

Sophia's Daughters

Iron Hands, Velvet Gloves



"The female of the species is deadlier than the male..."

- Valentina Villanova



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Dedication

For my mother.

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You think that you know us.

La Ciencia, Castille - 1666
 "They're coming."

The voice came from the rear of Alvara Arciniega's hidden laboratory, where the shadows pooled together. It belonged to Gruenhild, his groundskeeper, and a friend of the family since her father retired from the same position some fifty years before.

"How many?" Arciniega's words were firm, practiced.

"I'm not sure," Gruenhild answered, "But they're led by someone new."

Arciniega turned from the stone block resting upon his work bench. A fragment of it had recently been chipped away, revealing a sliver of thin inhuman bone.

"New?" Alvara's eyes narrowed. This was no time for surprises. "An Inquisitor?"

"I think, but I can't know. He looks... dangerous."

"Curious..." he mused, then sprang into action. Lifting a thick leather case from beneath the bench, he removed its contents - a small but heavy telescope - and replaced it with the chipped block of stone. Strapping the bag shut, he handed it to Gruenhild and ushered her toward the door from which she had emerged.

"Make sure this arrives safely in Aldana, and take Stefan with you. He knows his way around a sword."

Gruenhild had worked for Arciniega long enough to recognize the urgency in his voice. Without responding, she ducked back into the dark rear corner of the room and vanished. The only sound of her escape was a brief gust of air followed by the click as the secret door locked behind her. The stairwell beyond was all but sound-proofed.

As the door slid shut, Arciniega's groundskeeper smiled. Stefan had already left for Aldana... but he wouldn't make it. The boy had seen too much, and might begin to put two and two together. A waste, really... but this mission was three hundred years in the making, and could not be risked for a seventeen-year-old fool.

Gruenhild ran a hand through her short dark hair, her fingers lingering on the scar beside her temple. It had been there for nearly four hundred years. A reminder of her mortality... even as her life stretched on endlessly. *I am not eternal*, Gruenhild thought to herself. *All worlds must end...*

She walked down the hidden staircase, shouldering the leather case that held Arciniega's Blood Science research materials. At the bottom of the staircase, she peered through a peephole into the manor's small kitchen. Empty. Gruenhild stepped out stealthily, and reached for a small rack of herbs that rested in an unnoticed corner. Uncorking a small glass bottle that read "Chicken oil," Gruenhild glanced out the kitchen's window and saw a courtyard filled with horses and Inquisition soldiers. Arciniega's light spectrum had certainly earned some unwanted attention. Bright torches burned in their hands. They were eager to begin the "purification" of the house.

"Bastards," she whispered. "You haven't caught me yet." Upending the bottle's contents into her mouth, Gruenhild grimaced. The elixir was bitter, foul, but effective. It was always a bit eerie to watch its effects, and she stared at her hands in fascination as they slowly faded from view. Within a few seconds, Gruenhild and her possessions vanished within a shroud of invisibility.

The groundskeeper smiled, placing the rest of the now-invisible bottles in her unseen belt. Opening the door casually, she stepped out into the courtyard. Arciniega would have killed the first wave of attackers by now, and soon he would escape the house as well. She had no fear of that. He was a crafty devil, and dangerous as well.

Ignoring the screams of Arciniega's staff, she crossed the courtyard and headed away from the flames licking the foundation of the ancient estate. Arciniega would assume that his humble groundskeeper had smuggled his equipment out at great risk, and would likely become even more trusting. Soon, she would be as irreplaceable as the scientists in his laboratories - the men that she watched, day and night, subtly guiding their experiments. Without his knowledge, she controlled the information he obtained, preventing him from reaching certain conclusions that were too dangerous to be left in his hands.

Gruenhild smiled grimly. Men like Arciniega were uncommon, even after four hundred years. She welcomed the challenge he represented. Soon enough, she would have to return to the guise of his gentle, loyal servant, laughing at his jokes and pretending not to understand the scientific conversations that floated through the house with every breeze. But for now, her eyes shone with intellect, and her carefully guarded facade fell, as invisible as her body as she walked stealthily through the trees.

Deep in the forests around the manor stood a small hut - the groundskeeper's house. Inside the hut was a simple cot, a small armoire for clothing and utensils, and a cooking fireplace. Gruenhild slid her hand beneath the cot, opening a small chute in the floor. Two hundred years ago, this hut had been part of a lumber mill.

Gripping a knapsack of clothing and her knives, she slid into the chute, feeling herself accelerate rapidly before bursting out over the underground river. She fell into the rippling waves, feeling their chill bite into her skin in the blackness of the small cave. Anyone else would have drowned in the black river. Anyone, that is, except a child of the Lake.

With a whispered prayer, Gruenhild allowed the waters to close over her head, and saw a brilliant light open before her.

Bryn Bresail awaited.

You consider us to be powerless. Weak. Naive.

Pavtlow, Ussura - 1667

"I don't care what you think, Borin," Aleksi v'Novgorov snarled, leaning low over the Gaius's council table. "Montegue and his men are only a few weeks south of Pavtlow, and they show no signs of ceasing their march. We will not just *leave* them to pillage our country!"

Knias Borin quivered indignantly, his thick chin shaking as he stabbed a pointing finger toward the other rulers at the table. "No, Alexi, you are wrong. There is no way to fight the Montaigne. Look what they have done to Odyesse! To your own provinces and mine! Only Matushka..."

"Matushka..." a third voice said smoothly, "has more pressing matters on her mind. She is here for Ussura, but you cannot rely solely on her aid." Koschei's voice was ice, and his pure green eyes shone malevolently from the shadows of the corner. "Ussura must fight for herself. You are not children, waiting for your mother to kiss away your tears. You have gifts, strengths - use them." His snarl was palpable, and the air grew colder.

"We have tried weapons of war," Tamara, Knias of distant Gallenia spoke. She was a beautiful woman, tall and slender. "They outgun us, and have three times as many men as we can marshal. The only reason they have not come farther north has been the unusual weather plaguing them. Matushka is on our side - but she will not fight our wars for us. Koschei is correct. We must find another way to stop this war. We must negotiate with *l'Empereur*... and Montegue."

"Tamara, you are an adept negotiator, and an excellent administrator. But what women know of war would not fill a thimble," Aleksi glowered, his face dark. "My people are dying because of Montegue's march. They lie by the road,

starving, killed so that his troops can have grain. I will not negotiate with a butcher."

"What about the sickness that struck the Molhynian provinces some three years ago?" asked the Gaius slowly. He was a thick-bodied, strong man whose pure white hair hung well beneath his shoulders. "It caused pains of the bladder, ruptured organs, and literally ate the Kosars apart from the inside. Tell me, Koschei, does anyone struck by the symptoms still live?" The Ussuran sorcerer nodded slowly, and a cruel smile twisted the Gaius's features.

"By Theus, Ilya," murmured Borin. The fat man pressed his soft hands to the table in disbelief. "That plague is devastating. To even suggest releasing it among the Montaigne... we have no cure for it. What if it infects our own people?" He bit his lower lip in frustration. "Do we have the right?"

"We have the power, and the power makes us right." Ilya stood. "Bring me ten villagers with the sickness. Send them to the Montaigne with supplies of food for their injured – as a 'peace offering.' Make sure the peasants taint the food – they shall sleep with it, defile it, anything they wish. Only make sure the Montaigne eat it. Then we will let sickness and the winter snows do our work for us."

As four of the other Knias slowly nodded in agreement, Tamara shot a swift glance toward the roaring fireplace of Pavlow's meeting hall. The Gaius's wife, Ketheryna, sat quietly by the fire and spun thread for clothing, apparently oblivious to the conversation around her. When she looked up, her eyes met Tamara's in a long, understanding stare.

Something would have to be done.

You believe that you control us.

Dionna, Vodacce – 1668

The swordswoman's blows rang from the steel of her opponent's blade, pealing like bells above the high waters of the canal. A veiled girl huddled terrified against the

ledge of the palace, praying to Theus for her life as she stared into the water far, far below.

The guard died, spitted like a salmon on the swordswoman's blade, and fell twisting from the rooftop. He missed the canal by a few feet, his body bounding twice against the cobblestones below.

"We have to jump, Trista," the woman muttered.

"Jump?" shrieked the girl. "We'll die!"

"Look at the strands, *bella!*" The swordswoman sheathed her rapier with swift grace, pointing down into the fast-flowing current. "You won't die any more than I will."

"Why am I doing this?" the young Fate Witch sobbed.

"You are doing this," said the woman, taking the frightened girl's hand, "because you cannot live in slavery. You came to us knowing the danger, and willing to face it. If we escape, you will be free – truly free, for the first time in your life."

The woman's dark hair curled around green-grey eyes. She knelt beside the frightened maiden, reaching up with a sure hand to tear the veil away. Another yelp came from the terrified girl, but the swordswoman ignored it. "You can no longer see half the world, little one. Look around you. Look at the women of Vodacce. They are slaves, worse than slaves. They are animals."

"I am one of them," she pleaded. "I cannot change... I... I did not think this through... I was angry at my father..."

"You will do anything you wish," the swordswoman replied. "There is another world waiting for you out there. It is a place that needs women with your talent – brave, imaginative women. You can learn to read, and write. To hold a sword, and to be anything you wish to become. Your life will be your own."

"Like my sister's life?" she wept. "Murdered by thugs as she fled the city? She left Dionna to find her freedom, and she found nothing but dishonor and death!"

"Is that what they told you?" The swordswoman's voice was dark, sorrowful.

"It is the truth!"

"Look into your heart, Trista, and see if it is so."

"Her strand ended six years ago. It died as she died."

"No. It died when her captivity died. She was reborn." The swordswoman lifted the girl's head gently, staring into a matched set of grey-green eyes. "I risked my life to come for you. The Handmaiden wished to send another, but I would not let her. You were my responsibility. I could never abandon you."

"You... Fausta? You live?" Trista's eyes lit up with hope, recognizing the stranger at last. She was so different. Her black hair, no longer coiled into a tight bun, swirled in the wind of the high rooftop. Her features were tanned, freed of her veil, and her once-thin arms were strong and muscular.

"I live. And I am free." The swordswoman smiled, reaching into the air with a practiced hand. Colors coalesced around her outstretched grip, and a gleaming strand of Sorte spun between her fingers. "They lied to you in order to keep you from believing that freedom could exist for us. Yet it does, and I will take you there. You see, little Trista," she whispered, "you cannot die because I will not let you."

Trista stared at the thread for a moment, then reached out and pulled it taut. It spun between the two women, connecting their souls like spinneret of shimmering light. Releasing the thread, Trista stood confidently beside her sister, raising her chin with pride and newfound devotion. "Lead me."

Together, they leapt into the wind above the waterway, trusting in destiny to show them the way.

You assume that because we are women, we are not worthy of strength, power, and knowledge. You ask us to forsake our heritage, and accept the rules of society that you have invented. You wish us to ignore the fact that we can change the future.

You are convinced that we cannot change the world.

You are wrong.

Introduction

Many Secret Societies rest beneath the surface of Théan politics, but none have existed for longer than the Daughters of Sophia. Where other Secret Societies begin with the Bargain, or even later, the Daughters trace their origins back to the days when the first Sidhe set foot upon the sands of Théah. Their blood is born from the Sidhe; half-human and half-fae, they exist in both worlds.

Yet they are irrevocably connected to Théah. They knew of the First Prophet's coming long before he stepped foot into the Senate; they know when the Fourth Prophet will rise to bring about the end of the world. Unlike most doomsday cults, the Daughters of Sophia believe that this final ending can be averted. To that end, they work toward bettering the world, a world that Theus, in His wisdom, will not seek to punish with the coming of His Fourth Son.

This book explains the short and long-term goals of the Daughters, detailing their abilities, plots, and methodology. Chapter One details their history, both mythological and realistic. It includes information on their beginnings in the lands of the Sidhe, their organization, and the hidden group that still remains in Bryn Bresail.

Chapter Two describes the most influential members of the Daughters of Sophia as well as their male counterparts and adversaries. It gives you a glimpse of their most important members, the Handmaidens, as well as detailing other important figures that make up the Society.

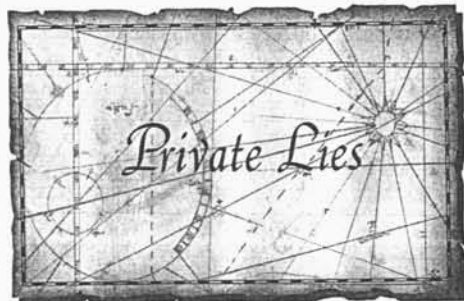
In the third chapter, you will find new rule and mechanics, a unique swordsman school, and a new type of sorcery. The fourth and final chapter contains hints and tips on playing a member of the Daughters, along with several adventure plots, and secrets about the NPCs in this book.

Where does the line of future and past diverge, and where does true freedom begin? Is there a difference between destiny and free will? Can Judgement Day be averted?

Seek the future.



Birth



Unlike many of Théah's so-called "secret" societies, the existence and purpose of the Daughters of Sophia is almost completely hidden. The name literally has no meaning outside of the society and those who do know never speak it to outsiders. It is a tribute to all those who serve the society that it has remained hidden for so long; a commendation to the delicacy of those who have worked for its purposes. It is an even greater achievement, then, that the Daughters have managed to keep their existence not only a mystery to the mortals of Théah's nations, but also to the Sidhe from whose blood they sprang.

You will find no real "discussion" of the public face of the Daughters of Sophia in this book; they have none. Ask any Jenny about her secret mistress, and she'll laugh in your face. Seek out a noblewoman and inquire after her political affiliation, and she will lower her eyes and tell you that women don't think of such things. Of course, they're lying.

Even more hidden are the men who work within the organization, and the brothers of the bloodline that spend their lives to help create a world where the laws of Theus are genuine, and where Sidhe and mortal can live together, from the distant shores of Bryn Bresail to the wide plains of Ussura. As far as the world knows, none of them exist.

A Friendly Spoiler Warning.

This section details the truths behind the organization known as the Sophia's Daughters. If you aren't a GM, or you aren't playing a member of that organization, you should stop reading now. Continued reading will tear the veils between the land of the Sidhe, and could show you truths that will alter your view of Théah... forever.

You have been warned.

Legends

*"Three Queens grace the halls of Bryn Bresail
One to rule the Sidhe, the sky,
One to rule the ocean wide, and
One to rule the heart..."*

– Ballad of Tamlaine, *Avalon traditional*.

The Daughters begin not with the Senate or the Numans, but with creatures considered ancient long before human beings walked the land. They begin with the Sidhe; or rather, with one particular Sidhe.

The land of Bryn Bresail has existed for countless centuries, from distant aeons shrouded in mist and veil. It briefly touches the world in which we live, then fades away into another reality, until the time when it returns. The creatures that live there have no understanding of time or age. They live carefree lives, untempered by mortal emotion, decay, or morality. It has always been this way, and the Sidhe once believed that it would never change.

Until the gates of Bryn Bresail opened upon the mortal realm once more, and they saw the world created by the short-lived, fiery humans. The Sidhe were taken by it – some revered it, some mocked it, but all were fascinated. The fae's three queens each adopted a different approach to the things they had seen. The Queen of the Sky modeled her court after those she saw in the human realms, while the Queen of the Sea began to steal the souls of sailors who drowned within her wide waves, thinking to create her own kingdom from their tattered hearts.

The last of the Fay Queens – the Queen of the Earth, also called the Lady of the Lake – struggled longest to resist the mortal passions that were so unlike her own cold heart. Where the rest of the Sidhe adopted human form and began to ape human art, politics, and society, she remained apart, trying to ignore the world that stood just beyond Bryn Bresail's enchanted gate. She lived in fear of the truths that mortality held, and vowed never to take mortal form, lest she lose herself forever.

She remained true to her word for many centuries, but even her resolve had limits. Her curiosity at last overwhelmed her, and she thought to take human form only once – to see what it was like to be encased in mortal flesh. One day (so the legend states), the Lady of the Lake crept down to the shore of the Westmoreland lake in the empty Avalon moors.

She stepped from the water in the guise of a woman, naked to the air and covered in shimmering droplets of water.

Unknown to her, a wandering knight had also paused at the lake, to fill his waterskin and rest his steed while the starlight night passed. He saw the maiden standing by the shore and, entranced, went to her side. Some tales say that he was Avalon, others swear he belonged to the Highland clans. Still other legends state that the knight of the Westmorelands came from far-off Montaigne, Castille, or even Eisen. Whatever his heritage, he knelt at her feet and was unashamed by her nudity. With love as his only thought, he swore his sword and his life to her cause.

The Women of Théah

Throughout history, the women of Théah have proven time and again that they are far more than just consorts and housewives. In the speakout boxes throughout this chapter, you'll read stories of several unsung heroines of Théah – brave women forgotten by history, but remembered with reverence and respect by the Daughters of Sophia.

The Lady of the Lake gazed on him in silence, and then turned to look at her own reflection in the waters. As soon as she saw her own face for the first time, tears began to run down her cheeks. The empty eyes of the woman reflected in the water were so different from the warm and adoring gaze of the man

who knelt at her pale white feet. Her brethren could never grasp what she had seen in an instant: that human emotions held a warmth and a passion that the Sidhe could never duplicate. For the first time, the Lady of the Lake knew the difference between mortal man and immortal Sidhe, and in that moment, she felt the first stirrings of true emotions. Love and sorrow creased her heart, causing her to cry out in wonderment. She could never again rejoin the distant peace of the emotionless Sidhe.

She visited the man often at the lake, though only by night, when her sisters could not see. Their love was recorded by the stars and the silent waters, and in time, the Lady of the Lake experienced another miracle. She bore him two children, and placed them in his arms.

The Fading of the Sidhe

The Lady of the Lake and her lover remained together for many years, and while he was with her, he did not age. Her husband maintained a small cottage by the Westmoreland lake, and whenever the Lady could escape Sidhe court unnoticed, she would come to him. She used water magic and the secret pathways out of Bryn Bresail that were known only to her; the rivers and streams hid her passage and allowed her to visit her family unmolested.

But all too soon, the court of the Sidhe began to recede from the mortal world. Many times before, the Court of the Three Queens would vanish from humanity's sight for a hundred years or more, returning as their whim took them.



The Lady could not bring her husband in to Bryn Bresail, lest he forget his own mortality – the very thing that caused her to love him. Worse, the other Sidhe would see him as no more than a toy, and his spirit could easily be broken by their jealous games. But at the same time, the Lady of the Lake had too much to lose if she allowed her husband to leave her side – he would grow old, and die without her, and she would be alone.

It was decided quickly, as all such things must be. The Lady did not wish her lover to die while she was away, and so she left to him a balm made of her tears and the waters of the sacred lake. "It holds the power of my love for you; so long as you use it, it will keep you alive until my return." The two decided to raise their twin children separately. The man remained behind with the girl-child, Sophia, while the Lady of the Lake took their son, Lugh, to the land of the Sidhe. With that, she departed the shore of Loch Westmoreland, and returned to Bryn Bresail, to follow the court in its wanderings.

The Sidhe courts did not return for a century or more. When at last they again touched the shores of man, the Lady rushed forth as soon as she could. She found, sadly, that time did not pass in the mortal realm as it did in Bryn Bresail – too many years had gone by, and the cottage by the lake was now no more than fallen stone and ash. She wept bitterly among the ruins for some time, but could not yet return to Bryn Bresail. She needed to know what had happened, what became of her family, before she left Théah again. Adopting a human guise, the Lady of the Lake walked among society in search of her lost family.

Her journeys took her to the far-off land of Numa, where she learned of a group of men known as the "Senate" – corrupt rulers whose bargains with evil had brought new sorcery into the world. The Sidhe had once fought a terrible war with the Bargainers, banishing them from Théah for all time. Now, these Senators threatened to unwittingly release them in exchange for sorcerous power. Frightened, but willing to dare all in order to find her family, the Lady moved through the common lands of the Numan Senate, searching for signs of her loved ones. She heard tales from

Lugh

The boy-child born of the Lady of the Lake by her mortal lover returned to the lands of Bryn Bresail with his mother. She hid his human heritage from her fae brethren, and instructed him to teach the same to his progeny. He grew strong and proud, with the legs of an elk and a great rack of horns sprouting from his forehead. One-half of the year he aged from youth to old age, while the other half of the year he returned from his old age, turning time back until he once more became a stripling youth. He went by several names, including the Horned King and the Holly Prince, though he was always Lugh to his mother.

With his human emotions untamed, Lugh seduced or ravished numerous Sidhe maidens, producing many children over the course of the last few millennia. One of these trysts landed him in considerable trouble. There are many tales revolving around his apparent seduction of the Queen of the Sky – a fact which the courts of the Sidhe never mention. Only whispered tales of her love for him are told – very cautiously – in dark passageways and Unseelie courts. Lugh did not return the Queen's love, but instead ran away with her heart. She still searches for him to this day, but he is too clever and eludes her capture.

The Lady of the Lake kept track of her son's descendants – those Sidhe carrying a portion of his mortal blood – and organized them to help her kin on Théah. They became the Sons of Lugh, the "male" counterparts to the Daughters of Sophia. More information on them can be found on pages 41–42.

the peasants of an ancient oracle known as the Sophia – her own daughter's name. Eager, the Lady climbed deep into the Olimpia mountains, and eventually found a small cave where the old woman lived.

It was, indeed her daughter, but so many years had passed that even with the immortality balm, Sophia had grown old and weary. She knelt by a pool of water in her small cave, and pointed at the future that she could see in the rippling waves. "Mother," she asked the Lady, "I knew that you would return to us, for I have foreseen many things of the future of the world. Yet I beg you this, at the end of my long life. Do not leave us again. See how the world has fallen, and how mankind has no hope for the future? Without you, there is no hope – and without hope, there can be no future."

But the Lady of the Lake took her daughter in her arms and said, "There will come a hero. One always rises, when he is most needed."

Sophia sighed wearily. "I have spent my life tending to our family. Your children and grandchildren have scattered throughout this world, passing their seed on to mortal men.

They heed my words, for I remember your lessons and have learned the secrets beneath the waters of the Sidhe. Bryn Bresail is more than Glamour, more than dreams and mist. It is Hope; a truer belief in the future than any that this mortal realm could ever hold. I can touch that hope, and because of it, I have drawn the strength I needed to live until your return.

"But it is not enough. I have seen the world around me fail. I have seen the greed and deception, and I have watched the Senators of Numa – men who were expected to be bastions for the future, shapers of the world – turn to dark bargains for nothing greater than temporal power. In the hundreds of years that I have shepherded our family and watched through my clear pool, I know this: the world is worth more than a single life.

"Bryn Bresail has much to learn from Théah – passion, change, and action – but so, too, can Théah learn from Bryn Bresail. Help me, mother, to bring these two worlds together, and offer hope to the people of both realms.

"Promise me," the Sophia continued, "That you will help me to give my death meaning. Promise me that you will

bring hope back into their world. I would gladly give my life for you to do this. I would gladly die that the world might live."

Unable to refuse her child anything, the Lady of the Lake wept, and nodded. Realizing that the mortal realm meant so much to her daughter, she drew upon mighty Sidhe magic — strengthened by Sophia's oath — and pulled part of Bryn Bresail into the world, changing the future forever. When she was done, her blood had forever entwined the destiny of both realms, mortal and immortal, and her children were given a purpose that would extend until the end of known time.

The sacrifice had meaning, and the world would change.

Looking down into Sophia's pool, the Lady of the Lake saw a gathering of Senators speaking to a single, impassioned young man. "Look, daughter," she whispered, "At the good we have wrought."

"Not by our hands, mother, but with our compassion," the Sophia responded. "We have made the world ready for his coming, but his arrival came from the hand of Theus." With that, the Sophia fell silent, and the Lady of the Lake cradled the old woman's head to her breast. The Queen's tears fell even faster when her daughter's hand grew cold and her breath faded to mist. Thus did the Lady of the Lake witness the coming of the First Prophet.

The death of her daughter was more than a herald of his arrival. With her oath and her mother's magic, Sophia had arranged for her death to be linked with the Prophet's arrival. So long as the Oracle lived, the next Prophet would not come. The children of the Lady of the Lake would stand not only on the borders between Bryn Bresail and Théah, but also in the place between the past and the future.

The Second Oracle

After the first Oracle's death, the Lady of the Lake thought long and hard about what had happened. Sophia had spoken a name — Theus — that she had no knowledge of.

As she watched the man on the Senate floor, she heard him use that name as well. Who was this Theus, and why was he so important? Was he a god? A Syrne? The Lady resolved to discover the answer.

First, however, she had other priorities. After burying her daughter in the floor of the cave, the Lady left to seek out the rest of her progeny. She did not have to search for long. Though small in number and scattered across Théah, their Sidhe blood called out to her. One woman, an Eisen peasant named Martyk, had already felt the gifts of the Oracle descend upon her shoulders. She knew what was expected of her, and she was already enroute to the Olimpia mountains. When her sisters asked her why she was leaving, she only answered, "Because the world will have need, and I must provide for it." She met the Lady at the foot of the Olimpia mountains. After hearing what was said, she agreed to take Sophia's place in the cave. Sophia's power became hers — flowing through her like the waters of Bryn Bresail and transforming her into a second Oracle.

She guided the descendants for just over 300 years, from the time of the First Prophet until the Second Prophet's arrival in the year 305. Although she knew her eventual fate, Martyk did not simply sit in her cave and await her death. With typical Eisen pragmatism, Martyk planned, preserved knowledge, and worked to make Théah more educated, enlightened, and balanced. She drew on the strengths of Bryn Bresail, and opened the portals between the two lands, so that they were more closely connected than they had ever been before.

She spread the children and families of the line of the Lady of the Lake, both male and female, throughout the nations of Théah. They traveled through Bryn Bresail, from distant Cathay to the far shores of Avalon. She tasked them with watching both Théah and Bryn Bresail, keeping a careful eye on the forces that would tear both lands apart. She taught them the water magic inherent in their blood — Srying — to assist them with their task, and helped them to foster justice and encourage education in Théan societies. Beneath her tutelage, the use of Scry developed in many members of the bloodline — almost always women. Only a

tiny percentage of males had the ability to use Srying magic.

Under Martyk's direction, they learned to identify children born with the gifts of Sidhe blood by their birth caul, and their innate ability to breathe water as if it were air. The Oracle encouraged greater use of magic to develop potions of great usefulness, from healing and restorative powers to reproducing extraordinary feats such as enhanced speed, invisibility, and enchanted disguises. Lastly, they learned that certain pools throughout Théah were, when properly invoked, portals into Bryn Bresail. Although they could only access the enchanted lands through these select pools, they provided the Daughters with emergency escape routes that could not be tracked, and more importantly, with a means to contact and visit their cousins that lived in the distant realm of the Sidhe.

Soon after her assumption of the Oracle's role, Martyk sent one of her sisters to each nation of Théah. She called them her "Handmaidens" and told them organize a community that could be relied upon. That close-knit family developed into the Daughters of Sophia, and has remained until today.

With the new Oracle organizing her children on Théah, the Lady of the Lake turned to the riddle of Theus. She returned to Bryn Bresail and summoned the sons of Lugh to her. She asked them to gather any information they could on Theus and report to her on what they had learned. She soon discovered that Theus was a single god, worshiped by the humans as the creator of the universe. At first, she dismissed Him as a silly superstition, but as time went on, she discovered some eerie similarities between the teachings attributed to Him and the concrete knowledge of her own people. The Prophet's teachings held wisdom — regardless of their source — and the Lady permitted her children on Théah to embrace his words. They eagerly complied.

The missions of the Daughters in those days were simple: they worked to prevent massive war, to heal the rifts between different nations, and to better life for all people. They worked primarily with woman (over 75% of the children born in their lineage were female), but men were

Hroswitha of Stahlfort (960, Eisen)

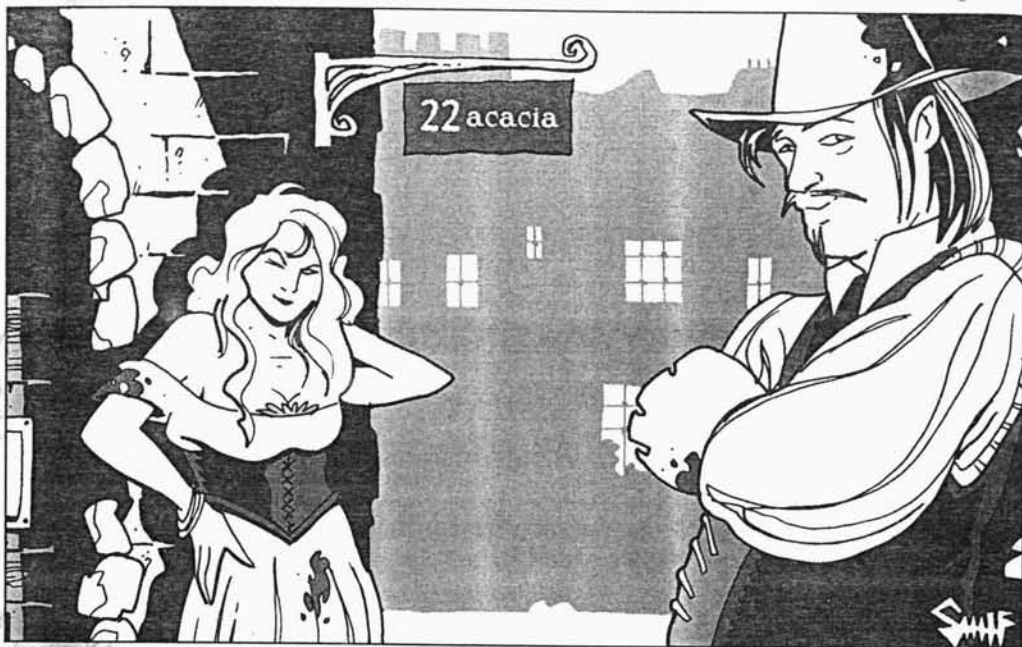
The nunnery at Gandersheim in Stahlfort has a long history as a place where women of faith can pursue their education. Despite the Order's vow of simplicity, the Abbess of Gandersheim still commands her own cadre of knights and has permission to mint special coinage for use on Church lands.

Young Hroswitha came to Gandersheim as an orphan. None of her relatives were interested in giving the child a home, so she was sent to the nunnery. Rebellious and angry, the little girl initially refused her lessons. Eventually, however, she came to realize that the Creator had a plan for her — a plan which involved her education at the nunnery. She developed her great intellect and achieved the rank of canoness. Thus, she was able to travel in the outside world on the nunnery's business. The more she saw, the more compelled she was to write, especially about the courage of women in her time.

Her travels taught her that people learned best when they were also entertained, and so she began to write satirical comedies about modern society. The people of Stahlfort came more and more often to see her plays, full of witty and thought-provoking material. Word of Sister Hroswitha's literary skill eventually reached the ears of the Eisen court and beyond. By her death in 1024, her plays were so popular that they were beloved by citizens of all ranks — a duke or a peasant, both laughing at her clever take on human nature.

welcomed within the association so long as they accepted its guiding philosophy.

Initially, much of their work focused on bettering women's lot in Théah — improving their education, increasing their political power, and helping them attain positions of equality with men. The Prophet's words helped them do that. He spoke of potential and equality, of all humanity striving towards a better future. Women, presumably, were included in those axioms. Many Numan women were interested in



the Prophet's words, and stories of the Prophet's coming passed down through oral teaching, from mother to child. Children with the blood learned that the Prophet's words held wisdom and should be obeyed. By the year 200, a number of noble wives belonged to the Daughters, including the Imperatrice Alostris, wife of Emperor Danatius. Her gentle pressures on the Emperor caused him to publicly adopt the Prophet's faith and declare it the chosen religion of his Empire.

The Brothers' Blood

In 240, an intense civil war broke out along the borders of the Eastern and Western Empire. Several city-states on the eastern Gallegos peninsula divided over an intense political dispute which split brother from brother and families from their neighbors. The first few skirmishes were fierce and unrelenting, and the violence threatened to spread across

the entire Empire. However, before things could deteriorate, the armies were set upon by the most unusual deterrent ever used to bring peace – and strangely, one of the most effective.

Members of the Daughters on both sides organized an extraordinary boycott among the women of the warring states. No camp followers clustered behind the armies. No wives on either side allowed their husbands to return home for the simple graces of conjugal bliss. So long as they were in the army, fighting the “enemy,” they would not be allowed private time with their wives. In short, the two armies were completely denied all trafficking with the opposite sex. It was an utter holdout, designed to bring frustration, resentment, and eventually peace.

The ruse – designed, organized, and enacted by the Handmaidens – worked perfectly. Within two years, the

armies had dissembled, hundreds of men had gone permanently absent without leave, and those who remained were bitter, frustrated, and more interested in seeking new wives than fighting for some lord's wealth. The battles trickled out, and the nobles who had demanded that the war begin found themselves with no sons to claim their holdings when they died. Their lands passed on to more temperate families, and the war was, within a generation, completely forgotten.

Most history books don't even mention the brief war. Fewer discuss the reasons that the battles ended, or debate the lack of interest in restarting the war in later generations. It has been forgotten to all but the most diligent scholars – but it was the first true extension of the power wielded by the Daughters of Sophia, and it would not be the last.

The Creation of the Library

In the year 297 after the First Prophet, the Numan Empire fell. Attacked by Eisen hordes, the capital city was nearly destroyed, the power base of the country collapsed, and the Senators were powerless to stop the fall of the nation. However, nearly ten years before the northern hordes advanced into Numan territory, the Second Oracle foresaw the war to come, and acted to preserve the Empire's extensive knowledge. Libraries were moved; noble houses in warm climates suddenly found their children afflicted with diseases that could only be treated with plants that grew in colder areas.

By using the art of Scrying, the Daughters located sites of major battles, and planned hideaways for Numan citizens, priests, and valuable texts. Some women memorized entire chapters from ancient masterpieces, so that books which could not be carried out of the country could be recreated. Their journals describe the horrors of the war which destroyed Numa, but the important information was protected by the diligence of the Daughters and their allies. It was the first extensive use of Scrying's ability to see into the future, and the Daughters took full advantage of their foreknowledge. Because of their heroism, many ancient texts of Numan literature still survive in hidden monasteries, safe from the devastation that befell the Numan Empire.

Their efforts formed a neat dovetail with their brethren in Bryn Bresail. The Sons of Lugh had continued to gather information on Theus – now encompassing most of civilization – and used their Sidhe magic to amass quite a collection. They made their services available to their human cousins during this period, marking the first formal cooperation between the two halves of the bloodline. They have continued to work together ever since.

The Death of the Second Oracle

Centuries after Martyk, was born, she called the Handmaidens to her side. She left her cavern to travel through Bryn Bresail, feeling that it would ease the burdens of her long vigilance. As she traveled, she came to a great lake, and is said to have met the founder of their line, the Lady herself. When she returned, she called the Handmaidens together, and told them to prepare for her death.

Showing them visions within the Oracle's Pool, Martyk proclaimed that the time of the “Second Prophet” was near. This Second Prophet would bring a great change to the world and the Teachings of Theus. When he arrived, her time would pass, but she would be replaced by another, much as the Second Prophet replaced the first. With each new coming, the Oracle would herald the return of Theus's power to the world through her own sacrificial death. The Handmaidens understood the wisdom in her words and remained with her until she passed.

Martyk's journal describes her final days, and is still kept by her descendants. The last lines read: “The Immortal Prophet comes when the world is in need of his guidance. Until then, we must learn to defend ourselves. We must begin again, and with each new beginning, we must relearn the truths that we have already discovered. Bryn Bresail is neither the beginning nor the end; it is a place beyond dreams, but Théah is the land of the dreamer. Without one, there can be no other. Theus preserve all of our souls.”

The Third Oracle

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; Theus abideth forever."

— *Book of the Prophets*

As Martyk promised, another Daughter soon came to replace her. The third Oracle was a eastern noble named Tatyana Sousdal Vsevolodova v'Pscov. Initially, many of the Daughters of Sophia resisted the leadership of a woman from the uncivilized lands that would one day become Ussura, and her ascension seemed doomed. However, shortly after she made the journey to the Oracle's Cave, Tatyana foresaw the separation of the Prophet's Church — that the teachings of the Second Prophet would cause schisms leading to a new faith called Orthodoxy. Because she understood the divisions within the church, Tatyana could quickly adapt to the dangers and difficulties around her. Her wisdom was needed sooner than anyone could have anticipated.

