insist. "It's her, isn't it?"



You must reply, "Your characters have never heard that name."

All the Spheres are associated with planets. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter. There is one missing planet, with nothing for a legacy but rubble. There is one missing Sphere.

"It isn't an Abyss," Snake says through his tears. "It's ruined. Murdered. They defiled her. Defiled Her!"

Virgin Goddess. Mother of Knowledge. Tortured and raped by the things that broke through. She's ruined. Destroyed. Obliterated. Even Snake cannot remember her name. But he can feel the loss. As the Knights do now.

"It's hopeless," Snake whispers. "Hopeless. The Tree cannot be repaired. The Light cannot find its way down. There is nothing you can do now. Nothing..."

If the Knights need further explanation, Snake tells them:

"The gap. Baphomet returned from her banishment. She returned here. Where the Spheres were weak. Because of the world's ignorance... because of its hatred... because of all that *you've* done. All that she meant, all that she was... you destroyed.

"She was Wisdom. Your church burns knowledge and murders 'heretics' who seek different truths!



"She was Strength. Look at your prideful crusades. Look at them! What are they but blood baths of conceit!

"She was Beauty. Look at what your women are now! Cattle! Property! Nothing!"

Snake curls around the body. "Leave me! Leave! All is lost now! There is no hope! No setting the world to right! The Light is lost to us... and *you* are the ones responsible! Leave me!!!"

### ***The Symbol of Saturn***

*At one point during their wanderings, the Knights stumble across a small pin about the size of a coin. It looks like this:*



*A Scholar may identify it as the symbol of Saturn, the God of the Underworld. That would certainly have meaning here in this place.*

*Just then, they hear the sound of something... a clicking or hissing sound. A grey blur behind some rocks. If they investigate, there is nothing. Nothing but a white glove.*

### **Alone in the Abyss**

The Knights must move on... but where to go? And what direction?

There are no stars. The "sky" is pitch black. There is no wind. No source of light. In fact, the Knights aren't exactly sure how they're seeing anything. All around them are ruins. They see smashed statues, the faces ruined and wrecked.

Noses and phalluses broken away. Sometimes, they must climb over the rubble.

Here, they find the ruin of old ideas. Abandoned myths. Unrecognizable deities. It isn't cold, it isn't hot. It's nothing. There is no sound. No wind. Only absolute silence. The Knights are completely alone.

Finally, something moving. A movement behind three fallen pillars, looking as if they are holding each other for comfort. The Knights come closer and find... a woman.

She is naked and plain. Nothing about her features is remarkable. If you look away from her, you barely remember the color of her hair or the shape of her eyes. She is timid and meek. Frightened. She acts like an animal... skittering away when the Knights approach. But she is also weak. A dying idea, perhaps. A Goddess who's worshippers are few and scattered. Another icon nearly destroyed by the raging torrent of Catholicism across the world.

*Perhaps this is what she is. In truth, she's something else. But for now, she's frightened, lonely, and weak. She doesn't speak, only gestures. She will not tell the Knights her name. If she leaves any Knight's sight, he will forget her until he sees her again.*

She welcomes comfort. If offered a blanket, she will take it. If offered food, she'll eat it with a ravenous hunger. She clings to the Knights like a child clings to a parent in a storm. She appears desperate and without hope.

This is far from the truth.

If asked if she knows the way out of the Abyss, she shakes her head.



The Knights may bring her with. They may leave her behind. Charitable and Merciful Knights in particular should remove appropriate dice from the Fraternitas Pool if the Knights decide to leave her.

### At the Edge of Ruin

The Knights move on. Tell them they don't know how much time is passing. They're just walking... and walking... and walking...

... until they reach the Edge.

A sheer drop, straight down. A cliff face. With no bottom in sight and no sign of the other side.

The girl wants to go another direction, frightened by the gap. If any Knight looks too long over the side, his eyes glaze over and he drops. One or two NPC Knights may illustrate this for the players.

This is where it happened. This is where the Sphere cracked and Baphomet brought up all the horrors of the otherside with her.

The energy from this place is awful. It causes dizziness, nausea, and flashes of awful things. If any of the Knights were ever captured and tortured, they'll re-live it here. If they've ever done something so awful, so unforgivable... they'll re-live it here.

The underside of all that's sacred and holy rushes up into the world from this place. Rape, murder, degradation... it's all from here. Not "sin." No, nothing so petty as that. Knowing and willful evil. This is the source of all that. The Knights don't need anyone to explain that to them. They can sense it. They can feel it. Pure malice.

And it will be here that the Knights face the source of it all.

### Baphomet

The naked woman they found... she twists in their grip. Her silent lips part and she laughs. She throws away whatever garment they've given her and she stands before them. Naked. And laughing.

"I brought you here," she says. "Here. Where I am strongest. Where you are nothing. Where you mean nothing."

She laughs again, nude and powerful before them. Her eyes turn black. So do her lips. Her tongue like pitch.

"I've waited for you. Just like the others. Waited for you to come walking down this path. I knew that foolish bitch would send you here. Pathetic waste of flesh. Each generation of her Name is weaker. And more stupid."

If a Knight tries to attack her, she'll easily deflect it and draw the Knight close to her. Then, after a kiss, she will cast the Knight into the Abyss.

"You are trapped now," she says. "Trapped without symbols or signs to guide you. And that fool Snake down here, too. In this place. Where all symbol is devoured. Where its energy flows down into the Qliploth. Into the endless nothing of abandonment."

Yes, this is Baphomet.

The smartest thing the Knights can do is run. They can try to hide in the ruins. If she finds them, she tears them apart. See Baphomet's stats in the nearby boxed text.

### Baphomet

Strength 7

Prowess 7

Knowledge 7

Fortitude 7

Honor 7

Skills: All at 7

Background: Baphomet

*If you were looking for a way to get rid of extraneous Knights, this is the time and place to do it. This is the darkest place in the journey – the belly of the beast" as Campbell would put it. The Knights are completely alone, abandoned, isolated, and without help.*

### The Trick

Baphomet can extend her power into the First Sphere, but only for short periods of time. Besides, she doesn't want to escape to the First Sphere, she wants to climb up... up to the Ninth Sphere. That's where the Knights come in.

She wants to possess one of the Knights. That way, she can escape up into the Ninth Sphere.

At some point, you will have the opportunity to get one of the Knights alone. This may come from a brave Knight throwing Baphomet into the Edge. She grabs the Knight, drags him down with her, but he miraculously catches the side and pulls himself up. Or, one of the Knights falls behind. Or, he's out alone on patrol. Whatever way works, get one of the Knights away from the rest. That's when Baphomet possesses him so she can escape from the Abyss.

If you can't, there are still ways to pull this trick off. She can wound

one of the Knights, injecting her own blood into the wound. That way, she's with the Knight symbolically... and that's all that matters. As long as they carry Baphomet out of the Abyss, she can escape it. Carrying her out literally (by possessing a Knight) or symbolically (by carrying her blood); either way, she escapes the Abyss and the Knights carry her up to the higher Spheres.

### The Abandoned One

Eventually, some of the Knights escape Baphomet. Once they do, they find themselves back at the ruined temple where Snake lays coiled around the Goddess' corpse.

Once he hears about Baphomet, his weeping begins again. "Baphomet," he says. "She who was cast away."

Pressing for more information, the Knights learn the truth. "There is one thing in all Creation without a name," Snake says. "One thing that Adam never gave a name to. One thing."

Snake pauses. "When Adam first was in the Garden, God made for him a companion. Lilith. But she went away because Adam was prideful and treated her like an inferior. As an aside, Snake almost laughs... an ironic laugh. "She didn't need to be tricked into eating wisdom."

Lucifer pauses. "Later, God made Eve. Made her subservient to Adam."

Another long breath. "But there was another. A *second* mate. God made the mistake of shaping her in front of Adam and he was appalled. He wouldn't even touch her. So, God cast her down into the Qliploth; into the place of abandoned things."



He looks at the Knights. "Of course she is here. This is where she broke through. She's been waiting for us."

The weight of this place is heavy and Snake has collapsed under it. He can't escape it. He needs their help to do so. "If we leave," he says, "we must bring her with us. Up the Tree toward the top. Perhaps then... perhaps then... she can be healed as the world is healed."

Snake tries lifting the corpse, but it is too heavy for him. "Help me," he says.

Together, they carry the mummified corpse through the Abyss. After a while, they smell smoke. And see the flickering of a fire. Another?

If they approach, a voice calls out. "I know you are there," it says. All at once, the Knights feel humble. They feel... beautiful. They approach closer... and find a beautiful young man sitting beside the fire. He has large white wings growing from his back. He is naked, but shows no sign of gender. In fact, they aren't quite sure if "he" is the correct term to use. Its face... brings tears to your eyes. Its form... makes you want to hold it and fall asleep in its arms. Not the comfort of sex, but something else. The comfort of trust.

It sits beside the fire, its voice sad and lonely. "Come closer," it says. The Knights feel compelled to follow its instructions.

"Please," it says. "Sit. She will not come here. She dares not." It sees their scaly companion. "Hello Snake," it says.

Snake makes a kind of bow. "Greetings Lucifer," it says.

If the Knights react strongly to it, Lucifer dismisses them with a soft *hush*. All the strength leaves their arms and legs and they fall to the ground in gentle heaps. Some may be wiser than to attack the First of the Fallen.

"Why are you here?" Snake asks (if the Knights do not).

Lucifer answers. "I was in Hell," he responds. "But when Baphomet opened the gate... I tried to leave. But what's the point?" It looks up at the empty sky. "He still despises me."

If the Knights are curious, Lucifer explains.

"I was the Best Beloved of all the angels," Lucifer says. "None loved Him as I did." When Lucifer speaks, they can feel the 'H' it uses. "I loved Him with all my heart, with no room for anyone or anything else. So, when He made you... He demanded we serve you."

It pauses, stokes the fire with a blackened bone from an unknown creature. "He told me, 'You will love Man.' I told him, 'I love God.' I disobeyed. So great was my love for Him, I could love no other. I disobeyed, so I fell."

He looks at the Knights now. "Tell me true, Brothers of the Red Cross. You have made vows and promises to each other. **Vows and Promises.**" The weight of those words falls on the Knights. "What could make you break your love for each other? What could make you turn away from God?"

It looks back at the fire. "When there is love in your heart... nothing can turn your heart away. I still love Him. My heart aches for Him.

"Just to hear the Word. Just to see... just to touch His feet..."

And then, Lucifer's eyes water. Its voice breaks. "I loved Him. I gave Him everything. I gave Him my life. My breath. Everything that was mine was His. And he said, 'Be gone from my sight.'"

It raises his eyes, full of tears. "Do you know what Hell is, Brother Knights? I'll tell you what Hell is. To forever remember... to have the memory... the sound of the one I love the most... telling me He doesn't want me anymore."

It pauses for a long while. Then...

"When I fell, I fell below things. Below everything. Under Creation to where the husks are. The broken and abandoned things. Where *she* was. The place of God's mistakes. The things He has placed out of His sight. When she broke through, I followed... but I've gone no further. Why should I? He still doesn't want me."

Lucifer has the power to leave here; it is one possible escape route, but the Knights have to be convincing. "Make a deal with the Devil." Of course, if they say that, it replies: "The Devil? Satan? Brother Knights, you are thinking of someone else entirely."

(It's true. Satan and Lucifer are two different entities. They may have met Satan back in Sphere II, but not Lucifer.)

If the Knights want Lucifer's help, they'll have to earn it. It is morose, depressed, and held down by the same energy that holds Snake down. Lucifer is a scorned lover. *The Scorned Lover*. It has lost the love of God. If the Knights can convince Lucifer, more power to them. Don't

let them get away with it without earning it.

If they do convince Lucifer, its wings open wide. "Very well," it says. "I will take you to the next Sphere. The Sphere of Truth."

### The Way Out is the Way In

If the Knights stay long enough, they'll begin to fall. The Knights with the lowest Traits will fall first. As they do, they slowly turn to stone, then fall apart, shattering into pieces. The weight of this place is too strong; even powerful symbols like Lucifer, Athena, and Snake cannot last forever.

If the Knights ask Snake how to escape, he tells them this: "The Abyss is always falling," Snake says. "It is a bottomless pit. Not literally, but... symbolically. A never ending descent."

How do you break a never ending descent? Snake says, "I don't know."

The Knights may remember Lady Strange's last message. The Fool. Walking blindly forward, about to fall off the edge of a great cliff. If they ask Snake about this, he tells them: "It's possible. We're descending without end. Perhaps the only way to break that descent is a willful step off the path. Newton's Second Law applied to magic." For the first time since they arrived, Snake smiles. "It might work."

The Knights need to find the Edge again. Once they do, they need to jump off. Right off into the unknown. A leap into certain death, certain destruction.



"Death would be better than this," Snake says. "Maybe that's why it will work."

They take a step... the Fool's leap...

... eternity rushes up...

... an eternity of Nothing...

... and they fall...

... forever...

### SPHERE XIII: WISDOM

... they awaken on sand. The sound of the beach all around them.

Here, the air tastes like the lingering atmosphere of a thunderstorm. The Knights can taste lightning between their teeth. Rain dapples their faces.

"We are here," Snake says. "We made it." He's still in his Snake form.

Then, a single light. A black light (yes, like the one they use in haunted houses; the one you used to light up velvet posters; the kind that makes your white shirt and teeth shine). A throne. Nothing else. Just a throne. Seated there is a beautiful woman dressed in a red robe/gown. She stands, and as she does, she grows larger than the entire sky. The Knights are dwarfed by her presence. Planets can dance on her fingertips. Her head is surrounded by a halo of galaxies. When she speaks, her voice is singing.

"I am the Mother of Suffering," she sings. "And pain is my crown."

As her voice falls upon them, it hammers them down. They are punished by her presence. Her words are fire that burns even the marrow of their bones.

"No beast knows my name," she sings, "but there are men who are less noble than beasts, and these men know not my name."

The Knights feel their blood stopping in their veins and their brains shrinking like an apple left out in the sun.

"I am a Virgin to those who know me not, and a Whore to those who would have me."

The Knights feel their skin slipping from their bones.

"I offer my treasures to those bold enough to look upon them. But those jewels are coal to those who know not how to find them."

The Knights feel their spines twisting, bones breaking through the skin of their backs.

"Those who wish to know my embrace must suffer my agonies..."

... and just as the pain of her words makes the Knights feel their eyes will explode inside their skulls, she whispers:

"... but my kisses are sweeter than all the stars."

And as she does, the Knights feel all the weight of all their sins lifted from their skin and souls. They look up and what they see is... not a woman...

They see...

They see...

... Mother. The Mother. The Mother of Us All.

And with that, the Knights know that any act of violence here would be profane.

"Come," she says. "I will show you the blessings of my embrace."

### Birth

The Knights appear in a stable. Before them is a bearded man, his eyes wide with panic. He's holding a woman, her belly thick with child. There is blood between her legs. A baby's head can be seen.

The stable is filled with the sounds of her screams. The man tries to help, but the process is hers alone. He pulls and the baby finally escapes. It cries. The mother and child are still connected.

"I was here," she says. "When my son was born. I am always here. Pain and blood are my garments. And this..." she pauses while the mother holds her newborn child, her red and blemished face still full of pain, but her smile unlike anything else in the world... when she sees her child.

"And this... this is my crown." She touches the Knights. "Now, this..."

### Cliff

The Knights appear on a cliff. A small girl is dancing, not paying attention. She can't be more than five. She's dancing to music in her own head. She dances too close to the cliff... and slips.

At the last moment, she catches herself. She pushes herself away from the cliff. An older boy rushes up to her. He grabs her.

"You could have died!" he tells her. "Mom and Dad would have killed me!"

The little girl's eyes are fixed on the cliff. Her lips are muttering. "I could have died... I could have died..."