The Ussuran Orthodoxy

In the year 325 after the coming of the First Prophet, the Corantine Convention presented the Vaticine Credo to Corantine, effectively unifying the teachings of the First and Second Prophets into a single entity: the Reformed Vaticine Church. This event also spawned the largest division in the faith of the Prophets and created the Ussuran Orthodox Church (Ussuran Orthodoxy rejects the teachings of the Second Prophet entirely).

The first battle ever fought between the Vaticine and Orthodox churches occurred on the fields surrounding the city of Sousdal. Tatyana's father, the Grand Duke Vsevolod, took the battlefield himself against the forces of the invading Vaticine. Within a year, the Vaticine forces were completely defeated. The Reformed Vaticine Church never conquered the northern nations, and the Orthodox religion has continued to thrive for over a thousand years.

The Daughters of Sophia look upon the Ussuran Orthodoxy as one of their greatest challenges. Although Orthodox beliefs do not officially support the teachings of the later Prophets, the Daughters have influenced the

peasant interpretation of their religion in such a manner that the teachings of the Second and Third Prophets often appear in folklore and oral myth.

The White Plague

In the year 398, the first outbreaks of the White Plague surfaced in the Crescent Empire, near a populous Coruscite city. By 408, the disease had grown into a full-fledged epidemic. The Society immediately began to investigate, aware that a portal to Bryn Bresail lay near the outbreak.

Much to their surprise, they discovered that the Plague was no mere sickness, but a strange disease that attacked Syrnych traces in the human system. Sorcerers and individuals who lived too near Syrnych power sources were the hardest hit, though others were affected as well. The Daughters knew from their Sidhe allies that the Syrne posed a great danger. The White Plague, it seemed, had some connection to the Barrier holding the Syrnych back. The disease's source was a small "tear" in the Barrier, coupled with the essence of the portal to Bryn Bresail. It damaged Syrnych influence and helped keep the infernal creatures at bay. Unfortunately, it also had a devastating effect on humans exposed to it.

At first, the more the Daughters used their Scrying magic to contain the Plague, the worse its effects became. At last, they hit upon a combination of Sidhe magic, Scry talent, and raw science in order to control the disease and create a magical antidote. The Daughters of Sophia immediately took action. If this plague could be controlled, it could serve as a locator for individuals attempting to make bargains with the Syrnych. The disease could be used to check for areas where Syrnych infection was escaping into Théah or Bryn Bresail. They had an antidote, and they had samples of the White Plague in all of its stages; enough to experiment with in safe laboratories and remote locations. By the year 450, the Daughters were in full control of the White Plague, and the outbreaks among the peasant populace slowly diminished. (More information about the nature and history of the White Plague can be found on pages 43–45).



Isabeau du Montaigne

The lineage of the Lady of the Lake has had its share of traitors and false friends. The most famous of these (and perhaps the most successful) was Queen Isabeau du Montaigne, the founder of the modern nation that bears her name. Isabeau was raised by strict Vaticine aunts, and given instruction and tutelage by the nuns of a nearby monastery. Her father had no use for her, and her relatives, though wealthy, were unintelligent and concerned only with daily pleasures.

Isabeau joined the Sophia's Daughters early in her life. She augmented her powerful *Porté* magic with regular visits to the Oracle's cave, where she paid careful attention to Tatyana's predictions — especially the impending death of Emperor Carleman's son, Charles, who ruled the lands around Isabeau's home. Recognizing a potential form of

wealth and power, Isabeau managed to convince her father to offer a tremendous dowry if Charles married her. Although she despised the man, she knew that the relatively impoverished prince would happily wed for money. Isabeau convinced Charles that she had fallen madly in love with him, and the wedding took place within a few months. Isabeau believed he would be dead before another year had passed.

The Daughters, however, did not wish Carleman's son to depart the world so soon. Now that he had married a Daughter, the Oracle wished to cement the bond with children and a family. Through the use of several powerful Fate Witches, the Daughters acted to stave off the prince's death, ensuring that Isabeau would remain married to him indefinitely. The new queen found herself trapped by her own machinations, married to a man she detested.

Racine de Foix (1243, Montaigne)

Trapped in a political marriage to a young prince of Castille, Racine made the best of an awkward situation, not by taking a slew of lovers, but by devoting herself to clerical studies. Specifically, she studied the teachings of a secret Church sect that preached a doctrine it claimed could be traced back to the Numan Empire. Inspired by its simplicity and power, Racine set about translating the scrolls describing the sect's philosophy, found hidden deep within the walls of an ancient fortress city built into the rocks in the Crescent Empire.

The scrolls spoke of a wondrous item called the Voice of the Creator, hidden in a cave somewhere in Vodacce and guarded by powerful spells. Its power was such that the faithful could drink from it and receive life everlasting... even if they were dead. Consumed with a desire to find the Voice, the older woman abandoned her young husband and her court duties. Dressed as a priest, she ventured into the wild hills of Vodacce. Although there is no reliable source regarding her fate, stories persist that she and the Oracle remained in contact and that Racine voluntarily took the responsibility of guarding the artifact until such time as the world would need it.

Unwilling to accept such a fate, Isabeau took matters into her own hands. Against the orders of the Oracle and the Handmaidens, she poisoned Charles and married her distant cousin, Léon. When the Daughters learned what she had done, they commanded that Isabeau retire to a nunnery and leave the future of the country to someone else. Isabeau refused, and through her new husband, began to rule the new nation of Montaigne (for more information, see the *Montaigne* book, page 11). She turned her back on the Sophia's Daughters, and began to actively work against the society.

Because Isabeau knew about the Sidhe and the Syrneath, she determined that if the Daughters were allied with the Sidhe, she would choose to find the enemy of her enemy, and ally herself with the Syrneath. She promoted Porté and other

Bargainers' arts in her lands, and encouraged the search for Syrneath artifacts. She banished any Avalon travelers, suspicious of Sidhe within their ranks. Isabeau divided the country into eight provinces, and appointed Dukes from her supporters – choosing the most powerful Porté sorcerers she could find. But the most damning step came when Isabeau expressed a desire to make contact with the Syrneath... and bear one of their children. By mimicking the Lady of the Lake's lineage, she could create her own power base to match the Daughters and eventually destroy them. Some months later, the aging Isabeau became pregnant.

Though no one knew the identity of the baby's father (it might have been Léon or any of a dozen lovers), Isabeau had finally gone too far. The child, and its mother, were destroyed shortly after its birth. There are no records of the event, and no one who witnessed the birth lived long enough to tell about it (the Daughters claim ignorance, though they were glad to see Isabeau go). The original palace at Paix was destroyed and never rebuilt. Isabeau's original descendants continue to hold the throne of the Montaigne, but have shown none of Isabeau's dangerous leanings (not even the current Empereur matches her destructive potential). The Daughters believed that the threat she represented had passed.

They thought wrong.

The Agiotage

Near the end of the tenure of the Third Oracle, the Daughters of Sophia and Sons of Lugh met their greatest enemy: another secret society known as Agiotage. The Agiotage consisted primarily of mediocre sorcerers and wealthy members of the merchant class. Inspired by secret texts, they worked to recreate the Senators' Bargain, and barter a deal with the Syrneath in exchange for new and even more powerful forms of sorcery. To achieve this goal, they were willing to violate law, sacrifice the innocent, and offer the Syrneath release from their imprisonment in exchange for temporal power.

Agiotage acted very quietly and rarely drew suspicion to itself. By the time the Daughters realized the other society's nature, they were on the verge of reaching their goals. Desperate, and forced into a position of great need, the Daughters began a secret war against the Agiotage. They were determined to stop the Syrneath sympathizers at any cost. From approximately the year 870 to 914, a hidden war raged between the two organizations. The Daughters called upon their Sidhe allies to help and the Sons of Lugh answered, but even with such support the Daughters were fighting an uphill battle. The Agiotage had already contacted numerous Syrneath beings, and were drawing strength from beyond the Barrier. Their power soon stretched through almost every nation in the world, and their Syrneath abilities had begun to corrupt the world around them.

There was only one choice to be made. The Third Oracle was forced to decide between destroying civilization, and allowing Agiotage to destroy the world. She opted for the first choice and instructed her followers to unleash their greatest weapon. In the year 914, the Daughters of Sophia released the White Plague upon Théah, and prayed that Theus would forgive them.

Over a third of the population of Théah was destroyed by the Plague. No matter how effectively the Daughters controlled its contagion, the Syrneath infestation had spread too far – and the Agiotage had nearly completed their work. The nations of Montaigne, Vodacce, and the Crescent Empire were struck with the most losses, as those nations were bastions of Agiotage power. Vodacce, in particular, had numerous cities that were wiped out to a man – children, livestock, and all sentient beings were destroyed by the White Plague as it fed upon the Syrneath taint that leaked through the faltering Barrier.

The good news is that the Agiotage had little defense against the Plague. Their links to the Syrneath made them susceptible. The war continued to rage for nearly one hundred years, but in the end, the Agiotage were defeated.

When the war ended, the Daughters spent the next several hundred years working to restore the Barrier, track down

the last remaining Agiotage, and repair the damage done to society. It would take centuries, and would critically divert their attention from the next major historical event: the coming of the Third Prophet. Because of their battles with the Agiotage and their need to restore the Barrier, the Daughters of Sophia were tricked by the most daring ruse in all of history: the False Prophet.

The Death of the Third Oracle

The Daughters knew of the Third Prophet's coming for a long time before their Oracle died. Their ability to see the future showed them that the time was near, and the beginning of the next age was at hand. As the date approached, the future revealed within the Scrying pools seemed to coalesce to a single point, seemingly immutable and strangely fixed – the harbinger of the Third Prophet.

Because the Daughters were very familiar with the shifting of history and the mutable nature of time, it seemed unusual and almost heretical that such a point could remain fixed. Time was a flowing river, yet images in the water seemed to stand still – as if some other power held it in place. Later, they learned that the true Third Prophet's coming had been concealed by this fixed point, but at the time, the Daughters were completely mystified.

Before they could alter the course of events – to find some way of changing this fixed point – the Oracle had died and a new Prophet appeared on the streets of Vaticine City. At first, they believed that nothing was wrong; the fixed point simply meant that the Prophet's time had come. Then they heard the message the Third Prophet gave – words of fire and brimstone on the steps of Castillian cathedrals – and they knew that something was wrong.

Upon further investigation, they realized that the Third Prophet's coming did not quite match the death of the Third Oracle. It was only a matter of weeks, but it was enough to know that the man speaking in Castille had begun his crusade while the Third Oracle *was still alive*.

Only years later, in reading the journals of one of the wives of a Rose and Cross Knight, did the Daughters of Sophia understand what had occurred. The man in Castille was a



fake, a false prophet sent by their Sidhe understanding could only assume, agents of the Syrneath. The real Prophet had been forever lost, destroyed by agents of the False Prophet long before the fight began.

It only took a short time for the Daughters, with the help of their Sidhe brethren, to understand the implications of this travesty. The real Third Prophet was dead, his message lost, and Théah was without true guidance. The False Prophet would never fulfill their true wishes for the betterment of the world – and if he caused too much damage, the Final Prophet, the Prophet of Vengeance, would come.

The Daughters could not allow such an apocalypse. No matter what Theus truly was, or why He chose to send his Prophets, the Fourth Prophet would free the Syrneath and destroy Théah. Their only hope to save Théah from destruction, and Bryn Bresail from the ravages of another war with the Syrneath, was to try to prevent his arrival. In

order to do that, Théah must be kept in a state of perpetual balance between good and evil. Neither side could be allowed to have too much strength; there must be enough good to offset the rise of the evil which constantly pervaded the nations of Théah. Unless the world was guarded, protected and guided, Théah would be destroyed.

The Daughters had a new purpose. They would prevent the apocalypse from taking place.

The Fourth Oracle

The woman who now lives in the cave of the Sophia appeared in the year 1009, carrying only a small bundle of silk robes. The acolytes in the cave recognized her immediately from their Scrying, but did not know her name.

She had an unusual appearance, small and yellow-skinned with delicate features and jet black hair. Her eyes were dark and slightly slanted, and her face was round with full, small lips. After a few years, she learned enough of the Vodacce language to discuss her purposes and give her name, but she has never spoken much about her past or her previous “mortal” life. Her name was Liauxiang, daughter of Liauhuan, although she used the title “Servant of the forty-four thousand ancestors that lead into the depths of the waters of the world” when she first arrived. Beyond that, she only referred to herself as the Fourth Oracle.

From the beginning, Liauxiang showed a complete understanding of the magic of Scrying, and of the principles and goals of the Daughters. She had more power than any of the other Oracles before her, and often received visits from the Lady of the Lake. She has thus far proven to be the most adept political mind ever known among the society, and has gathered the complete loyalty of the Daughters of Sophia, the Sons of Lugh, and even the grudging respect of the Queen of the Sky herself.

Liauxiang’s first task to the Daughters was to continue to repair the Barrier – at all costs, and ignoring all other political aspirations. Without the Barrier, there was no world to control or protect, no chance for survival. The next step

was to wipe out the Agiotage to a man; though defeated, a few cabals still existed and needed to be exterminated. Once the Syrneath were safely contained once more, the Agiotage on the run, and the White Plague no longer raging at such high levels, the Fourth Oracle turned toward her next goal: the death of the False Prophet.

It is no secret that the “Third Prophet” died in the year 1030, just as he was planning another major war. What few outside the Vaticine know is that he was found alone on his bed after a private soiree with an unknown woman. When the guards came to wake him for morning prayers, they found his body rigid and covered in boils, dripping with a blackish blood that was not his own. His mouth was open as if in total horror. The woman was never found, and the Vaticine recorded the death of the Third Prophet as “quiet,” but the Daughters know the truth.

All demons, even powerful ones, can die.

Die Kreuzritter

The Daughters discovered the Order of the Black Cross in the year 1320 through an inadvertent contact in a distant locale. Initially, the Daughters hoped to forge an alliance with them. Neither they nor the Sons of Lugh were particularly skilled at combat – their expertise lay in information and organization – and the Order had already learned something of the Syrneath. Against the likes of the Agiotage, they would make powerful allies indeed.

At first, Daughters, wished to make the Order their pawns, but the Knights proved far too competent for that: several Daughters nearly died and the Oracle ordered the remainder to back off before the Knights discovered them. Failing that, they began offering the Order occasional information and warning them of harm. They felt that if they could approach die Kreuzritter slowly, the Knights would agree to help them.

However, in 1411, the Daughters were forced to cease all communication with the Black Crosses. The Knights had faithfully served the Vaticine Church for centuries, but political betrayals forced them into a hopeless battle where their enemies planned to destroy them forever. On the

orders of their commander, however, a small number of Knights managed to escape, and continued the Order’s work in secrecy.

Since then, the Daughters have kept a healthy distance from die Kreuzritter. Though the Knights continually battle against the Syrneath forces which threaten them all, they are too paranoid – and too dangerous – to approach. A single canny Knight could expose the Daughters to the Order, and their relation to the Sidhe would not sit well with Black Cross philosophy. Die Kreuzritter had wisdom, information, and a strong arm to fight the likes of the Agiotage. Now, they were on their own – and the Daughters could do nothing but pray to Theus for their souls.

Adelaide Adair (1475, Avalon)

Adelaide Adair grew up in the heart of Lothian, running barefoot and living wild. In a region of beautiful women, Adelaide soon displayed the features for which the Lothians were justly famous: long copper curls and flashing green eyes. When she fell deeply in love with a man twice her age, her father did everything he could to stop it, short of having the man murdered on a dark winter’s night, but his daughter’s fury was something he feared, so reluctantly he gave his consent for her to be wed.

Her husband, a wealthy captain from Wandesborow, took his young bride on a voyage to celebrate their marriage. The ship was caught in a storm and young Adelaide was captured by pirates who had every intention of selling her to a slave market. However, Adelaide managed to escape from her captors using a brilliant ruse to fool the dullard assigned to guard her. She managed to steal a rowboat and make her way back to shore. Sadly, her husband had already been killed by the pirates, so she was now a young widow with a great deal of money.

Rather than retire to her highland home, she took instead to the sea where she gained a reputation as a fair minded captain with a strong hand and a generous heart for those who served her with loyalty and honesty.

Present Day

In the last two centuries, the Daughters have acted to stave off the potential apocalypse and ensure that the Oracle remains alive and safe. At first, the Oracles lived only until the world could no longer bear the burdens placed upon it by greedy leaders. They gave their lives willingly, hoping that the change heralded by their sacrifice would bring hope and renewal to the world. Yet, the Fourth Oracle, herald of the final Prophet, is not willing to give up her life so readily. The first three Prophets were harbingers of change, but they were also Prophets of rebirth and a new beginning. With each arrival, the world changed.

The Fourth Prophet, on the other hand, is said to be the harbinger of death and destruction – and from their studies in Bryn Bresail, the Oracle believes that she knows how that destruction will be brought about. The Daughters of Sophia see the coming of the Fourth Prophet in a very different manner than most scholars in Théah. They have knowledge of something that no other group on Théah outside of the Sidhe truly understands: the Syrneath.

The Book of the Prophets states:

“The world shall be cast into a cosmic battle... his army will be the ranks of the fallen. The gate between the world shall be broken, and those who have left Théah will return...”

If these passages are to be believed, the Fourth Prophet will open the Gate to the Syrneath, and release them to be freed upon Théah once more. All of humanity will be destroyed, and the Sidhe will at once make war upon the Syrneath, shattering Bryn Bresail, burning every last ounce of Glamour they possess, and destroying themselves in the process. At the end, nothing will be left at all.

When Théah can no longer be redeemed, Theus will send the Fourth Prophet. Whether he is divine retribution or a Syrneath army makes no difference. He *will* destroy the world. Thus, the Daughters of Sophia turn every thought, every ability and magic they possess to this goal: that Théah is brought into a state of grace, so that the arrival of the Fourth Prophet will be staved off for as long as possible. To that end, the Daughters have continued to seek the

betterment of all mankind – easing suffering, closing rifts between nations, and promoting equality among Théah’s citizens. They believe that their efforts will not only improve humanity’s welfare, but prevent the approach of the Fourth Prophet.

When an Oracle dies, it leaves a void in the fabric of the world that only the arrival of the next Prophet can fill. The death of an Oracle has happened only three times in the history of the world; the fourth has lived over six hundred years. Her descendants fight to bring hope to Théah and to better the world, in the belief that by making Théah strong and following the doctrines of the first three Prophets, the Fourth Coming can be averted for many more hundreds of years. They cannot absolutely prevent his coming, but they *can* put it off indefinitely – and that is nearly as good.



The Daughters of Sophia serve to guard Théah and maintain an ever-shifting balance, trying to keep the nations from war, and to ease the pressures against the barrier that holds the Syrneath within their realm. They struggle to keep the true teachings of the Third Prophet alive, and they encourage liberty, freedom, and enlightenment among all the nations of Théah. In this way, they can prevent the coming of the Fourth Prophet and the destruction of the world. Thanks to their abilities, some of them have been alive for centuries. They possess libraries comprised of all the journals of their predecessors, and have an almost

complete understanding of the nature of humanity and the patterns of history. Yet, because their nature is not entirely human, their understanding is limited.

Almost all of the Daughters of Sophia are descended from the original Lady of the Lake. Children strong with the Lady’s blood are born with a caul – the markings of the Sidhe. Even those children who are born generations away from the original Sophia still have the mark of the Sidhe – the blood does not diminish with distance, nor with time. It does not carry true through all generations, however, and the majority of children born into the families of the Daughters have no connection to the Sidhe world, or to their ancient ancestress. But the rare child, the one in a hundred that is born with the caul of the Sidhe wrapped about their shoulders – that child is claimed by the Lady of the Lake, no matter what other heritage she may carry.

This is not to say that all members of the Daughters are related by blood; some are children of the Lady of the Lake’s bloodline who are born without a caul. Others are husbands, wives, or close companions of true descendants. Still others are those who discovered the purpose of the Sophia, and were inspired by their commitment to equality and enlightenment. Some are male, some are female, and they hail from all the nations of the globe. When the apocalypse comes, the Syrneath will not spare the Crescent, nor Avalon, nor distant lands that are yet unknown. Thus, the Oracle forbids no aid, however unusual. She stipulates only that secrecy is maintained, and one Daughter does not endanger others; those are the tenets of granting aid to (or accepting it from) unknown quarters.

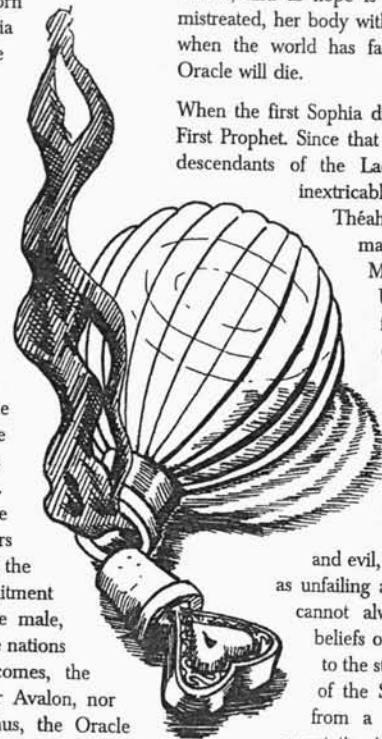
Despite the presence of outsiders, most Daughters belong to the bloodline and can trace their roots back to the original

Sophia. They feel the power of the Oracle, and work to perform her will. In a very Sidhe sense, the Oracle and her followers *are* the life-blood of the land of Théah, working toward the salvation of the land and the people that live upon it. They represent a very real connection to Théah’s past, and future. The Oracle is the living embodiment of Théah, and as hope is lost or the people of the world mistreated, her body withers and her flesh ages. One day, when the world has fallen completely from grace, the Oracle will die.

When the first Sophia died, it marked the coming of the First Prophet. Since that day, the Oracle – and all of the descendants of the Lady of the Lake – have been inextricably entwined with the very spirit of

Théah, and of Bryn Bresail. It is not a material connection, such as Matushka has with the nation of Ussura. The Oracle and her followers cannot raise mountains or cause the oceans to part. However, they do have a certain sense of the state of grace that enshrouds the world – Theus’s blessing, if you will, upon his people. Each child born with the caul of the Chosen has an instinctive knowledge of good

and evil, a sense of right and wrong that is as unfailing as night and day. Although they cannot always find proof of a person’s beliefs or goals, they cannot be fooled as to the state of his soul. In essence, a child of the Sophia can always tell a Villain from a Hero – no matter what their reputation in-game. The descendants have no supernatural ability to *prove* their instinct, nor do they automatically know *why* that person is “evil.” They simply feel that the balance of the world is out of place within this person – in one direction or another.





"How then shall I gather my children to me, for they are far beyond my earthly reach? I shall weave my thoughts like the finest spidery silk into a net of unimaginable size. And it will gather them not in confinement but within the embrace of my loving mind."

— *The Second Sophia, Journal I*

With these words, The Second Oracle Martyk began to establish the structure of the Order, although she was not aware at the time of how apt her image of a net would become. As she dispersed the Lady's descendants throughout Théah, Martyk wove what is without question the most elaborate web that has ever or will ever exist.

If one had to describe the structure of the Order as it stands today, the most apt analogy would be that of a Fate Witch's veil, an intricate openwork web with jewels of various sizes set at intervals. Handmaidens, Daughters, and allies are interspersed among members of the Order and the people of Théah, their Sidhe blood giving them an indefinable quality that sets them apart from the rest of humanity. They rarely congregate, except on missions, and many of them move around quite a bit. Thus there are no cabals or cells the way there are in other secret societies. Most Daughters learn to operate alone, without having depend upon their sisters.

At the center of the web stands the Oracle herself, she who must bear the legacy of the Lady of the Lake. She has taken

a blood oath on a flaming crystal blade that she will do anything, make whatever sacrifice she must, to prevent Armageddon. She demands nothing less of herself or the members of the Order. This is not some woman's game, played on a warm spring afternoon in a Montaigne solarium or a languid midnight soiree at a Vodacce salon: the fate of Théah rests in the hearts and minds of those who follow her guidance.

Around her are the Handmaidens, women entrusted with the heaviest burden imaginable. One Daughter in each of Théah's nations becomes the Handmaiden to the Oracle and is vested with the responsibility of overseeing Daughter operations in her region. She maintains contact with the other Handmaidens across Théah and also keeps an eye out for appropriate candidates to be initiated into the Order. There are currently eight known Handmaidens, and it is whispered among the Daughters that there may be a ninth who lives on the far side of Cathay's great Firewall. Although the Eight rarely meet together, each knows of the others, and can contact them when necessary, usually through Scry magic.

Whether or not she has a public face, each Handmaiden is an enormously powerful woman. Although she serves the Oracle, she acts as the center of the Order's activities within her own nation. Most Handmaidens shun public attention, believing that they can be more effective if they remain in the background and work through their agents. Doña Fidencia Suarez, for example, serves as a simple dueña, while Ysabelle du Montaigne gave up her position as the daughter of *l'Empereur*, and instead ran off to become a smuggler. Wilma Probst, on the other hand, has decided that she can be most effective by actively championing the rights of women in Freiburg in a very public way, while Lorraine Weller has chosen the middle course, seeking a position which carries a fair amount of political clout while still not garnering a great deal of public attention.

The current Handmaidens are:

- **Avalon:** Rhyanna ferch Hywel
- **Castille:** Fidencia Suarez, *duena* to noblewoman Maria-Soledad Aldana

- **Cathay:** Unknown as yet by any name other than "Perfect Jade" and only rumored to exist
- **Crescent Empire:** Jazhani binte Noura
- **Eisen:** Wilma Probst, administrator of the city of Freiburg
- **Montaigne:** "Isabelle" (Ysabelle du Montaigne), smuggler and wayward daughter of *l'Empereur* Leon
- **Ussura:** Tamara Breslau Fyodnavna v'Riasanova, Knias of Gallenia Province
- **Vendel:** Lorraine Weller, head of the Jenny's Guild
- **Vodacce:** Valentina Villanova, wife of Prince Giovanni Villanova

Beneath the Handmaidens stand the remainder of the Daughters, who work to fulfill the Oracle's will. Each Handmaiden surrounds herself with a group of women whom she regards as "Daughters." The Order is not without male support and those men who commit themselves to serving the Daughters of Sophia are regarded as "sons" and "brothers" (though precious few know who they serve) Each Handmaiden organizes her "family" differently, depending on the nation in which she lives and the position she holds in that nation. Some have a hierarchy that reaches several layers deep, with Elder Sisters and Brothers who are non-Order but knowledgeable supports and Younger Sisters/Brothers who support the Order through their attention and/or service to a member. Other Handmaidens have little organization, and leave the Daughters below them to operate as they see fit.

The Oracle has at her disposal a number of paths along which she can communicate with her children. Coded messages carried by hand or tied to the tiny legs of pigeons, harmless-looking parcels, fabric into which has been woven messages and instructions, all the way up to the ultimate expression of Scry magic – all of these and more make up the Daughters' arsenal of communication. Their knowledge serves as a weapon in a war against the forces of earthly men and supernatural evil. When the Oracle uses Scry magic, it is like sending her thoughts coursing through every strand of the growing structure, so that even those who are not contacted directly could feel

the power of her mind and sense the shifting fortunes of the world.

Through it, and the orders of the Handmaidens, the Daughters act to prevent the coming of the Fourth Prophet. Normally, this involves bettering the lot of humanity – correcting injustices, removing corrupt leaders, and aiding the oppressed. In the nation of Vodacce, this has led to a literal battle of the sexes, as they fight to free the country's women from the bonds of ignorance and subservience. They have established an underground railroad to smuggle Fate Witches and others out of Vodacce, where they can then lead lives unfettered by the whims of their fathers or husbands.

Although no one, not even the Oracle, knows for certain, it is estimated that there are between 300 and 500 members of the Order, which does not include uninitiated supporters or those who offer unknowing assistance.

The Jenny's Guild

It was late, or maybe it was too early, but she was tired. Her feet would have ached if they weren't so cold, too cold now to feel the sharp pebbles under her thin shoes. The icy winter wind that blew off the moors cut through the dark alleys of Balroux Downs like sharp teeth. Although she had recovered from the beating, the tightness in her lungs had become desperate; at least once a day she had to lean against a building while she coughed until she fell faint. She clenched the dagger hidden in her tattered skirt and found the strength to keep moving.

Winter may be a time for generosity in fancy cities like Carleon, but here in the Downs, it was an especially dark and bitter season for young women of the streets. Some nights were good, especially when a new performance had been successful, but tonight was not one of those. One of her regulars, a playwright whose most recent work had been greeted with a barrage of rotten vegetables, had burst into the tiny hovel where she slept, drunk out of his mind. Fury was evident in his eyes as he grabbed her hair and threw her down on the bed.

When he was finished with her, she lay battered and bleeding, unable to move. He tossed several coins on her naked body and



left her there, barely able to breathe. She managed to crawl out into the hallway where a young unemployed actor named Malcolm Stephens had found her. He carried her into his tiny room and despite her feeble protestations, had washed her body and tried to staunch the bleeding.

Somehow she survived, but something in her died that night. She could think of nothing but the sight of the writer's face, twisted in anger as he drove himself into her. A small flame of hatred began to flicker and grow, fueled by her pain. And she vowed that if she ever saw him again, she would kill him.

Luckily, she knew someone who could help.

The Jenny's Guild has formed an important part of the Daughters' power structure almost from its inception. The Daughters have covertly infiltrated the Guild, and used its members as a vastly effective spy network. The women of the Guild realized that as a class, they had a powerful weapon that could be put to good use virtually without detection. Unless a man is with a Vodacce courtesan, he does not usually consider the intellectual abilities of a prostitute, and thus might speak of things better kept silent. In the throes of passion, a man will tell a woman what he would never divulge even to a skilled torturer of the Inquisition. Though only a comparative few Jennys belong to the Daughters, they hold most of the positions of power within the Guild, ensuring that the information they receive is put to proper use.

Hiding in the plain light of day, the Jenny's Guild also provides sanctuary for women across Théah, working to spirit them away from abusive families, and offering them safe passage to cities where they can pursue their education free from repression. In addition, the Jenny's Guild serves as an important conduit for information that can be passed to and from the secret society.

Today the Jenny's Guild has hundreds of chapters across Théah, still protected by the same due process afforded to any other business venture. Under the strong hand of Madame Lorraine Weller, working girls are safer and the industry itself is thriving. In addition the Guild has established affiliations with other groups outside the normal

structure, such as Las Muñecas (see the *Los Vagos* book page 41). More importantly, the Jennys Guild takes as its charge the safety and welfare of those whom society is accustomed to beating down, namely women and children. While its approach may be unorthodox, its goals are nonetheless honorable and noble.

Protocols

The Daughters have a fairly rigorous initiation ritual. Even if a child is born with Sidhe blood, there are formal rites that must be performed before he or she is admitted to the Daughters. Shrouded in mystery as the Order is, it is not surprising that the rites and rituals contain power within themselves, which can be traced back farther than even the first journal of the first Sophia – farther back even than the Lady of the Lake herself.

These rituals are gathered in a text known as the Book of Mysteries, which details to proper procedure to follow when initiating a new member. Normally, those marked with the caul are monitored throughout their lives, but outsiders and those not of the blood are initiated in much the same way. Although most of those born with the blood are women, the Book makes allowances for the occasional male as well.

The Book of Mysteries

These then are the Mysteries, handed down from mother to daughter, from sister to sister. Whosoever shall read these words and not be of the Blood or be committed to the ways of the Order, shall know torment unimaginable and pain beyond reasoning, for these are the most sacred Words and shall not be taken lightly or without a faithful heart.

The Commitment

When a Daughter shall discover that she is with child, at the next full moon, she shall betake herself to the nearest body

of pure water, most especially a lake or a stream, and there bathe at midnight with the light pouring over her body. While enfolded in the mystical waters, she shall pray as follows:

O blessed Lady of Light, source of grace and inspiration, who illumines the way of the traveler and shines upon the sacred body of Théah as it lies asleep, I call you to witness that I purify myself in your service. If the child within me is graced with the Blood, I pledge that I shall guide my son or daughter in the ways of the righteous. This I promise, in the Lady's name.

When she is done bathing, she shall dress herself once again and take a piece of pure white thread, pure cotton or pure silk, and wrap a thin strand around her ring finger. In this way, she shall acknowledge her hope that she bears a sacred child of the Blood whose fate will be woven into the greater Tapestry.

Those who make their Pledge in the waters of the Westmoreland shall be twice blessed, and those who see the sacred Lady shall be thrice and most nobly blessed, and their child shall know great favor in the Lady's eyes.

The Dedication

When a woman shall come upon her time, she shall take great care to prepare herself for the arrival of the child. Her birthing room must be cleansed with herbs and salt, and all garments not made of pure fiber shall be removed from sight. Pure water must be made ready, both warmed and cold, and she must lie on soft cloths of white. Even in her hour of travail, a mother may call upon the Lady, who herself has known the pangs of birth. And when the child is born, the ring of thread must be removed from the mother's finger. The newborn child must be washed in warm pure water and bound in soft white cloth. The cut thread must be burned as the following prayer is recited:

Now comes another spirit into the world of Théus whose life shall be woven into the great Tapestry that holds the threads of all who walk the way of the Order. As I sever the tie that bound the child to the time before, so now will this child begin the weaving of a life in service to the Lady.

Difficult Choices

The Daughters of Sophia have access to an amazing power – the ability to foretell the future. However, that power comes with a terrible burden, for they often have no idea how their actions will affect the future. If they wish to change something, they can... but the new future they create may be even more terrible than the one they tried to prevent.

Imagine if you knew ahead of time when an evil dictator would be born and the atrocities he would perform. Millions would die to halt his depredations, and it would take many long years of suffering before he would finally be defeated. Most of us would say that we would do whatever is necessary to prevent his rise to power, and keep his atrocities from occurring. However, what if you believed that, by maneuvering the world away from that fate, you would simply be opening the door for an even worse tyrant – one with the same ideals, perhaps, but who would succeed where the first dictator failed? Would you still choose to stop him, and risk something worse, or would you choose the evil that you know, and try to defeat it in other ways? That's the dilemma the Daughters face – and why their greatest ability often cannot be used.

As the mother holds the newly-born child in her arms, she will give the child a special name known only to the two of them and place a tiny drop of sacred oil upon her own forehead and the child's forehead as a token of her pledge to pass her knowledge on to her daughter.

I acknowledge you, [child's sacred name], as the fruit of my body and the joy of my heart.

If the child is a daughter: *As a white lily in the darkness, so shall my daughter shine.*

If the child is a boy: *As the strongest tree in the woods, so shall my son thrive.*

May our thoughts flow as smoothly as this sacred oil, that you may receive the sacred knowledge that I shall impart unto you.

The Initiation

When a child reads the age of maturity, it will be time to make a formal Initiation into the Order. For a daughter, it is the time when she becomes a woman; for a son, it shall occur between his 12th and 13th birthday. *[This is altered for the initiation of new adult members, although the rituals do not change].* Although there shall be no proscribed location for this ceremony, it is best when done during a full moon by a body of pure water, in a place where a flame can be lit. The celebrant shall have in her possession a scrying bowl and a ceremonial crystal dagger, for this is the moment when the child's path shall be revealed within the blade. She shall then recite the following passage:

Who comes forth like the morning light, fair as the moon and bright as the sun?

If the child is a daughter: *Who is she who comes now into the sacred presence of the Lady, seeking to take her place as a sentinel against the forces that would destroy the world of Theus?*

If the child is a son: *Who is he who comes now into the sacred presence of the Lady, seeking to take his place as a champion against the forces that would destroy the world of Theus?*

With these words, the young initiate, clad in white, steps forward to make the ritual blood sacrifice and perform the first formal act of Scrying. The initiate's index finger is pricked slightly with the sharp tip of the dagger so that a single drop of blood drops into the Scrying bowl. She then recites the following passage:

Gathered in the sacred place, in faith with the Lady and reverence for the land of Theus, may the sacrifice of my blood be found acceptable, that I may walk the path of the blessed Order and take my place as a sentinel in your service.

Then the Initiate watches the blood move in swirls across the scrying bowl and makes the first formal contact with the great Tapestry. Once the Initiate has achieved the Trance state, the celebrant lowers the crystal dagger into the water to see which color travels up the shimmering blade. Based on that color, the Initiate's place in the Order and life path will be determined.

Blue: Your work will be focused on Scrying magic and traversing the great Tapestry, as well as moving between the mortal world and Bryn Bresail.

Red: Your service in the Order may bring you into mortal danger, possibly in combat on the battlefield.

Green: You will work in the mortal world in the area of science and/or medicine.

Purple: Your service to the Lady will put you in a position of power in one of the mortal Courts.

Orange: You will serve the Order as an entertainer or performer.

Yellow: You will lend your gifts to the education of women and children in Theus.

Silver: Your service to the Order will bring you great wealth and position in the mortal world.

Gold: Your gifts will bring you to a position of importance within the Lady's inner circle.

The Oath

Prior to the administration of the Oath and acceptance into the Order, the Initiate takes a drink of pure water and wipes his or her lips with a pure white cloth, praying:

Cleanse my heart and my mouth, O Lady of Truth, that the words I speak may be as pure and as clear as this gift of water, the lifeblood of Theus.

The celebrant then takes the crystal dagger and lays the point lightly against the Initiate's heart as the Oath is administered:

Hail, Lady of the Lake! I stand before you now, a faithful daughter [or son] of the Light, pledging my body, my mind, and my spirit to your service and that of our beloved land of Theus. Mindful that the pledge I make today shall bind me for my lifetime in this world and beyond: wherever there is darkness, I shall bring light; where there is cruelty, I shall bring compassion; where there is ignorance, I shall bring enlightenment. I shall never betray my sisters or brothers, though my mortal life be forfeit. If my step should falter, your ineffable

light will restore me and strengthen my heart. So long as there is breath in my body, I dedicate myself to driving back the darkness of Legion and the Barrier. This I pledge in the name of those who have gone before me, those who stand with me now, and those yet to come.

If a member of the Order is unable to bring her child to a formal Initiation, she may administer the Oath herself, although she may be unable to determine her child's path.

Touch of the Hand

Once a child is inducted into the Daughters, they receive a small tattoo, shaped like a band around their left ring finger – the finger covered by a ring of marriage. Thereafter, a member typically wears some form of ring on that hand to cover the marking. It is used only to identify other children of the bloodline, and those who are loyal to the goals of the society.



Mothers to the World

One of the primary duties of a member of the society, whether male or female, is to watch for children born within their caul – a sign that the blood of the Sidhe is strong within them. Those children are the legacy of the Sophia's Daughters, the next generation of hope for Théah. Occasionally, the blood of the Lady of the Lake skips a number of generations, and with the lack of written records, maintaining an accurate lineage can be nearly impossible. Without the knowledge of the Daughters, children are born every day that have some chance of bearing the caul. Such possibilities are rare, but it is the duty of certain Daughters to locate and gauge whether such children should be educated, or left to lead an innocent life.

The Journals

Every member of the Daughters of Sophia and the Sons of Lugh are required to keep a detailed journal of their activities. Every member of the Order sends regular updates by approved (and sometimes clandestine) methods to the Handmaiden or directly to the Sophia. It is through these journals that the history of the Order is tracked and contact maintained even to the farthest reaches of Théah.

These journals serve not only as a chronicle of events in Théah and Bryn Bresail, but also detail the numerous long-term plans that the Society has implemented. With their influence ranging from years to centuries, it is all too likely that a single mishap could claim the life of a prominent Daughter – and ruin decades of careful work. The journals are transported to Bryn Bresail via each member's Handmaiden (see the section on *Handmaidens*, page 54), where they remain in secure libraries – thousands of such tomes that collectively cover nearly every inch of Théan history.

Writers can use one of several established codes, create one of their own as long as the key is safe with their mentor or the Oracle, or they may be in a position where circumspect and diverted writing will suffice. Entries should be as long as necessary, but there are a few things that are important to record: any threats towards the member or any

sisters/brothers of whom she is aware; an increase in prejudice and restrictions on women and children; any change in the local or national political atmosphere; and especially any knowledge of Sryneth activity.

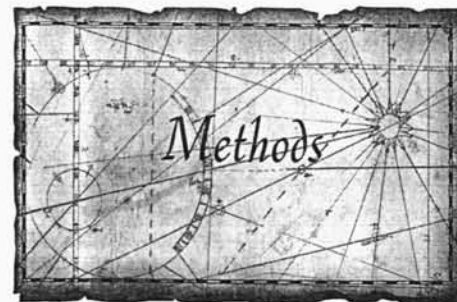
Communication

Members of the Order have a variety of methods available to them, including regular (but veiled or coded) written correspondence, carrier pigeons, trusted emissaries, embroideries and other types of handwork (including weaving), and of course Scry magic which enables members of the Order to reach each other through the great Tapestry. The Oracle and a special group of highly gifted women monitor the relays so that no cry for help goes unanswered. It is also an opportunity for the Sophia to walk about the mortal world and beyond without having to leave the confines of her sacred domain.

Songbirds

Many women in Théah have songbirds, sitting in their simple cages and chirping to keep company on a warm afternoon. In some places, these songbirds are common among all the classes of women – peasants and nobility alike maintain a small cage of such creatures, occasionally setting one free in order to reward companionship and service.

To the members of the Sophia's Daughters, these simple birds provide a vital lifeline of information. Trained as carrier pigeons, a strain of songbirds known as the "Sweetwren" carries messages between established locations. With tied notes on their frail legs, the birds have an unerring sense of direction and distance. Bred by cunning members of the Sons of Lugh, the birds are said to have some small Glamour of their own – although a common onlooker would never know that to look at them. Brown, with white wingtips and blue beaks, the Sweetwren listens to its mistress's whisper, telling it a location to seek. Assuming the bird has in fact been to that location, it will immediately spring into the air and journey toward its distant goal, carrying messages across Théah.



"One of the most terrible things about being precognitive is that you must live with the knowledge that the future is one of your choosing... of course, any man with free will can say that. The difference is that you knew where the path would lead before you chose to walk it. It burdens the soul."

– *The Third Sophia, Journal XVII*

Throughout the history of mankind, philosophers have struggled with the opposing concepts of free will and predetermination. The Sophia and her descendants – both mortal and Sidhe – know the thin line that separates the two. They must live within that border, knowing both the future that would come without action, and wondering where their choice to alter it will lead.

Those from the bloodline of the Lady of the Lady sometimes exhibit a unique form of sorcery: a water-based magic known as Scrying (detailed below). The abilities of Scrying range from simple clairvoyance and water breathing to complete precognition. The Oracle herself, known as the Sophia in deference to the first daughter of the Lady of the Lake, is said to have the ability to see many variations of the future within the clear pool of her hidden cave. By using the strength of her family, and a few brave heroes when need be, the Daughters of Sophia can change the possible future – although the outcome of such intervention is not always predictable. Sometimes the future they help create is worse than the one they tried to prevent.

Thus, the Daughters of Sophia must carefully choose when, and where, they intervene in the future that is to come. For centuries they have watched mankind, seen the rise and fall of tyrants, and only stepped forward to change the path of humanity when they knew that no future could be worse than the one that they already knew was slated to occur.

The choices that the Daughters face are not simple ones. Armed with even the smallest shreds of future knowledge, they must decide to use their abilities to alter what is to come. If they choose not to act, they must live knowing that they have allowed something horrible to occur. If they do act, they must understand that they have no control over the future that they will be creating. It may well be a better one – but if it is worse, then that burden rests solely on their shoulders.

Nevertheless, the society continues to struggle to bring about a brighter future. Over the course of history, they have helped scholars, encouraged liberation and freedom, and tried to stop injustice and tyranny wherever they could. Sometimes that means that they must fight on unusual sides – even lending their strength to a cause they do not believe in – simply to prevent an even worse future from occurring. Unlike Fate Witches, the Daughters of Sophia can not simply pull a thread and change one man's life; they must act with precision and strength in order to change the world.

Most members see very little of the larger tapestry they are weaving. They know only that a certain person must be saved, for example, or a certain book kept out of someone's hands. In that sense, their powers are quite limited and they learn to trust the orders of the Oracle, for only she can see the future they are helping to create. On the other hand, they can often see the benefit of their activities in the lives of those around them, even if it's only one or two people. The housewife they save from an abusive husband may go on to become a brilliant teacher, or the scroll they steal may hold the key to an important medical breakthrough. The rewards for individual Daughters are small, but worthwhile... and they know that their deeds are contributing to a much larger good.

Fiamma Trotula (1350, Vodacce)

A former courtesan educated at the famous Dilatante in Serine, Fiamma Trotula was one of the most brilliant students the school had ever seen. Her understanding of physiology and her ability to diagnose ailments were so instinctual that some believe she received divine inspiration. She devoted herself to finding ways of managing the diseases and health problems that plagued the women of Théah. She developed surgical techniques for difficult births, including a way to remove a child safely from a woman's womb without killing either the mother or the baby. She advocated combining medical techniques with herbal and natural remedies, noting that the mental comfort derived from a concoction might be a useful healing tool.

Fiamma lived a long and healthy life herself, and by the time she was in her ninth decade of life, her days were filled with visits from grateful women who brought their children to see her. Sadly, the Church finally deposed and burned her as a heretic, and her original writings were destroyed – all save the journals kept by the Daughters. They released the journals some fifty years after her death, under the name of a male scholar of the age. To date, no one has caught on to the ruse.

Scrying

The magic of the Daughters of Sophia, the legacy of their Sidhe heritage, and the result of the blessings of the Lady of the Lake is the ability to "Scry." A Scry sorcerer has many different abilities, all of which deal directly with the water that is their origin. Early tricks include the ability to breathe water (something inherent in all those born with the caul), and the power to see and hear into distant places, gathering information anywhere that there is a pool of clear water in which to use their magic.

Another gift, more difficult to master, is the ability to enter Bryn Bresail and walk the paths of the Sidhe lands (or, for a Sidhe-born descendant, the ability to cross into mortal lands). This transit is often unsafe, and there are no

assurances that there will be a passage back from those distant shores. The only places where it is safe to enter Bryn Bresail from the mortal world are in those bodies of water that are sweet and flowing, such as large lakes, rivers, or woodland pools. By submerging into the water, a descendant of the Lady of the Lake can pass beyond their own reality and enter another.

Also included in the gift to command and understand the nature of water is the descendant's natural ability to brew and create potions, balms, and elixirs of all types – a gift that far exceeds anything that modern Théan technology has been able to grasp. Some of these potions are simple to manufacture, requiring no more than blessed water and woodland herbs. Others are difficult, requiring unusual ingredients, large laboratories, or the application of sorcery to the mix. The most difficult potion of all is the legendary Balm of the Westmoreland, which confers to women a temporary immortality, and gives to men an agonizing death.

The most potent Scrying ability is the power to see not simply at a distance, but actually into time itself. To see the future and the past is dangerous and exhausting, and can tax the will of even the mighty Oracle herself. It is rarely done, and even the longest-lived Handmaidens are loathe to perform it without great need.

It should be noted that the Sidhe blood does not adapt well to being blended with other sorcerous bloodlines, and no one has ever been born with both the ability to Scry and any other form of magic. There are no mixed-blooded Scry sorcerers. Those born to noble families are considered to have no magic of their own – allowing the sorcerous families to know that the child was born with the Sidhe caul is too dangerous, and allowing public knowledge of Scry sorcery would be as good as admitting that the Daughters of Sophia exist.

This does not imply that the Daughters do not have other sorcerers in their midst. As their members marry into noble (sorcerous) families, many of their children are born without the Sidhe caul – and with the gift of their noble bloodline. Those children often prove agreeable to the subtle teaching

of the Daughters, and are subsequently recruited into the Society.

The Daughters of Sophia are not at all adverse to taking advantage of any ability or sorcery that they can control. Because of their beauty, many of the women born of the lineage of the Lady of the Lake find themselves married well, and this has created a preponderance of descendants within the noble families of the countries of Théah. Their children, even if not born with the Sophia's caul, often have valuable talents, sorceries, or educational advantages that they bring to the society.

Similarly, not all of the "Daughters" are female. Their ranks include potent Glamour mages, numerous Fate Witches, and a great deal of men and women who have no ability with sorcery, but many other talents to offer their society. The Daughters fight against the end of Théah; any weapon in their hands will be turned to the purpose of saving the world.

Manipulation and Seduction

One of the primary methods that the Daughters of Sophia have used to maintain the secrecy of their organization is the control of emotions – both positive and negative. The ability to alter and control someone's emotions is a powerful tool, and has often gained the society tremendous amounts of useful information and political gain.

In an era where women's opinions are often scorned, the Daughters must work to have their "suggestions" put forth by more credible sources. Although Théah may seem liberated in many ways, on most of the continent women are still not respected for their intellect or strength. Even Queen Elaine has difficulty trading with the Vodacce Princes, all of whom believe that she is nothing more than a pretty mouthpiece, a stooge for Derwyddon or MacDuff.

The Daughters are primarily an organization of women, and as such, they tend to fall back on the "traditional" tools of womankind. Using husbands, brothers, and anonymous "tips," the Daughters can carefully encourage certain courses of action. In many cases, beauty is a weapon, as is

love. Although it may seem cruel or vicious to use such emotions, Théah has never been ruled by those too weak – or too forgiving – to use every tool at their disposal.

Fate Witches

The Daughters of Sophia have spent many years trying to liberate and equalize the male-dominated culture of Vodacce, smuggling out Fate Witches and even teaching noblewomen basic reading and mathematic skills. Their fight is a slow one, because they cannot reveal themselves, but it has resulted in a number of Fate Witches both outside and inside the country who are loyal to their cause.



Annika Gorinsdottir (900, Vestenmannavnjar)

Jarl Gorin Kristoffson had fought for many years at the High King's side. During one particularly bloody battle at sea, Gorin was swept overboard. He thought his time on Thëah was done, but somehow, someone managed to carry him to shore and nurse him through a terrible fever. As he regained consciousness, he saw the face of an eerily beautiful woman leaning over him. She seemed to be kissing him but when he was fully awake, she was gone. He found his way home eventually, and in time he began to doubt whether she had ever existed.

Several years later, as he walked along the beach in high summer, he heard a child crying. Searching the nearby area, he soon found a tiny carved boat in which sat a little girl. His heart stopped in his chest, for not only was she the spitting image of the mysterious woman, but around her neck hung a runestone on a leather thong – the runestone he had worn since birth, which he had assumed had been lost at sea. He took the child to his tribe and raised her as his daughter. Although he explained how he had found the little girl, his wife took note of the similarities between her husband and little Annika. However, she held her tongue for fear that someday the child's mother might come and claim them both.

(continued on next page)

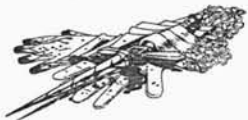
The *7th Sea Player's Guide*, page 219, states that "those attuned to Sorte can see the great web of fate, and how its tendrils connect to all things." Further, they can recognize and interpret the possible future by understanding the strands, classifying their color, and determining the nature of the connections between multiple strands. Lastly, they can create and destroy Fate Strands, risking destruction and an unpredictable future. In many ways, Sorte is very similar to Scrying, although the two types of sorcery go about seeing and changing the future in very different manners.

When combined, they can be extremely potent – and extremely dangerous.

A person with Scrying looks into the clear pool and sees a country torn apart by war. She sees people massacred, and the destruction of an ancient cathedral. If she watches for some time, she may even get shadows of the individuals involved – no names, only images or fleeting emotions transferred through the pool. If she is not familiar with the location (or if the future has changed or destroyed any landmarks she might recognize), the Scrying sorcerer might not even know what place she is seeing within the pool. She only knows that something terrible is about to happen, and that it will result in a ruined city, many deaths, and a shattered land.

To contrast, a Sorte witch is looking into the fate strands of those around her. She notes one young man whose future is raveled, covered in tarry black threads that seem to reach into the future like razor blades, severing any that come into contact with him. She has no idea what this might portend, or how far into the future this strange desolation reaches. The Fate Witch won't be able to determine why the strands turn deadly, or what result they may have. She only knows that this young man is important and that his future is filled with death.

Neither sorcerer has all the information necessary to piece together this puzzle. Even acting together, it can be difficult to accurately interpret the information, find the weak links in the future that will be created, and then use Sorte or other manipulation in order to change it. Even with applied Sorte, that will only change one lifetime (assuming it is successful). Who is to say that the strands do not simply re-attach to another individual, even more difficult to find than the first? Nevertheless, if the Daughters of Sophia locate a place where the future can be changed by a simple misdirection of strands, the assistance of the many Fate Witches within their organization is critical.



Potions and Philters

The control and understanding of enchanted potions is a great strength of the Daughters. Details of many of these items can be found elsewhere in this book, although some are more popularly used by the Daughters of Sophia. One of the most oft-requested potions is the Gilead's Whisper potion, which allows a user to hide obvious signs of sorcery. A Porté mage's blood-stained hands, for example, turn snow white; a Pyeryem user's eyes are altered from brilliant green to their original non-descript color. The Daughters of Sophia have used this to great advantage, inserting sorcerers into other organizations or governments with no one the wiser. The ability for a sorcerer to hide unnoticed and continue the work of the Society is an important boon, and one that the Daughters guard jealously.

The Balm of the Westmoreland

As the Lady of the Lake's family grew, the most adept of them learned to make the Balm of the Westmoreland – the potion she had given her mortal lover – to increase their lifespans. With that knowledge came a host of other potions, balms, and all the magic of the Lady of the Lake, whose Sidhe blood ran like water in their veins. Yet, the greatest tragedy of all was this: that the potion that could expand their lives only worked on women. Its effect on men was not beneficial; in fact, it was deadly. The Balm of the Westmoreland could cause a woman to live ten times her life span, and keep her beauty for a century; in a man's body, it became a deadly poison, rotting their stomachs and causing a painful and untraceable death. (The men did not gain either the extraordinary magic or the Sidhe blood that could turn poison into life, but they did inherit a gift from their father – mortal intractability, the capacity to bear through any pain and still continue with the fight.)

After learning of the death of her husband, the Lady of the Lake swore never to again leave her family to follow the courts of the Sidhe. No matter what happened in Bryn Bresail, she would use the passages that lay deep beneath the waves of each lake and shore, and come to their side as often as possible. Many times, the Sidhe courts faded and returned to Avalon, and each time, the Lady of the Lake

Annika Gorinsdottir (900, Vestenmannavnjar)

As she grew older, it became clear that Annika loved to sing. Her lilting voice filled the house with music, and as she time went on, she began to take training with the various skalds who wandered from town to town. It was unusual for a woman to serve as a skald, but when Annika sang, it seemed as if the dead came alive again. Soon word of her fame began to spread throughout the islands. She traveled from town to town, performing at festivals and keeping the history of the Vestenmannavnjar people alive in song.

One day, some 30 years or so after Gorin Kristoffson found her on the beach, the Jarl lay dying with his family around him. Annika sang a new song that night, a story about a handsome warrior and a beautiful woman of the sea, and watched her father's spirit leave his battle-weary body. When he had breathed his last, she rose quietly and left the house. She stepped into her boat and set sail for the west. Annika was never seen again, but she left behind a rich legacy of songs which are sung to this day.

gave to her ever-growing family the secret of her tears, to keep them alive until her next return.

As the Daughters studied the Balm of the Westmoreland and grew more adept with their magic, they began to create other potions using sorcery and alchemy. Their ability to manufacture such philters is unmatched, and the power of such potions can be effective in a number of situations.

Even if a member of the Society is not offered the Balm of the Westmoreland in order to prolong her age, many members of the society still carry the blood of the ageless Sidhe. This means that they often appear much younger than their true age, and more importantly, that their lifespan is occasionally prolonged simply through the ties of blood. It is not entirely unusual to have a male of the bloodline to live as much as 150+ years, or a woman who lives to be 200. Of course, such ancient sages must be relocated and

protected by their Society, lest the secret of their blood be discovered.

However, this means that the Society is uniquely capable of creating and engineering long-term schemes. They rarely, if ever, plan for the short term alone, and are much more often found engineering detailed arrangements that may take 50 or even 100 years to unfold. A member of the Daughters is, by their blood, a patient person. They know that resistance wears down over years of slow pressure, and remain acutely aware of the power of persistence.



As stated above, most of the members of the Daughters of Sophia aren't entirely human. Their ranks primarily contain those of Sidhe blood, a variety of "changeling children" produced by the union of human and fae. Because of their mixed heritage, the children of the Lady of the Lake (both mortal- and Sidhe-raised) are often extraordinarily beautiful. Even those who favor their mortal heritage have features that betray a faint unearthliness, and those who favor their Sidhe nature seem to have a depth to their eyes that shines of passions no Sidhe could ever truly understand.

The Daughters of Sophia are born with another Sidhe advantage unmatched by anyone of truly mortal birth. No matter what lineage, or where they were born, all the descendants of the Lady of the Lake are equally comfortable in both the open lands of Théah and in the mystic fields of Bryn Bresail. Those who have mastered the magic of the waters can travel to Bryn Bresail freely, taking

advantage of its beauty and resources to further their cause. If they spend enough time there, they may even encounter other gates back to Théah – or beyond to distant realities and strange territories unknown to mortal eyes. Such journeys are not without danger, and rarely can the adept bring companions along, for the enchantments of Bryn Bresail would soon blind truly mortal eyes and rid their minds of all memory of their former selves. Only those with a touch of Sidhe blood in their veins are safe from the Glamour of the fae homeland, and even they are not truly protected from its ravages.

Traveling through Bryn Bresail strengthens the Sidhe blood in the veins of a half-blooded mortal. Their mortality slowly begins to slip away, and strange urges to burn all ties to their mortal life whisper through their minds. Strange visions, mockeries of Théah cities, and fantastic monsters are only a part of the unusual sights that they will encounter.

Only in the waters of Bryn Bresail – the lakes, rivers, and streams – is a mortal-born child of the Lady of the Lake truly safe. There, the Lady's powers extend over all things and she can keep the fae pressures of Bryn Bresail from overwhelming her descendants.

Similarly, those descendants of the Lady of the Lake who are born and raised among the Sidhe find the mortal world uncomfortable, even disturbing. It calls out the passions and emotions that they have been hiding through their lives, and sings to the fire that hides in their blood. If they remain too long, or give themselves to their emotional desires, they will rapidly fall into excess – whether it be desire, anger, love, gluttony, or some other strong emotion. For too long they have hidden these emotions beneath the surface, not wanting any of the other Sidhe to know their true heritage. When they reach the mortal world, it calls to this forsaken portion of their psyche, and draws it forth. Again, only if submerged in running water is such a descendant freed of the pressures of their own emotions; there, the Lady of the Lake can shield and protect them, comforting their souls and allowing them to be at ease with their passions.

The Sons of Lugh

While Sophia was the first daughter of the Lady of the Lake, and remained in the mortal lands with her father, the first son of their union was taken to the Sidhe lands with his mother, and raised there as her own (see page 14). From his descendants come the Sons of Lugh, the half-blood lineage of the Lady of the Lake within the lands of Bryn Bresail. As with their counterparts, not all of the children of the Sons of Lugh are born with the Lady's Caul. Many are simple Sidhe, unknowing of the "taint" in their lineage, and completely unaware of their mortal heritage. Those few who do know are made to understand at a very young age that they must not allow anyone else in Bryn Bresail to ever suspect that they are special. They learn to mask their mortal heritage, and they are never, never dipped in the River of Forgetfulness. The Lady of the Lake learned that lesson from the mother of Mad Jack O'Bannon, and she has sworn that her own children will never suffer his insanity – or his dark fate.

While the Sons of Lugh do not technically belong to the Daughters, they serve many of the same functions and often act as allies. They perform the Lady of the Lake's will in Bryn Bresail, just as the Daughters perform her will in Théah. It is from these Sidhe-born descendants that the Daughters of Sophia have the majority of their information about the Sidhe, the Synchrony, and the possible origins of life on Théah. However, even all the Glamour of the Sidhe cannot answer the most difficult questions, nor assure the society that their works will be rewarded. Still, on both sides of Bryn Bresail, the children of the Lady of the Lake work to ensure that both lands can prosper, and that no knowledge of the past is truly lost.

Where the Daughters on Théah work to prevent the coming of the Fourth Prophet, the Sons work to discover as much as possible about the Synchrony. Since they believe that the coming of the Fourth Prophet would open the gates to the Synchrony realm, the Sons of Lugh have fully dedicated their lives to preparing the Sidhe for that upcoming battle. They ready themselves for war, training others who will listen, and moving slowly against the Queen of the Sky, lest she prevent their movements and thereby allow the Synchrony to

come unchallenged. (It isn't that the Queen of the Sky *wants* the Synchrony to attack, but the Sons believe that she will deny the threat they represent; she would rather turn a blind eye to the danger of the Synchrony than admit that they may be more powerful than her own magic.)

Sidhe have no capacity to understand human emotions, or even basic impulses such as lust and pain. In a very real sense, they are monsters, capable of tormenting a man ruthlessly just to see what will happen. The Sons of Lugh, being part mortal, have a very real understanding of true emotions. For years, they carried on an underground fight

Queen Zariama (1560, Kanuba)

Very little is known about the history of the small island nation of Kanuba, although from all reports, the presence of a Queen among her people is a rarity. While Orduñez was building walls around the island fortress of *la Bucca* in Castille, a young woman was born into a noble family with many sons on the island of Kanuba. She was raised with her brothers, learning the way of the warrior at their side and soon she surpassed them in almost every skill. With the deadly combination of brains, beauty and physical strength, young Zariama rose to power until she had gained the leadership of her people.

Queen Zariama is credited with having a brilliant tactical mind and a clever wit. Prior to her reign, the Kanubans were by all reports a poor and divided people, fighting amongst themselves over perceived insults. At the instigation of their ambitious monarch, the Kanubans fortified their cities, improved construction of their primitive buildings, and even developed the rudiments of roads. When newcomers came, the Queen made a number of profitable trade alliances that brought gold in exchange for several rare crops indigenous to the island, including a small red bean which produced a richly flavored beverage that began to achieve popularity at the court of Montaigne. Although she never took a formal husband, the Queen had many children, and made certain that her daughters were trained as warriors alongside her sons.

against their Sidhe brethren, protecting humanity, and working to keep the Sidhe from corrupting or destroying the very beings they wished to emulate. Their task was difficult, and as time has no meaning in Bryn Bresail, the many centuries that they spent trying to rescue mortals and educate the Sidhe as to their nature both flew by and crept with agonizing slowness. All this while trying to keep their true natures hidden, and the secret of their mortal ancestry protected from the other inhabitants of Bryn Bresail.

The Sidhe and Theus

Although the Sidhe have no real understanding of Theus, either as a divinity or as something beyond the mortal realm, they have heard the name more than once. In fact, before the Sidhe abandoned Avalon to the Montaigne invaders, they were known to carry out the occasional prank or farce of Vaticine services. (Imagine an entire "mass" of boggans, traipsing across the countryside and singing hymns whose lyrics had been altered to include bawdy depictions.) The Sidhe have never favored the Vaticine, which they see as trying to destroy humanity's innate creativity. For that reason, the Sidhe often arrange ways to humiliate Vaticine officials, destroy the faith of the people, and return them to the worship of various "pagan" religions.

This has made the position of the Sons of Lugh very difficult. It is dangerous to discuss the religion of the Prophets in Bryn Bresail, where every flowering plant or pool of water may repeat your words. The Lady of the Lake and her descendants are convinced that the Fourth Prophet is coming – no matter what his true nature may be – that he will release the Syrneth, and that Théah will be destroyed. The appearance of the first three Prophets implies that the Vaticine teachings hold

some truth to them, and the Sidhe would do well to heed the warnings.

The Sons of Lugh thus seek to educate the Sidhe about the mortal realms, and convince them – albeit carefully – that the land of Bryn Bresail cannot exist without Théah. In so doing, they prepare for a war which their brethren would forever deny. Time runs differently in the lands of the Sidhe; tomorrow could be ten years or a hundred. Though the Fourth Coming seems far away to the Daughters, to the Sons of Lugh it could be a thousand centuries away, or it could be tomorrow's dawn.

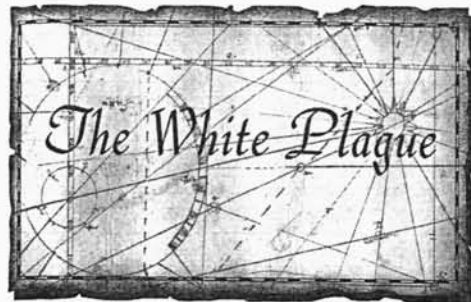
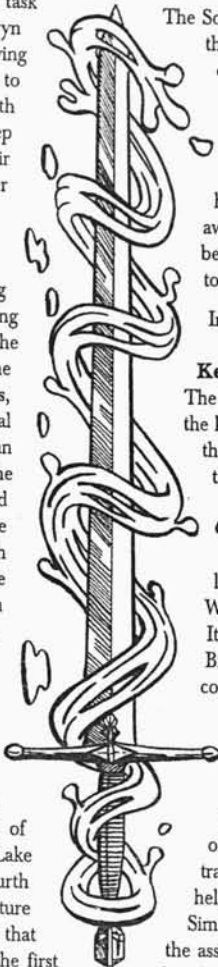
In Bryn Bresail, they are one and the same.

Keepers of Wisdom

The Sidhe descendants of the Lady of the Lake are the keepers of the great library, the compilation of all the journals ever written by all of the children of the bloodline. Thousands of books fill a small monastery that lies just over the border from reality, often obscured by the mists of Bryn Bresail and the deep waves of the sacred lake. This monastery lies beneath Loch Westmoreland, just north of Irnan Dun, in Avalon. It exists both in the mortal world and in Bryn Bresail, and appears the same in both: a humble country monastery.

Allies

Occasionally, a Son of Lugh will come to Théah, either to aid his cousins in the Daughters or on a specific errand for the Lady of the Lake. The Daughters usually aid such travelers however they can, providing support and helping them blend in among the other humans. Similarly, members of the Daughters can rely upon the assistance of the Sons of Lugh when their business takes them to Bryn Bresail.



The White Plague has appeared in Théah throughout the history of the world, from its first occurrence in the year 410, through the massive outbreaks from 900 to 1300, and more recent rashes in 1347 and 1386. Since the year 1386, however, there have been only isolated reports of outbreaks, often claiming the lives of a single village or small area before once again fading away into obscurity.

That much, the world knows.

What they do not know, however, is that the devastation caused by the White Plague saved the world from a far worse end: the release of the Syrneth, engineered by a secret society known as the Agiotage

The Agiotage, attempting to recreate the Senators' Bargain, dedicated every aspect of their lives and intelligence toward opening another hole in the Barrier, contacting the Syrneth, and gaining more power for themselves. They attempted to bargain with the Syrneth in exchange for more sorcery, more power, and greater control over their fellow man. Their already-sorcerous blood and their in-depth use of Syrneth artifacts had weakened the Barrier to an extent that a Syrneth contamination had leaked through into Théah.

The Daughters of Sophia first discovered this infection among the populace of Théah in the year 408, just before the initial outbreak of the White Plague. They did not yet know of the Agiotage society, or their involvement with the weakening of the Barrier. They initially summoned the

powers of Bryn Bresail to fight the Syrneth infection, but something horrible happened. The White Plague was created by the merging of Scrying magic, a combination of healing potions, and the elusive essence of Bryn Bresail. It spread rapidly through upper Vodacce and western Castille, transmitting to those infected with Syrneth taint – some by their association with Agiotage and others who were innocent bystanders, living too close to a weak point in the Barrier.

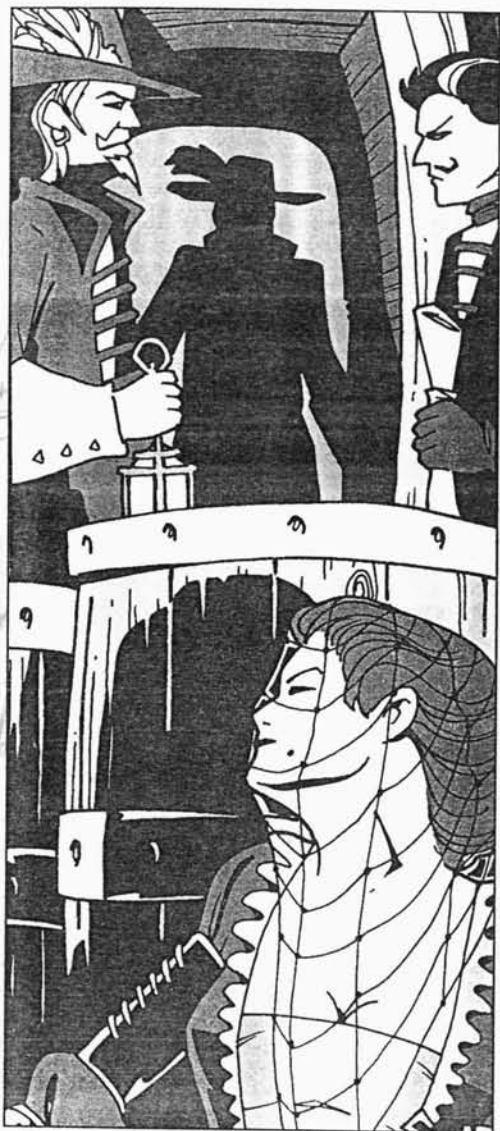
By the time the Daughters contained the plague a few years later, they understood its nature. The fact that it mainly attacked individuals with Syrneth taint, and that it spread so rapidly in certain areas, led them to believe that Syrneth influence had "leaked" into specific parts of Théah. Using the White Plague as a guide, the Daughters began to search for potential breaches in the Barrier.

By doing so, the Daughters unearthed the Agiotage. Through skillful infiltration, they learned that the group was attempting to weaken and eventually destroy the Barrier. Agiotage wanted to create another Bargain, and this time, allow the Syrneth full rein in Théah in exchange for power. After several years of infiltration, and careful intermarriage of Sophia's Daughters' spies into the organization, the truth was revealed. The Agiotage weren't trying to prevent Syrneth invasion, but rather, were trying to encourage it – on their own terms.

Immediately, the Daughters of Sophia began fighting the Agiotage's efforts, and at the same time, worked to repair the damage already done to the Barrier. A group of the Sons of Lugh used stolen Sidhe magic and ancient lore to seal weakened areas. As their work on the Barrier began to take effect, a horrible twist of fate allowed the Agiotage to discover one of the Daughter's highly placed spies in their midst. The woman was tortured for information, and eventually sent into a raw Porté tunnel – after her eyelids had been cut away from her eyes.

The Hidden War

Thus began a war between the two secret societies that continued for centuries, hidden from the eyes of all of the



residents of Théah. It consisted of numerous information and commerce blockades, spies, assassinations, and sorcerous methods of assault.

It reached a crescendo when the Daughters released their last, most devastating weapon. The White Plague affected countless thousands, but unerringly attacked anyone touched by Syrneth magic — a trait which every member of Agiotage had in common. Their attempts to Bargain with the Syrneth, and their propensity to live near weak points in the Barrier, contaminated them all. Unfortunately, the Agiotage had already opened several significant breaches of the Barrier, using them to draw power from the Syrneth in order to fight against the Daughters. Everyone who lived near these breaches, whether Agiotage or innocent bystander, would be affected.

More than one-third of the population of the continent was killed by the disease. The Agiotage had spread through nearly every nation in Théah, and the taint of the weakened Barrier was everywhere. The only nations that survived with a majority of their population intact were Ussura, where Matushka had kept the Syrneth contamination under control, and Castille, where a combination of Church knowledge and a strong Barrier allowed them to endure. The rest suffered debilitating losses to the mysterious disease, and the Hidden War between the Agiotage and the Daughters continued despite the sickness that surrounded them.

When the war finally ended, the Agiotage had been completely destroyed. The Barrier was seriously damaged, and Théah was still in a great deal of danger. There was much work to be done, and the Daughters occupied themselves with repairing the damage, and hunting down the Syrneth that had escaped during their war with the Agiotage.

Several times since then, the Daughters have released the White Plague in order to halt what they believed was a Syrneth infiltration. The most spectacular incident involved the destruction of a Syrneth artifact collector and his followers on the docks of San Cristobal. The Plague spread rapidly throughout the city, and eventually claimed the lives

of Castille's royal family before Vaticine action and the quiet efforts of the Daughters ground it to a halt. Since then, the Order has taken care to severely limit the exposure of the disease, lest more innocents suffer needlessly. The only samples reside in the cave of the Oracle herself: to be dispersed on her personal orders and only in the most dire circumstances.