She says the words as if they've never occurred to her before. "I was here," the Mother says. "When that

thought first entered her mind. She touches the Knights. "Now, this..."

### School

A classroom. Cadavers everywhere. 1893, England. Harvard Medical School. Students stand before the cadavers, scalpels in hand.

"Gentlemen," the professor says. "Make your first incision."

The students do as they are told. The Knights and the Mother walk among them unseen. They pause and look over the students' shoulders. Some of them faint. Some of them vomit. She pauses by one in particular. His eyes are wide. Almost in tears. Tears of terror.

His hand trembles as he makes the first cut. All of his doubts are there in his fingers.

"I cannot do this," he whispers. "It's terrible... terrible."

He makes the cut. The second cut. His hands trembling so badly, he needs to make it twice. Her gown glows red, drips with blood.

His lips tremble. Then, he peels away the skin and reveals what lays underneath. His tears still flow, but not tears of terror. He remembers why he is here. He remembers...

"It's... beautiful..." he says.

"I was here," she says. "When he saw the majesty of life." She touches the Knights. "Now, this..."

### Test

Back where this all began. Her and the throne.

"When the world began," she sings, "I was there. Beside Him. He made the world, but I wept for it. And I am here. Closer to you than He. And I weep for you."



She touches them without reaching. Her caress is like a mother's caress. "Pain is my gown. But comfort is my crown. What is my lesson? Tell me true and you may pass."

The lesson here is the name of the Sphere. "Wisdom."

The price of wisdom is the pain of lost innocence. What we gain in wisdom, we lose in naivete. And the process of losing that, for some, can be too painful.

The Mother who suffers the pains of childbirth to bring life into the world.

The Child who learns that she's not immortal, but will someday die.

The Doctor who overcomes and sees through the vulgar flesh to the beauty of nature's design.

They all surrender something. And by surrendering it, they gain something more.

Her name is Sophia. She is God's Female Counterpart. The Mother of the World. And the lesson she teaches is this:

The pain of wisdom is worth the loss of the comfort of ignorance.

### **Baphomet's Victory**

When Sophia approaches them, her gentle smile shining in the black light, the possessed Knight acts. He draws his sword and puts it through her chest.

Any act of violence here would be profane.

Baphomet doesn't have to kill Sophia; all she has to do is despoil the Sphere. While the Abyss corrupted all the Spheres below it, Baphomet's profane act could not reach higher than the corrupted

Sphere. The top three were untouched by Baphomet's act... until now.

And the Knights were the ones who brought Baphomet here.

Baphomet erupts from the Knight's body (how she does so is up to you; she can kill her host or just hurt him a lot). "Dear Mother," she says, looking down on the wounded form of Sophia, licking the blood on her fingers. "Now I will climb up and spit in the face of God!"

### **How Do the Knights Stop Baphomet?**

They are in the Sphere of Wisdom, the Sphere of Femininity. The Sphere of Ultimate Mercy. If the Knights need a clue, let her monologue for a while...

She looks at the Knights. "You pathetic creatures! Your Father cast me away! Sent me to the shadows where none could ever know I even was! He found me disgusting! He rejected me! Without even a name! Even that thing at your feet was worthy of a name!"

What is Baphomet? She's the only creature in all of Creation that Adam never named.

She's Adam's second wife. If the Knights still need a clue, either Snake or the dying Sophia can hit them over the head with the Clue Hammer.

For first God made Man and Woman together, calling them Adam and Lilith. But Lilith would not obey Adam, and Man asked God to make him a more suitable mate. Lilith left the Garden and was never heard from again.

When God made Adam's second wife, he formed her while Adam

was still awake. When Adam saw how she was made, he was disgusted by her. God cast her out of the Garden and she was never heard from again.

When God made Eve, he put Adam to sleep, so he could not see how she was made...

... and we all know the rest.

Baphomet is Adam's second Wife. She despises both Man and God. And now, she has the means to do something about it.

How do the Knights stop her?

Give her a name.

### **Naming Baphomet**

#### ***Genesis 2:19 – 2:20***

*Out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.*

*The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field; but for man there was not found a helper suitable for him.*

The Knights are sons of Adam. They have the same power God gave Man: the power of Naming. By giving something a name, Man defines what it is. This power has always been with humanity since the beginning of Time. Man's magic is that he can Name.

By giving Baphomet a Name, the Knights define her.

But what name to give her?

The Knights should consider this, but they have precious little time. In a heartbeat, she will ascend to

Sphere IX, then to Sphere X. They have a moment – and only a moment – to give Baphomet a name. The name they give her will define her and how they define her is how they defeat her.

Again, this is a moment where I have to trust your judgment and skills. I have no idea what your players will do at this point. They could decide to call her "the Gingerbread Man" for all we know. Just remember that in this place, what something means is far more important than what it is.

She cannot be given an old name. She cannot be called "Man" or "Snake" or "Elephant." Those names are taken.

She cannot be given a nonsense name; she already has one of those. "Baphomet" has no meaning at all. It is a nonsense word. It doesn't define her in the least.

She cannot be given one of the Knights' names. Like "Elephant," those are already taken. Although, you may want to fudge this rule: a Knight surrendering his name so Baphomet may have it will suffer severe metaphysical consequences. He may even become what Baphomet is now. Baphomet will be dispelled, but the Knight – now without a Name – is banished below to the Underworld, never to be seen again...

... perhaps.

### **Victory**

Once the Knights have named Baphomet (or, should I say "Named"), they can treat with her as they see fit. Because she has no name, she has no limit on her power.

With a name, her power is limited and she means something else entirely.

Again, using violence in this place is wrong. The Knights may dispatch Baphomet with their fists and swords, but if they do, they'll do all of Baphomet's work for her. She wants the Sphere corrupted and she's already done half the work: Sophia's blood has been spilled. Spilling more blood here will only damage the purity of the Sphere even more.

Something must be done about Baphomet – or whatever your players have chosen to call her – but something must also be done about Sophia. She's dying. Good thing the Knights brought the solution with them.

With her final moments, Sophia asks to hold her daughter – the mummified corpse the Knights have with them. She holds it close and whispers something into its mouth. Then, she dies.

Baphomet rejoices, laughing with obscene joy. A heartbeat later, something happens to the corpse. Its skin changes from black to pale to olive. Its hair changes from the consistency of leaves to flowing locks, smelling of myrrh. A dim light burns around her and she rises up, her eyes flaming. She raises her hand and a spear appears. She lowers her head and it is covered by a helmet.

She stands... and all the Knights know her name. They feel it behind their lips, clicking on their teeth.

She is Athena.

Athena lowers her spear at Baphomet. The Forgotten One trembles. Athena turns to the

Knights and when she speaks, her voice sings like her mother's...

*You have brought me here to my Mother's place. And now, I will cleanse it. But you must move on.*

She gestures to Baphomet.

*Do not worry about her. The Essence of this Sphere is Darkness and Light. Her place is here with me. Go now... move on and complete your task. But know this...*

And for a moment, she smiles. No smile a Mother makes, but a Lover.

*... I will not forget what you have done here. Go now.*

The Knights turn away, walking toward... something they don't know. What comes next? Where are they going?

They walk for a long while, the sky moving high above them. They stop to rest...

## SPHERE XI: TRUTH

... and they awaken with the moon above them, sitting in a parking lot. Cars are parked around them. They are still in their knightly garb. They have the remains of the Goddess and Snake looks like his human shape.

"Good. Well then. I have to leave you now. You've arrived at this – your most important moment. The Moment of Truth."

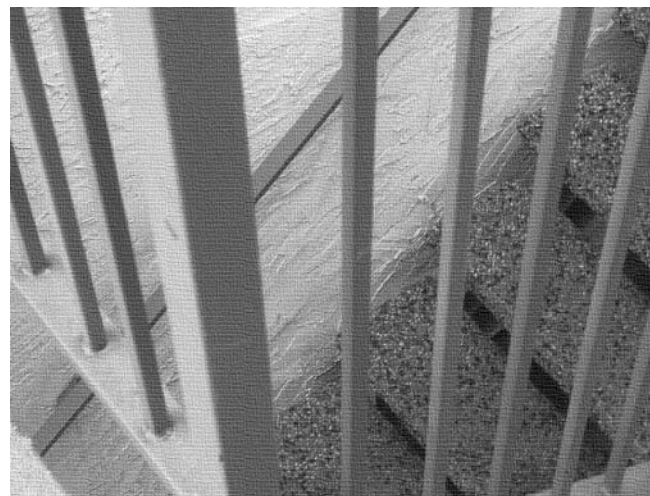
He shakes their hands, tips his top hat and steps away. "I do not envy what you are about to learn... but... I do envy the power it will give you." He points toward an apartment door. "Go there. Knock. Then wait."

## The Moment between Worlds

Hey Ms. GM. This is me, John, talking to you. To get the most out of this part of the campaign, you need a little preparation. If you pull it off, you will accomplish something no book, TV show, or movie can ever accomplish. Here, let me take a moment to explain.

Umberto Eco once said that the best murder mystery would end with the reader discovering *he* was the killer. I believe roleplaying games are the medium that can accomplish Professor Eco's goal. And here's how we're going to do it.

First, you need an accomplice. Someone with a cell phone. You also need a cell phone. Arrange for your friend to wait outside your house/apartment the night you run this part of the campaign. You can end the game session at the end of the Abyss then start up here so your friend doesn't need to wait outside for too long. He should also *not* be involved in the campaign or any way associated with it. Your significant other – the one who doesn't game – is a prime choice.



Like I said, have your friend waiting outside your apartment and out of sight when your players arrive. Make sure they have *no idea* this person is waiting outside. Before you begin the game, go to the bathroom/kitchen/another room and give your friend outside a call. They'll be waiting for your call, so all you have to do is dial them on speed dial and drop your cell phone in a breast pocket. Close enough to your mouth so the person on the other end can hear your signals. You may want to practice this bit ahead of time.

Then, when you've reached this part of the campaign, when the Knights appear in the parking lot/driveway/whatever, make sure your description of the surrounding area matches the outside of your house/apartment. The Knights have just landed outside the building where you and your players are seated.

You describe the area and Snake says, "Go knock on that door."

"That door" is *your* front door. Make sure your buddy can hear what's going on in the gaming area. Make sure he can knock on the door. Because when your players tell you they knock on the door, your friend is going to knock on the door.

Your players will probably jump. If even for a moment – if even for a moment – the lizard part of their brain makes the connection: *holy shit... our characters just knocked on the door!* – if they make this connection *even for a moment*, you've accomplished something no book, TV show, or movie can accomplish. For that moment, your players will be stuck, as Neil Peart put it, between Sun and Moon. The space between wonder and why. That place we were in when we were kids, listening to the story of a haunted house while sitting in the very room where that murder took place. Sitting out in the woods, listening to the story of The Hook.

Right here. The Knights are knocking on the door. If even for a moment, you can accomplish that,

all this other weird quabbalic/masonic/mystical/symbolic gibberish will be worth it. We've been leading up to this moment. *This* moment.

If you do it right, your players will be talking about it for years. Good luck.

### Crossing Over

The door opens. On the other side of that door is you, the GM. Seated in that room are the players. Standing outside the door are the Knights.

"Welcome," you tell the Knights. "We've been waiting for you."

The Knights enter, more than a little confused. The players are now their characters looking upon the players. The GM continues.

"You're probably very confused," you say. "How about you sit down and we have a little talk."

Introduce the Knights to their players if you like. Then, let the Knights in on the big secret.



"Do you all remember back in Sphere V? When Edward Derby told you that Sphere was the highest man could climb? Why do you think you could go higher?"

Give the Knights some chances to guess. Then fill them in.

"It's because you aren't human. You're characters. Fictional characters. Working your way up the Ptolemaic system toward God."

One of the Knights will ask, "We're not real?"

Shake your head. "Oh no. You're real. As real as The Shadow or Sherlock Holmes. As real as Darth Vader or Spider-Man. In fact, some fictional characters are more real than the people who created them. More people know about The Shadow than know who created him. More people know about Holmes than Doyle. Hardly anybody knows the names 'Siegel and Shuster,' but everybody in the world knows Superman."

Give them a chance to get used to the idea, then tell them the rest of it.

"This whole thing... this whole game thing... we've been telling your story. How you were betrayed, how you fled through the Mists, how you've been climbing up toward the final Sphere. This is one of the three final Spheres: the three Faces of God. This is the top. Almost the very top."

A dramatic pause.

"This is the Sphere of Truth. And you cannot pass here until you understand the Truth: that you are all fictional characters created by us for a specific purpose."

Lean forward. "I want you to know something, though. Something more

important than you'll ever understand."

Pause. Nothing better than a good pause for effect.

"No matter what happens to you... no matter how awful things get. No matter the pain you feel, no matter the despair in your hearts... know this: you're not doing it alone. You've got each other, but more than that, you've got *us*. Me and (insert players' names here)... we're fighting there, right with you. We're walking the same steps you are. We'll feel everything you do."

Then, the big one. "No matter what you do, or where you go... you're never alone."

If you like, and if the Knights are interested, have them speak to the players. Remember, the players created the Knights. For all intents and purposes, they are God. They gave each Knight his virtues and foibles. Caused every bit of pleasure and pain. Every success, every failure... the players had an active role in all of it.

This can be a powerful and emotional moment. Don't waste it. Let it play out. Finally, when it's all over, send the Knights away. "It's time for the next Sphere," you tell them. Get up and walk to the door. Open it. "Go now. You have one more test. If you're worthy, you'll pass on to the last Sphere. And you'll touch the face of God."

The Knights leave and you close the door behind them. And with that sound of the latch falling into place, the Knights find they have passed into...

## SPHERE X: BEAUTY

The Knights climb the stairs, one by one. Twenty-one steps.

Once they reach the top, a figure that reminds them of Lucifer stands before the gate. In his hand is a blazing star.

"Who art thou that might enter the Kingdom of Heaven?" the figure asks.

The Knights, of course, introduce themselves.

The figure nods. "Very well. Dost thou swear to protect it with thine very souls?"

The Knights should answer, "Yes."

"Very well," he says. "Thou may pass into God's Kingdom."

The gates open...

... the Knights pass through...

### Bannockburn

... and they are on horseback. In a graveyard.

The sky is blue and the air is cold. Snow is on the ground and the wind rips at them.

Before them are three large tombstones shaped like Templar crosses. There are no names on the stones, but there are words.

A rider approaches from the South. The rider comes close. He is a young man. A nobleman. He speaks English with a Scottish accent.

"Hail and well met, Brother Knights," he says. "I am James Douglas, son of the King of Scotland, and I come with the King's offer of solace for you and yours."

The Knights are probably very confused. Douglas offers some help.

"Where are you? Why, you are in Scotland! But, I bear sad news. While you were at sea, six months ago, your Grand Master de Molay... he was burned at the stake by the Pope and the King of France."

He lets this set in before going further. "Good Brethren, the King of Scotland, Robert the Bruce, has offered your Order safe passage here in his Kingdom in exchange for assistance in throwing off the shackles of Edward, that whelp of a King."

His voice and face are somber. "Be well," he tells them. "An English Lord loyal to the dream of Scotland's freedom will meet you here. He knows the signal for the charge."

The Knights wait, looking over the battlefield, hidden by the setting sun. A small grove of trees rests in the North; a perfect place for hiding until the battle begins.

### The Graves

Obviously, these are Templar graves. The stones have inscriptions:

*"Iam quiesco sed maneo excitari."*

*(Here, I rest*

*But another shall awaken me.)*

Buried here in these three graves is the bulk of the treasure from the Paris Temple as well as instructions for re-creating the Temple of Solomon. The Knights should understand the meaning here.

"Rebuild our Order."