The Daughters of Sophia integrate their philosophies and machinations differently in each culture. Depending on their needs and goals, the Daughters in each country of Théah are given different tasks. As each area of the world suffers from problems unique to their nature, so too must the Daughters' solutions be tailored to the obstacles.

Avalon

In Avalon, the Daughters of Sophia work very closely with the Sons of Lugh. They specialize in gathering information, protecting the library of journals, and encouraging understanding between the Sidhe and the common Théah citizen. Bryn Bresail is close; its strength and Glamour infuse the nation of Avalon, and with the Sidhe's return, the mortals there must again learn to adapt and cope with their foreign beliefs and emotionlessness. Because of this, Avalon is the most "open" haven of the Daughters of Sophia, and the location of most of their training grounds for educating new members.

The Daughters of Sophia support Elaine wholeheartedly. They believe that she is a critical link between the lands of Bryn Bresail and Théah, and that her ability to control the Graal signals a rebirth of hope — and thus, pushes the Fourth Prophet's coming even farther away. Further, Avalon is where the Lady of the Lake has chosen to place her Champion, Lawrence Lugh: a member of their organization, and the defender of the Queen. Although it is highly unusual that the Champion of the Lady of the Lake (Lugh) should serve the Champion of the Queen of the Sky (Elaine), the society trusts in their immortal ancestress and continues to ensure that Avalon is free of war, sickness, and division.

Castille

Castille is a very dangerous place for the Daughters. In 1380, Inquisitors of the Vaticine Church broke into a convent controlled by the society. The Church had discovered that the nuns were teaching lessons about the Fourth Prophet in ways "not suited to the Church," and had them burned as heretics. The Vaticine seized several of the journals and personal possessions of the nuns, and came very close to discovering the organization. Since then, the Daughters have gone to great lengths to hide themselves from the Castillians, using their abilities to marry into prominent lines, rather than attempting to teach or convert from the peasantry.

The Vaticine is one of the greatest and most unwitting allies of the Daughters. The society uses their hierarchy, plants spies among their librarians and Inquisitors, and deliberately affects their judgements of what is heresy and what is allowable theory about the Book of the Prophets. Without the Church's knowledge, the Daughters would have much more difficulty assembling their vast network of information. By using the Vaticine as a tool, not an enemy, the society has made large strides forward. Still, they remember that the Church is one of the few organizations that suspects their existence. They must move with caution, or risk losing everything.

Lady Li Ching Chao (1000, Cathay)

Even more than the Crescent Empire, the hidden world of Cathay holds a great fascination for ordinary Théans. Behind the Fire Wall lies the most fabled civilization in the world, a land of beauty alien to most Théans.

Lady Li was a renowned scholar with a passion for collecting poetry from all over Théah. Aware of war from a young age, Lady Li's own writings addressed political issues, exhorting women to stand up for themselves and keep their people from senseless conflict. Unlike many women of her time, Lady Li married for love when she wed the noted scholar Lord Chao Ming Cheng. Theirs was a marriage of equals who respected and admired each other immensely. When her beloved husband died suddenly, she was approached by many wealthy noblemen who wanted to spend time with the lovely woman (and her lovely fortune) but she yielded to none.

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tainted. (For more information on the Südlache and the Unsterblicher Sumpf, see the *Eisen* sourcebook.)

Montaigne

For a while, the Daughters believed that they had control of Montaigne. The Queen was a member of the society, social reform was eminent, and the King would be forced to seek political alliances in order to marry his many daughters.

Then, in relatively quick succession, Queen Rosa Velasquez de Sandoval died, and the King's daughters lost favor with their father one by one. Only a few short years later, the Vaticine Hierophant and the Cardinal of Montaigne vanished – dead, or missing. Afterward, Leon XIV announced that Montaigne would serve as a haven for all sorcerers, and was declared heretical by the Vaticine. The war against Castille began, and Montaigne slowly rotted from within. Today, the Daughters in that country are looking into the future and seeing a blackened wasteland where Montaigne once stood. The pool shows Montaigne's people starved and dying, all hope lost to the ravages of war.

In order to prevent this, the Daughters have begun educating the populace, subtly supporting the revolutionaries, and bringing arms and equipment into Paix and Charouse. There must be a rebellion, and the Daughters of Sophia will be right in the center of it. Many, particularly the nobility, will die – but in the end, it will save the world from Armageddon. They are working closely with the Emperor's youngest daughter, Dominique, because they realize that she and her husband, Montegue, may be the last hope for the future of her nation. Yet, at the same time, they watch in fear as the months pass, remembering a prophecy that her son will be a tyrant that will destroy Montaigne.

Ussura

Because of their close connection with Bryn Bresail, the Daughters of Sophia believe that they know exactly who, and what Matushka actually is – an ancient master of the Syrneath race, one of the most powerful of her kind. While

the Sidhe do not trust Matushka, the Daughters have adopted the stance of “keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” They work in tandem with Matushka and her people, encouraging her to believe that the Daughters of Sophia are firmly on her side. Of course, the Society has not entirely dismissed the notion that Matushka may be something much different – the Little Grandmother claims that she works against the Syrneath and seeks to destroy those who are weakening the Barrier. If that is true, then the Society may have found its greatest ally. However, if Matushka is lying, then the Society must have a method to destroy her before she can free her Syrneath minions. In the libraries of the Sons of Lugh, sorcerers and Sidhe have been researching a way to destroy her. It has taken over a thousand years to study the task, and will likely to take a long time yet. Killing an eternal power is difficult.

Although the Daughters hide their concern for Matushka's true motives beneath a veneer of understanding, they work well with the Ussurans. Matushka knows about the Daughters – their major goals, and their designs to keep the Syrneath in captivity. She knows that the Daughters operate in Ussura, and she allows them to continue with her blessings. Their quest to prevent the Syrneath from rising matches the Little Grandmother's own goals, and unless they take direct action against her or her people, Matushka allows their presence.

One of the largest bastions of the Daughters of Sophia is within the city of Breslau, where they make plans, organize, and heal their wounded. Further, some of the more explorative and courageous members of the society journey into the depths of Lake Vigil, to see their ruins of the Syrneath and learn about the dangers they will face when and if the Fourth Prophet arrives. *(For more information on Lake Vigil, see the Ussura sourcebook.)*

Vendel

The Daughters have made great strides in Vendel. Their Handmaiden, Lorraine Weller, is the head of the powerful Jenny's Guild, and the University of Kirk houses several members in prominent positions. The Daughter believe that

Lady Li Ching Chao (1000, Cathay)

The Lady Li continued writing about Cathayan life throughout her long and illustrious career. Copies of her work occasionally appeared beyond the great Firewall in Breslau, and from there spread to the rest of Théah. Though the texts rarely had an author attributed to them, the wisdom within them could not be disputed. From her words, Théans learned what little they know of Lady Li's exotic land.

She was aware of the outside world from her studies of the texts she collected, but she never yearned to travel, preferring the tranquility of her own estate. One of her most poignant poems was written near the end of her life: “Now, as I wither away, I prefer the company of silence. I listen to other women who talk and laugh among themselves and I am sad because I can no longer share their joy.”

the Vendel League has tremendous potential, and have resolved to guide it away from the corruption that currently plagues it. The Jenny's Guild managed to usurp one of the coveted League Chairs, which Weller has used to consolidate the Daughters' power. With Jennys in the beds of prominent merchants and the streets of Kirk bursting with opportunity, the Vendel nation has been very good to the Daughters of Sophia.

The Daughters have very few dealings with the Vestenmannavnjar, who remain too insular to make effective allies. Besides rescuing a few battered thralls and keeping a lookout for signs of the caul, they generally leave the primitive tribesmen to live as they see fit.

Vodacce

For many centuries, the Daughters of Sophia have battled against Vodacce's growing isolationism and gender bigotry. Women are little more than slaves in Vodacce, and greed and viciousness are considered virtues among the ruling class. It is a difficult task to reverse a country's entire moral structure; moreso, because many of the women of the

nation actively believe in the oppression under which they suffer. For all of Vodacce fervent believers, the Vaticine has little control over the nation and cannot offer much support. The Seven Princes remain isolated on their islands, paranoid about any contact and any new faces within their territories. It is a dangerous place to work covertly, but one that the Daughters cannot ignore.

Nearly all of the society's agents in Vodacce are native to the country. They have existed within the noble and lower classes for generations, quietly interbreeding and teaching generations of children both in the upper echelons and among the uneducated peasantry. They also seek to liberate many of the oppressed noble daughters and have operated an "underground railroad" of sorts for Fate Witches trying to flee their abusive husbands.

Needless to say, the work is very dangerous, but Handmaiden Valentina Villanova is up to the task. Under her direction, several dozen noblewomen have escaped the country to safety in Montaigne or Eisen. The Daughters have considered the possibility of an open revolt in Vodacce, but with the power of the Fate Witches, no such revolution could possibly succeed – or even be organized without their notice. Thus, they must play careful games, and maneuver slowly to achieve their ultimate goals.

Relations With Other Societies

Below is a brief discussion of the methods, dealings, and attitudes held by members of the Sophia's Daughters toward the other secret societies of Théah. As the oldest

society (essentially created when the Sidhe first discovered Théah), the Daughters have watched the other societies develop, grow, and change throughout the years. Blessed with their unique perspective on history, many of the eldest Daughters have chosen a specific secret society to follow, spending their time and energy tracking its members, actions, and goals. Such Daughters are often called "Scholars," reflecting their attitude of research and observation throughout centuries of history.

Keep in mind that the Daughters of Sophia and the Sons of Lugh often look at things very differently than most mortals; Sidhe blood causes perceptions and emotions to express themselves in many different ways. What follows is a general guideline to the attitudes of the Daughters. It is not a mandate, just a general opinion as expressed by the Scholars who follow them.

Explorer's Society

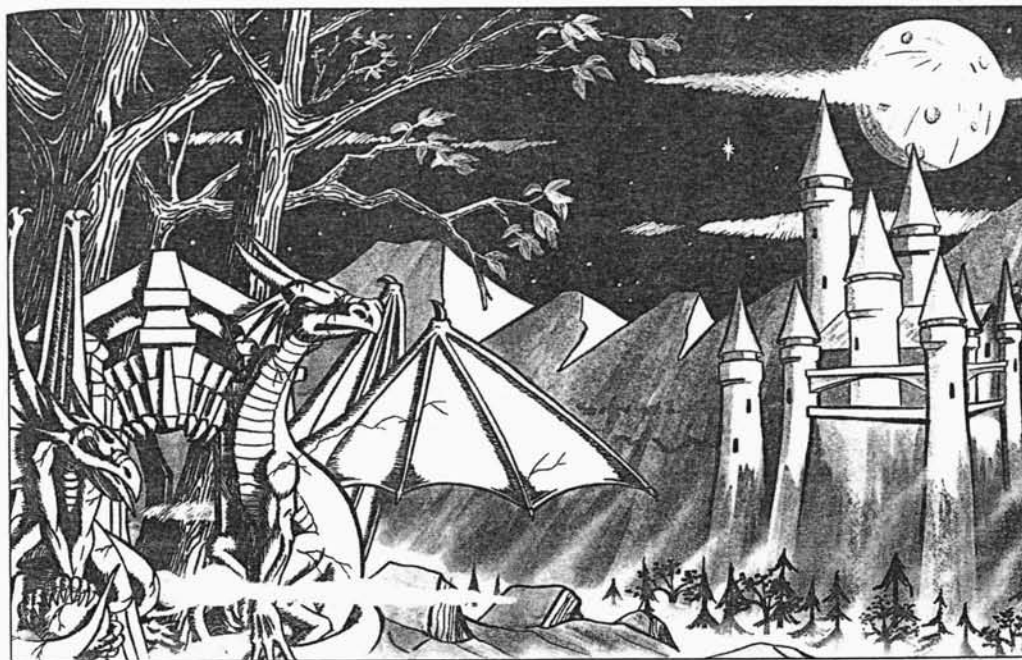
"They are children, always seeking new toys before they have finished with the old ones..."

– Professor Miranda Blake, University of Kirkwall

Many members of the Daughters hide beneath the guises of the Explorer's Society. The Daughters feel that the Explorers have stagnated, becoming more interested in experiencing the adventure of a quest than in the recovery of Surneth artifacts.

With their Sidhe knowledge, the Daughters can guess or ascertain the twisted reasoning behind many of the devices recovered from Explorer adventures. Certain that such knowledge is not safe in the hands of mortal man, the Daughters occasionally sabotage Surneth artifacts, ensuring that they never work as designed. Many Daughters still belong to the Society, watching for any sign that the creatures beyond the Barrier are growing stronger or attempting to communicate. Using Sidhe understanding of their enemy, they ensure that the Surneth will never use mankind's own ignorance and curiosity against him.

Some members of the Daughters fear that the Explorer's Society may be walking too close in the footsteps of



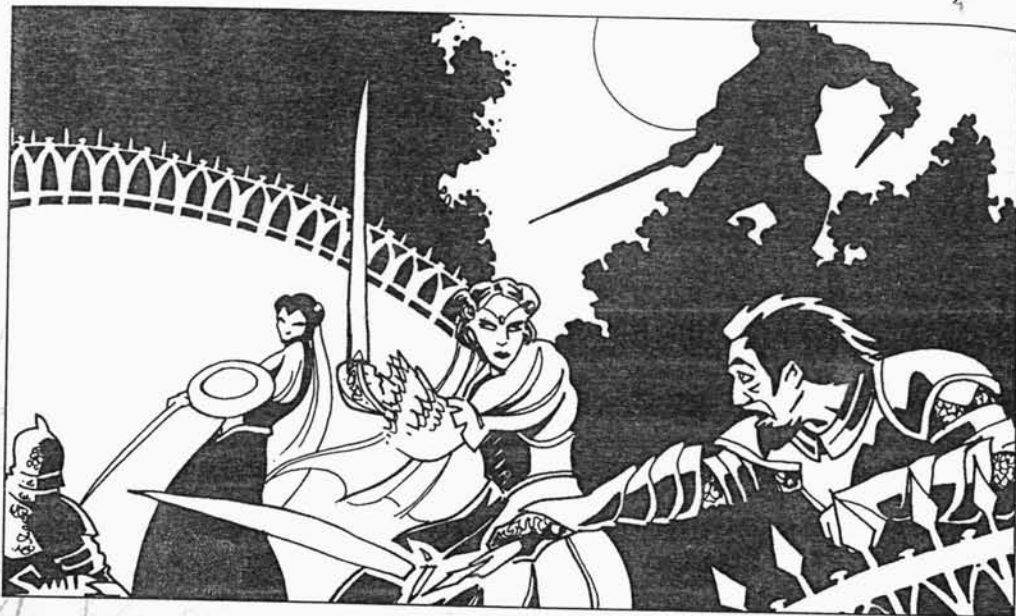
Agiotage. They believe that constant unearthing of Surneth artifacts can only weaken the Barrier, and that if the Explorers actually managed to understand half the items they uncovered, the world would be in extreme danger. Because of this, many Daughters take an active stance to end the adventures – as well as the lives – of members of the Explorers' Society (as covertly as possible, of course).

Invisible College

The Daughters of Sophia view the Invisible College as an ally in the making. They are intelligent, resourceful, and cunning – and they fiercely oppose the false teachings of the Third Prophet as evidenced by the Inquisition. Covertly, the Daughters try to help the College as best they can, turning aside their churchly enemies and sending prominent

scientists to safe havens. The Order supports the Invisible College's commitment to free will and equality through open learning.

Theirs was the hand that tipped the scales in Ravenild Hibbot's remarkable acceptance into the Royal Fraternity in 1657. Descended from the Lady of the Lake, Ravenild should have been inducted into the Daughters at an early age; unfortunately, the order did not discover her until well past her puberty. Her innate Scrying abilities were limited, but had manifested in her passion for the study of blood. She has nearly invented a method of blood transfusions, using only an untrained portion of her true potential. Yet after watching Ravenild for some time, the Daughters decided to allow her to live without their society. Her place in the College is secure; she will do Théah a greater service among their numbers.



As beneficial as they are, the Invisible College also presents a great danger to the Daughters. Their studies into Blood Science too accurately resemble the alchemy of potion making, and their keen minds may soon discover various other secrets long held by the Daughters. Further, their research into the White Plague comes dangerously close to discovering the disease's true nature... and its controllers. The Daughters are not prepared to justify their position, nor do they wish to fight a group which has such potential to aid them in their struggle. So, they maintain several highly-placed agents within the College. Through their skillful work, the Invisible College has been kept away from the discovery of either truth... for now.

Knights of the Rose and Cross

"They should have stayed as they were for hundreds of years... dead. The Knights were more useful without their tabards."

— Marquessa Alisinthé DuBeiere

The Daughters have maintained a distant relationship with the Knights of the Rose and Cross. Some time ago, the Daughters made a grave error, and the Knights became aware of a half-Sidhe lineage that appeared occasionally in Avalon. The Knights would not give up, but persisted in their quest to track down the half-bloods. Eventually, the Sons of Lugh had to use firmer methods to convince the Knights to leave them alone... which sparked a cold war between the two factions. The Knights didn't even know, for the most part, who they were fighting — only that somehow, contact with Bryn Bresail continued in Avalon even through the period of the Sidhe's withdrawal. It was enough to interest a number of Knights, who dislike the notion of the Sidhe interfering with humanity.

During the debacle, the Daughters handled themselves coolly and calmly... with one unfortunate exception. They poisoned several influential Knights with the Balm of the Westmoreland, trusting in the potion's unequalled efficiency

to remove their adversaries. It worked... except for one man. That man, known today as Louis-Claude du Sinjin, is the Daughter's greatest embarrassment.

They discovered, too late, that not only did Louis-Claude bear the blood of the Lady of the Lake, but possessed a genetic anomaly which not only rendered him immune to the poison, but conferred all the agelessness of the actual potion. For years, the Daughters have been hunting Louis-Claude down, but he has thus far eluded all capture. (For more on Louis-Claude Sinjin, see the *Knights of the Rose and Cross* sourcebook, pages 54-55, and pages 76-77 of this book).

Die Kreuzritter

Of all the secret societies of Théah, die Kreuzritter's goals are most like those of the Daughters of Sophia. Both fight to destroy the Synchron, and to prevent the barrier's rupture. Both work to restore true faith to all the nations of the world, and both are willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to prevent an apocalypse. If they could, the Daughters would reveal themselves to the templars and offer whatever assistance they could.

However, the Daughters also know that die Kreuzritter must not suspect their existence. If the Knights knew that another secret society was aware of them, they would immediately seek to destroy them. The Order of the Black Cross is extremely paranoid and responds to almost any perceived threat with war. The Daughters had enough of secret wars with Agiotage. They know that die Kreuzritter is fighting the same enemy as they, and they believe that the Order is competent and capable of fulfilling their duty without any interference from the Daughters. Regardless of their similar goals, they cannot take the risk of allowing die Kreuzritter to learn of the ties between the two groups. It is a dangerous balance, aiding the Knights without revealing their presence, and more than one Daughter has given her life rather than be discovered.

In Inismore, die Kreuzritter have heard of a permanent entrance into Bryn Bresail. They are wrong. What they have

discovered is a small pocket of Sophia's Daughters, working to bring Bryn Bresail closer to Théah. Aware that they have caught the attention of another society, all three Daughters have gone underground, hiding themselves until they can ascertain the danger presented by the local Kreuzritter.

Rilasciare

The bond between this secret society and the Order is very strong. The Rilasciare learned of the Order through discreet communication about seventy-five years ago, and the two groups have since put their philosophical differences aside in favor of the opportunities that collaboration provide. Sorcery, especially Fate Witches, makes the Rilasciare more than a little anxious. On the other hand, both Orders are committed to freeing the oppressed; more importantly, they share common enemies in Vodacce. Rilasciare safe houses have helped more than one abused and frightened Vodacce woman escape to freedom. Though a few of the more radical Rilasciare hate and fear the Daughters, cooler heads have usually prevailed, and the alliance should continue for some time into the foreseeable future.

Los Vagos

Although there is no direct connection between the Order and the Castilian patriots, the two groups share more than they may realize. Fidencia Suarez, Castille's Handmaiden, works in the household of Don Andrés Aldana and quietly assisted the development of his daughter Maria-Soldad. The bridge between the two organizations is further strengthened by Las Muñecas, a band of women currently "stationed" at the front between Castille and Montaigne. Despite the public face of prostitution, Las Muñecas are intelligent and fiercely loyal patriots determined to help bring about the defeat of the Montaigne army. What remains to be seen is how the active presence of Maria-Soldad Rivera y Aldana affects the Order, especially if she were to become queen of Castille. For more information, see the *Los Vagos* sourcebook.





Rhyanna ferch Hywel

Angharrett ferch Myddun could spin and weave and sing and dance. Oh, could she dance! She could move like the wind, turning and whirling, or float like the soft wisp of a feather falling gently to the ground, or move her body like a reed in the breeze. And she was beautiful, incredibly beautiful. Small wonder that on a midsummer's eve she caught the eye of that dangerously handsome traveling bard. He played tunes on his flute that made Angharrett feel strange and wonderful at the same time. The old women nudged each other and made warning motions with their gnarled hands, but Angharrett just danced away from them and turned her gaze on the bard, who grew more irresistible by the minute. When the festivities were done and most of the villagers had found their way home, Angharrett and the bard were still dancing.

Nine months later, the handsome man was long gone and Angharrett was giving birth in the dark hut of the old healer woman who lived on the outskirts of town. The child was born, a tiny little thing with bright red hair and emerald green eyes. Angharrett lay back on the straw-filled cot, almost too exhausted to breathe, while the old woman swaddled the infant girl in soft cloth. As she handed the baby to the pale young mother, the door to the hut blew open and a cloaked figure entered. The old woman was accustomed to emergency visits, but this man had not come

for medicine or a love potion – he had come for his newborn daughter.

Since the day of her birth, Rhyanna had full and complete knowledge of her Sidhe blood. Her father – the bard who seduced her mother on that wild summer's night – was actually a Sidhe nobleman: Duke Ioan, something of a renegade among his kind who had secretly pledged himself to the Lady of the Lake. On occasion, he ventured into the mortal world in a variety of disguises to find mortal women with special talents upon whom he could father children. Unlike many of his fellow Sidhe, he was actually concerned about mortals and understood the inexorable link between the two worlds.

Sadly, the mortal mothers usually could not withstand childbirth, so Duke Ioan took it upon himself to raise his progeny and see to it that they were trained to become members of the Daughters. He had watched Angharrett for some time before beguiling her. Although he knew that she would probably not live to see her daughter grow up, he also sensed that the child of their union would play a crucial role in the battles to come.

Rhyanna grew up attended by floral Sidhe in a castle hidden deep in the Forest Grumweald. There she learned the arts of Scrying and the ways of the mortal world. The Lady of the Lake herself performed the young girl's Initiation and was gratified when the flame that appeared in the crystal dagger glowed a fiery gold. There was no question that Rhyanna would enter a special circle of those who might succeed the Oracle.

Since then, she has coordinated Daughter activities throughout the Glamour Isles – monitoring relations with the Sidhe, fighting the dangers of the Unseelie court, and secretly promoting the agenda of Queen Elaine. She disguises herself as a traveling performer, allowing her to move at will throughout Avalon. The Daughters below her never know when she will appear, but she always brings a kind word and a bottle of wine with her. The more cynical members say that it's easier to accept her orders when you've had a few drinks.



Rhyanna ferch Hywel

Today, Rhyanna ferch Hywel is a beautiful young woman, with long dark auburn-colored hair and greenish-grey eyes. Her delicate frame belies an impressive strength. She has a quick wit and an avid thirst for knowledge. She dresses in a beautiful green kirtle stitching with Eldrich symbols, and often wears a brilliant gold scarf around her neck. She goes barefoot everywhere, but no one has ever seen her cut her feet or stumble on a rock or stone. Her Scrying abilities are considerable and she is skilled in more practical arts as well. She has a wicked sense of humor and a fondness for practical jokes, especially those she can play on her father. Rhyanna takes on everything in her life with a deep passion. And of course, she can dance...

Ysabelle (Isabelle) du Montaigne

Princesse Ysabelle, the eighth of *l'Empereur's* nine daughters, did not want to be initiated into the Daughters of Sophia and she certainly did not want the position of Handmaiden for Montaigne. Her sorcerous blood was a shameful thing to her and if there were any way that she could change her noble lineage, she would. When she displayed no skill at *Porté* magic like her father or her sisters, she was actually relieved. She did not enjoy the rigorous exercises or the endless hours of studied required to master the form. She did not like the idea of tearing holes in the fabric of the universe and she certainly did not like reaching into the darkness to pull out something screaming and bleeding. Her beloved nursemaid wanted her to pretend, of course – she even dyed her hands red so that she would appear to be a normal *Porté* mage – but Ysabelle herself felt no great loss at her lack of sorcerous power.

One morning while washing her face, la Princesse Ysabelle du Montaigne found herself unable to tear her eyes away from the basin of water before her. She froze, fascinated, and felt an eerie sensation like she was sinking into its depths. When she came to her senses a short time later, she found her nursemaid staring at her with a horrified look on her face. The young princess assumed that she had fainted, but the woman said no, that was not what had occurred. It was something far worse.

Apparently, little Princess Ysabelle was not actually *l'Empereur's* daughter. During a diplomatic mission some twenty or so years before, a contingent of powerful *Vodacce* men came to discuss certain temporary trade alliances. Among them was Viscount Tigran Lorenzo, a dark-eyed nobleman of dark reputation. The *Empereur* took great pains to spirit his mistresses away from the prying eyes of the degenerate *Vodacce* but never suspected that his wife would become the replacement. Tigran found the young Queen quite entrancing and set about cuckolding his host. He charmed her with flattery and little sparking gifts to the point where she never bothered to see the man for what he was.

Tigran managed to get the Queen alone, then drugged her wine to knock her unconscious. When the Queen awakened, she tasted the bitterness in her mouth from the drugged alcohol and knew from the disarray of her clothes that the Vodacce ambassador had "shared" an intimate moment with her. The poor Queen was too ashamed to admit what had happened to anyone save her maid — the same maid who now served Ysabelle. Instead, she made certain to sleep with her husband for the next several nights. Tigran returned to his country untouched.

The Queen died shortly after Ysabelle's birth, and the nursemaid prayed that the little girl would show signs of *l'Empereur's* blood. When she didn't, the old woman took steps to hide it from others. But now, with Ysabelle displaying this new, unknown magic, it was time for the princess to know the truth. The Scrying skill must have come from the girl's true father, so the nursemaid begged Ysabelle to hide it lest her true heritage become known. Shocked and horrified at these revelations, the young princess fled the palace instead, fueled by an insane anger at her mother, *l'Empereur*, and a horrible Vodacce cochon named Tigran.

She found herself in Surlig, tired and hungry, and by now a bit less angry. She felt a little less certain about what had seemed like an excellent plan before the sun rose. She could go back, but that would mean accepting a heritage she did not want. She sat in the corner of the inn, nursing a mug of ale. As she watched the surface of the beverage, she felt that she was being watched. Her hand slid under her cloak to a small dagger she had the foresight to bring.

A couple of rough looking men were jostling each other and looking at Ysabelle. She was accustomed to being stared at — after all, she was a *princesse du Montaigne*. However, she reminded herself, this was not the Court and these were definitely not courtiers. One of them swaggered over to where she sat and leaned over her, wiping the back of his hand across his mouth before muttering something obscene. His breath, a disgusting combination of wine and rotten teeth, almost made her faint. She shrank back from him which only seemed to excite him all the more. As he



Ysabelle (Isabelle) du Montaigne

reached for her, she drew her dagger, but before she could use it, a sharp sword flashed down between them. The unwanted suitor staggered back, replaced by a handsome man with long hair and black eyes. He sheathed his sword and offered her a leather-clad hand.

For some reason she could not explain, she took the proffered protection and soon found herself aboard a fast-moving ship named the *Santa Cecilia*. Her rescuer was a smiling Vodacce pirate named Sebastiano Scogna. When he asked her his name, she stuttered for a moment and then said, "Isabelle." He threw his head back and laughed for several minutes. "Isabelle the Pirate it is then!" She was accepted by most of the crew, and learned a number of

important skills, including fencing and a smattering of pirate cant and a pidgin of Montaigne and Castilliano.

Among Scogna's crew was a young Vodacce woman named Morgause Mercuri — a member of the Sophia's Daughters. She quickly realized that the young Montaigne lass had no small Scrying ability, but Isabelle proved incredibly unwilling to discuss it, so the Order bided its time and watched her. Meanwhile she worked hard at her assigned tasks, and became an excellent sailor and an astute tactician.

When she felt ready to assume command of her own ship and crew, Isabelle was once again approached by the Daughters. By now, she was mature enough and had seen enough cruelty in the world to appreciate the nobility in their cause. She agreed to come to their aid by sailing the dangerous waters between Montaigne, Castille and Vodacce, harassing those who did not have Théah's best interests at heart, and helping provide safe passage for women who wished to escape the repression of their old lives. In exchange, she received her own ship, the *Wayward Swan*, which she has captained ever since. So important was her role — and so successfully did she execute it — that she has recently been elevated to the status of Handmaiden.

Isabelle is a dark-haired girl with bright blue eyes and a dimple on the right side of her mouth. She refuses to cut her long curly hair or pretend that she is anything other than a woman. Instead, she sports a full-sleeve chemise, an elaborately tooled leather corset, several flounced skirts and a pair of sturdy boots that lace up to her knees. She carries a wicked looking dagger in her wide black belt, as well as a pistol in her boot. Her favorite hand-to-hand combat weapon is a moiré bladed scimitar from the Crescent Moon which she won in a particularly wild game of Mermaid's Eyes.

Adept in the Rogers Swordsman School, she also has a smattering of other fencing skills, thanks to various members of her crew. She skims the coast between Montaigne and Castille, taking what she pleases and distributing it evenly among her crew who are all completely devoted to her. Her Scrying abilities allow her to

keep tabs on the other Daughters in Montaigne without sacrificing her freewheeling lifestyle.

Jazhani binte Noura

Jazhani binte Noura first became aware of the great Tapestry on a warm afternoon after she had spent an exhausting morning pouring over a particularly difficult translation. The degree of freedom enjoyed by a woman in a harem of the Crescent Empire is determined very much by the man who owns her; luckily for Jazhani, Tamir ben Ha'atim was a very enlightened man. Perhaps that was due to his age (he was just passing out of his middle years) or perhaps it was his belief that one must find light in the world to survive. In any event, he still appreciated beauty and enjoyed the company of beautiful young women like Jazhani, who returned his genteel affection with absolute devotion.

Jazhani had worked hard to decipher the formula for an herbal remedy that she hoped would relieve the pain that Tamir suffered from. She had deduced one of the main ingredients — capsicum — but the other (a liquid compound) defied her ability to decipher from the ancient text. Her fingertips were stained with the black ink imported from Cathay as she spent hour after hour poring through the text. At last, when her eyes failed her, she turned away from the book for a brief respite.

She lay down beside the reflecting pool in the central courtyard of the harem and began to trail her fingers in the cool, refreshing water. She could hear the far-off sound of the songbirds, and the water made a soft splashing sound as the ink slipped off her skin into swirling patterns that moved languidly across the top of the pool.

As Jazhani watched them curl and twist back on themselves, her mind drifted into reverie. In retrospect, she wasn't completely certain, but from somewhere in the distance she thought she heard a woman's voice whispering her name. Unable to stir herself, she continued to drift as the voice continued, telling things about the great world beyond her home. Finally, she felt a cool hand brush across her

forehead, shaking her from her reverie. She opened her eyes, but saw no one. Shrugging off the incident as a waking dream, she found, however, that she could not forget the whispering voice or the strange words it had uttered.

Thus the Oracle made contact through her Srying web with a young woman who would soon take a large role in the Order. Jazhani continued to receive messages from the pool, and learned that there was more to her deep love of science and medicine than the random hand of Fate. Selected directly by the Oracle, the Crescent woman was chosen for her exceptional gift in the healing arts. As a student of medicine and alchemy, she spent her days and often her nights in a special laboratory that Tamir had built



Jazhani binte Noura

for her. There she worked on complicated formulas in hopes of creating medicines that would alleviate the pain and suffering that plagued the people of the Crescent Empire. She never met any of her sisters in the Order, save through the Sophia, but her increasing knowledge passed through the Oracle to her sisters elsewhere in Théah. Many of the Daughters have found her potions and herbal remedies invaluable to their work.

Jazhani is, by Crescent standards, an ideal woman. She is short and well-rounded with exquisite hands that flash with jewels. She wears her dark brown hair in a variety of coiffures as appropriate, but when she is alone, she prefers to make a single thick braid that stays out of her way when she is studying. She has huge almond-shaped dark eyes that are thickly lashed, high cheekbones, and full lips often curved up in a slight smile.

Wilma Probst

More information on Wilma can be found on pages 13–15 in the City of Freiburg book, from the Freiburg boxed set.

Wilma Probst grew up in Gottkirchen, Heilgrund, the only daughter of a wealthy Eisen merchant. An avid student of the courtly arts, she hoped that one day she would join the Emperor's court. Her father sent her to Montaigne's finest finishing school, which not only gave her an excellent education but brought her to the early attention of the Daughters. The bright young Eisen student caught the eye of Mlle. Jeanette Françoise, the school's headmistress. She saw that even at a young age, little Wilma possessed qualities unique in a woman – no remorse, an absolute lack of fear, and an iron will. She scorned the taunts of her classmates and endeavored to improve herself in every conceivable fashion. She was just what the headmistress was looking for.

Mlle. Françoise used her school to shape and mold the minds of young girls to serve the goals of the secret society, either directly or indirectly, as they progressed into womanhood. She had been waiting for years for someone like Wilma, someone whom she could groom into a great

leader. As if brought by the Sophia herself, Wilma Probst had landed right in her lap; so her training in the ways of the Order began.

Under Mlle. Françoise's direction, Wilma studied hard and proved very receptive to the tenets of the Daughters. Her lack of remorse became tempered with a strong sense of duty, allowing her to embrace the ethics that might otherwise elude her. She maintained her coldness and learned how to hide her thoughts behind it, making her a shrewd politician. And of course, her courage never wavered. Even when Mlle. Françoise told her of the potential coming of the Fourth Prophet, Wilma never so much as batted an eyelash. Upon graduation, she returned to Eisen and applied for an appointment at the Emperor's court. Thanks to a combination of influence and the overarching hand of Fate, the Emperor granted her application.

In addition to the duties of her position, Wilma began to look about for those who might be sympathetic to the Order's cause. She spent years establishing herself and grooming contacts that could potentially serve the Daughters' cause. She found a particularly strong ally in the Emperor himself, whom she hoped would assist her in furthering the Daughters' goals. Then disaster struck. The War of the Cross ended horrendously and the Emperor blotted out his shame by committing suicide. His sudden death caused the Eisen court – and the nation – to fall apart. Wilma suddenly found her careful preparations scattered to the wind.

She returned to her mentor, Mlle. Françoise, for guidance. The headmistress saw Wilma's situation not as a tragedy but as an opportunity. She suggested she search among the remaining Iron Princes for a suitable liege. Inspired by her mentor's words, Wilma recalled a relatively recent Eisenfürst named Nicholas Trägue, who had received control of a fortress called "Stein." He had parlayed the tiny strongpoint into a barony called "Freiburg." Wilma decided to have a small soiree to which she invited the Eisen baron.

He was a fascinating man, full of theories and pronouncements and detailed anecdotes about himself.



Wilma Probst

Although the young woman appeared to be entertained by Trägue, she was not cowed by the Eisenfürst's overbearing presence. She seemed to hold her own quite well, maintaining her usual demeanor of calm interest. At one point she had a brief but lively verbal sparring match with the Eisenfürst regarding refuse control; when the evening was over, Wilma Probst had a new position.

Freiburg turned out to be an excellent location for operations on behalf of Sophia's Daughters. Wilma began to create safe houses all over the city for women being smuggled out of Vodacce and Castille. The unique atmosphere in the city – freedom to speak and to think on one's own – provided Wilma with the perfect arena in which

to espouse the Order's principles. Only a few years after its founding, the Eisen contingent of Daughters had increased significantly. Wilma's ascension to the ranks of Handmaidens was only a matter of time.

Unlike many of her fellow Handmaidens, Wilma has no Sidhe blood. Her value to the Order lies in her unwavering devotion and ability to quite literally think like a man. Her efforts have earned her the admiration of those who would otherwise dismiss a woman's words; in all of Eisen, only Fauner Pösen commands more respect. She has become an important link in the Order's relocation efforts, helping to move women where they will be safe to work their magic or pursue their dreams of freedom. The Order knows that the salvation of Théah lies in the power of people such as Wilma, and makes full use of her abilities. She splits her time between guiding the Daughters and handling the monumental bureaucratic problems of Freiburg. Her boundless energy allows her to tackle both tasks with remarkable efficiency.

Wilma is an angular woman in her mid-thirties, with piercing blue eyes, an aquiline nose perhaps better suited to a man's face, and thin lips. She wears her long straight brown hair in a plain, severe style. While not intrinsically unattractive, her complete disregard for fashion and fripperies make her appear far more dour than she is. Her clothing is simply styled but made of rich fabric, giving an impression of quiet, understated elegance. Anyone who takes the time to look closely in her eyes will see a cold, relentless fire that belies her reserved demeanor.

Tamara Breslau Fyodnava v'Riasanova

More information on Tamara can be found on pages 73-74 and 115-116 of the Ussura sourcebook.

"She shall be strong at arm, and strong in mind. She shall know the light of truth, but she shall die in darkness..."

— *The Cathayan's Prophecy of Tamara*

Ussura is a large country, filled with practical people who have no need for fuss and pomp. Their religion, like their lives, is simple — but not primitive. They believe in Theus

and the First Prophet with an intellectual fervor that the other nations cannot match. Their churches reflect their faith, and stand stalwart against the frigid northern winters. Ussura is governed by the Gaius, a ruler traditionally chosen from the peasantry and raised to be Lord above the Five Knias, each ruler of a smaller kingdom within Ussura's boundaries. These Knias have independent will to govern their fiefdoms, so long as their wishes do not go against the Gaius — or the will of Matushka.

The Night of the Dragon is one of the most sacred festivals in Cathay, occurring once every 500 years in conjunction with certain celestial events. On that night, powerful forces move across Théah, and it was on such a night that an emissary from beyond the Firewall travelled to bless Tamara Breslau Fyodnava v'Riasanova, the second daughter born to the Knias of Gallenia. The emissary gave the Knias a gift for the child — a sword — which he instructed should be presented to her when she reached the proper age. He also delivered a haunting prophecy — that she shall die in darkness — which shaped every aspect of her life.

Tamara's mother refused to allow the girl to ever be in complete darkness, so Tamara has always had some source of light illuminating her world, even when she sleeps. Living at the edge of the Firewall, she has never known true night and has never experienced real darkness of any kind.

Other aspects of her young life progressed normally enough. She was educated and trained in the art of fencing for which she showed a remarkable ability. On her fourteenth birthday, her father presented the strange Cathayan sword to her. From the moment she touched it, she felt a strong bond with the weapon. She either wore it or carried it by her side at all times.

Her classic Ussuran beauty attracted many suitors, and her first love was the handsome son of a high ranking boyar. A strong and athletic young man, Yuri Radostnoi v'Petrov enjoyed riding, hunting and dueling with the beautiful Tamara, who was clearly infatuated with him. He also enjoyed a number of more intimate and clandestine activities with other young ladies of the court. It was on a particularly beautiful winter night that the meaning of the



Tamara Breslau Fyodnava v'Riasanova

emissary's prophecy became as clear as the light from the huge moon. Holding the trembling Tamara in his arms, Yuri suddenly began to tell her about his other conquests, shattering her innocent heart into a thousand pieces. Yuri was subsequently assigned to a diplomatic mission in the far reaches of Ussura and Tamara left to contemplate the implications of the gift she received at birth.

No one can lie to her.

It is impossible. A person can be focused intently on the lie in their mind only to find that they have either spoken the truth anyhow, or not spoken at all. It soon became clear that despite whatever personal torment this might cause the girl (and it caused a staggering amount), it was a blessing for a

ruler. Rather than pass his title on to his son (as is traditional) the Knias gave it to his second daughter, in hopes that her unique power would serve her people well.

Tamara's life is a lonely one. After several attempts at a romantic relationship, she finally gave up, growing tired of the constant confessions of infidelity. She has two goals in her life. The first is to find the Firebird, a wondrous magical creature whose spirit skin she carries. The bird has not been seen in some time, and she considers its absence a bad omen. Her second goal comes in the form of her unwavering devotion to the Gaius, the only man in her life who has never tried to lie to her. Gaius Ilya — young, bitter, cruel, and uncompromising — shares a special relationship with Tamara, who saved the young prince being held prisoner by those who would keep him from his rightful place as ruler. Tamara holds her promise to protect Ilya as sacred and she will honor it with her life, if necessary.

Adding to her burden is the fact that she has been a member of Sophia's Daughters since she was a child and currently serves as Ussura's Handmaiden. The Oracle has commanded her to protect the Gaius's wife, Ketheryna, for she has an important role to play in the Daughters' plans. As her feelings for Ilya grow, the command to protect Ketheryna becomes an exquisite torment. Tamara will not fail her sisters in the Order, but their loyalty to Ketheryna, who does not even belong to the society, galls her. Recently, she received instructions from the Oracle to induct the devout young woman into their society. Tamara must lead Ketheryna through the ritual initiation and indoctrination, a task that she dreads with all her being.

Tamara is in her mid-thirties, although she looks much younger. Intelligent and well-educated, she appears cold and stoic. Her appearance, however, belies the coldness, for she wears her strawberry blonde hair loose and dresses in flowing, lightweight clothing. She is never bothered by the infamous Ussuran weather and only consents to don furs during the coldest blizzards. She is never apart from the sword, which always draws blood when unsheathed.

Fidencia Suarez

The people in the lowlands of Avalon have a wanderlust that seems to involve taking to the high seas at the least provocation and sailing about looking for adventure. Oddly enough, this love of the sea does not seem limited to mortals. Sidhe feel the call of the water perhaps even more strongly than humans.

Fidencia Suarez is not a particularly well-born woman nor is she exceptionally beautiful. Her story is actually fairly unremarkable, except for one small thing – her proud Castillian heritage includes Sidhe blood. Born on the small island of Puerto de Cielo at the southern entrance to La Boca de Cielo, Fidencia is the daughter of Danielo Suarez, a Castillian fisherman, and Siobhan Martyn, a Dunkeen privateer who had taken to the high seas with her brothers in search of a better life. When they reached Castille, they were entranced with the warm breezes and the constant sun, not to mention the exotically attractive people. It wasn't long before Siobhan found herself madly in love with the handsome fisherman. Theirs was a simple life in which snow and cold played no part, which suited Siobhan just fine. Here in Castille she could also escape the legacy of her family – the stories of Sidhe blood that ran back generations. The Martyn children were not interested in faerie stories; they lived in a reality that did not involve Glamour magic, thank you very much.

But Fate has a way of claiming its own, and it soon became apparent that little Fidencia, a solemn child with large brown eyes, was not like the other children. She displayed a thirst for knowledge fairly early, to the extent that Siobhan gave up trying to pry her away from the local bookstore. Amador Sintera, the owner, enjoyed having the little girl's company and even taught her how to play the ancient Crescent game of Ajedrez, for which she showed a remarkable ability.

As she grew up, Fidencia took lessons at the *escuela* run by the kindly Sisters of Santa Micaela, a small order devoted to the education and welfare of children. As Fate would have it, the Mother Superior was affiliated with the Daughters. In Fidencia she found a perfect candidate for



Fidencia Suarez

Initiation. When it came time to find a *dueña* for young Maria-Soledad Rivera y Aldana, she easily placed her protegee in that important position. Fidencia worked so well there that the Oracle eventually named her Handmaiden for the entire nation of Castille.

Fidencia is probably the most secretive of the Sophia's Daughters. She lives in the very heart of the Inquisition, which is far more aware of the Daughters than they like to think. Thus Señorita Suarez has built the most security conscious organization in all of Thèah. Only two of her "sisters" know her true identity. One is Angelita Mendoza, another elderly woman who served as the nursemaid of Prince Javier when he was a little boy. The other is Rosario

Guzman, a widow who runs El Caballo Blanco Inn in San Cristobal. There the three old friends frequently get together to gossip, tell old stories, and plan the future of Castille. None of the other Daughters who serve "La Escondida," (the Hidden Lady), have any idea of her true identity. Almost all communication takes place through coded messages, passed from one messenger to another in a series of blind drops. When face-to-face communication is necessary, it either takes place in a darkened room with both sides wearing masks, or in the secrecy of the confessional.

Fidencia could best be described as unremarkable. She has dark brown hair that she wears parted in the middle and pulled back into a tight chignon close to her head. She has large brown eyes and regular features, and must wear spectacles when she reads (which she does constantly). Of average height, she prefers to wear simple clothes that do not call attention to her.

She has long known of her Sidhe blood, but regards it more as the mark Fate has placed upon her rather than a channel into magic. She has cultivated the demeanor of a stereotypical and slightly disapproving *dueña*. But when she is alone with those she trusts, she exhibits an intellectual energy that opens the door into her passionate soul. The only other time she steps out of her somber persona is when she goes sailing, a legacy from her parents that she continues to enjoy.

Valentina Villanova

More information on Valentina can be found on pages 80–81 and 119 of the *Vodacce sourcebook*.

"Scarovese died, in the end, from swallowing his own lies. So too will you die, my lord. So will you."

Vodacce is the playground of men, a world ruled by seven powerful merchant Princes. Anyone who is not male and rich is nothing but a pawn in their game of power. Or so they believe.

Valentina Vestini showed the signs of genius from an early age. Shortly after her birth in Numa in 1642, her mother noticed her precocious talent for painting, sculpture, and rudimentary mathematics. Afraid for the young girl's life, she took the child to a nunnery, hoping that the nuns could drive the evil from her soul. The Mother Superior of the Vaticine nunnery was dumbfounded by the child's almost instinctive grasp of theoretical mathematics, and at first suggested that the girl be trained as a courtesan.

Then Valentina's powerful Sorte abilities surfaced and destroyed all her hopes for a educated life. The nuns curbed her eagerness to learn, punishing her severely if she showed any interest in reading, mathematics, or recognizing written



Valentina Villanova

languages. Only one person encouraged Valentina: a local girl named Giulia. Though the two could not be friends (Giulia was a commoner), they secretly developed a strong kinship. When Valentina was taken away from the nunnery at 14, the girls wept fiercely, certain they would never meet again.

Her parents began presenting her to potential suitors, and she eventually caught the eye of a powerful lord... too powerful, some would say. Valentina was married to Giovanni Villanova and rapidly produced two sons for the black-hearted Prince. Her duty finished, Giovanni ignored her and has since had little use for her outside of her Sorte abilities. Aware of her husband's dangerous nature, Valentina only allowed him to see what he wished – a meek wife who is an eager servant, and whose abilities of Sorte are just enough to “do the job.” It would not do for him to know her capacities or her intelligence.

When Giovanni took his first permanent courtesan, Juliette, Valentina wept, screamed, and demanded that the woman be killed. She even attempted to hire assassins – all of whom were easily foiled by Villanova, who beat her for her arrogance. Still, he expected nothing less. What he did not know, however, was that the entire event was staged – for his benefit.

Valentina and Juliette are close childhood friends, separated at the age of 14. Since their lives brought them together again, they've been sharing old memories – and comparing notes. Both are disgusted with the treatment of women in Vodacce; both believe that women can be more than a match for men, and that Sorte only travels through the female lineage because only females are capable of controlling that much power. Although they are both somewhat elitist, they never let their machination or true opinions show around others.

The Daughters of Sophia have also given both women something they never had before: family. Juliette and Valentina have worked for the Daughters for many years now, and when the Handmaiden in Vodacce died of old age, the Oracle approached them both to be the Handmaiden's successor. Valentina accepted, after

discussing the matter with Juliette. Because Valentina is rarely required to attend social functions, she has more free time to see to the organization and safety of the Daughters in Vodacce. This arrangement has worked out well, and numerous women owe their lives and freedom to the pair of them.

To the world around her, Valentina is a quiet woman, dedicating her life to her two small boys. She is a slight, pretty figure with pitch-black hair and pale white skin. Valentina takes care never to draw undue attention to herself, and always dresses in the traditional garb of a Fate Witch. She knows how to hide herself among crowds, to keep her head lowered reverentially to the ground, and to speak Thèan, the language of the Vaticine. She has an astounding memory, and her natural ability at mathematics rivals even the greatest inventors in Dionna – but she keeps such things carefully hidden beneath her veil. Only Juliette knows the truth.

However, recent difficulties have thrown an unforeseen brick in the works. The Daughters of Sophia have been approached to smuggle a particularly powerful Fate Witch out of the country and into Montaigne. The request came to Valentina directly, because the defector is potentially more dangerous than any other that the Daughters have liberated.

The defector is Beatrice Caligari, and she wishes to see her sister, Morella, in Montaigne “once more, before the world ends.” The request chills Valentina to her very bones, and she has sent word to the Oracle.

Although she has not yet agreed to the request, Valentina has spoken with Morgause Mercuri of the *Santa Cecilia*, a member of the Daughters among one of the only crews able to successfully carry out such a mission. Until she hears back, Valentina is unwilling to move further on the matter – but her days grow short, and Beatrice's words may come true sooner than anyone could think possible.

Madame Lorraine Weller

More information on Lorraine can be found on pages 78–79 and 123 of the Vendel • Vesten sourcebook.

Although born to Avalon country gentry, Lorraine's life did not turn out the way she had planned. Brutally attacked and raped on her 15th birthday, she was reviled by her family and neighbors, and fled her hometown in disgrace. In Carleon, she and her girlfriends (who had also been attacked) were forced to take up the world's oldest profession. Lorraine was disgusted by prostitution, which she saw as the final act in the hideous tragedy her life. She had been attacked, reviled and rejected, and now she was seen as a mindless object. Every day, she repeated a vow to herself that someday she would be rich and powerful, able to control the actions of others without having to satisfy their desires or be a victim of their will.

A practical girl at heart, she applied herself, and quickly mastered not just the functional applications of prostitution, but also the trade and its potential for economic and political influence. In time, she became the head of Avalon's Jenny's Guild, the youngest ever at age 25. By that time, she was already a successful member of the Daughters. She had sniffed the society out by paying careful attention to one of the local madams, who belonged to the organization. The woman was so impressed by Lorraine's perception that she agreed to initiate the young girl without hesitation.

Lorraine has held her Guild seat less than five years, but in that brief time managed to use her driving personal quest for power to make it a viable political force. She is also in a unique position to pass needed information along to her fellow Handmaidens in other parts of Thèah, especially Eisen and Montaigne. In addition, Lorraine demonstrates a keen understanding of both Vendel and Avalon culture – especially their songs and their drinking. She has created a “curriculum” of sorts for the Guild which capitalizes on the talents of girls with bardic skills. Get a man drunk enough and you'd be amazed what kinds of secrets he will divulge. This suits the Daughters quite nicely, since it provides



Madame Lorraine Weller

information that can be sent buzzing along the scrying connections that make up the great Tapestry.

Madame Weller prides herself on the caliber of her girls and works hard to maintain a high level of cleanliness and grace to all of her establishments. The level of her accomplishments speaks to her acute business sense, but even her incredible financial success has not removed the memory of the assault and the devastating rejection that resulted. She has, however, lived among the Vendel long enough to know that personal revenge against the male gender would be neither practical nor, in the end, truly satisfying. So she has thrown herself headlong into her work for the Daughters.

A Jenny learns that while men are basically the same throughout the world, there are myriad ways to obtain information from them, and not always through sexual favors. Any Jenny who wishes may receive an education from the Guild, learning economics, politics, and languages in addition to the gentler arts. Unlike the majority of Théans, Lorraine Weller knows that one does not always choose this way of life. It is her personal goal to see that whenever a girl wishes to change her fortune, she receives the tools she needs, which includes the ability to read and write. Jennys who benefit from this education take care to hide their talents, for it wouldn't do to alarm their customers. But poke your head into a given chapterhouse, and you're as apt to find a library or reading chamber as a debauched bordel.

In addition to its phenomenal spying abilities, Lorraine has also made the Guild a vital hiding place for women seeking new lives. Hiding in plain sight makes a cunning tactic, and that painted, corseted beauty in the corner might actually be the abused wife of a cruel Vodacce nobleman, a runaway from a political marriage in Castille, or a young Montaigne servant once forced to serve the whims of men at a *salon des hommes*. Almost every chapterhouse has an underground section or a series of rooms behind a hidden door where these women and often their young children are brought to safety by the Daughters and their allies.

Lorraine is 34 years old now and although never considered classically beautiful, she is quite striking with long shining brown hair and large expressive brown eyes. She is a placid, perpetually calm woman who rarely smiles, preferring to surround herself in an air of personal mystery. Although she entertains regularly (she can afford to), she has few close friends. She has achieved her dream of financial and personal freedom, but that victory remains somewhat hollow. She has delegated many of the tasks involved in the day-to-day operations of the Guild over to her trusted partners. Her focus these days is almost exclusively on her responsibilities for the Order; as a Handmaiden, she can keep a tight rein on the power she has worked so hard to procure. And if the Daughters flourish, then so does she.



Maria Catarina Nicolletta di Caligari

"If he stays to make love a second time, you have won his body. If he stays to talk, you have won his mind, and that is worth far more than any jewel you could ever own."

— *Marsilia Priano*

The climb from commoner to Contessa is no easy task; secrets and hidden agendas cling to each rung of the ladder. Contessa Maria Catarina Nicolletta di Caligari was born simply Catarina Rustino, the daughter of an intermittently successful cloth merchant. Catarina was the third child of four and the only girl. Her parents planned to sell her to a courtesan school if she showed promise of any kind. Unfortunately for Catarina's parents, she preferred boys' pursuits, running after her brothers with her clothes ripped and her face smeared with mud. Her looks were deemed attractive enough, but somewhat unremarkable. She did, however, possess a quick wit and the ability to pick up any kind of learning with a remarkable facility.

Her wild ramblings eventually led her into the company of a street gang headed by her second brother. From him, she learned the fine art of picking pockets and deft use of a sharp knife. The gang selected its victims carefully and never stole things whose loss would be noticed immediately. It was on such an adventure that young Cat's life was changed dramatically.



Maria Catarina Nicolletta di Caligari

While the rest of the gang provided a suitable distraction, Cat quietly slipped a bracelet off the pale wrist of a finely dressed lady, then slipped into a holiday crowd. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for the woman — Dona Marsilia Priano — was both a powerful Fate Witch and a member of the Daughters. When she arrived at the urchins' lair (with a suitable escort of bodyguards), she was tolerantly amused by the youngsters' consternation and intrigued by the quick-witted Catarina. Rather than punish the children, Dona Marsilia offered to sponsor her at a notable courtesan school. Cat's parents were delighted to

rid themselves of their troublesome daughter and make a profit in the bargain.

Catarina was none too happy about the trade at first and set about making elaborate plans to escape. But even as she began to hoard food and note the exits, she was becoming enthralled with the new world before her. As much fun as dashing about the streets with the gang had been, wearing dresses and reading books was not as loathsome as she had imagined. She greedily absorbed what she was taught while learning lessons on diction and social graces.

While she never developed into a classic beauty, her cleverness and wit granted her handsome looks and a certain fascination that men found appealing. Here was a young woman who knew the tricks of her trade but who could also entertain in more than just the bedroom.

The Daughters, meanwhile, had made some large plans for her — plans which involved much more than a courtesan's lifestyle. They approached her one evening and made it clear what they had in mind. Under their tutelage, she slowly changed from Catarina Rustino into Maria Catarina Nicoletta, a noble member of the ancient Vestini family. So effective was the transformation that she almost came to believe in it herself. Vodacce nobility was completely fooled, and even Prince Vestini himself claimed to have known her as a child. The ultimate measure of success was her marriage to Count Cesare di Caligari, one of the grandsons of Vincenzo Caligari. She now awaits instructions from her superiors in the Order, their ultimate plan as yet unrevealed.

The "Countess" is a tall, statuesque woman with regal bearing and a disarming demeanor. Though technically a member of Vodacce's *Senzavista* (noblewomen without Sorte) her keen wit and ready laugh have overcome most of the prejudice against her position (it also doesn't hurt that Cesare is a superb duelist). Beneath the disguise, Catarina is sharper and less kind; her street urchin's instincts have yet to entirely leave her. The Daughters have trained her well, however, and her true nature never comes to the surface unless she wishes it. When the Order contacts her, she will act without hesitation. Until then, she enjoys her position and revels in the grand masquerade she is playing.

Madeline du Chatelaine

The Daughters of Sophia often bring refugees and escaped women from Vodacce through the merchant homes of the Montaigne. A few more faces aren't likely to be noticed amid the crush of Paix or the bustle of Charouse. Madeline du Chatelaine assisted with these smuggled journeys, as did her mother before her. For over fifty years, the modest Chatelaine estate has served a safe haven in a long journey from Vodacce to Avalon. Numerous Fate Witches and women of noble blood have spent nights in the hidden apartments above the main house. Hundreds of dreams of freedom have passed through these walls, and hundreds of grateful women have thanked the house of Chatelaine for their salvation.

It was inevitable that Madeline, the oldest daughter, would receive the house as her dowry when she wed the rather boorish Merron du Chatelaine. She had been born with the Sidhe caul, and trained by the Daughters to follow in her mother's footsteps. Her husband was a wealthy merchant, not of noble blood, and an imbecile to boot. Interested only in his tariffs and imports, he has left Madeline to her own devices, rarely visiting the chateau near Charouse.

Recently, Madeline has become very interested in the whispers of the Montaigne lower classes – whispers of revolt and of a new government. A dreamer to the last, Madeline attended their meetings, expecting to hear men arguing for the freedoms of men – another male-dominated society to replace the old.

She was terribly surprised. Given a chance to speak her mind, Madeline proved herself an equal and was readily accepted into their ranks. She expressed her views on women's equality; they applauded her courage and innovative thinking. By the end of the night, Madeline had found a new group of allies – and a new cause.

The freedom of Montaigne.

The philosophy meetings have continued, and Madeline occasionally holds them within the Chateau. As she tells her maid, "if I am willing to fight for women from Vodacce and Ussura, then I must be willing to fight for Montaigne."



Madeline du Chatelaine

Many of these meetings constitute outright sedition. If anyone caught them, Madeline and her revolutionary friends would quickly be thrown in jail – or executed for treason.

The meetings discuss new forms of government, a spread of education, and the rights of the common and merchant classes. Although the sessions have thus far been no more than philosophy and argument, Madeline grows weary of inaction. In order to create true freedom, humanity must overthrow the chains of stagnation and create something new out of the ashes of the old world. When the time is right, she will ensure that her society's bold words will be

matched with equally bold deeds – and she intends to use the Daughters to help her.

Madeline is not a pretty woman. She is too thin and too tall, to be considered beautiful, but her eyes shine with intelligence and her hands are swift and sure. She knows how to shoot a musket, as her father taught her, and she has a keen knowledge of ancient Numan philosophies, modern government and law, and mercantile procedure. Her entire body tenses in excitement when she talks about "freedom" or "equality," and she exudes an aura of passion about her whenever her favorite topics come up.

Reune Vengasdotter

"Evil knows evil, Arciniega. And I know you even better than you know yourself..."

For the last few years, three scientists have made extraordinary advancements in the area of alchemical physics. Alvara Arciniega, Joshua Daylen, and Don Petrigai have been studying the properties inherent in sorcerous blood. They detail its nature, composition, and qualities, recording their work in detailed journals hidden from the eyes of all but a trusted few. These men are considered innovators in their field, brilliant scholars and theorists guided by the stern hand of Alvara Arciniega.

However, Arciniega has a secret. He is not alone in his research of "Blood Science" (which he calls the "Fifth Mystery"). Hidden within his personal notes are a series of letters, written anonymously from an unknown comrade. These letters detail research attempts, innovations, alternate routes of recovering information, and other in-depth information about the burgeoning Blood Science.

Arciniega has been communicating with this peer for quite some time, sharing research and comparing notes about the nature of sorcerous blood. These notes, and the letters that have been sent to Arciniega, are among the most advanced scientific research in the world. Without it, Arciniega would still be years behind his current understanding of Blood Science.

Unknown to Arciniega, his benefactor, fellow scientist, and anonymous pen pal also belongs to the Daughters of Sophia. When the Daughters discovered that Arciniega was beginning to research alchemy, they knew that they had to act in order to steer his work away from the material that the Daughters had already discovered. What would happen if Arciniega found how to create and control the White Plague? The immortal Balm of the Westmoreland? Even some of the lesser potions and alchemical mixtures used by the Daughters of Sophia could be devastating in the hands of a man such as he.

Arciniega does not know the true identity of the individual with whom he is corresponding, but he knows that he or

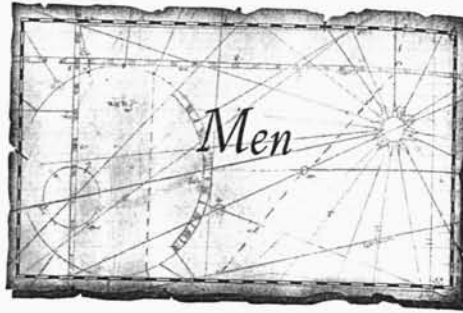


Reune Vengasdotter

she possesses an astounding knowledge of alchemy. His work on Blood Science, however, seems to be a new discovery to his benefactor, and their shared discoveries are powerful indeed. One day, Arciniega swears he will discover the identity of his "patron," and usurp their knowledge for his own. Until then, the patron remains hidden from even his sharp eyes.

Her real name is Reune Vengasdotter, a native Vesten. She is over four hundred years old, kept young by the Balm of the Westmoreland. One of the greatest scientific minds in the Sophia's Daughters, Reune has accumulated hundreds of years of research into alchemy, herbalism, and numerous other sciences. She is the foremost mentor of alchemy in the Daughters, and is responsible for many of their potions and powerful elixirs. One of her greatest creations is known as the Glasswater, a potion capable of altering a person's appearance. If the change is minimal, such as eye color or hair length, the potion's effects can last for weeks. However, it can also be used to create entire new identities, and with proper acting and makeup skills, these disguises are nearly flawless.

Reune has used Glasswater to change her identity nearly a dozen times over the course of her life. Her latest incarnation is known as Gruenhild, a simple gardener and groundskeeper to Alvara Arciniega. She appears as an old Eisen woman with rheumy eyes and a single dedication to her master. She feigns ignorance of his "devilish science" and goes about her work unmolested, even while carefully observing every move he makes. From this vantage, she watches his work, arranges to study his laboratory in depth, and keeps a cautious eye on his theories and progressions. It is dangerous work, but Reune is skillful and capable. Arciniega has fallen for it completely. He has many enemies throughout Théah, and Reune marvels at his ability to ferret them out, but has yet to notice the spy beneath his very nose. Four hundred years of intellect and caution have kept her alive this long; it will take more than a single mad scientist to discover her ruse, no matter how dangerous that scientist may be.



Esteban Valentin de la Cruz

The Sons of Lugh know how difficult it can be to be born Sidhe, yet possess human emotions. Among the Sidhe, love is a cold, dispassionate thing, a mockery of emotion. Sidhe lovers are no more than actors in a performance, pretending to feel the joy, pain, and pleasure that humans know first-hand. Few ever know what it means to be human, and those who do must suppress such emotions or risk being cast out of Bryn Bresail. The Sons have learned from an early age that they must hide all signs of their human blood, lest they suffer a similar fate.

But occasionally, the emotions find an outlet, and a release.

So it was for Valentius, son of Ellaevia. He was born a Baron of the Sidhe, distantly related to the Lady of the Lake and in many ways a normal Sidhe. Unfortunately, he had difficulty hiding his human emotions. A strong-willed and passionate boy, Valentius had to constantly fight against his own soul in order to maintain the detached attitude of the Sidhe. It was agony for him to ignore the feelings within his heart, and he nearly took his own life out of madness as he tried to "fit in" among the Sidhe.

When at last his sorrow overwhelmed him, he went to the Lady of the Lake and begged her to help him. He claimed he would die if he suppressed his emotions for a moment longer and threatened suicide if she did not help. The Lady

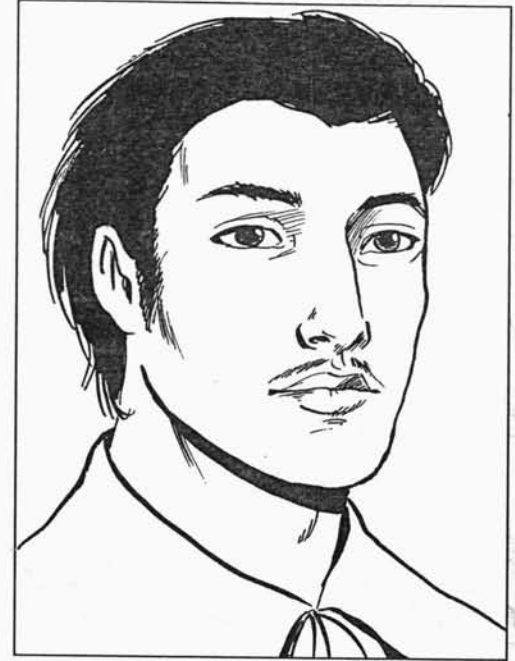
of the Lake agreed to help him. She explained the mortal world to him, and the ways human beings kept check on their passions. Beneath her care, and at last able to understand his emotions, Valentius thrived. As he grew in strength and wisdom, the Lady took him to Avalon as her page. He was her favorite, a young boy eager to learn about this new land and its treasures.

After several years in the mortal realms, the Lady of the Lake sent him to Castille to observe the growing war there - and Valentius's life changed forever. He saw the strength of a people fighting with the Montaigne, and he learned about how Porté was tearing through the Barrier that held back the Synchron. Valentius watched as the Castillians fought against an obviously superior force, and he saw the strength and courage in their eyes as they talked about freedom, loyalty, and country.

The barrier around his heart broke when he saw Good King Sandoval seated on his throne in San Cristobal. Unsure and frightened, the King's crown seemed too large for such a young man, and the burdens of his nation weighed impossibly heavy on his shoulders. Yet despite it all, Sandoval had a look of determination and hope that seemed to shine from within. Inspired and committed to lending his aid, Valentius notified the Lady of the Lake that he would not be returning. He then altered his form and slipped seamlessly into the young King's entourage.

It wasn't long before joined the Castillian guard. Using his abilities with the sword and the gifts of his half-Sidhe nature, the newly-named Esteban Valentin de la Cruz rose rapidly in the ranks and soon became a well-known soldier. He held the line when Montaigne came to destroy the peasants and nobles of doomed Barcino, and his valor became a rallying cry for the others in his command. When asked by his superior officer what post he would most like, Esteban replied, "I want the chance to give my life in defense of King Sandoval. No other duty in Castille will truly satisfy me."

He was immediately transferred to Sandoval's personal guard, and now numbers among the King's fiercest protectors. Although he has no political leverage, he has



Esteban Valentin de la Cruz

already foiled an assassination attempt on Sandoval and stands ready to do so again should it become necessary. He is one of the few people that Sandoval trusts, and while the King rarely confides in a "simple" guard, Esteban serves some of his regiment's most important duties. More often than not, it is he standing vigilant outside the King's bedroom while Sandoval sleeps.

Valentius has not lost contact with the Sons of Lugh, although he's currently out of favor for what many see as an "abandonment." He refutes their accusations, claiming that he is helping to return hope to an embattled nation. The Lady of the Lake has allowed him to maintain his human guise, and the Daughters of Sophia have occasionally made

use of such a highly placed ear in the Castillian courts. But through it all, Valentius remains loyal to the King. His heart, which was once bound as if in chains of iron, now has purpose and drive – and he is, for the first time, at peace.

Valentius appears as a young Castillian with fierce eyes and a thin mustache. He keeps his uniform immaculately pressed, and trains constantly in his leisure time. He has not been around humans long enough to worry about his ageless looks, but it may come back to haunt him if he intends to maintain his position for more than a few years.

Bishop Ferenc Orlund von Durenstadt

Durenstadt is a minor duchy located on the far shore of Lake Goranth, in Eisen, where the mountains rise in the north and the vast forest looms to the south. Durenstadt weathered the worst of the War of the Cross with comparatively good fortune. Neither the populace nor the local nobility was infected with any degree of religious fervor and few army units bothered their territory. Sitting atop a modest-but-reliable collection of dracheneisen weapons didn't hurt either.

In 1627 Duchess Vivia Karla Magdalene von Durenstadt and Duke Orlo von Durenstadt were blessed with their fourth son and seventh child, Ferenc Orlund von Durenstadt. The Duchess, a stern, rigid general's daughter who took no delight in her pregnancies, refused to acknowledge the pain or discomfort of childbirth with more than several perfunctory exhalations. As soon as possible, she rose from her bed and returned to what she truly loved – politics and dueling. The Duke – little more than a well-dressed forest bandit with a flowery title – rarely stayed at home for any length of time, and sent her a rather gaudy and vulgar necklace as a token of the occasion.

Their marriage caused something of a scandal in its day. The union of the ambitious, social-climbing soldier's girl and a well-dressed country warlord was widely regarded as an astounding mismatch, but – perhaps to spite everyone – the odd couple seemed to thrive in their own peculiar way.



Bishop Ferenc Orlund von Durenstadt

With three older male siblings, the succession was assured, so the scholastically inclined Ferenc was free to indulge his interests in exploration. He spent many happy days journeying through the caves of the nearby mountains and recording what he found. The Duchess – who had won her 25th duel when she was six months pregnant – was deeply dismayed by her son's lack of physical skills. Ferenc didn't even seem interested in swordplay, leaving the warrior's life to his elder brothers. She insisted that if he did not wish to become a soldier, he must become a priest instead. Nothing else would do for one of his lineage. Although he would have been far happier collecting and cataloguing minerals from the caves, Ferenc dutifully submitted to the Duchess's wishes.

He was schooled at the best university the nation had to offer, and applied himself as best he could. His Eisen heritage granted him a methodical patience, which served him well in his studies. His ordination and progress up the ladder of success was smooth and unspectacular until he achieved the rank of Bishop. He had only served in his new capacity for a few months when he became involved with Cardinal Lindenauer, a formidable academic and Eisen's official representative on the Vaticine council.

In the position of the Cardinal's personal secretary, Ferenc aided Lindenauer in his work. He soon learned that the Vaticine did not know as much about the world as they pretended, and that some things remained a mystery to even the most devout eyes. In particular, he was fascinated by the Avalon Sidhe, and also the ancient Synrth races. How did they fit in to Theus's grand scheme? Were they agents of Legion, as many Vaticine believed? Or were they something else, something which Theus has yet to fully reveal? Through his studies with the Cardinal, he resolved to find the answer.

Unfortunately for him, Lindenauer was quite old, and it wasn't long before Theus called him home. His replacement, Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim, had no use for Ferenc's skills, and he was relegated to a quiet library near Insel. He maintained his strong political connections, however, and today has become a quiet but important wheel in the Church's social structure. In addition, he has continued his research into Théah's inhuman races, and has made some surprising revelations that he has yet to share with his reactionary colleagues...

Bishop Ferenc is by nature a bit distant and can appear unemotional, although he would describe himself as dispassionate. He maintains a strict sense of justice and personal integrity, which is not always a given among his colleagues. He is a nobleman first, a politician second, and a devout cleric third. Still, he is respectful of his calling and always maintains the proper devotion to Theus. Such a man would be a valuable ally for the Daughters of Sophia.

Viscounti Tigran Lorenzo

According to official accounts, the last fragments of the Lorenzo line died out in 1175, thanks to the Vestini family's insatiable greed for power. Claiming to be the true rulers of Vodacce, the Lorenzos suffered first at the hands of the Delaga family and then the Vestini. There are currently less than a hundred descendants of the Lorenzo/Serrano/Bianco line, and most of them can be found in positions of subservience to Vodacce's greater houses. They do their duty, suffering in silence, and they wait. Revenge will come in due time; when it does, those who brought the ancient line down will pay for their insolence.

As infamous as the Serrano family was, the Bianco family reveled in their epithet: Walkers of Darkness. No simpering incense-laden Vaticine ceremonies for them; in their hidden chapels, they practiced dark arts and worshiped infernal powers without apology or repentance. The family's reign of terror reached into the heart of Vodacce until the Vestini declared a holy crusade and burned the family's ancestral home to the ground. As far as the Church was concerned, that put an end to the wretched demon-worshippers once and for all.