### An Old Friend

The Knights have all day to decide what to do, but as day passes into night, another rider approaches them. He looks... distantly familiar. When he arrives, the Knights notice he wears no colors but black. His shield is without heraldry. He nods and speaks English with a thick Norman accent.

"I represent the English Lords who wish to see Edward defeated by the Scots," he says. "I admit, there is selfishness in my motive, but I must confess... thwarting the Pope and that French King would do my heart good."

He looks back at the battlefield, then looks back at the Knights.

"You were betrayed, good Brethren. You protected my father and mother when they traveled to the Holy Land. Now, if you will permit me, I would hope to return the favor. My lands are safe for you to travel, if you would be so generous as to accept my hospitality."

If the Knights show him favor, he smiles "Good! It is done, then. You will stay with me until Bruce needs our help. Edward will never anticipate cavalry coming to the defense of the Scots!"

If the Knights ask him his name, he replies, "Stanley. Thomas Stanley. Lord of Strange."

He bows to the Knights. "You look most weary from your journey. I am staying at a local Lord's manor. It is most hospitable. Will you join me?"

The Knights have the choice of staying out in the woods or joining Lord Strange for a fortnight in comfort. After their long journey, they'll probably choose the former.

### The Battle of Bannockburn

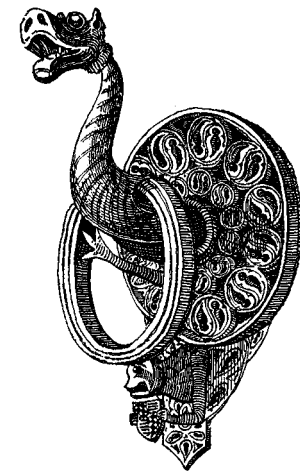
Weeks later, at the Battle of Bannockburn, the Knights Templar, dressed in white tabards with red crosses, carrying blackened shields showing no heraldry, assist Robert the Bruce in defeating the armies of the English King, ensuring that Scotland wins its independence.

The Knights Templar, returning from their journey through the Spheres, return to Earth on April 19th, 1314, seven years after they left. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, less than a month before their return, Jacques de Molay is burned at the stake for the crime of heresy. He is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Grand Master of the Order. The day after they return, on April 20<sup>th</sup>, Pope Clement V dies. Seven months and nine days later, Philip of France follows his example.

The Knights are home.

Less than one hundred years later, the Dark Ages end...

... and the Renaissance begins.



# Afterward

Seem like a cliffhanger? Well, it is.

You'll want to know what happens next. What happens at Bannockburn? What happens to the Knights who returned?

They're home. Let them have their rest. The Battle of Bannockburn was won by James I, the first step to liberating his countrymen from foreign rule. Later, a church filled with strange symbolism would be built in 1446 by Sir William St Clair, the third and last St. Clair, Prince of Orkney.

Within those stone walls, a strange story could be read, full of symbols and metaphors... why, one hundred different people could walk into that place and walk out with one hundred different interpretations of the wisdom etched into the stone. But that's what myth and metaphor do... they allow us to create our own system of symbols, our own belief structure... to let us make sense of the seemingly random world that surrounds us.

The Knights left us a legacy... if you believe the stories.

Do I believe them? Well... let's just say that I'm a skeptic. I don't believe myths are *fact*, but I do believe they are *true*. When I say that, I mean there is something valuable to be learned from all of these myths. Christian, Norse, Greek, Hindu... they're all *true*.

They all have something to teach us.

The point is to see beyond the symbol and get to the secret.

*Feel the cool mist all around us?  
Feel it gathering? Clinging to our skin?*

*We have to walk for a while. Don't worry, I know the way. Hold my hand. Or my shoulder if you like. Listen to the sound of my voice. Don't lose your focus. This is dangerous territory here. One wrong step and we can fall. Hold on. And listen closely. It isn't far. It's closer than you think...*

*Please be patient. I know you can't see. I couldn't either. I can now. It may seem like we're not going anywhere, but we are. We're not going forward, not in the conventional sense. We're going in circles. And when we get back to the beginning, you'll see that while we may have ended up where we started, we will not be the same as when we began, and that will make the beginning a different place, too.*

Let's take a walk, you and I.

When Arthur's Knights went questing for the Grail, nobody makes arguments about real Knights out looking for a real Grail. The story is an analogy. It's myth. It means something other than what it

says. Arthur's Knights weren't out looking for a cup, they were out looking for *themselves*. The Grail heals the king, heals the land, heals the people.

Joseph Campbell's mythic hero went for a walk, too. He went out into the world looking for a magic potion to heal the land. What he found was that the potion was guarded by a dragon. In order to kill the dragon, he'd have to drink the potion. What he didn't know was that the potion is made from the dragon's blood. You have to become the monster to defeat the monster. That only makes sense... if the monster is yourself.

If the dragon and the hero are the same... and the potion transforms the hero...

Come on. Don't get too bogged down in all this. We've still got a ways to go. You can think about it later.

Where are we going? Someplace close, but very far away. A place that sometimes touches our own, and sometimes even crosses over. This land has been called many things by many people. It has been called the Astral Plane, the Dreaming, the Tellurian, and Ideospace. I have my own name for it. I call it "Imagination."

We feed this place with our dreams, our ideas, our inspirations and aspirations. We visit this place when we dream. When our minds are set at the right speed. Shamen used peyote to reach this place. Tibetan monks used meditation. If we refuse to sleep, sometimes the dreams fight their way through. This is the

place where dreams and dreamers meet. We call to them and they answer back.

Heroes are born here, live here, and die here. All our legends, all our faiths are born in this place. It is the home of Robin Hood and Beowulf. Buddha and the Christ are here, breaking bread and drinking wine. Just over there, Jacque de Molay and the Old Man on the Mountain play an endless game of chess. Odin and Loki argue with Zeus and Prometheus. All our dreams, all our legends, all our myths. They come from this place. This holy, sacred place.

We believe this place can be reached through various means. We use ritual and ordeal. We use the ritual of enacting the stories of heroes. We do not simply tell the stories of heroes, we walk in their footsteps. To summon the energy of heroes, we tell their tales. We wrap ourselves in their symbols and invoke the hero. We do not simply tell the myth, we become the myth. We are the heroes of the stories we tell.

We are the shaman, suffering to summon the invisible spirits.

We are the magician, making something from nothing with rituals and ordeals.

We are the storyteller, walking in the footsteps of heroes. Heroes we find in our own Imaginations.

\* \* \*

This game is a prelude. A small first step on a much longer journey. Something I've wanted to do for a very long time, but never really



knew how to do it. I've been walking in this direction for longer than I thought, and it was only when I turned to see where I've been did I notice where I was. And where I was going.

Before I get too esoteric, let me try to explain.

For me, the Templars have been an object of fascination since my youngest days. When I was in Catholic School in Albany, Georgia, a young priest named Thomas told me about them. I was an altar boy and was talking about King Arthur and his Knights. Father Tom told me that there really were Knights and they not only served God but protected people as well. He called them "warrior priests." Of course, Father Tom was too good for our parish (meaning he was too progressive for a conservative Southern town) and he got transferred somewhere else – I seem to remember it being somewhere in California – but his story stuck with me. I looked for books about them, stumbled across the Assassins, stumbled across the Illuminati, stumbled across the Masons, Discordia, High Weirdness, alternative history and religions... and that, of course, led to the book you have today.

\* \* \*

In the Postscript to his book *From Hell*, Alan Moore talks about the phenomenon of "Ripperology" and how so many people have tried to piece together Jack the Ripper theories from the scant evidence available. He called the exercise "Gull Catching," a double entendre

referencing the popular theory surrounding Doctor Gull as the Ripper and British slang referring to someone who is easily tricked.

Moore decided early on that he wouldn't join the Gull Catchers in their vain quest to discover "who really did it," but would rather explore what the murders *meant*. What all these Gull Catchers were missing wasn't the tiny bit of evidence that would prove their theories, but the symbolic and mythological *meaning* of the act: how the Ripper murders changed Western society forever.

This book is my own first tentative step toward the same goal. The Templar Treasure has been a part of our culture for almost seven hundred years. It has been the object of obsession for scholars, theorists and armchair conspiriologists (like me). I'm not so much interested in proving anything about the treasure or the Templars who took it. I'm not interested in what the Templar treasure *was*; I'm much more interested in what it *has become*.

By the way, I know where the Templar treasure is. But I'm not telling. Not just yet. Walk with me a little further, and then I'll tell you.

\* \* \*

Joseph Campbell often described the transformation from history into mythology as the moment when something takes on a meaning other than its own inherent meaning. Pearl Harbor no longer means "a port in Hawaii," Benedict Arnold no longer means "an American general in the Revolutionary War," and for

me (and others), "the Templar Treasure" no longer means "something that was lost a long time ago."

The mystery of the Treasure used to be a simple guessing game. Now, it has become a true Grail Quest. A spiritual journey. A journey that transforms those who embark upon it. It is not something that can be done lightly: once you start looking for it, you've got to devote yourself to it entirely. I've got dozens of books on the subject and I've read through them all looking for tiny clues I can use to further my own spiritual journey. People have devoted their entire lives to the subject, writing millions of words on theories and speculations. The Templar Treasure has more meaning now than it ever has before.

Of course, when it comes to myth, *everything* has meaning. Everything is metaphor. The Knights, the Mist, the Treasure they carry, even their journey home. What they do in the course of that journey has metaphysical consequences. They're living mythic lives. As are we. Right here, right now. We forget that too often, how important our own lives are and how everything around us has meaning. Every aspect of our lives helps us build our own personal myth.

\* \* \*

I wrote this down in another game: "We tell the tales of heroes to remind ourselves that we also can be great."

I still believe that. I still believe roleplaying games are the only medium where the author *is* the

audience. We aren't watching the hero on the screen or reading about him in a book. We *are* the hero, living in a world of symbols and metaphors, taking actions that have more meaning than what's on the surface.

Roleplaying games are magic. A special kind of magical ritual where we invoke the spirit of The Hero and channel that spirit in a new way. We take that very old energy and tell new stories with it. Stories that we aren't just telling, but *invoking*. There are moments during a roleplaying game where nobody knows what's going to happen – not even the players themselves. This moment – this sublime moment – can *only* be experienced in a roleplaying game, where the story is completely in the hands of the characters. No script. No director. No audience. Just us, right there, in this very specific moment that can only happen in this medium. This magical invention we call *roleplaying games*.

Now, what does all this mumbo jumbo have to do with the Templar Treasure? See, the Treasure is a metaphor. It isn't a bunch of religious artifacts or a chest full of gold or books of ancient wisdom. The Treasure is something we all seek. It's the Grail. It's what we all want. What we *really* want.

All this time – seven hundred years – we've been asking the wrong questions.

"What was the Templar treasure?" That's easy. *You* are the treasure. Now, how do you find it?

That is the *real* question.

# Appendix 1: Important Dates

Robert Anton Wilson has this brilliant idea: go through history and create your own horoscope based on events that happened on your birthday. Don't stop at the same year; go as far back as you can, finding events that happened on the day you were born and draw meaning from them. Later, Alan Moore used the same concept to draw correspondences for a magical theory he called "idea space."

Listed here are some that occurred on June 23rd (the Battle of Bannockburn) and October 13th (the day de Molay was arrested). Draw whatever conclusions and meanings you like.

## JUNE 23RD

June 23<sup>rd</sup> is commonly recognized as "midsummer's eve," a holiday of the old Celtic faith. It is also the Christian day of celebration for St. John the Baptist who was murdered for his faith. Although, St. John's holiday, unlike every other saint, is celebrated on his birthday rather than the day of his martyrdom. He is the only exception.

1314  
The Battle of Bannockburn south of Stirling, Edward II of England & Robert I of Scotland met in battle. Scotland won and Edward fled the field and Scotland.

1626  
A large Codfish, split open at a Cambridge market, is found to

contain a copy of a book of religious treatises by John Frith.

1653  
New Amsterdam - now New York City - is incorporated.

1784  
1st US balloon flight (13 year old Edward Warren).

1771  
Over the course of two days, Masons discuss the first Grand Lodge in England.

1794  
Empress Catherine II grants Jews permission to settle in Kiev.

1810  
John Jacob Astor, "the furious furrier," strengthens his grip on America's fur industry by founding the Pacific Fur Company.

1857  
William Kelly patents a process of air-blasting furnaces... but reveals his findings too late. Henry Bessemer patented the same process in 1856.

1860  
Congress establishes the Government Printing Office.

1860  
US Secret Service created.

1862  
Confederate General Robert E. Lee meets with his corps commanders to plot an attack on General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac.

1868  
Christopher Latham Sholes patents "Type-writer."

1882  
James Joyce, the Irish author of "Ulysses," is born.

1888  
Frederick Douglass is the first African-American nominated for US president.

1894  
Alfred Kinsey entomologist/sexologist (Kinsey Report) is born.

1894  
International Olympic Committee is founded at the Sorbonne, Paris, at the initiative of Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

1903  
M Wolf discovers asteroid #512 Taurinensis.

1904  
Charles E. Menches of St. Louis, Missouri invents the ice cream cone.

1912  
Alan Turing, Founder of computer science is born.

1917  
Babe Ruth, then a pitcher, slugs an umpire for a bad call (four balls).

1923  
Carving begins on Stone Mountain

1940  
After marching into Paris, Hitler takes a tour of the place, smiling and waving.

1943  
The remainder of Nazi forces from the Battle of Stalingrad surrendered in a major victory for the Soviets in World War II.

1947  
The Senate overrides President Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act.

1949  
1st 12 women graduate from Harvard Medical School.

1956  
Nasser elected first President of Egypt.

1964  
Arthur Melin (creator of the Frisbee) patents the hula-hoop.

1969  
Warren E Burger sworn in as Supreme Court Chief Justice.

1972  
Nixon & Haldeman agree to use CIA to cover up Watergate.

1973  
The last person drafted into the U.S. armed forces prior to the expiration of the Selective Service Act, Dwight Elliott Stone, gets the call from Uncle Sam.

1979  
Founding member of the Sex Pistols, Sid Vicious, dies at the age of 21. Meanwhile, "My Sharona" is released, clearly signifying... something.

1980  
Reports surfaced that the FBI had conducted a sting operation targeting members of Congress using phony Arab businessmen in what became known as "Abscam," a codename protested by Arab-Americans.

1982  
-117 F; All time low at the South Pole.

1985  
Bomb destroys Air India Boeing 747 in air near Ireland, 329 die.

1986  
Tip O'Neill refuses to let Reagan address House.

1987  
W Landgraf discovers asteroid #3683 Baumann.

1992  
Mafia Boss John Gotti is sentenced to life in prison.

1993  
Lorena Bobbitt cuts off her husband's penis and throws it out the window of a moving vehicle.

2003  
The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the University of Michigan's School of Law affirmative action policy.

### OCTOBER 13TH

On this day, the Romans threw festivals for Fontus, the God of wells and springs. Son of Jutura (Goddess of wells and springs) and Janus (God of Doorways, Beginnings, and Endings). Janus was the two-faced god: one clean-shaven, the other bearded. He represented the concept of the counterpart and was often attributed to the sun and moon.

54  
Roman Empire emperor Claudius I dies after being poisoned by his wife Agrippina.

1582  
Due to the implementation of the Gregorian calendar this day **does not exist** in this year in Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

1775  
The US Continental Congress orders the establishment of the Continental Navy (later known as the United States Navy).

1843  
In New York City, Henry Jones and 11 others found B'nai B'rith (the

oldest Jewish service organization in the world).

1845  
A majority of voters in the Republic of Texas approve a proposed constitution, that if accepted by the U.S. Congress, will make Texas a U.S. state.

1925  
Margaret Thatcher, future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, is born on the very same day as American comedian Lenny Bruce. Proof positive that the universe likes to maintain a sense of balance.