Would that it were so.

In the winter of 1622, a series of violent storms tore across the nation, especially in the northeast. Death walked the land, armed with bitterly cold temperatures and shrouds of snow that buried entire villages. As midnight struck on the last dark moon of the year, a son was born in the city of Agitazion to Milo Mondavi, first cousin to Prince Mondavi. The young mother barely had time to enjoy her son's dark-haired beauty. She was the first woman Tigran Lorenzo killed, but she would not be the last.

Named for the notorious Prince Viscounti and proudly taking the Lorenzo name, Tigran (as he preferred to be called), showed his heritage at an early age. He took to Vodacce's Great Game with a burning devotion and soon horrified even the other Lorenzos with his sadism. By three, he had become adept at torturing small animals; at five, he turned his attention to his playmates, children of local peasants and fisherman on whom he tested little



Visconti Tigran Lorenzo

interrogation techniques. He was a brilliant scholar with an avid mind for calculations and contingencies, and became a master of both Squares and the Crescent game of Ajedrez. His swordsmanship, too, was quite impressive.

As he got older, it became clear that he had been gifted with a palpable charisma and personal beauty. His skin was tawny and smooth, his eyes dark and smoldering, and his black hair always tousled in a way that women felt compelled to touch. His list of female conquests numbered in the dozens, even before he officially came of age. Many of his lovers spoke of insatiable appetites, of debauchery that would make the hardest courtesan blush with shame. Even if his father had found the boy's sexual escapades

deplorable, there was little he could do. Women threw themselves at Tigran like moths into a burning candle. If they came away from the encounter a little worse for wear — a small cut here or a bruise there — it was worth the hours spent in the handsome young man's burning embrace.

Tigran was almost 20 when his father died. The man had been hunting and became separated from his group. When they found him, something had savaged the body beyond recognition — something with sharp teeth and long claws. Tigran cared deeply about his father, and was inconsolable at the loss. He promptly locked himself up in the family mausoleum for three days without food or drink. Strange howls and cries were heard emanating from the room during that time, but no one dared enter. On the morning of the third day, Tigran emerged, hollow-eyed and gaunt but calm. The family conducted the funeral with the appropriate pomp, and things returned more or less to normal.

Thanks to his intelligence and deadly charm, the young heir gained a diplomatic position that enabled him to travel and study torture in a variety of places. He has journeyed throughout the Vodacce courts, attending the various Princes and ostensibly serving the Mondavi family's interests. He is a keen player of the Great Game, and has already gained tremendous personal power. And of course, his sexual conquests have continued — as savage and scandalous as ever. His features remain as young and pristine as ever, despite his age of nearly forty-seven. Some claim that he bathes in the blood of virgins to remain young.

Visconti Tigran Lorenzo is just a shade under six feet, with black hair worn slightly longer in the back, and dark almost black eyes with a slight slant, giving him an exotic look. He fanatically maintains a regimen of exercise and proper food, and grows violent when his routine is disturbed. His demeanor appears calm and dignified, but a closer examination reveals an undercurrent of cruelty in his eyes. He can be incredibly charming when he wants to be, but has an unnerving tendency to look at his fellow humans like laboratory creatures designed to do his bidding.

Sir Lawrence Lugh

More information on Sir Lawrence can be found on page 33 of the Game Masters' Guide and pages 68–69 and 112 of the Avalon sourcebook.

Lawrence spent countless eons among the Sidhe of Bryn Bresail, moving among the Queen's court with grace and ease. He often looked down his nose at the silly humans, scoffing at the emotions which drove them to such ridiculous lengths. How could they have built such a civilization when they were always falling in love, or getting angry about some little trifle? It was quite absurd.

Unbeknownst to him, he himself bore traces of human blood. His lineage could be traced back to the Holly King, and though he did not know it, that gave him the capacity to feel human emotions. He never questioned the occasional twinges he felt in his gut or the pangs of strange longing that occasionally overtook him. After, he was a Sidhe. What could he possibly have in common with humanity?

Then came the witch — the one who seduced him, who gave him the hand of iron, and who ensured his banishment from Bryn Bresail. Stripped of his powers and restricted to human form, Lawrence suddenly found himself overwhelmed by the emotions he had tried so hard to deny. For years after his exile he wandered alone, wrestling with his new thoughts and feelings. He came close to madness during that time, seized by raging emotions that would not abate for days.

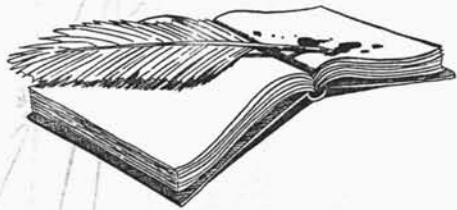
Finally, deep in the Avalon wilderness, he received a visit from the Lady of the Lake. She calmed his troubled mind and explain his heritage to him. Though he could no longer return to Bryn Bresail, he could still find meaning in life. In Carleon, a woman named Queen Elaine was coming to power. She needed men of valor and courage to defend her interests: men who adhered to a strict code of honor. If Lawrence would help protect Queen Elaine from her enemies, the Queen would provide him with the fulcrum to handle his emotions. Seeing the wisdom in her words and desperate for a way to calm his roiling passions, he agreed to seek out the new Queen.

Since then, he has become one of Elaine's most trusted servants, and stands at the head of her knightly order. All who meet him say that he personifies chivalry, and he is content to maintain that impression. He uses the Knights' code as a means of guiding his feelings, a system to help him define right from wrong. Without the Knights' code, he fears he will slip back into near-madness. As it is, he has become the embodiment of a proper Avalon Knight.

Lawrence devotes his life to Queen Elaine, protecting her from all enemies. He serves both as her champion and the champion of the Lady of the Lake: her mortal representative on Théah. In that capacity, he works closely with both the Daughters of Sophia and the Sons of Lugh, helping them



Sir Lawrence Lugh



further their goals. The latter find him reticent and withdrawn, deeply reminded of his loss by their presence. Elaine and her new regime have helped combat the approach of the Fourth Prophet, and he has also helped open the way for numerous women who seek safe haven and new identities in Avalon. Elaine assists him in these tasks, partly because she agrees with the goals of Sophia's Daughters, partly because she very much needs support of the Sidhe – and the Lady of the Lake.

Lawrence is a staggeringly handsome man, tall and imposing. He speaks with kindness and honesty, and works diligently to uphold his Knightly vows. But a deep sadness hides in the corners of his face, and he sometimes betrays looks of terrible pain. He is never seen out of uniform – the colors of Elaine's knights don his form at all times. He wears a dueling glove over his iron hand and never removes it, even in private. Lawrence has a terrible fear of aging and refuses to grow a beard in the traditional Avalon style. He secretly hopes that he will fall in battle before he becomes wrinkled and decrepit, a desire which drives him to the extreme acts of heroism which have made him famous.

Louis-Claude du Sinjin

More information on Louis-Claude can be found on pages 54–55 of the Knights of the Rose and Cross sourcebook.

The man known as Louis-Claude du Sinjin (among at least seven other names) is a member of the Rose and Cross, a devoted follower of chivalric code, and, unfortunately, a

member of the blood of the Lady of the Lake – a fact which the Daughters of Sophia found out too late, and much to their sorrow.

Louis-Claude claims to be over three hundred years old. While he doesn't believe that he's truly immortal, his aging has slowed to a crawl. Louis-Claude isn't sure what caused his limited immortality, but it has something to do with a lovely young woman he met at the age of seventeen. He met the girl in a tavern, got both of them drunk and took her back to his room. She had a flask of some concoction with her that she proposed they toast from. Louis-Claude took a drink, and – much to the girl's obvious surprise – didn't immediately keel over and die. The suddenly-sober girl hastily excused herself and fled; he hasn't seen her since.

That girl, ordered by the Handmaiden of Avalon over 300 years ago, mistakenly made one of the most important discoveries in the history of the Sophia's Daughters. The potion known as the Balm of the Westmoreland grants extended life to women, instant death to men. The Daughters sometimes use it to eliminate certain political rivals that cannot be disposed of any other way. However, when Louis-Claude (then known as Liam St. Claire of Luthon) took the draught, he mysteriously remained alive. His would-be assassin – the Avalon Handmaiden – panicked and ran.

Three hundred years later, Louis-Claude still looks like a young man and remains convinced that his accidental benefactress is also alive. He is correct. The Handmaiden who allowed the snafu to occur retired her post and kept her alive using the same Balm potion that granted Louis-Claude his extended longevity. Her goal in life is to follow him, and one day, finish the job she started. There are only two difficulties with this plan, however. The first concerns Louis-Claude's recent induction into the Rose and Cross (the year 1599 is "recent" to individuals as long-lived as these two). The Daughters lost track of him when he joined the Knights. It took them twenty years to find him again, and by then, he was well-entrenched within the Order. He's still serving the Rose and Cross and shows no intentions of leaving. If he were to vanish mysteriously or die, it would



Louis-Claude du Sinjin

certainly be investigated, and the Daughters don't need the Rose and Cross as an adversary.

The second complication is even more tangled. The vanishing act he pulled when he joined the Knights is nothing new. Louis-Claude periodically changes his appearance, dress, and even accent, abandoning his old life and resurfacing under different pseudonyms. He has naturally acquired just enough Scrying ability to help him hide from the Daughters – although he knows nothing of his abilities, they still protect him from anything but direct physical observation.

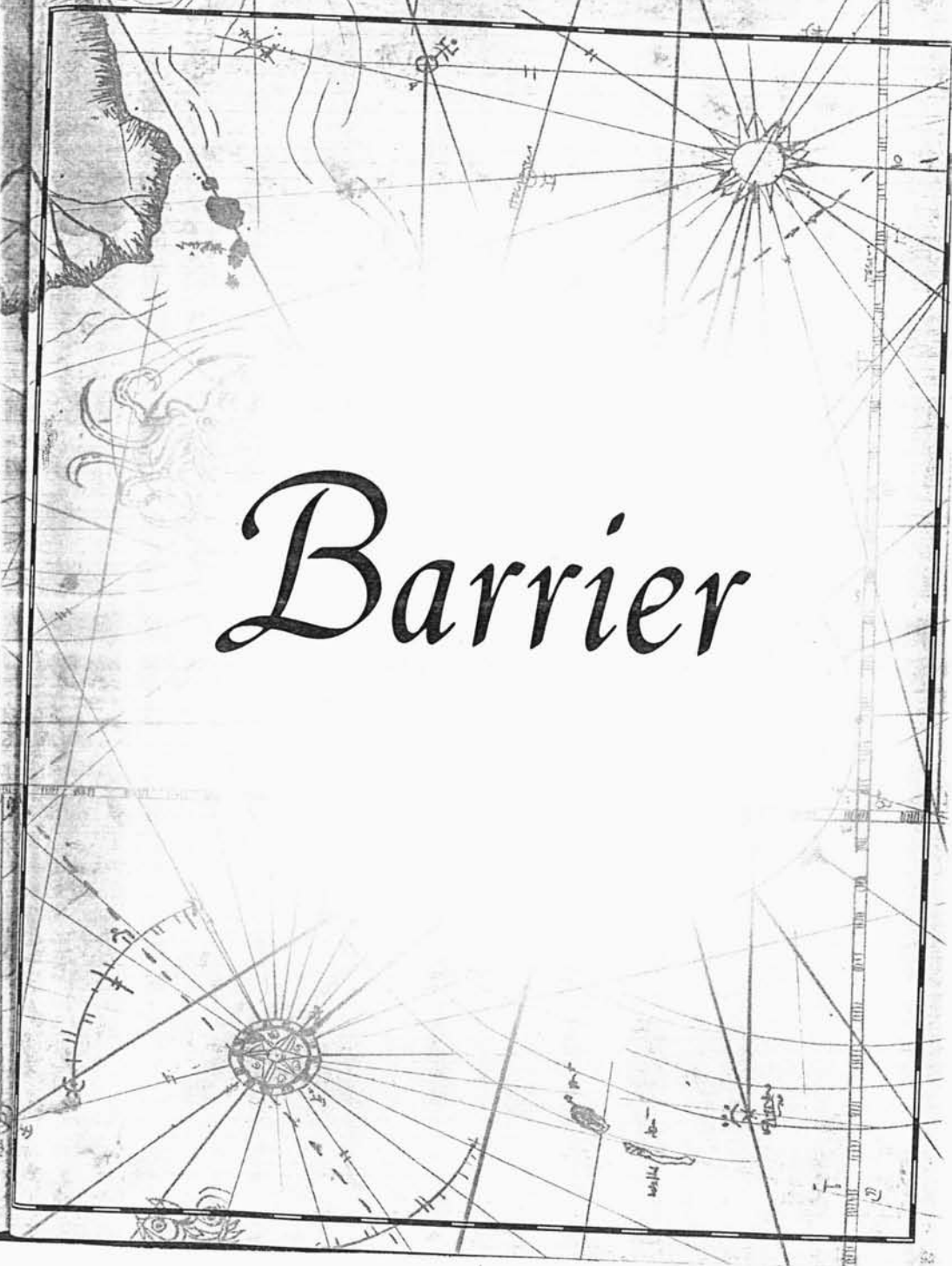
The woman who attempted his murder so long ago still follows Louis-Claude, reporting his actions and keeping a precise journal of his movements. However, over the years she has studied his movements and prepared to bring about his death, she has also inadvertently fallen in love with Louis-Claude. He's a dashing man with limitless charm and a dandy's sense of taste. Something about his flashing clothes and swashbuckling ways has touched a chord in her heart. She has missed several opportunities to kill him, claiming that they were each imperfect in some means.

However, the Oracle has begun pressuring her for a result: after three hundred years, it is about time to cut this niggling thread. To finish her mission, she has concocted an elaborate plan. She has set about seducing Louis-Claude. Calling herself Seara, she has sent him series of romantic letters. Through them, they have arranged several discreet rendezvous, each one growing more passionate than the last. After nearly three years of drifting from her side to various other ladies, Louis has always returned – and this last time, he carried with him a wedding proposal.

Their marriage is slated for spring, in a quiet part of Inismore. His death, Seara tells her superiors, will occur immediately thereafter. She plans to be married on the high cliffs over the sea. After the priest announces the vows, Seara plans to take her lover, leap over the sheer cliff walls and end both of their lives.

The Daughters have an elaborate record of Louis-Claude's life, detailed in extreme precision. Over the centuries, he has served as counselor, court magician, alchemist and spy. He has also traveled extensively, including the forbidden Crescent Empire and the mysterious lands of Cathay. He has fought in countless wars, spent twenty years as a monk in Eisen, rode with the wild Kosars of Ussura, and even claims to have seen a new continent far in the western seas.

Frankly, the Daughters don't care what he's seen. He is considered dangerous, and anyone to whom he reveals the cause of his immortality may be targeted for assassination.



This chapter details the new rules presented for the Sophia's Daughters. It includes new Advantages, Backgrounds and equipment, a new form of Sorcery, and a new Swordsman school. It also includes rules for potions, and ideas for using Scrying's water-magic in order to create your own potions. As with all new rules, your GM is the final arbiter, and has the right to allow or disallow anything you find in this sourcebook.

Joining the Daughters

Belonging to the Daughters is a 5-point Advantage, which may be purchased at the beginning of Hero Creation (see page 136 of the *Players' Guide*). If a Player wishes to join later in the campaign, she should consult her GM. The GM should decide the particulars of such a meeting (perhaps expanding it into an entire adventure) and the conditions for joining. The Daughters try to keep tabs on the Lady of the Lake's bloodline, but often allow those without the proper ancestry to join as well.

Everyone belonging to the Sophia's Daughters gains the following benefits:

- Daughters have the ability to make contact with the Oracle through a Scrying bowl, mirror, or other source. Even Daughters without the Scrying skill may do this. They may ask the Oracle one question about the future; the answers tend to be annoyingly vague, but can provide the Daughter with much-needed knowledge to prepare her for potential danger. The GM has the final say on what the Oracle reveals, this ability cannot be used more than once per Story.

- Each Daughter has knowledge of three secure locations throughout Théah: Jenny houses, a noblewoman's summer cottage, even a barn with a hidden storm-cellar. If needed, the Daughter and her companions can remain there – secure and undetected – for up to seven days before

moving on. It is understood that such locations are temporary havens, and cannot be permanently used by any one member. (If the Daughter wishes to have access to a more permanent safe house, she may purchase one using the rules on pages 90-91.)

- Knowledge of a single portal to Bryn Bresail. All Daughters know of at least one locale leading to the land of the Sidhe: a woodland spring, an enchanted mirror, or the like. They don't necessarily have the ability to use it (it requires Scrying sorcery), but they know how to reach it.

- Contact with one other member of the Daughters (considered a 1-point Connection Advantage), who can provide advice and assistance when necessary. Keep in mind that such figures have their own missions to perform, and do not live at the Hero's beck and call. A Daughter who makes extensive use of her contact may be called upon to perform a large favor in return someday. Players may spend extra Hero points to make the Connection closer if they wish. For an additional 2 Hero Points, the contact may be one of the Handmaidens detailed in Chapter 2 (presumably whichever Handmaiden controls the Hero's native country).

- All Daughters have a practical knowledge of the Book of Mysteries and the rituals which it contains.

- Daughters may purchase an additional Panache point for 2 HP less than the current cost. Daughters may begin the game with a maximum Panache of 4 instead of the usual 3.

Who Belongs to the Daughters?

The Daughters of Sophia have a somewhat complicated membership scheme. It is dominated by women, yet men can join. Most members are descended from the Lady of the Lake, but not all. Many practice Scrying, but others have different forms sorceries as well. It can be daunting separating the rules from the exceptions. For clarity's sake, membership in the Daughters can be divided into the following categories:

Descendants of the Lady of the Lake

Most of the Daughters of Sophia have the blood of the Lady running in their veins. They can trace their lineage all the way back to the original Sophia, and through her, to the Sidhe of Bryn Bresail. Because the Daughters have spread throughout the world, the bloodline can be found in any nation. Over seventy-five percent of the Lady's descendants are female; males born to the line are rare, though they are welcome to join the Order as well. (In Bryn Bresail, the reverse is true: most of the descendants of Lugh are males, with only a handful of females being born.)

Daughters descended from the Lady can be further divided into three subcategories:

- *Scryers*: Those born with the Lady's caul, marking the ability to Scry (either full-blooded or half-blooded).

- *Sorcerers*: Those born without the ability to Scry but who show abilities in other forms of Sorcery.

- *Non-magical Daughters*: Those born without sorcery of any sort. They serve the Daughters in other capacities, although some are never inducted into the Order at all.

Outsiders

Outsiders are Daughters who are not born within the Lady's bloodline. They lack the ability to Scry and the vast majority have no Sidhe blood within them at all. They join because they believe in the Daughters' cause, out of gratitude for being rescued, because they have a close friend in the Order, or any of a hundred other reasons. Most do not join until they reach adulthood, although the Daughters recruit among young girls with strong sorcererous blood.



Males

There are few males in the Order, but they do exist, and their services are highly valued. The Daughters try to limit male membership to those born in the Lady's bloodline, although occasionally a husband, lover, or other outsider may express a desire to join (and possess the skills, sorcery, or political connections to make inducting him worthwhile). Such men are regarded as equals within the Daughters, although they cannot become Handmaidens.

Note: Male members of the Daughters are often referred to as "Sons of Lugh", even though they may have no affiliation with that organization. (Few men like being referred to as a "Daughter.")

Special Training

It is possible to reach a Rank 6 in a Knack under certain circumstances. First, the Hero must have a Rank 5 in the Knack to begin with. Next, she must find a fellow Daughter to train under for anywhere from one month to a year (at the GM's discretion). Finally, the Hero must spend 25 XP to complete the process. Keep in mind that the Hero is unable to teach a rank 6 Knack to others; it simply means that she has it herself. Normally, only NPCs and Heroes retired by their players have a Rank this high, since the ability to grant others Rank 6 in a Knack can be game-breaking in the hands of a player.

Three members of the Daughters of Sophia have attained Rank 6 in a Knack, and can teach what they know to others:

Seduction: Madame Lorraine Weller, Kirk

Natural Philosophy: Reune Vengasdotter, whereabouts unknown

History: Fidencia Suarez, Rancho Aldana

New Swordsman School

Necare School

Country of Origin: Vodacce, but it is only available to members of Sophia's Daughters. The Daughters may study it for 25 HP regardless of nationality. Students of the Cappuntina School may purchase this School for 20 HP.

Description: The Necare style is an assassin's school, specializing in small, concealed knives wielded in tight quarters. Because these weapons are so light, they do little damage in ordinary combat. In order to enhance the lethality of their attacks, these students often utilize poisons. The typical method of assassination is to embrace the victim, stab him with the dagger while he is defenseless, shove him to the ground, and flee while the poison spreads through his system.

The first priority of an assassin trained in the Necare style is to appear nonthreatening. Most of its students are attractive, charming people. They often become good friends of their victims, associating with them for months in order to gain their confidence. Some even become romantically involved with their victims in order to avoid suspicion and maximize their chances of catching him in an unguarded moment.

Necare assassins are assigned missions from the Daughters, detailing their target and certain specific parameters — usually instructions regarding the target's activities ("Do not allow Anthony Russell to enter the city of Freiburg," and the like). They frequently allow their victims to live until just a day or two before the prohibited situation would come to pass, hoping that fate will steer him or her elsewhere. When Necare students strike, they do so with utter ruthlessness.

Basic Curriculum: Knife, Spy

Swordsman Knacks: Conceal, Corps-a-Corps, Exploit Weakness (Necare), Poison

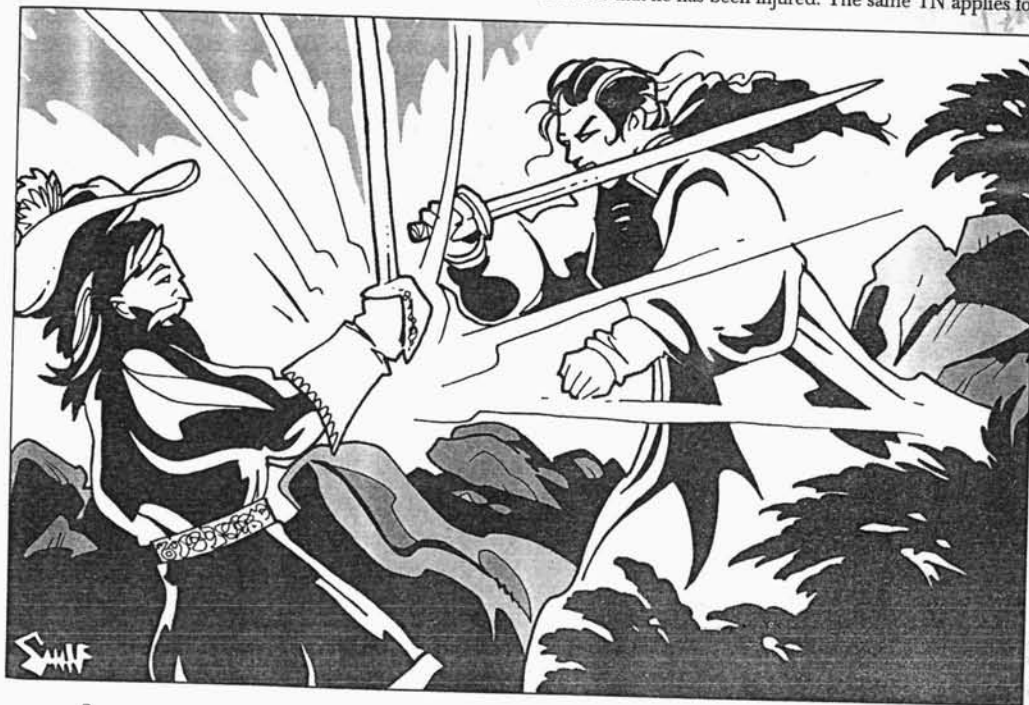
Apprentice: Apprentices of the Necare style learn to get close enough to their targets to ensure that their strikes will be effective. You get a Free Raise per Mastery Level when attempting to conceal a small weapon (such as a bodice dagger, see page 91) on your person. You may add your Mastery Level to your Damage Roll when using a bodice dagger. Also, you have used one specific type of poison often enough to build up a tolerance to it. Pick one kind of poison and gain the Poison Immunity Advantage for it.

The Necare style is not recognized by the Swordsman's Guild, so its students do not gain Membership in that guild for free. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Journeyman: As Necare assassins become more proficient, they learn to use a broader class of poisons and

can wield their knives much more efficiently. You gain a Free Raise when using the Poison Knack. You also gain a Free Raise when attacking with a bodice dagger and may add your Rank in Corps-a-Corps to your Damage Roll with that weapon. Furthermore, you gain a free Rank of the Conceal Knack. This may increase your Rank in this Knack to 6. If it does not, you may later improve your Rank in the Conceal Knack from 5 to 6 by spending 25 XP.

Master: Masters of the Necare style have perfected a maneuver that they refer to as "the light touch." When using this, you make a Finesse + Attack (Knife) roll with 3 Raises to its TN. If you succeed, then you have successfully poisoned the victim and inflicted exactly 1 Flesh Wound to him. The victim must make a Perception Check with a TN of 5 plus 5 times your Rank in the Conceal Knack in order to notice that he has been injured. The same TN applies for



anyone searching the victim's body for injuries later. Also, your body has developed a strong resistance to poisons. You are considered to have the Poison Immunity Advantage for all kinds of poisons.

New Swordsman Knacks

Conceal: A woman with a dagger in her bodice has a means of defense, even though she may appear helpless. If you wish to get a pistol into a well-guarded ballroom, or a lockpick into a jail cell, you need this Knack. To use this Knack you must make a Simple Roll with it; the total generated becomes the TN for anyone nearby to see through the concealment. Anyone searching you receives a Free Raise, and anyone thoroughly searching you receives two Free Raises. This is the same as the Conceal Knack in the *Players' Guide*, but is considered a Basic Knack for students of the Necare School.



Poison: When diplomacy fails and a military victory is impossible, an ounce of arsenic will sometimes suffice. This Knack lets you know what poison to use and how much to administer, as well as how to handle it safely. Your GM will have rules for using this Knack in the *GM's Guide*. This is the same as the Poison Knack in the *Players' Guide*, but it is considered a Basic Knack for students of the Necare School.

New Skills

Alchemy

You have knowledge of arcane chemical theories intended to transform one base object into another. Most alchemical notions have been replaced by more modern concepts of chemistry and natural philosophy, but the Daughters still make use of them from time to time.

Note that this skill differs from the "Alchemist" Advantage detailed in the *Invisible College* sourcebook. That Advantage refers to a fundamental shift in perception. The Alchemy Skill is merely a collection of theories, most of which have been supplanted.

Basic Knacks

Research: What is unknown can prove to be the most valuable part of any endeavor, and you know how to ferret out vital information. You have studied the ways that knowledge is gained - where to look and who to ask.

Advanced Knacks

Natural Philosophy: Natural philosophy is the study of both chemistry and physics. You have an understanding of the (mostly) immutable laws that govern the physical world such as gravity and inertia, and you may be able to make things such as weak acid or steel if you can remember the formulas.

Occult: With the occult, there is precious little hard knowledge to be learned. You have acquired some of it and know how to use it, be it a trivial fact about a certain brand of sorcery or the solution to an ancient puzzle.

Poison: When diplomacy fails and a military victory is impossible, an ounce of arsenic will sometimes suffice. This Knack lets you know what poison to use and how much to administer, as well as how to handle it safely. Your GM will have rules for using this Knack in the *GM's Guide*.

Herbalist

You have a strong knowledge of various kinds of flora: where they grow, what they thrive upon, and which ones have beneficial (or harmful) effects. Many herbalists also specialize in healing, acting as "practical physicians" in areas where formal doctors cannot be found.

Basic Knacks

Cooking: No servant is as beloved as a fine chef. Employers will bend over backwards to avoid losing such a person, while others will try to steal one away if he is truly skilled. In short, a skilled cook is guaranteed a steady income.

Diagnosis: Feeling for broken bones and listening for punctured lungs is a doctor's most elementary Knack. Without making a diagnosis, how can you possibly hope to treat your patients? The TN for using Diagnosis is $5 + 5$ times the number of Dramatic Wounds the patient has suffered. Success with this Knack will reduce the TN for Surgery. Diagnosis requires one Action to use, and can only be used once per patient, per Act.

First Aid: Even without formal training, you can administer simple treatment if the ailment allows for it. The TN for First Aid is the number of Flesh Wounds the patient has suffered. Success eliminates all current Flesh Wounds. First Aid requires one Action to use and may not be used more than once per patient, per Scene. Heroes with First Aid may use it on themselves, with the same restrictions, but they will need to make one Raise because of the difficulty of bandaging themselves.

Flora: You can identify different types of plants and determine whether they have any potentially beneficial (or harmful) effect.

Advanced Knacks

Compounds: You know how to treat plant matter, and mix different kinds of flora to produce beneficial mixtures: healing balms, poultices, sleep aids, and the like. Note that such mixtures are not the magical potions detailed in the Scrying Sorcery section, but non-magical compounds that any hermit or midwife can feasibly prepare.

Poison: When diplomacy fails and a military victory is impossible, an ounce of arsenic will sometimes suffice. This Knack lets you know what poison to use and how much to administer, as well as how to handle it safely. Your GM will have rules for using this Knack in the *GM's Guide*.

Quack: Specializing in "invisible" cures (such as sugar pills and colored water) that do more for the patient's ego than his body, you know how to make people feel like they're getting better. If they get some benefit from this, wonderful. If not, you will likely have moved on already.

New Backgrounds

Trance (Scrying Sorcerers Only)

You sometimes fall into epileptic fits that grant you strange visions from the Sidhe. During this state, the spirits actually enter your mind, attempting to convey some vital bit of information to you. When this occurs, you completely lose touch with your surroundings, and are aware only of the presence of the Sidhe making contact. The effects of this can be positive or negative, depending on the nature of the spirit that contacts you.

The risk here is that some spirits, perhaps Unseelie or even those faithful to Legion, may do this with malicious intent,



and end up terrorizing a person repeatedly until the Oracle can intervene. The Hero must be prepared to see visions of things that are not always pleasant; some have gone insane from their brush with the future. This Background must be cleared with the GM, and the player must realize that there is a risk, however small, that he or she may lose the Hero to such a seizure.

Past Possession (Daughters Only)

Characters with this background have been or may be (temporarily) possessed by a Sidhe spirit and received a message or a mission from it. This mission might have been as specific as "tell Handmaiden Weller to contact The Chosen," or as general as "work to bring gender equality to Théah." If the Oracle cannot reach a Daughter or Son through normal mortal channels or Scrying, she will use a Sidhe spirit. The player must confer with the GM before taking this Background, and the details should be worked out in advance. However, no other Heroes should know about this Background. When the Character is under Possession, they will appear catatonic and cannot respond to stimuli of any kind. It is not advisable to move them during Possession unless they are in immediate danger.

New Advantages

Appearance (Varies)

Physically, you are more appealing to others. This can take the form of something blatant (like a perfectly sculpted face), or something more subtle (like a pair of radiant eyes). Regardless of the cause, however, the game modifiers are the same:

Above Average: 5 Points

(+1 unkept die (+1k0) for all social rolls)

Stunning: 10 Points

(+2 unkept dice (+2k0) for all social rolls)

Intimidating: 15 Points

(+3 unkept dice (+3k0) for all social rolls)

Blessed Beauty: 20 Points

(+4 unkept dice (+4k0) for all social rolls)

It is recommended that you consult with your Game Master before taking the Intimidating or Blessed Beauty versions of this Advantage. You may not take the Unnerving Countenance Advantage.

The Balm (Varies, Minimum 5; Female Daughters Only)

You have imbibed from the Balm of the Westmoreland and now enjoy the benefits of its success. For every 5 points invested, the Hero has lived fifty years longer than her appearance suggests. She does not suffer from the negative effects of Aging rules (see page 167 of the *Game Masters' Guide*) and is immune to disease, including the White Plague. She also gains the Scholar Skill for free, as well as one free point in the Language Advantage.

For every additional 4 points invested, she gains 2 additional free points in the Language Advantage, plus 2 free Ranks in the History Knack (maximum 5). If her History Knack is already 5, she may add two points to another Knack in any Civil Skill of her choice.

The effects of the potion last for twenty-five to seventy-five years past the beginning of the campaign. The Daughters only administer the Balm in exceptional cases, so the player should have a very good reason why her Hero has been alive for so long. Keep in mind that the Balm does not render its user invulnerable: the Hero still takes damage as normal and if she suffers enough Wounds, she'll die just like everyone else. Immunity from aging is not immortality.

More on this Advantage can be found in the "Forever Young" essay in Chapter Four.

Poison Immunity (1 Point)

Either through natural immunity or gradual exposure, you have no fear of a specific type of poison; it is no more harmful to you than children's milk. *Select a single type of poison. You may ignore all effects of that poison when you are exposed to it. You may purchase this Advantage as many times as you like.*

Sidhe Blood (Varies [minimum 1], Avalon or Daughters Only)

These rules originally appeared in the Avalon sourcebook, and have been reprinted here for your convenience.

Through some ancient (or perhaps not-so-ancient) tryst, you have the blood of the Sidhe running through your veins. normally, only Avalons possess such blood, but the Daughters of Sophia have spread far enough throughout the world that traces crop up in members from other countries as well.

Heroes with Sidhe blood have both benefits and hindrances. The cost of this Advantage varies, depending on which traits you inherited from your Sidhe side. The Blessings cost Hero Points, while the Curses give you points back. The minimum cost for this Advantage is 1; you cannot have more points in Curses than Blessings.

One need not purchase this Advantage in order to have Sidhe blood. It simply means that your blood is strong enough to convey some tangible benefit or drawback. Daughters with Sidhe blood who do not possess this Advantage have no abilities imparted through their inhuman heritage.

Blessings

These are benefits you have received from your Sidhe heritage. Each Blessing may be taken only once.

Existing Advantage (Varies)

One, and only one, of the following Advantages may be taken as part of your Sidhe Blood Advantage package for the listed costs: Appearance: Above Average (4 Points) or

Stunning (8 Points), Dangerous Beauty (2 Points), Keen Senses (1 Point), Large (4 Points), or Small (1 Point).

Child of the Earth (2 Points)

You have an affinity for Avalon's bountiful earth. You can feel the heart of the mountains slowly beating beneath you. You can sense impending earthquakes like an animal, and when you take Falling Damage the surface you land on is always considered to be one category softer than usual.

Child of the Sea (2 Points)

You have an affinity for the sea. You can smell the sharp tang of the salt air no matter how far inland you travel. You can sense impending storms, and when using the Drowning rules your Resolve is considered 3 higher than normal.

Child of the Sky (3 Points)

You have an affinity for the sky and a faint tie to the Queen of the Sidhe. You are always lulled to sleep by the gentle sound of rain, even in the worst of droughts. You can sense another world out of the corners of your eyes, and you may use a Glamour Knack once per Act without paying a Drama Die.

Good Standing (2 Points)

The Sidhe side of your family is in good standing with the Queen's court. You receive one extra Reputation die when dealing with the Seelie Court. In addition, those with Good Standing may purchase the Sidhe Weapon Advantage at a 1 HP discount (see the *Avalon* sourcebook, page 94).

Slow Aging and Immunity to Disease (2 Points)

Because of your Sidhe heritage, you age more slowly than you should (divide your age in half, rounding down, for Aging rule purposes) and you are immune to all disease (including the White Plague).

Smell Glamour (3 Points)

Because of your Sidhe heritage, you can "smell" Glamour. Pick a distinctive smell, like ripe oranges, wintergreen, or brimstone. This smell fills your nostrils when a Sidhe or Glamour Mage is using his powers within thirty feet of you.

Some Heroes with Sidhe blood hear Glamour and a very few can even taste it.

Curses

These are drawbacks you received from your Sidhe heritage. Each Curse may be taken only once.

Cold-Hearted (2 Points)

Your Sidhe heritage has left you with a hard heart. You may never experience True Love (except through magical means), and any romances you get involved in are doomed to fail once you grow bored with your lover. In game terms, any romances your Hero gets involved in must be ended by the beginning of the next Story. Each ended romance lowers your Reputation by 3 Points. Worst of all, you begin the game with a 2-Point Lost Love Background for which you never receive bonus Experience Points.

Diurnal (2 Points)

You grow weak when shielded from the light of the sun. Unless you are in direct sunlight, all your rolls suffer a penalty of two unkept dice. You cannot take the Nocturnal Curse.

Gifts (2 Points)

The giving of gifts is a powerful ritual in the lands of the Sidhe. Your heritage has made it a curse. Whenever you accept a gift, you must return the favor as quickly as possible. For every day that you do not, you lose one unkept die to all your rolls. This effect is cumulative.

Iron Susceptibility (1 Point)

You are susceptible to cold iron, but to a much smaller degree than some of your cousins. Touching cold iron with your flesh causes mild discomfort, but no actual penalties. If you are struck with a weapon made from cold iron, your opponent rolls one additional unkept die on Damage Rolls. MacEachern weapons roll and Keep one additional die on Damage Rolls against you.

Iron Vulnerability (2 Points)

Your Sidhe heritage has left you vulnerable to cold iron. Whenever the dreaded metal comes into contact with your flesh, you suffer extreme pain and lose one unkept die from all your Actions until the end of the Scene. If you are struck with a weapon made from cold iron, your opponent rolls and Keeps one additional die on Damage Rolls. MacEachern weapons affect you as if you were a full-blooded Sidhe.

Nocturnal (1 Point)

You have trouble functioning in direct sunlight, and are at a penalty of one unkept die when doing so. You cannot take the Diurnal Curse.

Running Water (1 Point)

You cannot cross running water without a bridge. You can't explain why. You wish you could; maybe that would help you get over it. This Curse is not recommended for Heroes belonging to the Daughters.

Sea Bound (2 Points)

You are left feeling weak whenever you can't feel the salt spray of the sea on your skin. When you are more than ten miles from any body of salt water, all your rolls are at a penalty of two unkept dice.

Songbird (1 Point; Daughters Only)

You have a trained Sweetwren who can ferry messages back and forth for you. As long as the bird has been to the location you wish to send it (*been* there, not simply seen it in a Scrying pool), it will travel there unerringly and return to any preestablished point. The Sweetwren cannot travel to Bryn Bresail or other realms beyond Théah, nor can it carry anything heavier than a simple parchment. Flight time varies according to distance, but it usually takes some time for the bird to reach its destination and return.

Unnerving Countenance (Varies)

Physically, you are less appealing to others, and they feel uncomfortable around you. While this can be awkward in many situations, there are times where being ugly can help. Many people simply assume that your soul matches your form in its hideousness, so you can cow them more easily. Your lack of beauty could take the form of something blatant (hunchback, excessive scarring, warts, missing teeth, etc.) or it could be something more subtle (eyes that seem as though they never blink). Regardless of the cause, the game effects are the same:

Below Average: 2 Points

You have a penalty of -1 unkept die (-1k0) for all social rolls except those where being unpleasant to look at can be an advantage (Haggling, for instance). Those social rolls get a +1k1 bonus. This bonus applies to Intimidation attempts as well.



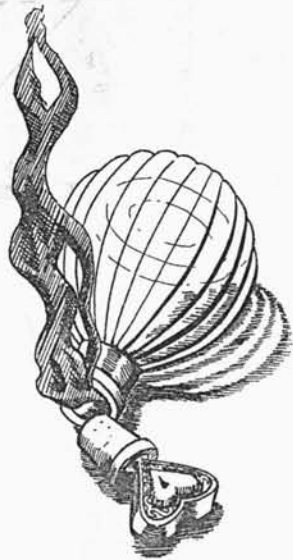
Ugly: 4 Points

You have a penalty of -2 unkept dice (-2k0) for all social rolls, except for those where being unpleasant to look at can be advantageous. Those social rolls get a +2k2 bonus. This bonus also applies to Intimidation attempts.

Hideous: 6 Points

You have a penalty of -3 unkept dice (-3k0) for all social rolls, except for those where being unpleasant to behold can be beneficial. Those social rolls get a +3k3 bonus, which also applies to Intimidation attempts. Furthermore, you may spend one action per turn displaying your ugliness to add +1 to your Fear Rating for the remainder of the turn. If you do not have a Fear Rating, you temporarily gain a Fear Rating of 1.

You cannot take the Appearance Advantage if you have this Advantage. It is recommended that you consult with your Game Master before purchasing the Hideous version of this Advantage.



Creating a Daughters Safe House

The Sophia's Daughters rarely congregate in any numbers, but they maintain a number of hideaways and safe houses which members may use. Everyone who joins the society learns the location of several of these safe houses (see page 80) and can use them as resources during their travels. Some of them are nothing more than abandoned barns or remote cabins, while others are bustling Jenny houses in the middle of huge cities. But they all serve the Daughters and they all have special qualities designed to protect their members from outside harm.

Heroes who wish to create a Daughters Safe House for their own use may do so by investing up to 10 Hero Points (total) during character creation. GMs may also use these rules to create Safe Houses for use in their campaigns; they may ignore the Hero Point requirements, of course. The players (or GM) should decide where the safe house is located (if any) and how the Daughter is connected to it (i.e., is she the owner, does she visit it regularly, or does she simply stop by from time to time?). Hero Points may be distributed as follows.

Size (Varies)

The size of the safe house determines how effective it can be and what sort of manpower it can muster.

0 Points: Abandoned

The safe house has no one caring for it and may be suffering from neglect. Such safe houses cannot have the "Healer" ability.

2 Points: Small

1 resident Daughter
3 allies (maids, messengers, etc.)

4 Points: Large

2 resident Daughters
10 allies

Front (1 Point)

The safe house has an established front as a Jenny house, tavern, or other place of business. Because of the bustling activity, comings and goings are harder to notice. In terms of the Chase Rules (see pages 169-172 of the *GMs' Guide*), it gives members an additional Phase advantage over any pursuers. For an additional point, the safe house draws in an income of 700 guilders per year, for use as the resident Daughter sees fit.

Healer (3 Points)

The safe house has a skilled Healer in residence, who can treat any Daughter or ally who enters. The Healer is considered to have a Wits of 3 and Diagnosis and First Aid Knacks of 2 (along with clean bandages and other equipment) unless otherwise stipulated by the GM.

Hidden Rooms (2 Points)

The safe house has a small series of secret rooms to hide fugitives on the run. Only Daughters with knowledge of the safe house know where the rooms are or how to access them. All others must make an active search (taking at least thirty minutes) and a simple Wits check at TN 25 to find them. Actually accessing the rooms without the proper trigger requires a Finesse + Lockpicking Check at TN 20.

High Vantage Point (1 Point)

The safe house has a bell tower, is perched atop a high hill, or has some other means of viewing the surrounding territory. All Stealth rolls made to approach the buildings have a +10 to their TN. If it fails, members within always have time to prepare for any interlopers: fleeing, arming themselves, even preparing a hasty ambush if they wish. A guard must be posted in order for this ability to work.

Library (1 Point)

The safe house has an extensive library of forbidden books: secret histories, forgotten diaries, things the authorities don't wish to know. A Daughter who spends at least one month there a year (cumulative) gains an extra XP (usable only on Civil Knacks) at the end of each Story. Only one XP may

be earned in this manner per story, no matter how many libraries the Daughter visits.

Link to Bryn Bresail (3 Points)

The safe house has a magic mirror, pool of water, or other construction that allows passage to the faerie land of Bryn Bresail. Members may use this gateway to discreetly enter the Sidhe's land, though they must have the proper Scrying ability in order to do so. Examples of these links can be found on pages 121-123.

Secret Entrance (3 Points)

The safe house has an entrance below ground, behind a storefront, or otherwise unseen. Members may enter the building unseen or escape if the cell is compromised. In terms of the Chase Rules (see pages 169-172 of the *GMs' Guide*), it gives members an additional 4 Phase advantage over any pursuers.

Secure Building (5 Points)

The safe house has stone walls, stout locks and easily defensible positions. All Climbing and Lockpicking rolls are made at +10 to their TN.

New Equipment

Bodice Dagger

While many daggers can be hidden in bodices, most of them are ordinary daggers sheathed somewhere between the body and the outermost layer of clothes. A bodice dagger is a special piece of equipment designed especially for concealment in a woman's clothing. A bodice dagger is a small knife often kept within a woman's bodice or some other article of her clothing. The blade is never more than three inches long, and the handle is not large enough to allow more than the thumb and two fingers to grip it. They

are socially acceptable because they are viewed as the last line of defense for a woman's honor. Bodice daggers only do 1k1 damage, but anyone attempting to conceal one gets two Free Raises to the attempt.

Scrying Bowl

Used to foretell the future, a scrying bowl is any type of a shallow bowl into which pure water can be poured. Bowls tend to be made of glazed ceramic, stoneware, semi-precious stones like malachite or agate crystal, alabaster, marble, brass, or silver. The Daughters use undecorated Scrying bowls so as not to distract the Scryer from the task at hand. They are usually between 1-1/2 and 3 inches deep, and anywhere from 6 inches in diameter to as much as two feet across. The Scrying Bowl used by the Oracle, for example, is made of translucent alabaster and stands on a gold tripod.

Ceremonial Crystal Dagger

There are very few of these mystical blades in Théah, but each Handmaiden has one as part of her most personal possessions, and others exist as well. Wrapped in silk and protected in a slender hardwood box, the ceremonial dagger boasts a wavy blade made of some unknown crystalline material, supposedly mined from the land of Bryn Bresail. When the Oracle chooses a new Handmaiden, she sends the Dagger to the woman within days of her notification. It simply appears one day in its box without explanation; no one ever delivers it and it has been known to appear in the middle of locked rooms. Crystal daggers are used only for the Initiation ceremony and in fact will not work under any other circumstances. It will also not work if the candidate cannot properly perform the required rituals.



Karolan's Drum

The legend of Karolan's Drum is actually tied to the ancient Avalon legend of the Stone Knight. Renowned for his bravery in battle, the Stone Knight held a narrow pass by himself until his fellow knights could arrive, at which point he dropped dead of exhaustion. He carried with him a drum, which supposedly captured his voice before he died. Since that time, numerous different "drums" have been produced, each one claiming to be the original Drum of Karolan. The "voice" of the drums may in fact be that of the Stone Knight himself, calling to rouse Avalon's defenders, or simply the result of his residual Glamour. Regardless of their authenticity, anyone using these drums will gain a free Raise to any roll involving the Incitation Knack.

New Sorcery

Scrying (Sophia's Daughters Only)

Knacks (Female): False Potion, Potions (e.g. Healing Balm, Philter of Invisibility, Philter of Strength, etc.), Scry

Knacks (Male): Agility, Perception, Speed, Stamina, Strength

Apprentice Degree (Female): Clairvoyant

Apprentice Degree (Male): Endurance

Adept Degree (Female): Medium

Adept Degree (Male): Recovery

Master Degree (Female): Oracle

Master Degree (Male): Inner Strength

The bloodline shared by the descendants of the Lady of the Lake bears its own unique kind of Sorcery, called Scrying. It derives its power from the mystical waters of Bryn Bresail

– the rivers, lakes, and streams which the Lady of the Lake claims as her own. Scrying sorcerers have the ability to use water as a form of clairvoyance, to blend its mystical properties into potions and elixirs, or to connect with its essence in order to increase the sorcerer's overall health and physical prowess. All of it finds a common link in the mystical waters of Bryn Bresail – waters that flow through the veins of the Lady's descendants.

Usually the females have the gift of potions and clairvoyance, and the males have the gift of being a superb physical specimen. Occasionally, however, a few Scrying Sorcerers (perhaps one in a hundred thousand) exhibit the form usually associated with the opposite gender. A child of a Scrying Sorcerer who is also born with the gift may have either form; each is merely one side of the same sorcerous coin. It is not possible for a Double-Blooded Sorcerer to take Scrying in any form, however.

Both versions share certain aspects, based on the Sidhe blood that is the source of their powers. All Scrying mages have the ability to breathe water. They also have an innate ability to sense whether a person is good or evil, regardless of his current reputation. In spite of the fact that their magic comes from their Sidhe ancestry, purchasing Scrying does not automatically give you Hero the Sidhe Blood Advantage; Scrying sorcery manifests in different ways than the abilities mentioned in that Advantage. Scrying Heroes may still purchase Sidhe Blood as normal, however.

Female Scrying

Apprentice Degree: Clairvoyant

You are able to brew special potions, which will temporarily have a given effect on the person who imbibes it. When you brew a potion, you may produce a number of doses of it equal to your Mastery Level. You also have the ability to



scry, to look into a pool of water and see visions of other times and places.

As an Apprentice, your ability to scry is limited to the present, and you may only use it to see and hear the events going on in or around a place, person, or thing with which you are familiar. You may try to scry about something of which you have only heard descriptions, but this will count as two Raises to your TN. Scrying on something that you have only seen before when scrying on something else will Raise your TN once. There is no maximum range to your ability to scry. For example, if you know someone and they are in the Crescent Empire while you are in Avalon, you may scry on them without penalty.

In addition, Apprentices have the innate ability to sense whether someone is good or evil, and can breathe water as if it were air. You know instinctively (no roll is required) whether someone you meet is a Hero, Villain, or Scoundrel regardless of his current Reputation. You never suffer from the rules concerning drowning when you are immersed in water, although they do apply if you are immersed in any other liquid substance, or a solution which is less than three-quarters water. Finally, you are unusually attractive. You gain the Appearance (Above Average) Advantage for free, or you may discount the cost of Appearance (Stunning), Appearance (Intimidating) or Appearance (Blessed Beauty) by 5 HP.

Adept Degree: Medium

As your abilities increase, so does the strength of your potions and your ability to scry. You may now, within limits, scry into the past or the future. You may not see anything that happened before you were born, and you may not peer into the future by more than a year. Each week or fraction thereof that you attempt to scry into the future increases the TN of your scrying attempt by +1. Every 2 years or fraction thereof that you attempt to scry into the past will increase your TN by +1.

Another ability gained at this Mastery Level is the power to travel to and from Bryn Bresail through special pools that are found in hidden locations throughout Théah. In order to do this, the character immerses herself in the pool and

calls upon this power. Such a transportation is disorienting and will give effects similar to (although less intense than) the Portal Sickness suffered by those using *Porté*. In order to use one of these pools in this manner, make a Wits + Scrying roll with a TN of 20. Each person besides yourself that you try to bring will Raise your TN twice. Each person who comes along must roll a single die (which does not explode) and subtracts their Resolve. The result is the number of rounds that he suffers from disorientation. While disoriented, all rolls a person makes have their TNs raised twice.

Master Degree: Precognitive

When you become a Master, your scrying abilities are at their zenith, and your potions are more potent than those of any mere Adept. Also, your ability to scry into the past is no longer constrained to your own lifetime. You may now scry without limits into the past or the future. You are no longer subjected to the increases of TN due to scrying into the past or future than an Adept is. Instead, your scrying attempts are modified by +1 per 5 years or fraction thereof that you scry into the past or future.



Sorcery Knacks

Scry

Using any pool of fresh water, you may see and hear what is going on in another place. In order to perform this feat, you expend a Drama Die and roll (Mastery Level + 1) + Scry against a TN of 20, with any modifications for familiarity and trying to see into the past or future as determined by your Mastery Level. For example, if an Adept with Rank 4 in her Scry Knack is attempting to scry on someone she knows well, she rolls 7k3. This Knack takes several minutes to use and its TN is increased by 10 if there is anything happening that could distract the Sorcerer, such as combat. Anyone within line of sight of the pool may see what is going on in the scene being scryed upon, and all within earshot can hear its noises.

As your Masterly Level increases, you may scry into the past or future. When scrying into the past, images are distorted by a yellow haze, the color of old parchment. This obscures some of the details of the events, but usually not to any great degree. When peering into the future, all the images are blurry and all sounds register as whispers. This effect gets worse as one tries to see deeper into the future.

When a Sorcerer uses the Scry Knack to try to see something, the GM may expend a Drama Die to replace the vision with something else. This is an excellent way for a GM to give a clue or to establish a plot point in his Story. Visions given by the GM in this fashion are not restricted by the boundaries of space and time that apply to the Sorcerer's Mastery Level. Scrying Sorcerers call such events "Currents of Destiny" and regard them as a blessing. This can also be used as a means of preventing characters from obtaining a bit of information too soon in a story, but such an application ought not to be abused.

False Potion

Sometimes, it is useful to give someone something that seems to be a potion, but really is not. When you wish to make something that looks, tastes, smells, and feels just like another potion, you add your Rank in that potion's Knack and your Rank in this Knack, and divide by two, rounding

down, and use this result instead of your Rank in the potion's Knack. For instance, if you are going to make a False Potion of Healing and your Ranks in its Knack and this Knack are 1 and 3 respectively, you would make a Wits + 2 roll to try to do so.

A False Potion is indistinguishable from a normal one in every way, except that it does not grant any of the effects of the potion. False Potions do count against a person's limit of how many potions they may be affected by at once, however. A False Potion requires the same ingredients and is subject to the usual modifications to its TNs as a normal potion.

Potions

While each kind of potion that you can make has its own Knack, they do have some common features, which will be addressed here. When brewing a potion, you must make a roll of your Wits + your Rank in that potion's Knack against the TN for that potion. If a potion has ingredients other than water, you may attempt to make the potion without an ingredient, but each ingredient you leave out of the potion Raises the TN of your roll twice. Ingredients are destroyed by the process of brewing a potion. A person may be affected by multiple potions at once, but not by more than their Rank in the Brawn Trait (minimum 1), nor by more than one of any one kind of potion (philters, oils, etc.). If someone who is already at their limit is affected by another potion, the first one that is currently affecting them is canceled and the new potion's effects begin. Unless otherwise noted in its description, a potion's effects last for one Act. It takes half an hour to brew a potion.

Some mention should be made of potions that modify Ranks in Traits and Knacks. These may never increase a Rank above 7, nor may they decrease one below 0. For example, if a Hero has a 5 Brawn and he quaffs a potion that increases his Brawn by 3 Ranks, he only increases to a 7, not to an 8. You may only alter a Rank by up to your Mastery Level. For each degree of alteration of a Rank after the first, you must Raise the TN. For instance, if you are a

Master and want to increase someone's Brawn by 3, you must make 2 Raises to your TN.

Potions come in a variety of forms, which dictate the means of their application. *Elixirs* and *philters* are meant to be ingested. *Fumes* and *vapors* are made to be inhaled. *Balms*, *dusts*, *oils*, and *powders* take effect by contact. Each of the potion Knacks specifies which type it is. Changing a potion from its normal means of application to another (oil to philter, for instance) counts as a Raise to the TN of the roll to create the potion.

Potion Knacks

This is a compilation of some of the more commonly brewed potions. It is by no means a comprehensive list of all of the potions that have been brewed by Scrying Sorcerers in the history of their bloodline. If you wish to make a new kind of potion, describe its effects to your GM. If he approves the new potion (perhaps with a modification to its effects) he will assign it one or more ingredients and a TN.

In addition to their listed ingredients, all potions require a bottleful of fresh water, obtained by the Scryer from a natural source (stream, lake, natural spring, etc.) At the GM's discretion, water obtained from sources in Avalon can lower the TN by up to 5, depending on the source.

Antidote Philter

Base TN: 20

Ingredients: One spider

Drinking this potion will completely nullify the effects of any one poison currently in the imbiber's system.

Cooling Balm

Base TN: 15

Ingredients: A fresh leaf from an oak tree

When this balm is rubbed onto someone's body, it renders them immune to damage from hot weather, keeping them cool even in the heat of a desert. For purposes of taking damage from the Weather Chart, the Hero takes damage as normal from cold weather and rough weather, but he treats

damage on the hotter side of the chart as if it had the Damage Rating of the square in the central column of the chart in the same row as the current square. This does not change the time period in the square. Thus, if the Hero would normally be taking 4k2/1 hour, he would instead take 1k1/1 hour.

Dust of Irritation

Base TN: 15

Ingredients: A pinch of pepper

When this dust is sprinkled or blown onto someone, he is set upon by strong itching and sneezing fits. This distraction causes all of his TNs to be Raised once.

Dust of Petrification

Base TN: 40

Ingredients: One stone from a riverbed

Anyone sprinkled with this dust takes on a stone-like appearance; his hide toughens and becomes as hard as a rock. The user rolls three extra dice (+3k0) for all Wound Checks, but all of his Action Dice are considered 2 Phases higher than they actually are, up to a maximum of 10.

Fumes of Slumber

Base TN: 20

Ingredients: A pinch of sand

Anyone inhaling the Fumes of Slumber must make a Contested Roll of his Resolve against the brewer's Wits + Fumes of Slumber. If the brewer wins the contest, the victim falls into a deep sleep and cannot be roused from it until the duration of the potion expires.

Elixir of Eagle's Flight

Base TN: 30

Ingredients: Two feathers from an eagle

Anyone who drinks this elixir will be able to fly. This does not improve one's speed. It merely removes the movement restrictions based upon changing levels of elevation.

Elixir of Good Fortune

Base TN: 30

Ingredients: The foot of one rabbit

Once someone has drunk this potion, he becomes extremely lucky. Give him a number of Luck Dice equal to the Mastery Level of the brewer of this potion. Luck Dice may be used like Drama Dice to modify the results of a roll. Unlike Drama Dice, they cannot be used for anything else, nor do they become Experience Points at the end of the Story. The Luck Dice disappear at the end of the potion's duration.

Elixir of Tongues

Base TN: 25

Ingredients: None

The imbiber of this potion can understand and speak in any human language until its effect wears off. He does not gain the ability to read in any languages in which he is not already literate.

Elixir of Velme

Base TN: 15

Ingredients: One feather from a songbird

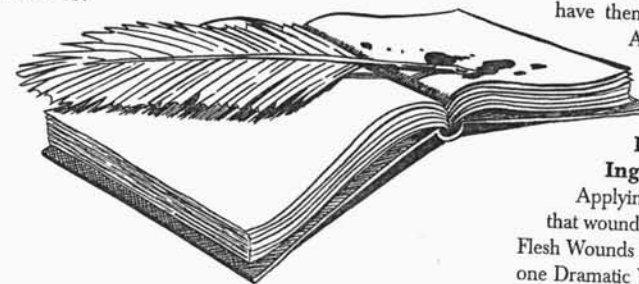
Anyone who drinks this potion will feel inclined to pursue (ahem) romantic activities. Any Seduction or Charm attempts made by members of the gender to which the imbiber is attracted will get a Free Raise.

Elixir of Warmth

Base TN: 20

Ingredients: A pinch of white ashes from a fire no more than a day old

This potion will keep its imbiber warm in even the coldest climates. The drinker is immune to the effects of cold weather.



For purposes of taking damage from the Weather Chart, the Hero takes damage as normal from hot weather and from rough weather, but he treats damage on the colder side of the chart as if it had the damage rating of the square in the central column of the chart in the same row as the current square. This does not change the time period in the square. Thus, if the Hero would normally be taking 5k5/1 hour, he would take 2k2/1 hour instead. Similarly, when swimming, he treats Cold or Freezing water as if it were Cool for purposes of using the Water Temperature Chart.

Gilead's Whisper (Elixir)

Base TN: 25

Ingredients: A glove of white silk

This potion disguises all signs of sorcery within the imbiber. Porté-stained hands appear as normal, Pyrem's green eyes turn a more ordinary color, and even the marks of Lærdom fade to ordinary flesh. This applies to all forms of sorcery, even rare types such as *Nacht* or *Zerstörung*. It does not apply to shamanistic abilities. The benefits of this potion are lost if the drinker uses his or her sorcery at any time before the duration expires.

Glasswater (Balm)

Base TN: 30

Ingredients: One snake's shed skin

This balm makes the user's flesh rearrange itself according to his desires, allowing him to reshape it in order to disguise himself. It can, for its duration, lessen or negate the effects of the Appearance or Unnerving Countenance Advantages, but cannot bestow either of them on someone who does not have them. Neither can it grant the Large or Small Advantages. The clothing and equipment of the user are not changed.

Healing Balm

Base TN: 25

Ingredients: A scab from the brewer's body

Applying this balm to someone's wound will cause that wound to heal quickly. Using this potion removes all Flesh Wounds the recipient currently has, and it will remove one Dramatic Wound as well.

Love's Scented Oil**Base TN:** 20**Ingredients:** One dozen red roses

Anyone who is soaked in this oil will be very attractive to the opposite sex. Any time he attempts to Seduce or Charm a member of the opposite gender who can smell him, he will get a Free Raise to his roll.

Oil of Clumsiness**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** The foot of an albatross and the down of a fledgling hawk

This potion makes anyone who is soaked with it less graceful until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The affected person's Finesse Rank is modified by the potion, decreasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares



when brewing it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Oil of Dullness**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A powdered mule's hoof and three worker ants

This potion makes anyone who is soaked with it less intelligent until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The affected person's Wits Rank is modified by the potion, decreasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Oil of Feebleness**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** An earthworm and a cobweb

This potion makes anyone who is soaked with it weaker until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The affected person's Brawn Rank is modified by the potion, decreasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Oil of Sloth**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A handful of moss and a powdered clamshell

This potion makes anyone who is soaked with it react less quickly until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The affected person's Panache Rank is modified by the potion, decreasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits. If the affected party's Panache Rank is reduced to 0, he follows the following rules for determining his initiative: he gets one action per Round, which always comes on Phase 10, and his Initiative Total is 0.

Oil of Weakness**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A mouse's tail and three eggshells

This potion makes anyone who is soaked with it less intelligent until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The affected person's Resolve Rank is modified by the potion, decreasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Philter of Champions**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** One used fencing glove

Drinking this potion will cause the user to become a better swordsman. Until the duration of the potion expires, the drinker's Attack (Fencing) and Parry (Fencing) Knacks will have their Ranks increased by the amount specified by the brewer of the potion when she created it. This takes effect even if the drinker does not have the Fencing Skill (which which case, Knacks are considered 0). This potion is subject to the rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Knacks.

Philter of Grace**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A sparrow's feather and a serpent's tooth

This potion makes anyone who drinks it more agile until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The imbiber's Finesse Rank is modified by the potion, increasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it. This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Philter of Intelligence**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** An owl's feather and a handful of fox's fur

This potion makes anyone who drinks it more perceptive and intelligent until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The imbiber's Wits Rank is modified by the potion, increasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it. This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Philter of Invisibility**Base TN:** 30**Ingredients:** One diamond

After drinking this oily potion, the user becomes invisible to anyone who is watching him, even by use of the Scry Knack. This includes clothes, personal weapons, and immediate possessions, but only items that can be placed on the drinker's person. His Stealth and Shadowing rolls get four Free Raises.

Philter of Quickness**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A fish's scales and the forelegs of a praying mantis

This potion makes anyone who drinks it react more quickly until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The imbiber's Panache Rank is modified by the potion, increasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it. This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Philter of Stamina**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** A piece of the root of an old tree and a ground turtle's shell

This potion makes anyone who drinks it sturdier until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The imbiber's Resolve Rank is modified by the potion, increasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it. This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Philter of Strength**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** The powdered horn of a bull and the claw of a bear

This potion makes anyone who drinks it stronger until its duration ends and its effects wear off. The imbiber's Brawn Rank is modified by the potion, increasing it by as much as the maker of the potion declares when brewing it. This potion is subject to the usual rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Traits.

Powder of the Buffoon**Base TN:** 25**Ingredients:** One handful of dirt

Being sprinkled with this powder will cause the victim to become a worse swordsman. Until the duration of the potion expires, the victim's Attack (Fencing) and Parry (Fencing) Knacks will have their Ranks decreased by the amount specified by the brewer of the potion when she created it (minimum 0). This potion is subject to the rules regarding potions that modify Ranks in Knacks.

Vapor of Forgetfulness**Base TN:** 20**Ingredients:** The dust from one cobweb

When this vapor is inhaled, the victim must make a Contested Roll of his Resolve versus the brewer's Wits + Vapor of Forgetfulness. If he fails to beat the brewer, he forgets the events of the current Scene. If the brewer makes 4 Raises, the gap in his memory will last for as long as he lives. Of course, he can be informed of what happened, and will remember being informed of it, but he will not actually recall anything that happened during that period of time.

A Note

Players will notice that there are no rules governing the creation and play of the potion known as the Balm of the Westmoreland. Only the Oracle has the ability to make such a potion. It requires the actual tears of the Lady of the Lake, a component which few other people could gather even if they had the required knowledge. For the curious, the Balm ceases all aging within a subject's body for a period of 75-150 years, after which the subject will begin to grow old again normally. Those who have used the potion show no ill effects. To the knowledge of the Daughters, the Balm works only on women descended from the Lady of the Lake, and has only once worked on a male subject. Males who imbibe it suffer instant death; there is no known means of resisting it and the Poison Immunity Advantage has no effect.

Male Scrying**Apprentice Degree: Endurance**

You are a perfect physical specimen. You are incredibly attractive, you have never had a sick day in your life, and you heal in an amazingly short time. You gain the Appearance (Stunning) Advantage for free, or you may discount the cost of Appearance (Intimidating) or Appearance (Blessed Beauty) by 5 HP. You are considered to be half your age when determining the effects of age upon you, unless the Category of your age is Young or Spry. You are immune to disease. At the end of every Scene, you may make a Brawn Roll against a TN of 30 to heal one of your Dramatic Wounds.

Because you are a descendent of the Lady of the Lake, you have the innate ability to sense whether someone is good or evil, and you can breathe water as if it were air. You know instinctively (no roll is required) whether someone you meet is a Hero, Villain, or Scoundrel regardless of his current Reputation. You never suffer from the rules concerning drowning when you are immersed in water, although they do apply if you are immersed in any other liquid substance, or a solution which is less than three-quarters water.

Adept Degree: Recovery

Your physique has developed even further. You can now withstand even greater punishment, and when you take damage, your wounds heal in a much shorter time than anyone else's injuries do. Your toughened skin gives you a +5 bonus to your base TN to be hit, making your TN $10 + 5 \times$ Defensive Knack. For example, if you have a Parry (Fencing) of 4, your TN will be 30 instead of 25 while you have a sword; if someone disarms you, your TN will be 10 instead of 5. At any time, you may spend a Drama Die to heal one of your Dramatic Wounds immediately.

Master Degree: Inner Strength

You have learned to focus your power to resist taking damage. You may spend a Drama Die to automatically

succeed a Wound Check, regardless of its TN. You gain another +5 bonus to your base TN to be hit, making your TN $15 + 5 \times$ Defensive Knack.

The Knacks**Agility**

You are incredibly graceful. All Finesse rolls you make have a +1 bonus per Rank you have in this Knack.

Perception

You are alert and perceptive. You always pay attention to even the smallest details, and it shows. All of your Perception Checks have a bonus of +2 per Rank you have in this Knack.

Speed

Your hands move more quickly than the eye can follow. You gain a bonus to all of your Panache rolls equal to +1 per Rank you have in this Knack. When rolling initiative, this bonus applies to your Initiative Total rather than to any of your Action Dice.

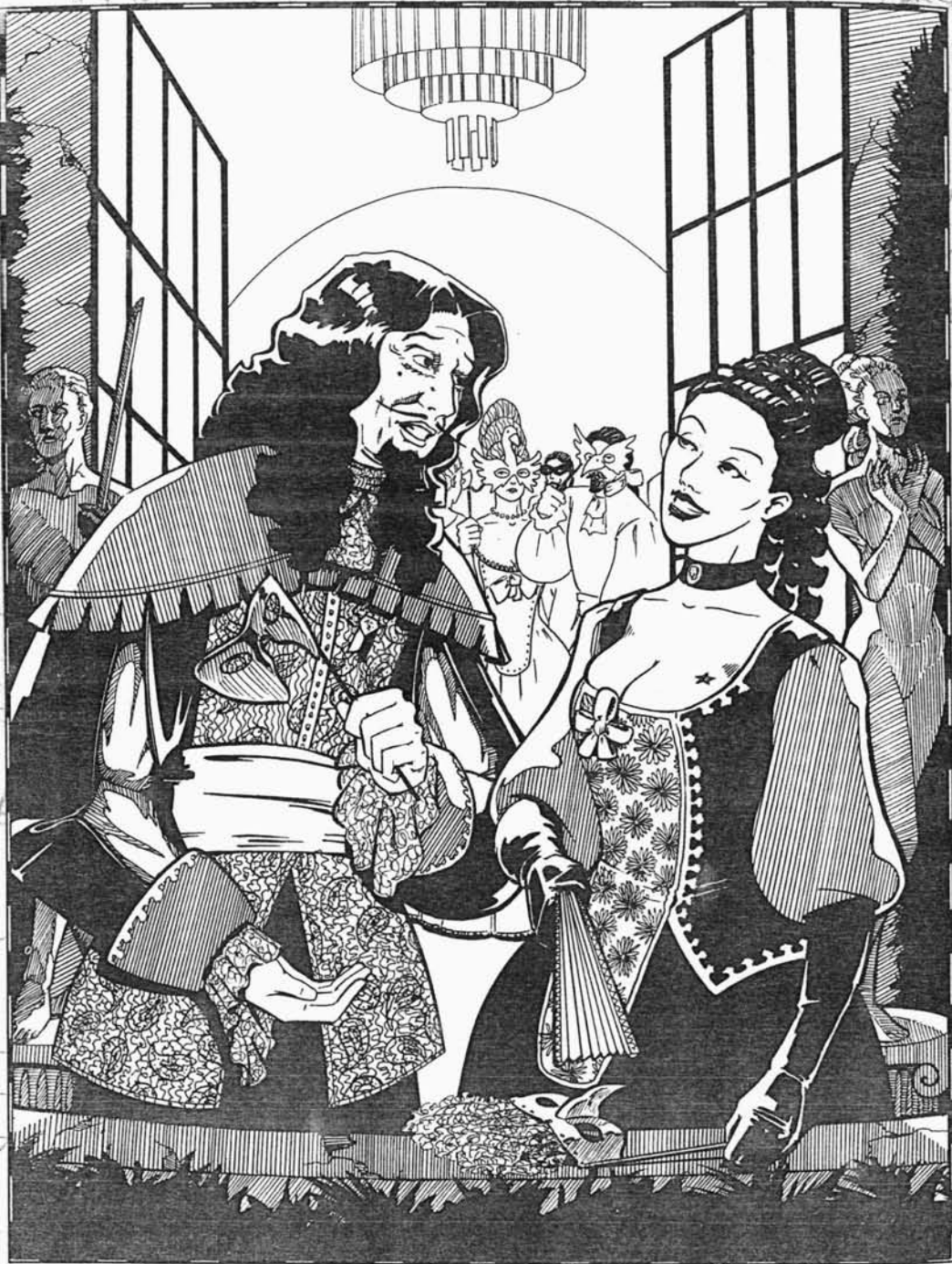
Stamina

You are like an immovable object. You can endure things that would make even the mightiest men fall. Whenever you make a roll involving your Resolve, you gain a bonus equal to +1 per Rank you have in this Knack.

Strength

Your strength is amazing. You can lift far more than a person who has your size, frame, and physique ought to be able to lift. All of your Brawn rolls get a +1 bonus per Rank you have in this Knack. This applies to Wound Checks as well. You also get a bonus equal to your Rank in this Knack when using a weapon that adds your Brawn to its Damage Rating. For instance, you would add this bonus when using a fencing sword, but not when using a pistol or a bow (unless it was a special bow that allows you to add your Brawn, such as those employed by students of the Goodfellow School).





Beyond



Vodacce, 1668

A hand brushed against the water, pushing away a vision of the future before it could become the present. Weary eyes lifted from the pool of sweet water to look once more at the low-hanging moon. The Oracle rose from her seat by the pool, feeling blood return to her folded legs as she placed them upon the grass. She had not left the cave in many years, but this was a special case.

"The time is approaching," a voice whispered. The Oracle saw a figure posed by the edge of the lake, her form perfect in the moonlight.

"I know, mother," the Oracle sighed. "I feel it in my bones once more. We pushed him away last time, but now... the pressure of his nearness burns my soul."

"The Barrier is weak," the other woman's voice was musical, like water trickling across smooth pebbles. "If he comes now, it will surely fall."

"I know," the Oracle murmured. "Your children, Lady, will fight it to the last bitter drop of blood in our veins. We pray it will be enough, but if it is not, then we will die knowing that Théah *cannot* be saved." Her voice gained strength as she spoke. "But I am not willing to accept that destiny."

"All things will die. The Sidhe prepare without knowing why. Théah, too, feels the strain against the Barrier, turning

blind eyes to the magic they perform. One day, it too will die." Her voice held bitter regret.

"Yes, but that time may be eons off. It need not end... like this."