1943  
In the middle of WWII, the new government of Italy sides with the Allies and declares war on Germany.

1962  
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* opens on Broadway.

1972  
*Fairchild* passenger plane transporting a rugby team crashes in Andes. They are found alive on December 20, but they have had to resort to cannibalism to survive.

1976  
The first electron micrograph of an Ebola viral particle was obtained by Dr. F.A. Murphy, now at U.C. Davis, who was then working at the C.D.C..

1995  
Microsoft releases Windows 95.

1999  
The United States Senate rejects ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

## Appendix 2:

### The Letter

My beloved Brothers,

I fear I shall never see you again. There are things moving in the world – both visible and invisible – that neither you or I can stop now. These shadows have been on the edge of my sight and while I bought all the moments I could, I fear my time has run out. I hoped to make this journey with you, but I must remain behind now to protect all those I can. I send you, the men I trust most, on this journey. This most remarkable journey.

I have given you this letter for two reasons. The first is because it reveals the true nature of your journey and I wished only one of you two find it. The second is more difficult to communicate. I hope you will be patient as I do so.

Where you are now is not where you were. Some of you understand Aristotle's model of the universe, the concept of Celestial Spheres between our world and the Heaven where our Lord and Father rest. You have passed from our world, from our Sphere into the next. You are currently walking on lands no other Christian has ever walked. I did this so you may heal a wound that has been festering in our world for generations. The means I used to place you there is not Christian, but you are men of God and your souls will be unmarked for it. Only I will bear the burden of this sin. Only I will answer for it when I am brought before the Throne. That is

why I could not tell you what I was doing nor explain myself. The more ignorant of the facts you were, the less I risked your immortal souls.

But now, Brothers of God, you walk in a place no Christian has ever walked, and you must walk further. You must continue your journey up through the Spheres toward the Throne. You must do this because our world has long suffered and you must make right that which was torn asunder. I speak now of a great crime committed against humanity. One we brought upon ourselves. You see, for generations, our world has been without the Word of God. The Light that falls down from Heaven has been severed from us. We stand in darkness, eternal darkness, and until the Light is brought back to us, we shall remain here, cold and shadowed.

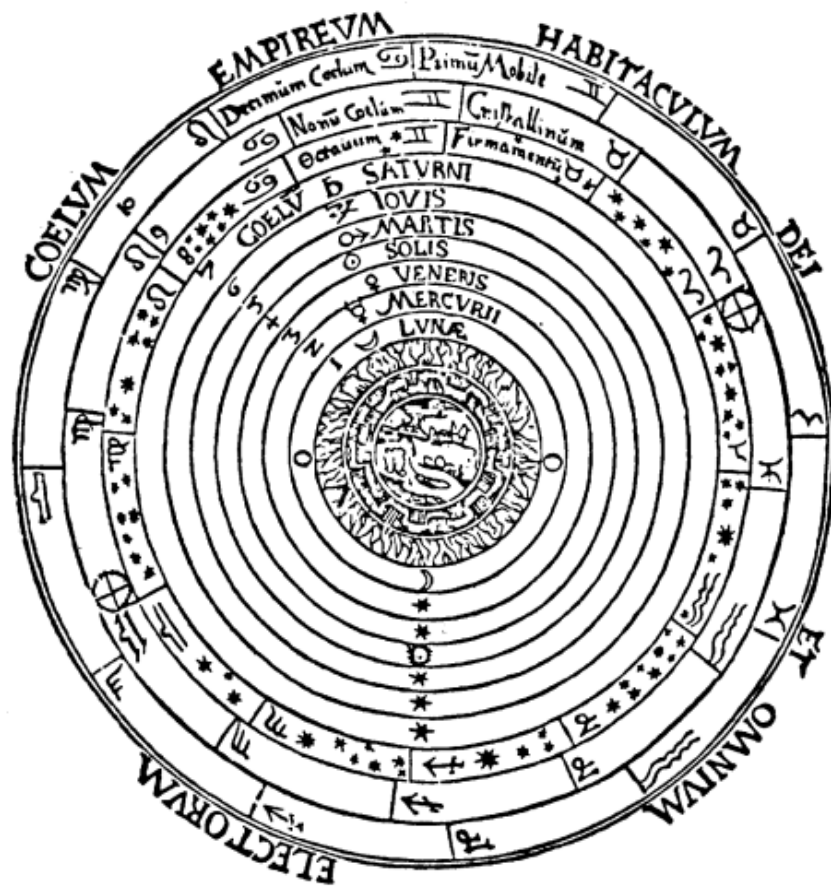
It is up to you, my Brethren, to return the Light of God to men. To do so, you must reach up to the Crown of Heaven and open the gates that have been locked for so long. Each Sphere has a Gate. You must find that Gate and open it. Otherwise, no Light will ever find its way back to the world and we will go on, living in this shadow of sin and evil.

I know there is a creature that seeks to keep the Gates closed. I do not know its name, but it is a servant of Satan. It is a demon and its kind will seek to thwart you. You must overcome all manner of temptations to do so. This is why I chose you. My most trusted Brothers.

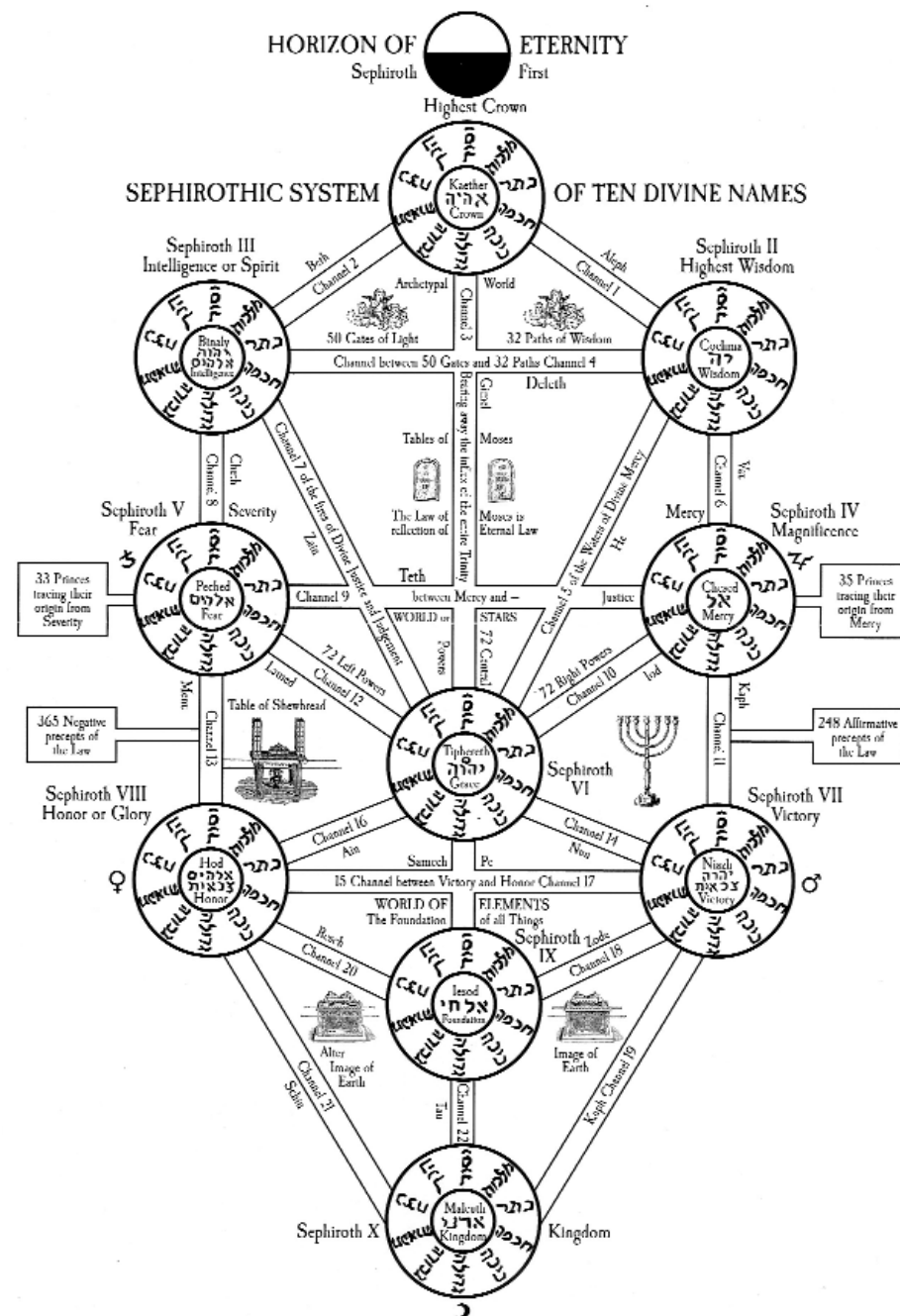
May God grant you the wisdom, courage, and strength you need to reach your goal. Without you, all is lost. All is in darkness. Without you, the Word of God will never reach us again. I will pray for you now and I trust you will do the thing I cannot.

# Appendix 3: Maps

Schema huius praeiuxta diuisionis Sphaerarum.



The Grand Master's Map



Abby's Map

# Appendix 4:

## The Rule of the Templars

*This translation of the original, or primitive, Rule of the Templars is based on the 1886 edition of Henri de Curzon, La Règle du Temple as a Military Manual, or How to Deliver a Cavalry Charge. It represents the Rule given to the fledgling Knights of the Temple by the Council of Troyes, 1129, although "it must not be forgotten that the Order had been in existence for several years and had built up its own traditions and customs before Hugues de Payens' appearance at the Council of Troyes. To a considerable extent, then, the Primitive Rule is based upon existing practices." (Upton-Ward, p. 11)*

*This translation is excerpted from Judith Upton-Ward's The Rule of the Templars, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992, and is reprinted here with permission. The Rule of the Templars includes an introduction by Upton-Ward; it also contains the Templars' Primitive Rule and the Hierarchical Statutes; regulations governing penances, conventual life, the holding of ordinary chapters, and reception into the Order; and an appendix by Matthew Bennett, "La Règle du Temple as a Military Manual, or How to Deliver a Cavalry Charge." The book is highly recommended to those interested in the Templars or*

*any other military order. It is now available in paperback.*

*The notes to the Primitive Rule, supplied by Mrs. Upton-Ward in The Rule of the Templars, are not included below. They are of considerable interest and should be consulted by those wishing to study the Rule in more detail, however.*

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### THE PRIMITIVE RULE

#### Here begins the Prologue to the Rule of Temple

1. We speak firstly to all those who secretly despise their own will and desire with a pure heart to serve the sovereign king as a Knight and with studious care desire to wear, and wear permanently, the very noble armour of obedience. And therefore we admonish you, you who until now have led the lives of secular Knights, in which Jesus Christ was not the cause, but which you embraced for human favour only, to follow those whom God has chosen from the mass of perdition and whom he has ordered through his gracious mercy to defend the Holy Church, and that you hasten to join them forever.

2. Above all things, whosoever would be a Knight of Christ, choosing such holy orders, you in your profession of faith must unite pure diligence and firm perseverance, which is so worthy and so holy, and is known to be so noble, that if it is preserved untainted for ever, you will deserve

to keep company with the martyrs who gave their souls for Jesus Christ. In this religious order has flourished and is revitalised the order of knighthood. This knighthood despised the love of justice that constitutes its duties and did not do what it should, that is defend the poor, widows, orphans and churches, but strove to plunder, despoil and kill. God works well with us and our saviour Jesus Christ; He has sent his friends from the Holy City of Jerusalem to the marches of France and Burgundy, who for our salvation and the spread of the true faith do not cease to offer their souls to God, a welcome sacrifice.

3. Then we, in all joy and all brotherhood, at the request of Master Hugues de Payens, by whom the aforementioned knighthood was founded by the grace of the Holy Spirit, assembled at Troyes from divers provinces beyond the mountains on the feast of my lord St Hilary, in the year of the incarnation of Jesus Christ 1128, in the ninth year after the founding of the aforesaid knighthood. And the conduct and beginnings of the Order of Knighthood we heard in common chapter from the lips of the aforementioned Master, Brother Hugues de Payens; and according to the limitations of our understanding what seemed to us good and beneficial we praised, and what seemed wrong we eschewed.

4. And all that took place at that council cannot be told nor recounted; and so that it should not be taken lightly by us, but considered in wise prudence, we left it to the discretion of both our honourable father lord Honorius and of the noble patriarch of Jerusalem,

Stephen, who knew the affairs of the East and of the Poor Knights of Christ, by the advice of the common council we praised it unanimously. Although a great number of religious fathers who assembled at that council praised the authority of our words, nevertheless we should not pass over in silence the true sentences and judgements which they pronounced.

5. Therefore I, Jean Michel, to whom was entrusted and confided that divine office, by the grace of God served as the humble scribe of the present document by order of the council and of the venerable father Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux.

#### The Names of the Fathers who Attended the Council

6. First was Matthew, bishop of Albano, by the grace of God legate of the Holy Church of Rome; R[enaud], archbishop of Reims; H(enri), archbishop of Sens; and then their suffragans: G(ocelin), bishop of Soissons; the bishop of Paris; the bishop of Troyes; the bishop of Orléans; the bishop of Auxerre; the bishop of Meaux; the bishop of Chalons; the bishop of Laon; the bishop of Beauvais; the abbot of Vèzelay, who was later made archbishop of Lyon and legate of the Church of Rome; the abbot of Cîteaux; the abbot of Pontigny; the abbot of Trois-Fontaines; the abbot of St Denis de Reims; the abbot of St-Etienne de Dijon; the abbot of Molesmes; the above-named B[ernard], abbot of Clairvaux: whose words the aforementioned praised liberally. Also present were master Aubri de Reims; master Fulcher and several others whom it would be tedious to record. And of the others who have not been listed



it seems profitable to furnish guarantees in this matter, that they are lovers of truth: they are count Theobald; the count of Nevers; André de Baudemant. These were at the council and acted in such a manner that by perfect, studious care they sought out that which was fine and disapproved that which did not seem right.

7. And also present was Brother Hugues de Payens, Master of the Knighthood, with some of his brothers whom he had brought with him. They were Brother Roland, Brother Godefroy, and Brother Geoffroi Bisot, Brother Payen de Montdidier, Brother Archambaut de Saint-Amand. The same Master Hugues with his followers related to the above-named fathers the customs and observances of their humble beginnings and of the one who said: *Ego principium qui et loquor vobis*, that is to say: 'I who speak to you am the beginning,' according to one's memory.

8. It pleased the common council that the deliberations which were made there and the consideration of the Holy Scriptures which were diligently examined with the wisdom of my lord H[onorius], pope of the Holy Church of Rome, and of the patriarch of Jerusalem and with the assent of the chapter, together with the agreement of the Poor Knights of Christ of the Temple which is in Jerusalem, should be put in writing and not forgotten, steadfastly kept so that by an upright life one may come to his creator; the compassion of which Lord [is sweeter] than honey when compared with God; whose mercy resembles oine, and permits us to come to Him whom they desire to

serve. *Per infinita seculorum secula. Amen*

### **Here Begins the Rule of the Poor Knighthood of the Temple**

9. You who renounce your own wills, and you others serving the sovereign king with horses and arms, for the salvation of your souls, for a fixed term, strive everywhere with pure desire to hear matins and the entire service according to canonical law and the customs of the regular masters of the Holy City of Jerusalem. O you venerable brothers, similarly God is with you, if you promise to despise the deceitful world in perpetual love of God, and scorn the temptations of your body: sustained by the food of God and watered and instructed in the commandments of Our Lord, at the end of the divine office, none should fear to go into battle if he henceforth wears the tonsure.

10. But if any brother is sent through the work of the house and of Christianity in the East—something we believe will happen often—and cannot hear the divine office, he should say instead of matins thirteen paternosters; seven for each hour and nine for vespers. And together we all order him to do so. But those who are sent for such a reason and cannot come at the hours set to hear the divine office, if possible the set hours should not be omitted, in order to render to God his due.

### **The Manner in which Brothers should be Received**

11. If any secular Knight, or any other man, wishes to leave the mass of perdition and abandon that secular life and choose your communal life, do not consent to

receive him immediately, for thus said my lord St Paul: *Probate spiritus si ex Deo sunt*. That is to say: 'Test the soul to see if it comes from God.' Rather, if the company of the brothers is to be granted to him, let the Rule be read to him, and if he wishes to studiously obey the commandments of the Rule, and if it pleases the Master and the brothers to receive him, let him reveal his wish and desire before all the brothers assembled in chapter and let him make his request with a pure heart.

### **On Excommunicated Knights**

12. Where you know excommunicated Knights to be gathered, there we command you to go; and if anyone there wishes to join the order of knighthood from regions overseas, you should not consider worldly gain so much as the eternal salvation of his soul. We order him to be received on condition that he come before the bishop of that province and make his intention known to him. And when the bishop has heard and absolved him, he should send him to the Master and brothers of the Temple, and if his life is honest and worthy of their company, if he seems good to the Master and brothers, let him be mercifully received; and if he should die in the meanwhile, through the anguish and torment he has suffered, let him be given all the benefits of the brotherhood due to one of the Poor Knights of the Temple.

13. Under no other circumstances should the brothers of the Temple share the company of an obviously-excommunicated man, nor take his own things; and this we prohibit strongly because it would be a fearful thing if they were

excommunicated like him. But if he is only forbidden to hear the divine office, it is certainly possible to keep company with him and take his property for charity with the permission of their commander.

### **On Not Receiving Children**

14. Although the rule of the holy fathers allows the receiving of children into a religious life, we do not advise you to do this. For he who wishes to give his child eternally to the order of knighthood should bring him up until such time as he is able to bear arms with vigour, and rid the land of the enemies of Jesus Christ. Then let the mother and father lead him to the house and make his request known to the brothers; and it is much better if he does not take the vow when he is a child, but when he is older, and it is better if he does not regret it than if he regrets it. And henceforth let him be put to the test according to the wisdom of the Master and brothers and according to the honesty of the life of the one who asks to be admitted to the brotherhood.

### **On Brothers who Stand Too Long in Chapel**

15. It has been made known to us and we heard it from true witnesses that immoderately and without restraint you hear the divine service whilst standing. We do not ordain that you behave in this manner, on the contrary we disapprove of it. But we command that the strong as well as the weak, to avoid a fuss, should sing the psalm which is called *Venite*, with the invitory and the hymn sitting down, and say their prayers in silence, softly and not loudly, so that the proclaimer does not disturb the prayers of the other brothers.



16. But at the end of the psalms, when the Gloria patri is sung, through reverence for the Holy Trinity, you will rise and bow towards the altar, while the weak and ill will incline their heads. So we command; and when the explanation of the Gospels is read, and the Te deum laudamus is sung, and while all the lauds are sung, and the matins are finished, you will be on your feet. In such a manner we command you likewise to be on your feet at matins and at all the hours of Our Lady.

#### **On the Brothers' Dress**

17. We command that all the brothers' habits should always be of one colour, that is white or black or brown. And we grant to all Knight brothers in winter and in summer if possible, white cloaks; and no one who does not belong to the aforementioned Knights of Christ is allowed to have a white cloak, so that those who have abandoned the life of darkness will recognise each other as being reconciled to their creator by the sign of the white habits: which signifies purity and complete chastity. Chastity is certitude of heart and healthiness of body. For if any brother does not take the vow of chastity he cannot come to eternal rest nor see God, by the promise of the apostle who said: *Pacem sectamini cum omnibus et castimoniam sine qua nemo Deum videbit*. That is to say: 'Strive to bring peace to all, keep chaste, without which no one can see God.'

18. But these robes should be without any finery and without any show of pride. And so we ordain that no brother will have a piece of fur on his clothes, nor anything else which belongs to the usages of the body, not even a blanket unless it is

of lamb's wool or sheep's wool. We command all to have the same, so that each can dress and undress, and put on and take off his boots easily. And the Draper or the one who is in his place should studiously reflect and take care to have the reward of God in all the above-mentioned things, so that the eyes of the envious and evil-tongued cannot observe that the robes are too long or too short; but he should distribute them so that they fit those who must wear them, according to the size of each one.

19. And if any brother out of a feeling of pride or arrogance wishes to have as his due a better and finer habit, let him be given the worst. And those who receive new robes must immediately return the old ones, to be given to the squires and sergeants and often to the poor, according to what seems good to the one who holds that office.

#### **On Shirts**

20. Among the other things, we mercifully rule that, because of the great intensity of the heat which exists in the East, from Easter to All Saints, through compassion and in no way as a right, a linen shirt shalt be given to any brother who wishes to wear it.

21. We command by common consent that each man shall have clothes and bed linen according to the discretion of the Master. It is our intention that apart from a mattress, one bolster and one blanket should be sufficient for each; and he who lacks one of these may have a rug, and he may use a linen blanket at all times, that is to say with a soft pile. And they will at all times sleep dressed in shirt and breeches and shoes and belts, and

where they sleep shall be lit until morning. And the Draper should ensure that the brothers are so well tonsured that they may be examined from the front and from behind; and we command you to firmly adhere to this same conduct with respect to beards and moustaches, so that no excess may be noted on their bodies.

#### **On Pointed Shoes' and Shoe-Laces**

22. We prohibit pointed shoes and shoe-laces and forbid any brother to wear them; nor do we permit them to those who serve the house for a fixed term; rather we forbid them to have shoes with points or laces under any circumstances. For it is manifest and well known that these abominable things belong to pagans. Nor should they wear their hair or their habits too long. For those who serve the sovereign creator must of necessity be born within and without through the promise of God himself who said: *Estote mundi quia ego mundus sum*. That is to say: 'Be born as I am born.'

#### **How They Should Eat**

23. In the palace, or what should rather be called the refectory, they should eat together. But if you are in need of anything because you are not accustomed to the signs used by other men of religion, quietly and privately you should ask for what you need at table, with all humility and submission. For the apostle said: *Manduca panem tuum cum silentio*. That is to say: 'Eat your bread in silence.' And the psalmist: *Posui ori meo custodiam*. That is to say: 'I held my tongue.' That is, 'I thought my tongue would fail me.' That is, 'I held my tongue so that I should speak no ill.'

#### **On the Reading of the Lesson**

24. Always, at the convent's dinner and supper, let the Holy Scripture be read, if possible. If we love God and all His holy words and His holy commandments, we should desire to listen attentively; the reader of the lesson will tell you to keep silent before he begins to read.

#### **On Bowls and Drinking Vessels**

25. Because of the shortage of bowls, the brothers will eat in pairs, so that one may study the other more closely, and so that neither austerity nor secret abstinence is introduced into the communal meal. And it seems just to us that each brother should have the same ration of wine in his cup.

#### **On the Eating of Meat**

26. It should be sufficient for you to eat meat three times a week, except at Christmas, All Saints, the Assumption and the feast of the twelve apostles. For it is understood that the custom of eating flesh corrupts the body. But if a fast when meat must be forgone falls on a Tuesday, the next day let it be given to the brothers in plenty. And on Sundays all the brothers of the Temple, the chaplains and the clerks shall be given two meat meals in honour of the holy resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the rest of the household, that is to say the squires and sergeants, shall be content with one meal and shall be thankful to God for it.

#### **On Weekday Meals**

27. On the other days of the week, that is Mondays, Wednesdays and even Saturdays, the brothers shall have two or three meals of vegetables or other dishes eaten



with bread; and we intend that this should be sufficient and command that it should be adhered to. For he who does not eat one meal shall eat the other.

### **On Friday Meals**

28. On Fridays, let lenten meat be given communally to the whole congregation, out of reverence for the passion of Jesus Christ; and you will fast from All Saints until Easter, except for Christmas Day, the Assumption and the feast of the twelve apostles. But weak and sick brothers shall not be kept to this. From Easter to All Saints they may eat twice, as long as there is no general fast.

### **On Saying Grace**

29. Always after every dinner and supper all the brothers should give thanks to God in silence, if the church is near to the palace where they eat, and if it is not nearby, in the place itself. With a humble heart they should give thanks to Jesus Christ who is the Lord Provider. Let the remains of the broken bread be given to the poor and whole loaves be kept. Although the reward of the poor, which is the kingdom of heaven, should be given to the poor without hesitation, and the Christian faith doubtless recognises you among them, we ordain that a tenth part of the bread be given to your Almoner.

### **On Taking Collation**

30. When daylight fades and night falls listen to the signal of the bell or the call to prayers, according to the customs of the country, and all go to compline. But we command you first to take collation; although we place this light meal under the arbitration and discretion of the Master. When he wants water and

when he orders, out of mercy, diluted wine, let it be given sensibly. Truly, it should not be taken to excess, but in moderation. For Solomon said: *Quia vinum facit apostatare sapientes*. That is to say that wine corrupts the wise.

### **On Keeping Silence**

31. When the brothers come out of compline they have no permission to speak openly except in an emergency. But let each go to his bed quietly and in silence, and if he needs to speak to his squire, he should say what he has to say softly and quietly. But if by chance, as they come out of compline, the knighthood or the house has a serious problem which must be solved before morning, we intend that the Master or a party of elder brothers who govern the Order under the Master, may speak appropriately. And for this reason we command that it should be done in such a manner.

32. For it is written: *In multiloquio non effugies peccatum*. That is to say that to talk too much is not without sin. And elsewhere: *Mors et vita in manibus lingue*. That is to say: 'Life and death are in the power of the tongue.' And during that conversation we altogether prohibit idle words and wicked bursts of laughter. And if anything is said during that conversation that should not be said, when you go to bed we command you to say the paternoster prayer in all humility and pure devotion.

### **On Ailing Brothers**

33. Brothers who suffer illness through the work of the house may be allowed to rise at matins with the agreement and permission of the Master or of those who are charged

with that office. But they should say instead of matins thirteen paternosters, as is established above, in such a manner that the words reflect the heart. Thus said David: *Psallite sapienter*. That is to say: 'Sing wisely.' And elsewhere the same David said: *In conspectu Angelorum psallam tibi*. That is to say: 'I will sing to you before the angels.' And let this thing be at all times at the discretion of the Master or of those who are charged with that office.

### **On the Communal Life**

34. One reads in the Holy Scriptures: *Dividebatur singulis prout cuique opus erat*. That is to say that to each was given according to his need. For this reason we say that no one should be elevated among you, but all should take care of the sick; and he who is less ill should thank God and not be troubled; and let whoever is worse humble himself through his infirmity and not become proud through pity. In this way all members will live in peace. And we forbid anyone to embrace excessive abstinence; but firmly keep the communal life.

### **On the Master**

35. The Master may give to whomsoever he pleases the horse and armour and whatever he likes of another brother, and the brother to whom the given thing belongs should not become vexed or angry: for be certain that if he becomes angry he will go against God.

### **On Giving Counsel**

36. Let only those brothers whom the Master knows will give wise and beneficial advice be called to the council; for this we command, and by no means everyone should

be chosen. For when it happens that they wish to treat serious matters like the giving of communal land, or to speak of the affairs of the house, or receive a brother, then if the Master wishes, it is appropriate to assemble the entire congregation to hear the advice of the whole chapter; and what seems to the Master best and most beneficial, let him do it.

### **On Brothers Sent Overseas**

37. Brothers who are sent throughout divers countries of the world should endeavour to keep the commandments of the Rule according to their ability and live without reproach with regard to meat and wine, etc. so that they may receive a good report from outsiders and not sully by deed or word the precepts of the Order, and so that they may set an example of good works and wisdom; above all so that those with whom they associate and those in whose inns they lodge may be bestowed with honour. And if possible, the house where they sleep and take lodging should not be without light at night, so that shadowy enemies may not lead them to wickedness, which God forbids them.

### **On Keeping the Peace**

38. Each brother should ensure that he does not incite another brother to wrath or anger, for the sovereign mercy of God holds the strong and weak brother equal, in the name of charity.

### **How the Brothers Should Go About**

39. In order to carry out their holy duties and gain the glory of the Lord's joy and to escape the fear of hell-fire, it is fitting that all brothers who are professed strictly obey their





Master. For nothing is dearer to Jesus Christ than obedience. For as soon as something is commanded by the Master or by him to whom the Master has given the authority, it should be done without delay as though Christ himself had commanded it. For thus said Jesus Christ through the mouth of David, and it is true: *Ob auditu auris obedivit mihi*. That is to say: 'He obeyed me as soon as he heard me.'

40. For this reason we pray and firmly command the Knight brothers who have abandoned their own wills and all the others who serve for a fixed term not to presume to go out into the town or city without the permission of the Master or of the one who is given that office; except at night to the Sepulchre and the places of prayer which lie within the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

41. There, brothers may go in pairs, but otherwise may not go out by day or night; and when they have stopped at an inn, neither brother nor squire nor sergeant may go to another's lodging to see or speak to him without permission, as is said above. We command by common consent that in this Order which is ruled by God, no brother should fight or rest according to his own will, but according to the orders of the Master, to whom all should submit, that they may follow this pronouncement of Jesus Christ who said: *Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed ejus que misit me, patris*. That is to say: 'I did not come to do my own will, but the will of my father who sent me.'

### **How they should Effect an Exchange**

42. Without permission from the Master or from the one who holds that office, let no brother exchange one thing for another, nor ask to, unless it is a small or petty thing.

### **On Locks**

43. Without permission from the Master or from the one who holds that office, let no brother have a lockable purse or bag; but commanders of houses or provinces and Masters shall not be held to this. Without the consent of the Master or of his commander, let no brother have letters from his relatives or any other person; but if he has permission, and if it please the Master or the commander, the letters may be read to him.

### **On Secular Gifts**

44. If anything which cannot be conserved, like meat, is given to any brother by a secular person in thanks, he should present it to the Master or the Commander of Victuals. But if it happens that any of his friends or relatives has something that they wish to give only to him, let him not take it without the permission of the Master or of the one who holds that office. Moreover, if the brother is sent any other thing by his relatives, let him not take it without the permission of the Master or of the one who holds that office. We do not wish the commanders or baillis, who are especially charged to carry out this office, to be held to this aforementioned rule.

### **On Faults**

45. If any brother, in speaking or soldiering, or in any other way commits a slight sin, he himself

should willingly make known the fault to the Master, to make amends with a pure heart. And if he does not usually fail in this way let him be given a light penance, but if the fault is very serious let him go apart from the company of the brothers so that he does not eat or drink at any table with them, but all alone; and he should submit to the mercy and judgement of the Master and brothers, that he may be saved on the Day of Judgement.

### **On Serious Faults**

46. Above all things, we should ensure that no brother, powerful or not powerful, strong or weak, who wishes to promote himself gradually and become proud and defend his crime, remain unpunished. But if he does not wish to atone for it let him be given a harsher punishment. And if by pious counsel prayers are said to God for him, and he does not wish to make amends, but wishes to boast more and more of it, let him be uprooted from the pious flock; according to the apostle who says: *Auferte malum ex vobis*. That is to say: 'Remove the wicked from among you.' It is necessary for you to remove the wicked sheep from the company of faithful brothers.

47. Moreover the Master, who should hold in his hand the staff and rod—the staff with which to sustain the weaknesses and strengths of others; the rod with which to beat the vices of those who sin—for love of justice by counsel of the patriarch, should take care to do this. But also, as my lord St Maxime said: 'May the leniency be no greater than the fault; nor excessive punishment cause the sinner to return to evil deeds.'

### **On Rumour**

48. We command you by divine counsel to avoid a plague: envy, rumour, spite, slander. So each one should zealously guard against what the apostle said: *Ne sis criminator et susurro in populo*. That is to say: 'Do not accuse or malign the people of God.' But when a brother knows for certain that his fellow brother has sinned, quietly and with fraternal mercy let him be chastised privately between the two of them, and if he does not wish to listen, another brother should be called, and if he scorns them both he should recant openly before the whole chapter. Those who disparage others suffer from a terrible blindness and many are full of great sorrow that they do not guard against harbouring envy towards others; by which they shall be plunged into the ancient wickedness of the devil.

### **Let None Take Pride in his Faults**

49. Although all idle words are generally known to be sinful, they will be spoken by those who take pride in their own sin before the strict judge Jesus Christ; which is demonstrated by what David said: *Obmutui et silui a bonis*. That is to say that one should refrain from speaking even good, and observe silence. Likewise one should guard against speaking evil, in order to escape the penalty of sin. We prohibit and firmly forbid any brother to recount to another brother nor to anyone else the brave deeds he has done in secular life, which should rather be called follies committed in the performance of knightly duties, and the pleasures of the flesh that he has had with immoral women; and if it happens



that he hears them being told by another brother, he should immediately silence him; and if he cannot do this, he should straightaway leave that place and not give his heart's ear to the pedlar of filth.

50. This custom among the others we command you to adhere to strictly and firmly: that no brother should explicitly ask for the horse or armour of another. It will therefore be done in this manner: if the infirmity of the brother or the frailty of his animals or his armour is known to be such that the brother cannot go out to do the work of the house without harm, let him go to the Master, or to the one who is in his place in that office after the Master, and make the situation known to him in pure faith and true fraternity, and henceforth remain at the disposal of the Master or of the one who holds that office.

#### **On Animals and Squires**

51. Each Knight brother may have three horses and no more without the permission of the Master, because of the great poverty which exists at the present time in the house of God and of the Temple of Solomon. To each Knight brother we grant three horses and one squire, and if that squire willingly serves charity, the brother should not beat him for any sin he commits.

#### **That No Brother May Have an Ornate Bridle**

52. We utterly forbid any brother to have gold or silver on his bridle, nor on his stirrups, nor on his spurs. That is, if he buys them; but if it happens that a harness is given to him in charity which is so old that the gold or silver is tarnished, that

the resplendent beauty is not seen by others nor pride taken in them: then he may have them. But if he is given new equipment let the Master deal with it as he sees fit.

#### **On Lance Covers**

53. Let no brother have a cover on his shield or his lance, for it is no advantage, on the contrary we understand that it would be very harmful.

#### **On Food Bags**

54. This command which is established by us it is beneficial for all to keep and for this reason we ordain that it be kept henceforth, and that no brother may make a food bag of linen or wool, principally, or anything else except a profinel.

#### **On Hunting**

55. We collectively forbid any brother to hunt a bird with another bird. It is not fitting for a man of religion to succumb to pleasures, but to hear willingly the commandments of God, to be often at prayer and each day to confess tearfully to God in his prayers the sins he has committed. No brother may presume to go particularly with a man who hunts one bird with another. Rather it is fitting for every religious man to go simply and humbly without laughing or talking too much, but reasonably and without raising his voice and for this reason we command especially all brothers not to go in the woods with longbow or crossbow to hunt animals or to accompany anyone who would do so, except out of love to save him from faithless pagans. Nor should you go after dogs, nor shout or chatter, nor spur on a horse out of a desire to capture a wild beast.

#### **On the Lion**

56. It is the truth that you especially are charged with the duty of giving your souls for your brothers, as did Jesus Christ, and of defending the land from the unbelieving pagans who are the enemies of the son of the Virgin Mary. This above-mentioned prohibition of hunting is by no means intended to include the lion, for he comes encircling and searching for what he can devour, his hands against every man and every man's hand against him.

#### **How They May Have Lands and Men**

57. This kind of new order we believe was born out of the Holy Scriptures and divine providence in the Holy Land of the East. That is to say that this armed company of Knights may kill the enemies of the cross without sinning. For this reason we judge you to be rightly called Knights of the Temple, with the double merit and beauty of probity, and that you may have lands and keep men, villeins and fields and govern them justly, and take your right to them as it is specifically established.

#### **On Tithes**

58. You who have abandoned the pleasant riches of this world, we believe you to have willingly subjected yourselves to poverty; therefore we are resolved that you who live the communal life may receive tithes. If the bishop of the place, to whom the tithe should be rendered by right, wishes to give it to you out of charity, with the consent of his chapter he may give those tithes which the Church possesses. Moreover, if any layman keeps the tithes of his patrimony, to his detriment and against the

Church, and wishes to leave them to you, he may do so with the permission of the prelate and his chapter.

#### **On Giving Judgement**

59. We know, because we have seen it, that persecutors and people who like quarrels and endeavour to cruelly torment those faithful to the Holy Church and their friends, are without number. By the clear judgement of our council, we command that if there is anyone in the parties of the East or anywhere else who asks anything of you, for faithful men and love of truth you should judge the thing, if the other party wishes to allow it. This same commandment should be kept at all times when something is stolen from you.

#### **On Elderly Brothers**

60. We command by pious counsel that ageing and weak brothers be honoured with diligence and given consideration according to their frailty; and, kept well by the authority of the Rule in those things which are necessary to their physical welfare, should in no way be in distress.

#### **On Sick Brothers**

61. Let sick brothers be given consideration and care and be served according to the saying of the evangelist and Jesus Christ: *Infirmus fui et visitastis me*. That is to say: 'I was sick and you visited me'; and let this not be forgotten. For those brothers who are wretched should be treated quietly and with care, for which service, carried out without hesitation, you will gain the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore we command the Infirmarer to studiously and



faithfully provide those things which are necessary to the various sick brothers, such as meat, flesh, birds and all other foods which bring good health, according to the means and the ability of the house.

### **On Deceased Brothers**

62. When any brother passes from life to death, a thing from which no one is exempt, we command you to sing mass for his soul with a pure heart, and have the divine office performed by the priests who serve the sovereign king and you who serve charity for a fixed term and all the brothers who are present where the body lies and serve for a fixed term should say one hundred paternosters during the next seven days. And all the brothers who are under the command of that house where the brother has passed away should say the hundred paternosters, as is said above, after the death of the brother is known, by God's mercy. Also we pray and command by pastoral authority that a pauper be fed with meat and wine for forty days in memory of the dead brother, just as if he were alive. We expressly forbid all other offerings which used to be made at will and without discretion by the Poor Knights of the Temple on the death of brothers, at the feast of Easter and at other feasts.

63. Moreover, you should profess your faith with a pure heart night and day that you may be compared in this respect to the wisest of all the prophets, who said: *Calicem salutaris accipiam*. That is to say: 'I will take the cup of salvation.' Which means: 'I will avenge the death of Jesus Christ by my death. For just as Jesus Christ gave his body for me, I am prepared in the same way to give my soul for my

brothers.' This is a suitable offering; a living sacrifice and very pleasing to God.

### **On the Priests and Clerks who Serve Charity**

64. The whole of the common council commands you to render all offerings and all kinds of alms in whatever manner they may be given, to the chaplains and clerks and to others who remain in charity for a fixed term. According to the authority of the Lord God, the servants of the Church may have only food and clothing, and may not presume to have anything else unless the Master wishes to give them anything willingly out of charity.

### **On Secular Knights**

65. Those who serve out of pity and remain with you for a fixed term are Knights of the house of God and of the Temple of Solomon; therefore out of pity we pray and finally command that if during his stay the power of God takes any one of them, for love of God and out of brotherly mercy, one pauper be fed for seven days for the sake of his soul, and each brother in that house should say thirty paternosters.

### **On Secular Knights who Serve for a Fixed Term**

66. We command all secular Knights who desire with a pure heart to serve Jesus Christ and the house of the Temple of Solomon for a fixed term to faithfully buy a suitable horse and arms, and everything that will be necessary for such work. Furthermore, we command both parties to put a price on the horse and to put the price in writing so that it is not forgotten; and let everything that the Knight,

his squire and horse need, even horseshoes, be given out of fraternal charity according to the means of the house. If, during the fixed term, it happens by chance that the horse dies in the service of the house, if the house can afford to, the Master should replace it. If, at the end of his tenure, the Knight wishes to return to his own country, he should leave to the house, out of charity, half the price of the horse, and the other half he may, if he wishes, receive from the alms of the house.

### **On the Commitment of Sergeants**

67. As the squires and sergeants who wish to serve charity in the house of the Temple for the salvation of their souls and for a fixed term come from divers regions, it seems to us beneficial that their promises be received, so that the envious enemy does not put it in their hearts to repent of or renounce their good intentions.

### **On White Mantles**

68. By common counsel of all the chapter we forbid and order expulsion, for common vice, of anyone who without discretion was in the house of God and of the Knights of the Temple; also that the sergeants and squires should not have white habits, from which custom great harm used to come to the house; for in the regions beyond the mountains false brothers, married men and others who said they were brothers of the Temple used to be sworn in; while they were of the world. They brought so much shame to us and harm to the Order of Knighthood that even their squires boasted of it; for this reason numerous scandals arose. Therefore let them assiduously be given black robes; but if these cannot be found,

they should be given what is available in that province; or what is the least expensive, that is burell.

### **On Married Brothers**

69. If married men ask to be admitted to the fraternity, benefice and devotions of the house, we permit you to receive them on the following conditions: that after their death they leave you a part of their estate and all that they have obtained henceforth. Meanwhile, they should lead honest lives and endeavour to act well towards the brothers. But they should not wear white habits or cloaks; moreover, if the lord should die before his lady, the brothers should take part of his estate and let the lady have the rest to support her during her lifetime; for it does not seem right to us that such confrères should live in a house with brothers who have promised chastity to God.

### **On Sisters**

70. The company of women is a dangerous thing, for by it the old devil has led many from the straight path to Paradise. Henceforth, let not ladies be admitted as sisters into the house of the Temple; that is why, very dear brothers, henceforth it is not fitting to follow this custom, that the flower of chastity is always maintained among you.

### **Let Them Not Have Familiarity with Women**

71. We believe it to be a dangerous thing for any religious to look too much upon the face of woman. For this reason none of you may presume to kiss a woman, be it widow, young girl, mother, sister, aunt or any other; and henceforth the Knighthood of Jesus Christ should avoid at all costs the embraces of women, by which men



have perished many times, so that they may remain eternally before the face of God with a pure conscience and sure life.

#### **Not Being Godfathers**

72. We forbid all brothers henceforth to dare to raise children over the font and none should be ashamed to refuse to be godfathers or godmothers; this shame brings more glory than sin.

#### **On the Commandments**

73. All the commandments which are mentioned and written above in this present Rule are at the discretion and judgment of the Master.

#### **These are the Feast Days and Fasts that all the Brothers should Celebrate and Observe**

74. Let it be known to all present and future brothers of the Temple that they should fast at the vigils of the twelve apostles. That is to say: St Peter and St Paul; St Andrew; St James and St Philip; St Thomas; St Bartholomew; Sts. Simon and Jude St James; St Matthew. The vigil of St John the Baptist; the vigil of the Ascension and the two days before, the rogation days; the vigil of Pentecost; the ember days; the vigil of St Laurence; the vigil of Our Lady in mid-August; the vigil of All Saints; the vigil of Epiphany. And they should fast on all the above-mentioned days according to the commandments of Pope Innocent at the council which took place in the city of Pisa. And if any of the above-mentioned feast days fall on a Monday, they should fast on the preceding Saturday. If the nativity of Our Lord falls on a Friday, the brothers should eat meat in honour of the festival. But they should fast

on the feast day of St Mark because of the Litany: for it is established by Rome for the mortality of men. However, if it falls during the octave of Easter, they should not fast.

#### **These are the Feast Days which should be Observed in the House of the Temple**

75. The nativity of Our Lord; the feast of St Stephen; St John the Evangelist; the Holy Innocents; the eighth day of Christmas, which is New Year's Day; Epiphany; St Mary Candlemas; St Mathias the Apostle; the Annunciation of Our Lady in March; Easter and the three days following; St George; Sts Philip and James, two apostles; the finding of the Holy Cross; the Ascension of Our Lord; Pentecost and the two days following; St John the Baptist; St Peter and St Paul, two apostles; St Mary Magdalene; St James the Apostle; St Laurence; the Assumption of Our Lady; the nativity of Our Lady; the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; St Matthew the Apostle; St Michael; Sts Simon and Jude; the feast of All Saints; St Martin in winter; St Catherine in winter; St Andrew; St Nicholas in winter; St Thomas the Apostle.

76. None of the lesser feasts should be kept by the house of the Temple. And we wish and advise that this be strictly kept and adhered to: that all the brothers of the Temple should fast from the Sunday before St Martin's to the nativity of Our Lord, unless illness prevents them. And if it happens that the feast of St Martin falls on a Sunday, the brothers should go without meat on the preceding Sunday.

## Appendix 5: The Three Imposters

This is option for Game Masters is also known as "the Hyrum Alternative." It's a private joke, but if you get a chance to ask Mr. Savage about it, everything will make sense.

It's a tricky thing to pull off and you need the right group, but if you think you can handle the challenge, it'll add another dimension to your game.

(Like this game doesn't already have enough dimensions.)

The Thirty are not alone. Three walk among them that do not belong to the Order. No Knight knows this. Not even de Molay knows this. The three imposters have been hiding among the Order for three years, and now they walk with the Knights on this symbolic journey. Will they aid the Knights or perhaps sabotage their efforts?

The three imposters are members of the Hashashin, Hassan's assassins. They penetrated the Order three years ago. Because the Knights keep shaggy beards and don't cut their hair, the assassins blended right in, replacing their targeted Knights on the battlefield. These (one, two or) three fellows have kept themselves hidden for months, keeping tabs on the Order, sending back information to Hassan.

The Templars and Assassins have a history (in this game, they do) as respectful enemies. The assassins are not here to murder the Knights, but to spy on them. As soon as they pass through the Mists, however, there's no doubt that they're in for more than they thought.



## Appendix 6: Thirty Treasures

One of the first ideas I had when writing this game was the notion of each Knight carrying a specific mythic treasure into the Spheres. Armed with these treasures, the Knights wouldn't just be transforming themselves, but also these artifacts they carry.

I wanted to create a sense of suspense, a sense of mystery about these things, giving the players ambiguous descriptions and letting their own imaginations run wild. Unfortunately, during playtest, what I found was the whole idea was anticlimactic. The Knights opened their boxes, looked at the treasures and put them away, never looking at them again.

Still, I think it's an idea that may summon some other idea, so here are the thirty treasures I chose. Use them as you see fit.

### "WHAT'S IN THE BOX?"

Just what are the Templars carrying? Here's a list of ideas for your perusal. Use all, some, or none of them. A few of them are important to the campaign, so you may want to keep those. I've marked the special Treasures with an asterisk to let you know you may want to keep these.

The Knights know little, if anything, about these items, and while they may have suspicions, not all suspicions are correct. Each Treasure has a description for the players and a description for you.

Read the players' description to them when they open a box, but don't tell them anything else.

While reading through the Treasures, you may notice that some of them have no reason at all to be with a group of Knights from 1307. You are correct. And yet, here they are.

### #1. Nail

*The box opens and is nearly empty. Within is a small bundle of fabric, wrapped up in leather. There's something heavy in the fabric bundle. When you open it, you find a nail. It's about 6 inches long and as round as an index finger.*

There's a story about a little gypsy boy who stole one of the nails the Romans planned on using for Christ on his cross. The boy stole one of the nails, so the Romans had to use three instead of four. This is that nail. Because that little gypsy boy stole the nail, God forgave his people for any act of thievery.

The Brother who owns this nail gains 3 Advantage Dice for any act of theft. Also, because he owns the nail, any such act has no effect on his Virtues.

### #2. Demonic Circle

*The box opens revealing a rolled up parchment. As you open it, it displays an ugly, demonic face surrounded by elaborate patterns. The face demonstrates classic Satanic grimaces (its mouth is open and its tongue is sticking out). The patterns are indiscernible iconographs, a random muddle of lines, circles, and squiggles.*

This is a copy of the Aztec Calendar. How the Templars got a hold of it is anyone's guess.

### #3. Cup

*Inside your small box are the remains of a broken ceramic cup.*

Is it the Cup of Christ? If it is, the Cup is broken, and in this place, a place of ideas, that means much. It could mean the New Covenant has been broken, that the Church – with all its riches and indulgences – has betrayed the promise Man made with God.

However, in this place, the Cup could be remade. The Covenant could be restored. Meanwhile, whomever holds the Cup has no need of food and drink.

### #4. Sword

*Your box is much larger than the others. Almost six feet long and two feet wide, it requires both hands to carry. When you open it, you find an old sword wrapped in silk. There's a chink missing from the blade. The blade is rusty loose from the pommel. A hard strike could separate the two.*

This could be one of many swords. It could be Excalibur, it could be Roland's sword, and it could be Beowulf's sword. It may even be Odysseus's sword. The description above does not detail the culture of the weapon.

Using the sword is foolish. As the description says, any strong blow will break it. However, the blade will cut through anything. You just have to be very careful with it.

### #5. Obelisk

*Your box contains a small, black obelisk made from a strange material that is very cold. Strange writings are carved into the stone: pictographs of odd fellows and ladies doing strange things.*

This odd object is a model for "Cleopatra's Needle," presented by the original designer to the Queen of the Nile herself for approval. It is not large enough to use as a proper bludgeoning weapon, but if blood ever comes in contact with it, the Needle grows very hot and the pictographs begin to glow. The Needle will burn whoever holds it, but as long as they hold it, they are protected from any supernatural being (vampires, zombies, wraiths, etc.).

### #6. Scrolls

*The scrolls within your box are covered with squiggles. Is that a language?*

It is indeed a language. It's Hebrew. There are seven scrolls within the box and they are written by a man named "Zohar." Not only do they help understand the map, but also understand exactly where the Brothers are.

(Yes, the Templars have The Zohar. Not a complete version, but enough of it. And yes, the Zohar wasn't published until the fifteenth century. Wait 'till you see Treasure #9.)

### #7. Coin

*A small coin, just the size of the tip of your little finger, rests inside the box, making it look larger than it actually is. The coin looks to be made of silver.*

This is one of the thirty coins paid to Judas Iscariot to betray Christ. There are two ways to handle this little trinket.

The first is to give the owner 3 Advantage Dice whenever he takes an action that may betray the Order.

The second is to give the owner 3 Advantage Dice whenever he would



take an action that *seems* like betrayal, but in actuality, serves the Order's greater good.

Or, you could do both. It's up to you.

#### #8. Box

*Your box is slightly larger than the others. When you open it, you find a second box within the first; only a little smaller. It is difficult to remove. Within the second box you find crumbled stones. Closer examination reveals writing on the stones.*

The writing is Hebrew and the stones are the broken pieces of the Ten Commandments. If the smaller box is removed from the larger box, whenever the Thirty enter battle and the smaller box is held aloft in front of them, the Thirty gain 3 Advantage Dice to every action during combat.

#### #9. Keys

*Within your box are a metal ring and five keys. But these are not like any keys you have ever seen. They are small and seem to be made of silver; but this metal is not silver. It is lighter. Harder. The keys are very small and have intricate carvings upon them. One of them is written in a strange Spanish dialect. Perhaps it is a name. "Medeco?"*

This is a set of keys from New York City, autumn 2001.

#### #10. Mirror\*

*Wrapped in fine silk is a black stone. It is flat and polished on one side, the obsidian making strange colors in the light. When you see your face in it, it is distorted and startling.*

This is John Dee's obsidian mirror. He used this mirror (and other tools) for speaking with angels and spirits. The Brothers may try to use it in the same way, or perhaps spirits will attempt to contact them through the mirror. Either way, voices whisper from the mirror at night. The mirror cannot be broken, only thrown away.

#### #11. Sharp

*A sharp piece of copper, perhaps a cutting tool, rests at the bottom of your velvet-lined box. It is broken and the edges are a little dull, but can still cut. Two pieces of stone... is that stone?... are also in the box.*

The "stone" is petrified wood. The sharp piece of copper is what remains of the Spear of Longinus. The Brother who holds these items never ages.

#### #12. Cat

*Inside the box is a glass jar. The glasswork is amazing. No blemishes, no flaws. The jar is topped off with brass fittings. It is difficult to open, but there should be no need to open it: the jar is empty.*

The jar is far from empty. In fact, it contains a life. One of the nine lives of the King of the Cats. When the seal is broken and the jar is opened, the Brothers will hear a deafening scream. A cat's scream. If the jar is left open, the life stolen from the King of the Cats will escape. If closed again, the life remains trapped.

Anyone who owns the jar gains 5 Advantage Dice to use – all at once for one roll, once per game. Take the player aside, explain he has extra Advantage Dice, but don't tell him why. He'll learn why when the

King comes looking for his stolen life.

#### #13. Art

*A small pamphlet of letters rests in the bottom of the box. The letters are written in a language you've never seen before (not even matching anything you've seen from the other boxes). The letters are delicate – having the consistency of dry leaves. You must be very careful with these, lest they disintegrate in your fingers.*

The Scholar will not be able to decipher the writing on these pages, but someone the Brothers meet on the road may be able to. There are seventy-four pages in total. They contain the only complete copy of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* (including the missing text from the Espionage chapter).

If the Brothers can translate the work, any who reads it gains an Advantage Die on any tests involving strategy or tactics.

#### #14. Eye

*What's in your box is old and withered. Like a fat raisin. It has a tail as well. Closer examination shows it to be... an eye. A dried up human eye.*

This is the eye Odin threw away to gain the wisdom of the world. The Brother who holds it gains 3 Advantage Dice on any tests for wisdom or knowledge.

#### #15. Scabbard

*Rolled up inside your box is an old leather scabbard. It is only four foot long and looks chipped and worn.*

This is Excalibur's scabbard. Any man who wields it will not bleed from any blow. This means he

cannot be harmed by edged weapons.

(Note the scabbard and the Sword do not fit. However, this does not rule out that the Sword is Excalibur. In fact, if a Brother tries fitting the Sword and Scabbard, he will be amazed to find they fit quite well.)

#### #16. Comedy

*It's a book. A large book. It looks old. Old enough to fall apart with even a touch. The language inside the book is Greek*

Yes, the book is Greek (both the Scholar and the Clergy can read it). It's also the (pseudo-)legendary missing *second* book of poetics Aristotle wrote. His first was on Tragedy. Anyone who reads the text gains 3 Advantage Dice when using comedy or wit.

#### #17. Statue

*The statue is small enough to hold in the palm of your hand. It is a cherubic figure. Portly and grinning. His hands are held high above him as he smiles at you, his eyes shut tight with pure joy.*

The little Buddha seems harmless, but he's quite a fortunate fellow to have around. As long as the Brother carries him, he cannot lose his temper to rage or fury. He is calm, reflective, and insightful. (He also gains 3 Advantage Dice in matters of emotion, including courage.)

#### #18. Thomas

*Another book. This time, the pages are made of velum, the words in a... familiar language. The text seems to be poetry of some kind.*

The language is Aramaic. The opening lines read: "This is the secret gospel of Jesus of

Nazareth..." The author appears to be "didymos Judas Thomas." "Didymos" is Greek for "twin" while "Thomas" is Aramaic for the same. This document is a collection of Jesus' sayings, although not all of them appear in the canonical gospels.

#### #19. Song\*

*A canister. Within the canister, a parchment. Upon the parchment, words. A poem? No. A song.*

This is the song Jacque de Molay was singing to summon the Mists. If the Brothers discover it, any can learn it. Summoning the Mists then requires only a Difficulty 15 roll for the Scholar and Difficulty 25 for anyone else.

#### #20. Map\*

*A burned parchment. Take care with the edges. It looks like some kind of map or chart, although you do not recognize any of the seas or lands inscribed upon it.*

This Map (see graphic in Appendix 1) will help the Brothers get home, but they'll need to learn how to use it.

#### #21. Honey

*Your box opens to reveal a small, capped ceramic jar. The cap is sealed tight. When removed, it gives a slight pop. Inside the small jar is honey.*

This honey is over four thousand years old. It was taken from the tomb of a Pharaoh and has rested here ever since. One drop of the honey is enough to feed a man for a day.

Be subtle about that. Don't tell the Knight "You don't have to eat for a

day." Let him figure it out on his own.

#### #22. Finger

*Within your box is a bone. It looks like a finger bone.*

This is the bone of a Goddess. In another world, she was the patron Goddess of Love. Her name was Talia. Unfortunately, she and her fellow Gods were murdered by a betrayer, the God of Murder, Ikhalu. This one bone is all that's left of her.

Anyone who possesses the bone gains 3 bonus dice on any act that would lead to... romance.

#### #23. Veil

*Inside your box is a bloodstained cloth. It smells of age and mold.*

This is the cloth St. Veronica ("vera" + "icon" = "true visage") used to wipe Jesus' face while carrying the cross to his death. Any Brother who carries it needs no rest.

#### #24. Blade

*Your box is larger than most. It is long and thin. When you open it, you withdraw a long sword, still in its sheath. The sheath is made from lacquered wood and the blade is thin and slightly curved. When drawn from the sheath, the blade sings in the air. The edge is sharp. Very sharp. Sharp enough to cut through a rope of silk.*

Yes, it's a katana. Here are some things to know about a katana. First off, this isn't like the katanas you buy in knife stores. It's a four-foot razor blade. It can cut through your hand with little or no pressure. If you take a length of rope and try to cut through it with an English (or even Spanish) longsword – the kind the Templars were using – it

wouldn't cut the rope. A katana will.

#### #25. Claw

*You withdraw a claw from the box. It is curved like a Saracen's blade, and just as sharp. It looks very old.*

It is a claw from some mythical beast. Perhaps a hydra or a cockatrice. Or maybe it's a claw from some prehistoric beast. Whatever it is, it is just as sharp as a sword and poisonous. Putting it in a cup will poison the liquid within. The poison is instant. It paralyzes the victim, then, they suffocate slowly. A nasty way to die.

#### #26. Deck\*

*You open your box to find another box. This one is made of bone. Inside it, a large deck of cards rests in a bundle of red silk. The cards have vivid images. The Pope being trampled by an ass, the Angel of Death, a crab and wolf worshipping the Moon...*

Of course, these are Tarot cards. They won't be in general circulation until the 1400's. Like the Map, these are important clues to solving where the Knights are now.

#### #27. Apple

*You open your box and resting within is an apple. You reach inside and lift it from the box, but it is heavier than it looks. That's because it's made of gold. And carved in the side of the apple are the letters "KALLISTI."*

We really don't need to say anything else, do we?

#### #28. Battery

*The jar you remove from your box is a 6-inch-high pot of bright yellow clay. Within the jar is a cylinder of what appears to be copper (it is green with age). The edges of the*

*cylinder are... is that tin?... melted into the copper somehow. This is master blacksmithing indeed! But, what is it?*

It's an electrical battery. In addition to the details listed above, the bottom of the cylinder is capped with a copper disk and sealed with bitumen. It's all insulated with a layer of asphalt, sealed at the top to hold the rod in place. This odd device can generate an electrical charge – but only a small one. Not even a Volt. While the Brothers won't know anything about it, someone they meet might.

#### #29. Compass

*It's a small thing, fitting neatly into your hand. It dangles from a golden chain, its various weights and counterweights keeping all the pieces perfectly in order. It resembles the Heavens in its own way: a dangling wind chime of delicate beauty.*

The more they play with it, the more the Brothers will realize this fragile bauble is actually a compass. Specifically, an alchemical compass. And whichever way they turn, it always points in the same direction: toward home.

#### #30. Empty\*

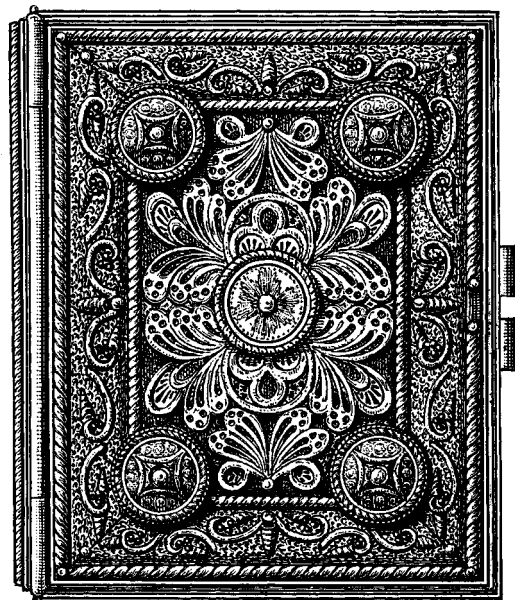
*Your box is empty.*

Really. Really, it is.

## Appendix 7: Suggested Reading

This book is a culmination of three decades of obsession. Ever since I was a child, I've adored the Templars. The concept of a holy knight – a virtuous warrior – has inspired my imagination. When I learned the Knights had Muslim counterparts, the idea ignited a new fire. All of this was when I lived in Georgia, when I was only ten years old.

These books assisted me on my way through the Spheres. I hope they bring you as much insight and enjoyment (and sometimes even giggles) as they brought me.



### *The Templars: Knights of God* by Edward Burman

This is one of the most historical (non-speculative) source of information on the Knights I've ever found. A wonderful, but somewhat dry, resource.

### *Secret Societies: From the Ancient and Arcane to the Modern and Clandestine* by David V. Barrett

The author has energy and humor about the subject and a healthy sense of skepticism that makes it an educational and pleasurable read.

<http://www.templarhistory.com>

A site every Templar fan should check out. Lots of history and speculation. And the webmaster is friendly, cordial, and quick to respond to all my annoying questions.

*Dungeon, Fire, & Sword: The Knights Templar in the Crusades* by John J. Robinson  
With maps and stats, this is a great book for players looking to capture the feel of the time early in the Order's history.

### *The Hiram Key* by Christopher Knight & Robert Lomas

All the *Hiram Key* books are fun, but this is where it all starts. (*Turning the Hyrum Key* is the most friendly and approachable book in the series.) Following the history of esoteric enlightenment from ancient Egypt to the Templars, to the Rosicrucians, to the Freemasons... it's a trip that makes Mr. Toad's Wild Ride look like a walk in the park. A fun read.

### *The Kabbalah Tree: A Journey of Balance & Growth* by Rachel Pollack

A personal account of climbing the Tree of Life. It's obvious the author is an Alan Moore fan (and more power to her). A good introduction to a dense and difficult subject.

### *The History of Hell* by Alice K. Turner

*History* is a scholarly and historical look at why we believe in Hell and where those beliefs came from.

### *Encyclopedia of Hell* by Miriam Van Scott

This book is a bit more sensational than Turner's and less scholarly, but it does have references to Ronnie James Dio and Black Sabbath. That's always a plus.

### *The Principia Discordia* by Malaclypse the Younger

"Hail Eris and pass the hot dogs."

### *The Templars and the Assassins: The Militia of Heaven* by James Wasserman

I wanted to put more Assassins in the game, but it's really not about them. (Sorry, Hyrum!) A fun read about the esoteric connection between these two groups and the Gnostic heresy.

### *GURPS: Cabal* by Kenneth Hite

This is my favorite GURPS book. A dark, occult alternative history setting that knocks your socks off. No more need be said. Go get it now.

### *Promethea* by Alan Moore and J.H. Williams III

The best thing Alan Moore has ever done. Williams' art is inventive and stunning. What Wonder Woman could have been: a living myth and source of all human imagination. The series is over now. Read it. You'll never be the same.

### *Dictionary of the Occult* by A. Nataf

This curious little book can usually be purchased for a buck in most large bookstores. The value far outweighs the cost. A quick primer on ideas such as Gnosticism, the Ptolemaic Model, and the Tree of Life.

### *The Tree of Life: An Illustrated Study in Magic* by Israel Regardie

This book helped me find the symbols and myths I needed to populate the Spheres. It's also reputed to be a great magical work, but I haven't tried any of the rituals yet. Yet.



## Appendix 8:

# The Spheres

While designing *The Long Walk Home*, I pulled nearly every myth I knew out of my hat. Okay, not all of them... come to think of it, not even most of them... but I didn't want to overload the reader with too much symbolism. Going through the Spheres is kind of like visiting Wonka's Factory – you don't want to eat *everything* because it will all start tasting the same. You want to sample a little here, a little there, and maybe some of that... but don't eat everything. Otherwise, you'll get a belly ache, or worse, turn into a giant blueberry.

The symbols and stories in *The Long Walk Home* are recognizable by anyone, but they are very specific to me. Athena and Odin have always had a special place in my heart. They've played such important parts in my life, not putting them in the Spheres seemed... well, disrespectful. But the reason I populated the Spheres with symbols that were familiar to me was that my players also knew them. The things and places in *The Long Walk Home* resonate with my players. I chose them because I knew my players would react to them. They knew me well enough to know that Odin and Athena are sacred symbols in my own private mythology. *Sacred*. I don't mention them in casual conversation; when I invoke them, I do it for a reason. That's why they belong in the

Spheres: they're sacred to me and my players know it.

On the other hand, these two symbols may not be sacred to you or your players. They may not (and probably don't) communicate the same level of sanctity. What I've done here is not the only way to run the campaign. It isn't even the "correct" way. Instead, it's an example of how a journey through the Spheres *might* go. There are so many gods, goddesses and heroes to employ... I just picked ones that resonated with me.

In fact, I deleted one of the most powerful episodes in Sphere II because it was too personal. "The Three Jesuses" was a bit of random fun I included in the playtest, but eliminated in the final cut. It involved the knights finding Jesus in the City of Lights. They did what good knights do: they bowed and begged forgiveness for their sins. But Jesus shook his head. "Get off the ground," he told them. "I'm not that Jesus."

The knights were confused. He explained. "I'm the Gospel of Thomas Jesus. The Gnostic Jesus. You don't need to beg me for forgiveness. You already have it. You want the Gospel of Luke Jesus." He looks over the heads of the people gathered around him. "There he is!"

The knights turn and see *another* Jesus walking through the crowd performing miracles, healing the sick, turning water into wine, etc. Gnostic Jesus smiles and shrugs, "I just give advice. He's the messiah."

Just then, the City begins to shake. The crowd starts screaming. Loud footsteps thunder down the way. Gnostic Jesus ducks. "Run!" he

shouts to the knights. When they ask him what it is, he shouts, "Run for your lives! It's the Paul Jesus!"

And there, twenty feet tall and breathing fire, is the Big Bad Jesus spouting fire and brimstone hate and bile about women and faggots and damnation.

Yeah, it was a mean joke, but it showed the knights something important. I knew I'd never include it in the main adventure, but here it is so you can include it if you like. Why didn't I include it? Not because I felt it would offend people (I don't give two farts about offending people), but I felt it was too personal. My players would get the humor, but I wasn't sure if other people would. So, I left it out.

(I was also tempted to include the Mormon Jesus for a friend of mine, but he didn't make it to the playtest, so I left it alone.)

There's a point to all of this. Fill the Spheres with symbols, myths and metaphors your players understand. If you have a player who's nuts for Roman history, throw in a few figures from Roman culture. You've got a buddy who knows Chinese history backwards and forwards, do your best to populate the Spheres with figures he'll recognize.

Heck, even the Spheres themselves can change. Grab a copy of Ptolemy's system and fiddle with it. Nobody says it has to be perfect. In fact, if you pay attention, you may notice that everyone who tells the knights about the Spheres is a little wrong. De Molay's map isn't entirely accurate. Derby knows a lot, but he still gets the little details wrong. Even Abby doesn't get everything right.

The whole point is that the Spheres are made of crystal; they're refracting the Light. But *which way* are they refracting the Light? From the top to the bottom or the bottom to the top? The answer is, of course, both ways. The knights encounter the Spheres in a language they can understand. The Light communicates to them but they communicate to the Sphere. It's a dialogue between the Light and the knights. Between God and Man.

When I wrote up the campaign, I stole symbolism from just about every esoteric system I could. I stole stuff from Ptolemy, the Masons, Quabballah, Hermeticism... just about everything I could get my hands on. The top three Spheres are the three Masonic virtues... kind of. It's really Beauty, Wisdom and Strength.

Meanwhile the other Spheres are filled with Tarot symbolism from the Kabbalic Golden Dawn system. If you look, you can see The Tower, The Fool, The Hermit, and The Devil. Those are the obvious ones. There's others, but they're hidden pretty well. Go look for them.

If you want to personalize the Spheres for your own players, here's a brief list of themes for each Sphere. I've based each of these on two sources: Ptolemy's model, the Qabballah, and the Golden Dawn's Tarot. I didn't invent this trick – it's been around a long, long time. But, I found it useful when trolling for symbols to populate the Spheres. I hope it helps you.

Also, I should mention that there are still some secrets that I won't divulge quite yet. Yes, the adventure ends on a cliffhanger, but that's only because it's leading into

something much larger. So, if you want to know *everything* about the Spheres, you'll have to be a little more patient. Or, you could just make it up yourself. After all, that's what the rest of us are doing!

(Note: The Spheres are numbered in the *opposite* way from Abby's Map. Not everyone agrees on the Spheres, least of all those "serious magicians.")

### SPHERE I

Malkuth, the Kingdom. (Hebrew spelling: Mem, Lamed, Kaph, Vau, Tau.)

**Magical Image:** A young woman, crowned and throned.

**Situation on the Tree:** At the base of the Pillar of Equilibrium.

**Titles:** The Gate. The Gate of Death. The Gate of the Shadow of Death. The Gate of Tears. The Gate of Justice. The Gate of Prayer. The Gate of the Daughter of the Mighty Ones. The Gate of the Garden of Eden. The Inferior Mother. Malkah, the Queen. Kallab, the Bride. The Virgin.

**Archangel:** Sandalphon.

**Choir of Angels:** Ashim, Souls of Fire.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of the Holy Guardian Angel.

**Virtue:** Discrimination.

**Vice:** Avarice. Inertia.

**Symbols:** Altar of the double cube. The Equal-armed cross. The magic circle. The triangle of art.

**Ten of Wands:** Oppression.

**Ten of Cups:** Perfected Success.

**Ten of Swords:** Ruin.

**Ten of Pentacles:** Wealth.

**Color:** Yellow.

### SPHERE II

Yesod, the Foundation. (Hebrew spelling: Yod, Samech, Vau, Daleth.)

**Magical Image:** A beautiful naked man, very strong.

**Situation on the Tree:** Towards the base of the Pillar of Equilibrium.

**Archangel:** Gabriel.

**Order of Angels:** Kerubim, the Strong.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of the Machinery of the Universe.

**Virtue:** Independence.

**Vice:** Idleness.

**Symbols:** The Perfumes and sandals.

**Nine of Wands:** Great strength.

**Nine of Cups:** Material happiness.

**Nine of Swords:** Despair and cruelty.

**Nine of Pentacles:** Material gain.

**Color:** Indigo.

### SPHERE III

Hod, Glory. (Hebrew spelling: He, Vau, Daleth.)

**Magical Image:** A hermaphrodite.

**Situation on the Tree:** At the foot of the Pillar of Severity. Intelligence because it is the mean of the Primordial, which has no root by which it can cleave or rest, save in the hidden places of Gedulah, from which emanates its proper essence.

**Archangel:** Michael.

**Order of Angels:** Beni Elohim, Sons of God.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of Splendour.

**Virtue:** Truthfulness.

**Vice:** Falsehood. Dishonesty.

**Symbols:** Names and Versicles and Apron.

**Eight of Wands:** Swiftmess.

**Eight of Cups:** Abandoned success.

**Eight of Swords:** Shortened force.

**Eight of Pentacles:** Prudence.

**Color:** Violet-purple.

### SPHERE IV

Netzach, Victory. (Hebrew spelling: Nun, Tzaddi, Cheth.)

**Magical Image:** A beautiful naked woman.

**Situation on the Tree:** At the foot of the Pillar of Mercy. because it is the refulgent splendour of the

intellectual virtues which are perceived by the eyes of the intellect and the contemplations of faith.

**Archangel:** Haniel.

**Order of Angels:** Elohim, Gods.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of beauty triumphant.

**Virtue:** Unselfishness.

**Vice:** Unchastity. Lust.

**Symbols:** Lamp and girdle. The rose.

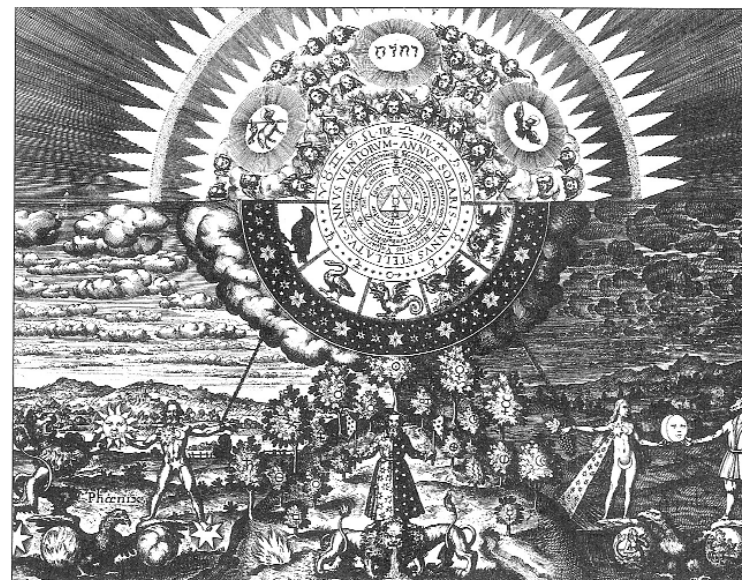
**Seven of Wands:** Valour.

**Seven of Cups:** Illusory success.

**Seven of Swords:** Unstable effort.

**Seven of Pentacles:** Success unfulfilled.

**Color:** Amber.



## SPHERE V

Tiphareth, Beauty. (Hebrew spelling: Tau, Pe, Aleph, Resh, Tau.)

**Magical Image:** A majestic king. A child. A sacrificed god.

**Situation on the Tree:** In the centre of the Pillar of Equilibrium. Because in it are multiplied the influxes of the Emanations; for it causes that influence to flow into all the reservoirs of the blessings with which they themselves are united. Melekh, the King. Adam. The Son. The Man.

**Archangel:** Raphael.

**Order of Angels:** Malachim, Kings.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of the harmony of things. Mysteries of the Crucifixion.

**Virtue:** Devotion to the Great Work.

**Vice:** Pride.

**Symbols:** The Lamen. The Rosy Cross. The Calvary Cross. The truncated pyramid. The cube.

**Six of Wands:** Victory.

**Six of Cups:** Joy.

**Six of Swords:** Earned success.

**Six of Pentacles:** Material success.

**Color:** Clear rose-pink.

## SPHERE VI

Geburah, Strength, Severity. (Hebrew spelling: Gimel, Beth, Vau, Resh, Heh.)

**Magical Image:** A mighty warrior in his chariot.

**Situation on the Tree:** In the centre of the Pillar of Severity. It resembles Unity, uniting itself to Binah, Understanding, which

emanates from the primordial depths of Chokmah, Wisdom.

**Titles:** Din: Justice. Pachad: Fear.

**Archangel:** Khamael.

**Host of Angels:** Seraphim, Fiery Serpents.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of Power.

**Virtue:** Energy. Courage.

**Vice:** Cruelty. Destruction.

**Symbols:** The Pentagon. The Five-petalled Tudor Rose. The Sword. The Spur. The Scourge. The Chain.

**Five of Wands:** Strife.

**Five of Cups:** Loss in pleasure.

**Five of Swords:** Defeat.

**Five of Pentacles:** Earthly trouble.

**Color:** orange.

## SPHERE VII

Chesed, Mercy. (Hebrew spelling: Cheth, Samech, Daleth.)

**Magical Image:** A mighty crowned and throned king.

**Situation on the Tree:** In the centre of the Pillar of Mercy.

**Titles:** Gedulah. Love. Majesty.

**Archangel:** Tzadkiel.

**Order of Angels:** Chasmalim, Brilliant Ones.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of Love.

**Virtue:** Obedience

**Vice:** Bigotry. Hypocrisy. Gluttony. Tyranny.

**Symbols:** The solid figure - Tetrahedron. Pyramid. Equal armed Cross. Orb. Wand. Sceptre. Crook.

**Four of Wands :** Perfected work.

**Four of Cups:** Pleasure.

**Four of Swords:** Rest from strife.

**Four of Pentacles:** Earthly power.

**Color:** Deep Violet

## SPHERE VIII

Binah, Understanding. (Hebrew spelling: Beth, Yod, Nun, He'.)

**Magical Image:** A mature woman. A matron.

**Situation on the Tree:** At the head of the Pillar of Severity in the Supernal Triangle.

**Titles:** Ama, the dark sterile Mother. Aima, the bright fertile Mother. Khorsia, the Throne. Marab, the Great Sea.

**Archangel:** Tzaphkiel.

**Order of Angels:** Aralim, Thrones.

**Spiritual Experience:** Vision of Sorrow.

**Virtue:** Silence.

**Vice:** Avarice.

**Symbols:** The Yoni. The Kteis. The Vesica Piscis. The cup or chalice. The Outer Robe of Concealment.

**Three of Wands:** Established Strength.

**Three of Cups:** Abundance.

**Three of Swords:** Sorrow.

**Three of Pentacles:** Material works.

**Color:** Crimson.

## SPHERE IX

Chokmah, Wisdom. (Hebrew spelling: Cheth, Kaph, Mem, He'.)

**Magical Image:** A bearded male figure.

**Situation on the Tree:** At the head of the Pillar of Mercy in the Supernal Triangle.

**Titles:** Power of Yetzirah. Ah. Abba. The Supernal

Father. Tetragrammaton. Yod of Tetragrammaton.

**Archangel:** Ratziel.

**Order of Angels:** Auphanim, wheels.

**Spiritual Experience:** The Vision of God face to face.

**Virtue:** Devotion.

**Vice:** N/A

**Symbols:** The Lingam. The Phallus. The Yod of Tetragrammaton. The Inner Robe of Glory. The Standing-stone. The Tower. The Uplifted Rod of Power. The Straight Line.

**Tarot Cards:** The four Twos.

**Two of Wands:** Dominion.

**Two of Cups:** Love.

**Two of Swords:** Peace restored.

**Two of Pentacles:** Harmonious change.

**Color:** Pure soft blue.

## SPHERE X

Kether, the Crown. (Hebrew spelling: - Kaph, Tau, Resh.)

**Magical Image:** An ancient bearded king seen in profile.

**Titles:** Existence of Existences. Concealed of the Concealed. Ancient of Ancients. Ancient of Days. The Primordial Point. The Point within the Circle. The Most





*The quest is over  
but the real journey  
has just begun.*

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