"I fear your optimism my child. I fear there is no way to cut this thread that binds us to our future." The Lady's blue, blue eyes were limpid and sorrowful.

"You may be right," the Oracle replied. "But I will not lay down for it. I will not embrace such a destiny. Help me fight it, mother. Give me a sword and a hand to wield it, and I will move the world."

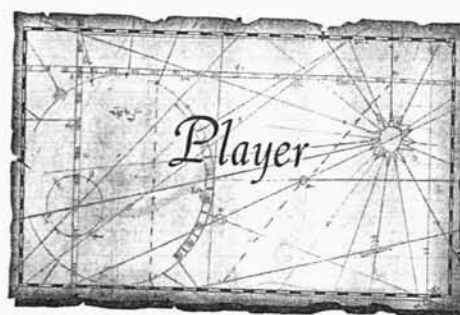
The Lady looked at her daughter with a strange pitiful pride. "So be it. Here is your sword, then, my Sophia," she whispered with a gesture. From the scrying pool, the pommel of a masterfully crafted weapon rose, water shimmering from its perfect blade. Within the blue steel edge, rainbows from the deepest ocean danced, and the gold of its pommel seemed to glow with purity and strength. "And here is your hand..." In the pool beneath the sword, the waves rippled, revealing the face of a man whose features betrayed his Sidhe parentage. Yet upon his hand was a glove of iron, trapping his soul for ever more.

"I see..." the Oracle whispered. "And these... will be enough to save us?"

"I do not know, my Daughter," the Lady of the Lake murmured. "All you can do is try."

"Yes. I can indeed to that" the Oracle gathered up the sword in her loose robes, and marked the beautiful face that shimmered in the water. "Thank you Mother, for these gifts."

"Use them well, my Daughter," the Lady of the Lake murmured softly as the waters of the lake parted before her. By the time the waves rolled gently away from the shore, she was gone.



The following information is exclusively for players who wish to better plan and play out a Hero from the Daughters. Such players (or GMs who intend to use the Daughters of Sophia in their plotlines) are encouraged to read the following essays.

Predestination

Members of Sophia's Daughters have two advantages over most other Secret Societies of Théah. First, most of them are aware of the society from the time they were very young, and have spent their lives preparing to join in its covert machinations. They do not need to be "convinced" that preventing the arrival of the Fourth Prophet is a necessity; nor do they need to be convinced that improving the lot of Théans everywhere can hold him off indefinitely.

Secondly, the members of Sophia's Daughters are a family. More than any other society in the world, the children of the Lady of the Lake share a very real blood-tie to each other, and are often joined through genetics as well as intent. When a member of your society dies, you have truly lost a brother, cousin, aunt or son. The effects on morale are very real. Members of the Daughters of Sophia have often grown up together; their loyalty to each other, and to the society and goals they serve, is difficult to sway. Most of the Daughters of Sophia have never known a family other than the one that surrounds them, and could never imagine any

other life. This attitude even spreads to those members who don't have the blood. When they join the Daughters, they feel a connection to this greater ancestry – feel the sense of purpose and the untold centuries behind the Order. They become family as closely as those with the blood.

The Daughters of Sophia have seen the future, and they know what will occur – unless they stop it. Unlike the other secret foundations of Théah who must guess that their actions will cause change, the Daughters actually *know* when they have altered the world. They peer into their pools of crystal water, and they see the world as it will be – and then, a new future appears. This gives the society the genuine knowledge that the choices they make, for good or for evil, are rewarded with the blessing of a new hope for all of Théah.

Visionaries

Certain other Théan secret societies concentrate on the destruction of sorcery or the elimination of Synchronism influence. While preparing to fight the Synchronism is high on the list of priorities for the Daughters, their true goal is more far-reaching. The Daughters do not advocate the destruction of sorcery. They simply advocate a view of cautious use. Reasonable use of magic, even Porté, will not cause the end of the world. It takes sorcery on a massive, unchecked level to do that. If controlled and used sparingly, the Daughters believe that sorcery can be a useful tool, not a destructive force. Many members practice sorcery and the Daughters often recruit those with magical blood to serve their cause. Every sorcerer in the Daughters understands the roots of her power and knows how to use it wisely.

In this, they are often opposed by many of the other covert groups in Théah. The Daughters refuse to kill someone simply because of his sorcerous bloodline; nor will they refuse to use his or her individual abilities if it aids their cause.

The Daughters of Sophia know a great deal about the Barrier; more than any group except perhaps die Kreuzritter. They have some idea of how it works, and a few

even have the ability to see where the Barrier is weak and in need of restoration. This gives them even more cause to advocate controlled sorcery: in time, the Synchrony may be released, and mankind will need every available weapon – magical or otherwise.

The Daughters of Sophia realize that their singular goal – beyond all short-term plans – is to prevent the coming of Theus's Fourth Prophet. They are united in this goal. They are completely aware that if the day of his arrival ever comes, there will be nothing that they (or anyone else) can do to prevent the apocalypse. Their fight is all or nothing.

Traveling through Bryn Bresail

As children of the Lady of the Lake, the Daughters often have the need to travel through the faerie kingdom of Bryn Bresail. They do this with Scrying magic: entering the Sidhe lands through a mystically prepared pool and leaving much the same way (see page 94 for more information). In this manner, they can avoid detection as they travel, moving unseen through the world before returning to Théah hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Their Scrying also allows them to consult with the Sons of Lugh and keep tabs on the comings and goings of the Sidhe world.

Bryn Bresail is nothing like Théah, for all that it mimics the mountains, lakes, oceans, and plains of the mortal world. The terrain of Bryn Bresail constantly shifts and changes; it is useless to map or attempt to remember landmarks which will not exist the next time you walk the same path. This doesn't bother the native Sidhe – their perceptions of Bryn Bresail are very different than our own. The Sidhe see complex lines of magic, shifting patterns of Glamour and reality. No matter what the external veil, the Sidhe can always find their way through their own lands.

So how do the Sons of Lugh, part mortal by blood and birth, travel through Bryn Bresail? Further, how do the mortal-born Daughters of Sophia make their way to the strongholds of their cousins within the Sidhe lands?

Unlike Porté travel, walking through Bryn Bresail is best done with eyes *open*. Very open, and aware – not

everything you see is real. Experienced travellers in Bryn Bresail have usually picked up some sort of trick to get them through. Some completely ignore the terrain around them, taking a determined number of steps in one direction and basing their true north on Théah's compass (which they check before entering Bryn Bresail). Others rely on bargaining with the local sprites and minor faeries, offering glittering jewels, shining tokens, and other Théan objects if the creatures will lead them to a familiar location.

The most common way, however, is to summon a Guidelight – a strange magical anomaly within Bryn Bresail that operates much as a Théan compass. The "spell" to bring a Guidelight is simple; anyone, even those completely ungifted with any sort of magic, can hail one. The Guidelight is semi-intelligent, and can understand simple commands ("take me to the palace of the Queen of the Sidhe" or the like). However, travelers should understand that using a Guidelight is about as subtle as holding a car horn down. The tremors in Bryn Bresail's magic echo for nearly a mile, and the light of the shining orb resembles that of a halogen bulb. Any Sidhe or other creatures that live in Bryn Bresail will immediately know if the travelers pass close. This can bring danger, discovery, and assault. Mortals, beware.

On the outside, Bryn Bresail can appear to be any sort of terrain, varying from day to day. GMs should feel free to be inventive, creating new species of orange trees, for example, or glistening mountains of quartz and gold. Remember that anything taken from Bryn Bresail will last only until the sun rises or sets. The magic of the Faerie lands is not meant to exist upon the mortal tread.

Forever Young

One of the most difficult concepts to grasp when playing a Daughter is the understanding that certain members are quite literally hundreds of years old. They have witnessed the passing of rulers, governments, and even nations. How would it feel to know someone who has lived that long?

How would it feel to *be* that person?



The ancient members of the Daughters are referred to as the Fates, women who have lived beyond their years and entered a new perspective of reality through their near-immortality. Though some are older than most nations, they all appear to be between twenty and forty years of age, frozen in time; their youth restored by the Balm of the Westmoreland. In order for someone to belong to the Fates, they must be selected by the Lady of the Lake as a worthy Daughter, capable and invaluable to the society. Only those who serve loyally and whose abilities cannot be lost are granted truly immortal life. Others who prove their valor, but are not irreplaceable, may be granted an extra twenty or thirty years (a single small draught) as a reward for their faithful service to Théah and the Daughters.

The average member of the Daughters of Sophia is unlikely to meet one of the Fates. They are reclusive and often live their lives as loners, preferring to have few friends. The Fates have to remember not to allow themselves to be caught as young men and women long after they should have aged and withered. They must spend their lives constantly on the move, with no family and no permanent

home. Otherwise, their ageless quality will certainly be noticed – and questions will be asked.

It is possible that one of the Fates has selected a Daughter Hero as a possible addition to their number, and is watching her adventures through the use of Scrying magic. They may also choose to interact with the Hero Daughter without revealing their nature – after all, it would take years for anyone to notice that the Fate isn't aging. For short period of time (a few years), it is possible to keep a single guise and maintain a normal life within Théan society.

The Fates are intimately connected with the Oracle, and are in contact with her as well as with the Handmaidens. Many of the Fates were Handmaidens in the past, and now serve in advisory positions to those important posts.

Chapter Three provides rules whereby a Daughter Hero can live far beyond her years, but such an undertaking requires more than just spending a few Hero Points. The player must understand how her Hero has changed from the experience, and how she now regards the rest of the world. Such a character can remember clearly events that to other Heroes are distant history.



Most Fate Heroes will be reasonably young (100 years or thereabouts). The older the character, the more important she is to the Daughters and the less likely she will be traipsing around with a band of adventurers. The eldest Daughters (500 years or more) would be close confidants of the Oracle herself and responsible for tremendous machinations that slowly alter the entire face of Théan culture and society. It is not likely that such an individual would be routinely adventuring with a party of Heroes.

Even a younger Fate (i.e., one who might be played as a Hero) will probably come off as somewhat distant and aloof; she knows in all probability that the other Heroes will die before she does, and doesn't want to get close. She also might have to abandon them before they catch on to her condition — leaving them behind and starting a whole new life. Best not to make friendships in such a situation; it saves a world of hurt in the long run.

She may also appear as inhumanly patient. Where the other Heroes will want to rush in and quickly resolve a situation, the Fate will sit back, watch, and devise a long-term plan that achieves much the same results. For this reason, they often find themselves set apart from their Heroic companions — a member of the group but never truly belonging.

Because of this, Fate Heroes tend to devote themselves all the more zealously to the Order. The Daughters have the sense of permanence that other Théans lack, and can look at things in the long term — qualities which most Fates welcome. Accordingly, they throw themselves deeply into the Order's machinations, pursuing the Daughters' agenda to the exception of all else. The rest of the world is going to change anyway; why bother with it when the Order has something more important going on?

Of course, there are always exceptions, and you need not play your Fate Hero in such a manner. But there are precious few Fates in the world, and the majority of them tend to follow these patterns. The alternative is too painful, especially for a lifetime as long as theirs.

Playing a Male

If you normally play a male Hero (regardless of whether you are a male or female player), you may be asking yourself "Why would I want to play in this Order? After all, the Daughters of Sophia are... well, *daughters*." You may think that any male character is going to feel like something between a servant and an afterthought, right?

This is definitely not true. Players drawn to the chivalric aspects of male Heroes, especially in highly romanticized worlds like *7th Sea*, can find ample opportunity to display great feats of physical prowess and courtly love as a member or an ally of the Order. Rather than focusing his efforts on the Daughters' magical aspects, a male member will focus on his role as a warrior of the Light, charged with protecting women and children and saving the world from the encroaching darkness. When engaged in combat against creatures of darkness, there will be plenty of opportunities to swing your sword and chop the monsters into mincemeat. Not every female player can or will play a sword-wielding defender of the Order, so male Heroes with strong Martial Skills will find their services in high demand.

Even if your male Hero is not a standard fighter, he can still provide needed services to the Order: for instance, proprietor of a way station, inn, and/or safe house. Perhaps you may prefer to play a clerical or non-combatant character. Healers are always welcome. Having an ally inside the Vaticine Church can mean the difference between life and painful death for a member of Sophia's Daughters. Men in these positions often become vital to the Order's interests, and hold positions of respect and influence within the secret society.

Playing a male in the Order is certainly an unusual choice, but it's not unheard of, and can make for a fascinating role-playing experience. A good GM will work with you to make sure that the adventure provides enough focus and challenges for you, and that your role in the Daughters holds as much potential as those of the fairer sex.

Game Master

Players, stop reading now. The following section of the book contains material that is intended for the GM only. Ignoring this warning will ruin countless surprises and reveal numerous secrets that should only be known to your Game master. You have been warned.

It's Not What You Know...

To some, the Daughters of Sophia have a considerable edge over other entities in Théah. With the Oracle's precognitive abilities, along with the power of Scrying and the numerous Fate Witches within their ranks, the Daughters seemingly hold the key to the future. They know when and where specific events will take place, and have the power to alter them at will. With such power, they could surely rule the world, sweeping all opposition before them. Or could they?

The Daughters have learned to their eternal sorrow that tampering with the future can often be more dangerous than useful. No one can tell how the river of time will flow; when they act to change history, they have no way of knowing that they might unleash something far worse than the disaster they sought to prevent. The results of heedless action have had grave consequences of Théah and the Daughters have borne the brunt of responsibility for such mistakes. These painful lessons have left their mark; the Order only acts when it feels it has no other choice. Because of this, and because on the immense practical realities

involved in their endeavors, they shouldn't appear any more or less powerful than any other Théan secret society.

Keep in mind that the future remains murky and enigmatic, even to those who can see into its eddies. The Daughters rarely know exactly what to look for, nor can they determine the root causes of the events they see. They must guess certain outcomes, piece together future events from hints and clues. They owe much of their success to thoroughness and old-fashioned detective work, not Scrying powers.

When running a campaign featuring a Hero from the Daughters, keep in mind that only the most powerful members can see into the future with any clarity. Most Daughters lack this insight; they see very little of the pattern they are helping to create. Instead, they focus on small things – saving individual lives, rescuing woman from Vodacce, discovering new caches of knowledge. They rarely know why such missions are important – why it is necessary to save a given child or destroy a given politician – they only know that it serves a greater purpose. The Daughters learn early on not to question the Oracle. Even if they don't fully understand the nature of their missions, they trust their superiors to do the right thing. Thus, they can affect the future without really knowing what they are changing.

If a player wants to create a Daughter in order to lord her “superior knowledge” over the other Heroes, gently suggest that she try something else. If she persists, have her “knowledge” inadvertently unleash some minor catastrophe... then have her clean it up. Knowledge may be power, but power without discipline is dangerous – and the Daughters know better.

The Lady of the Lake

The Lady of the Lake is an enigmatic figure at best, communicating with the Daughters through portents and omens, and rarely contacting them directly. Like the Ussuran Matushka, her goals and methods are difficult to understand. She is immortal, after all, and despite her link to her children she has never really been human. Unlike

Matushka, she exists in a world beyond our own, and rarely notices when even the most dire events affect Théah or her bloodline.

When a copy of the *Book of the Prophets* was brought to the Lady of the Lake, she read it out of a perverse interest in Théan religion. What she found matched the histories of her own people, and worse, seemed to accurately describe the Syrneath, the Barrier erected to hold them at bay, and the means by which the seals could be broken and armageddon released. Reading it through the mist of Bryn Bresail, the Lady of the Lake became convinced that Theus's Fourth Prophet would release the Syrneath from their exile, and destroy the world. She set her children on the course of preventing this from happening – at whatever cost.



She has detailed and intimate knowledge of the Syrneath and the Barrier, but does not speak of such things. Her innate shyness and inability to understand the workings of mortal society keep her in isolation a great deal of the time. Further, she is forced to keep a good mien within the court of the Queen of the Sky. Long ago, her son Lugh wooed the Queen and stole her heart. Ever since, the Queen of the Sky has sought some reason to persecute her sister for Lugh's cruel deed. She would not let any indiscretion go unpunished, and so the Lady must be extremely cautious in her dealings with other Sidhe.

The Lady of the Lake is the only Sidhe in Bryn Bresail who has any real understanding of human emotion. The event scarred her, and frightened her – but it also served to addict her to the experiences of mortality and true emotion. However, to keep her power and political position within the Sidhe world, she was forced to hide her epiphany and keep a distance between herself and her children in Théah.

Not so the Sons of Lugh. To them, she is a Queen, a ruler, and a close confidant. While she speaks freely only to the Oracle and through visions to her Théan children, she guards and shares her magic with those born in the lands of the Sidhe. To other members of the Fae, the Sons of Lugh are a continuing mockery of the knights of old, clustered around their Queen along with her nereids and water sprites. Today, they are seen much differently. They appear to other Sidhe as replicas of Elaine's knights or *L'Empereur's* Montaigne bodyguards. So long as no one interferes with their activities, the Lady of the Lake allows the Sidhe court to whisper whatever they like about her “knights.”

The Lady of the Lake is cautious. She must be. She remembers the time when the Sidhe fought against the Syrneath, and unlike her sisters (the Queens of the Sky and Sea), she does not believe that they will remain forever behind their Barrier. The Queen of the Sky, current “ruler” of the Seelie courts, has forbidden any talk of the Syrneath, the war, or the time before – on pain of death within life, sealed within a chamber of cold iron. Two members of the court were caught jesting about the Syrneath once, several

hundred years ago. Their screams still echo deep beneath the Sidhe Palaces.

Because of her sisters' fearful denial, the Lady of the Lake must rely upon the Daughters to function without her. Otherwise, they risk being discovered by the rest of the Sidhe. If she gives them too much information or assistance, they will certainly attract the attention of the Queen of the Sky. If that happens, they will die – and so will the Sons of Lugh. The Queen and her court would see the Daughters' activities as “meddling” with the Barrier, and immediately blame any rifts of weak spots on them. The mortal bloodline of the Lady of the Lake would be stamped out as scapegoats. Those born in the lands of the Sidhe would be imprisoned in a massive cold iron chamber... forever.

Firinbrand

Firinbrand is the sword of the Sidhe, created by the Lady of the Lake as a gift for mankind. Legends say that the sword was drawn from the pure waters at the heart of Bryn Bresail, and the Lady of the Lake caused it to hold its form by freezing it within a cauldron of the blood of the Syrneath “that it may know its true enemy.” For centuries, it has been in the possession of the Oracles, given out to those who enter combat in the most dire situations, and only if they are combatting the Syrneath, or their allies. It is currently wielded by Lawrence Lugh, beloved of Queen Elaine and mortal champion of the Lady of the Lake.

The sword itself seems made of ice and water, with the flickering fire of Glamour cascading from blade to pommel. Each Oracle has the power to summon it from wherever it may be, thus ensuring that even in missions that end in death, the sword will return to the Daughters to serve their purposes.

Firinbrand is a 4k4 weapon. There is no Unskilled Penalty to use it as long as the wielder has the blessings of the Lady of the Lake. While on Avalon's shores (or in Inismore or the Highland Marches), as long as he wears the sheath, the wielder takes no Wounds from any bladed attacks. In addition, the weapon can cut through any material,

including dracheneisen. This means there is no armor bonus against Firinbrand. It is said that the sword possesses numerous other Sidhe abilities, and even the power to heal or destroy entire tracts of the Barrier, and to operate independently of its wielder.

Agiotage

The Agiotage have been defeated. Their minions were wiped from the face of the earth, and their dark magic is no longer practiced. Because of the swift and uncompromising battle fought by the Daughters, they were unable to destroy the Barrier, and their efforts to create new forms of Sorcery were thwarted. Although the hidden war cost Théah hundreds of thousands of lives, the release of the Syrneath may have meant the total extinction of mankind.

However, even such devastating weapons as the White Plague could not entirely erase the Agiotage. Although they are certain that no actual member of the ancient society lived through the White Plague, the Daughters know that they kept numerous bastions of materials and research — bastions which were never found. Some few sympathizers may have survived as well, and managed to hide the libraries of the Agiotage, along with a great deal of their research.

To this day, the Daughters search for those hidden enclaves — desolate places, hidden from society as well as sorcery. They believe that the largest such hiding place lies deep within the southern mountains of Vodacce, near the city of Casigula Rosa. The Daughters suspect that a chamber exists deep beneath the city, but all attempts to locate its entrance have failed. To keep others from discovering it, the Daughters maintain a small number of operatives in Casigula Rosa, posing as members of the Explorer's Society in order to deal with treasure-hunters, archaeologists, and other adventurers who operate in the area. Such individuals are monitored and guided so that their explorations can be contained by the society.

NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the Blood Chapter that were too sensitive to give the players. As the Game Master, you have the final say on the actual implementation of any of these secrets; they are listed here to flesh out the NPCs we have provided and offer ideas for campaigns and adventures.

Rhyanna ferch Hywel: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: 37
Background: None
Arcana: Passionate

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Connections (many), Dangerous Beauty, Linguist, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Servants, Sidhe Blood (Smell Glamour)

Courier: Dancing 5, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 3, Gaming 2, Oratory 2, Politics 4, Seduction 3

Hunter: Ambush 3, Stealth 4, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 3

Performer: Acting 2, Dancing 5, Disguise 3, Oratory 2, Singing 2

Scrying (Adept): Scry 4, False Potion 4, Fumes of Slumber 4, Healing Balm 3, Oil of Sloth 4, Philter of Grace 4

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Side-Step 2, Sprinting 3, Swimming 3, Throwing 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3

Rider: Ride 4, Mounting 3, Trick Riding 3

When Rhyanna was initiated into the Order, the Lady of the Lake charged her with a tremendous responsibility and a very precious item: Karolan's Drum. General Rhys

Karolan was a hero from the time of King Elilodd whose leadership and prowess in battle has not seen its equal in Avalon since (see Chapter Three, page 92, for more). Only when the Drum is played by one who is a true child of Avalon will General Karolan descend with his army from Bryn Bresail to save the people of Avalon, Sidhe and mortal alike. Other drums exist, and Karolan's Glamour has invested them with certain abilities, but Rhyanna believes that hers is the true artifact. She has agreed to protect the drum with her life, and will not relinquish it until she is replaced as Avalon's Handmaiden.

Ysabelle (Isabelle) du Montaigne: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 76
Background: True Identity, Hunted
Arcana: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Connections, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Scoundrel

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Seduction 3

Hunter: Ambush 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Tracking 2

Sailor: Balance 3, Cartography 3, Climbing 4, Knotwork 4, Leaping 2, Navigation 4, Pilot 3, Rigging 3, Swimming 2, Weather 2

Scrying (Apprentice): Scry 3, False Potion 3, Healing Balm 3, Philter of Invisibility 2

Spy: Bribery 2, Forgery 3, Interrogation 3, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 1, Stealth 2

Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 4, Footwork 3, Lifting 2, Rolling 3, Sprinting 2, Swinging 3, Throwing 2

Commander: Ambush 3, Gunnery 3, Leadership 4, Logistics 3, Strategy 3, Tactics 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye-Gouge 2, Kick 2, Throat Strike 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

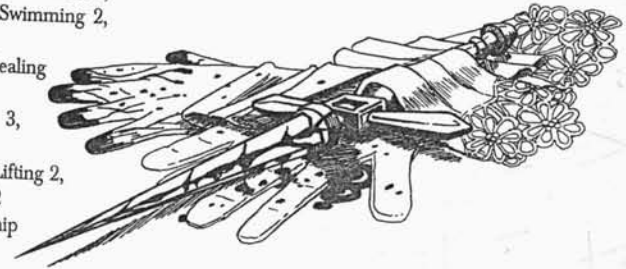
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3

Rogers (Journeyman): Bind (Fencing) 5, Corps-a-corps 4, Disarm (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Rogers) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2

Isabelle's Rogers skill gives her the ability to use her Balance Knack in the place of any Parry Knack. In addition, she adds +5 to her TN to be hit while onboard ship. Finally, she receives no off-hand penalty when using a pistol, and may grab a sword off the ground and attack with it in the same Action, provided she is standing right next to it at the start of her Action. For more information, see the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook, pages 94–95.

Recently, while anchored in a cove to rendezvous with a group of old friends from the *Santa Cecilia*, Isabelle met a young pirate who was introduced to her as Joaquin Orduño. The two of them began sparring verbally almost immediately. When Isabelle beat Orduño three times in a row at Ajedrez, he began to get irritated and insulted her. She challenged him to a duel; he scoffed at her, claiming that the skirts she always wore would hamper her. When she whipped out her sword and dazzled him with moves from the Rogers school, he found himself fighting for his life. If Captain Scogna ever even hinted that perhaps Isabelle is more than a little attracted to the handsome Joaquin, she would cut his heart out.



Jazhani binte Noura: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 26
Background: None
Arcana: Insightful

Advantages: Crescent (R/W), Théan, Appearance (Stunning), Dangerous Beauty, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Small

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion (Crescent) 3, Gossip 2, Oratory 1, Politics 1, Seduction 5

Criminal: Cheating 2, Gambling 2, Lockpicking 3, Pickpocket 2, Quack 2, Shadowing 3, Stealth 4

Performer: Acting 2, Dancing 4, Disguise 2, Oratory 1, Singing 3, Storytelling 5

Scholar: Astronomy 3, History 2, Mathematics 3, Occult 3, Philosophy 1

Spy: Shadowing 3, Stealth 3, Underworld Lore 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3

As if the lack of physical contact with other Sisters were not enough of a challenge, Jazhani has received a most difficult mission from the Oracle – to contact the Handmaiden in Cathay. Even if Jazhani had the freedom to leave the hareem at will, the journey to Cathay passes through the mountainous stronghold of the Safadim, a fanatical sect of religious “purists” committed to the subjugation and enslavement of women and children. Claiming divine inspiration, their doctrine includes stringent codes of behavior for women, treating them as little more than mindless creatures whose sole purpose is to serve men.

The Sophia has recently learned that in fact the Safadim do have non-human inspiration, but sadly it appears that it may come from their discovery and use of numerous Syrneth artifacts. If this is indeed the case, the challenge of preventing the Fourth Prophet may have grown larger in the Crescent Empire.

Wilma Probst: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 5
Panache: 3
Reputation: 56
Background: Obligation
Arcana: Focused

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Connections (many), Eisen Accent (Republic), (Wo)Man of Will, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Gossip 4, Mooch 3, Oratory 5, Politics 5, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4

Merchant: Accountant 4, Calligrapher 3, Haggling 3, Scribe 5

Scholar: History 3, Law 3, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 3, Research 2

Servant: Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Menial Tasks 3, Seneschal 5, Unobtrusive 4

Spy: Conceal 4, Cryptography 5, Forgery 4, Lip Reading 3, Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

Rider: Mounting 2, Ride 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 1

Wilma's Man of Will Advantage means that she is immune to mind-altering magic (including Sorte manipulations, Lærdom, and Sidhe Glamour), immune to the effects of the Repartee system, immune to the effects of Fear, and immune to the effects of being Crippled.

With the exception of her affiliation with the Daughters, Wilma has no appreciable secrets. The combined duties of Eisen Handmaiden and chief administrator for the most chaotic city in the world keep her far too busy to develop any hidden agendas.

Tamara Breslau Fyodnava v'Riasanova: Hero

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 5
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 2
Reputation: 43
Background: Cursed
Arcana: Exemplary

Advantages: Ussuran (R/W), Théan (R/W), Faith (Sud'ya), Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 3, Gossip 4, Oratory 2

Hunter: Skinning 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 3

Streetwise: Scrounging 3, Socializing 1, Street Navigation 4, Underworld Lore 3

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2

Commander: Ambush 2, Leadership 5, Strategy 5, Tactics 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5

Rider: Animal Training 3, Mounting 3, Ride 5

Peryem (Master): Firebird 5, Goshawk 5, Owl 5, Man 5, Songbird 3, Speak 5

Two years ago, Tamara's brother Dreng finally escaped from his exile, with help from powerful forces inside the Ussuran Orthodox Church. Tamara is aware of this, but does not acknowledge it, preferring to maintain at least some illusion of safety. However, she is rarely far from Gaius Ilya and demands complete loyalty from her boyars in support of him. She has a growing attraction to the mad ruler, but also respects the fact that he loves his wife Ketheryna, so she keeps her feelings of love and hatred to herself, which only adds to her torment.

As her feelings for Ilya grow, the Daughters' command to protect Ketheryna in any way necessary becomes an exquisite torture. The beautiful Knias will not fail her sisters in the Order, but their loyalty to Ketheryna, who does not even belong to the society, galls her. Recently, the Oracle

has instructed her to induct Ketheryna. Tamara will probably be the one who must lead her through the ritual initiation and indoctrination, a task that she dreads with all her being.

Fidencia Suarez: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 2
Reputation: 17
Background: Obligation
Arcana: None

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Education, Connections (Many), Membership (Sophia's Daughters)

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Politics 2, Scheming 3, Seduction 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, Examiner 2, First Aid 3, Surgery 1

Sailor: Balance 2, Cartography 3, Climbing 1, Knotwork 2, Navigation 2, Pilot 3, Rigging 2, Weather 2

Scholar: Astronomy 3, History 6, Law 3, Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 3, Occult 4, Philosophy 5, Research 4, Theology 3

Servant: Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Gossip 3, Haggling 2, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 5

Streetwise: Shopping 4, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Rider: Ride 3

Fidencia Suarez has dedicated herself to her young charge, Maria-Soledad Aldana y Rivera. The young woman has become quite important in the affairs of Castille and Fidencia wishes her to make the full use of her potential. Not only does Maria play a vital role in Los Vagos, but she has caught the eye of Good King Sandoval as well, and a marriage is not out of the question. Because of her family connections, she was never seriously considered for membership in the Daughters, but like Ravenild Hibbot,

she may prove more effective outside the society than within it.

Suarez quietly dotes upon her protégé and has gone to great lengths to keep her safe. Though the young girl knows nothing about her *duena's* true allegiance, Suarez has almost tipped her hand on more than one occasion. Her devotion sometimes clouds her to her greater duty to the Daughters. She would do nearly anything to keep Maria-Soledad safe – even reveal her own presence to the Inquisition if necessary. Hopefully, it won't come to that, but the girl *does* have a very dangerous hobby...

Information on Maria-Soledad can be found in the *Los Vagos* sourcebook, pages 49–51 and 103–104.

Valentina Villanova: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 29
Background: Defeated
Arcana: Perspective

Advantages: Vodacce (R/W), Keen Senses, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Small

Artist: Painting 4, Sculpting 5

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Gossip 4, Lip Reading 3, Oratory 3, Politics 4, Scheming 5, Sincerity 5

Merchant: Seamstress 4, Steward 4

Scholar: History 2, Law 3, Mathematics 5, Philosophy 3, Research 2, Theology 2

Servant: Accounting 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Menial Tasks 5, Seneschal 3, Unobtrusive 4, Valet 3

Sorte (Master): Arcana 5, Coins 5, Cups 5, Staves 5, Swords 5
Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 4

Valentina's first secret is her association with Juliette. If anyone outside of the Daughters discovered that the two

were actually allies, they would be in great danger. She hides their connection very closely, and they communicate using a secret cipher they developed as children. She was chosen to be the Handmaiden because she was less visible, but she has been exemplary in her role. Information on Juliette can be found in the *Vodacce* sourcebook.

The only other secret that she hides is an unrelenting, uncompromising hatred for Giovanni Villanova. Never fond of him, she began to revile her husband once she discovered his deepest secrets. Only one of his sons – the eldest – is actually his own child. The other is the child of a Montaigne general who never knew the name of the "courtesan" with whom he slept. Juliette helped Valentina escape the palace while Giovanni was out of the country, and afterward, she claimed that he child was his. He never doubted it, trusting in his security and his wife's fear of him. It was one of the most daring experiences of her life, and Valentina often remembers it with satisfied longing.

One day, she will find a way to kill her husband before he can twist the minds and hearts of her beloved little boys.

Lorraine Weller: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 5
Reputation: 43
Background: None
Arcana: Passionate

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W) Vendel (R/W), Connections (Many), Membership (Merchant's Guild) (Sophia's Daughters), Merchant Patron, Vendel League Seat (Special)

Courtesan: Acting 4, Cold Read 5, Dancing 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Gossip 5, Jenny 5, Masseur 4, Mooch 5, Poison 3, Politics 5, Seduction 6, Sincerity 5, Unobtrusive 5

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, Examiner 3, First Aid 1

Merchant: Accounting 4, Hagglng 3, Jenny 5, Jeweler 3, Vintner 2

Scholar: History 4, Law 3, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 3

Lorraine Weller is perceived as a power-mongering ice-queen with no feelings for anyone save herself. In truth, while she keeps a healthy distance from the rest of the world, she can be capable of surprising generosity. The Jennys under her care have received untold benefits, and she devotes herself quite strongly to the Daughters and their agenda. However, the psychological scars of her early days remain, and she has vowed never to let anyone – even the Order – control her again. She owes much to the Daughters, but if she ever felt that they threatened her security, she would turn on them in an instant.

Maria Catarina Niccolletta di Caligari: Hero



Brawn: 1
Finesse: 3
Wits: 3
Resolve: 2
Panache: 2
Reputation: 23
Background: True Identity
Arcana: Focused

Advantages: Castillian, Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Connections (Several), Linguist, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Gossip 3, Oratory 2, Scheming 2, Seduction 1

Performer: Acting 1, Dancing 3, Disguise 3, Oratory 2, Singing 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2

Rider: Mounting 2, Ride 3

Besides her origins and true identity, the Contessa has no real secrets. She exists as a cipher for the Order, and eagerly awaits their commands

Madeline du Chatelaine: Villain



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: -31
Background: Vendetta
Arcana: Fanatical

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Connections (many), Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Servants

Courtier: Dancing 5, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Mooch 3, Oratory 3, Politics 4, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 3, Law 4, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 3, Research 2

Scrying (Apprentice): Scry 3

Servant: Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Menial Tasks 3, Seneschal 4, Unobtrusive 4

Spy: Conceal 4, Forgery 4, Lip Reading 3, Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

Commander: Incitation 4, Logistics 3, Strategy 2, Tactics 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 1

Rider: Mounting 2, Ride 3

Unknown to the Daughters, Madeline has contacted certain radical elements within the Rilasciare, and is making plans for a revolution that goes beyond mere philosophy. She issued her husband's money to buy weapons and arm the peasantry of Charouse, sending out anonymous flyers in order to get the public riled. Soon, the situation will either erupt, or she will be caught, tried, and executed for treason.



Reune Vengasdotter: Villain



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 6
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: -31
Background: Dead to the World
Arcana: Deceitful

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Ussuran, Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Alchemist, Connections (Many), Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Membership (NOM)
Alchemist: Natural Philosophy 6, Occult 5, Poison 5, Research 5

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Politics 5, Scheming 4, Seduction 3, Sincerity 5
Herbalist: Compounds 5, Cooking 3, Diagnosis 4, First Aid 5, Flora 5, Poison 5

Merchant: Cooking 4, Gardener 5

Scholar: Astronomy 4, History 4, Law 3, Mathematics 3, Occult 5, Natural Philosophy 6, Philosophy 3, Research 5, Theology 2

Spymaster (Master): Scry 5, False Potions 5, Antidote Philter 5, Cures of Slumber 5, Elixir of Eagle's Flight 3, Elixir of Felme 4, Gilead's Whisper 5, Glasswater 5, Healing Balm 5, Oil of Sloth 3, Philter of Grace 3, Philter of Intelligence 4, Philter of Invisibility 5, Vapor of Forgetfulness 5
Servant: Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Menial Tasks 4, Sensechal 4, Unobtrusive 5, Valet 4

Thief: Shadowing 4, Stealth 5, Bribery 3, Conceal 4, Disguise 5, Read Lips 4

Athlete: Climbing 5, Footwork 4, Leaping 3, Long-Distance Running 4, Sprinting 4, Swinging 3, Throwing 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 3

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing) 5, Feint (Fencing)

Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Reune has four hundred years worth of secrets, from the materials and how-to of true potion making to the locations of hidden ruins, artifacts, and treasures around the world. However, her biggest secret would shock even the Oracle herself. Reune is a member of Novus Ordm Mundi, the most elite and secretive society in Théah, comprised of criminal masterminds, vigilante scientists, and all those interested in the myriad Black Arts. They specialize in all means of illegal activity, and consider themselves the most powerful men and women in the world. They may be correct.

Reune learned of NOM almost one hundred and fifty years ago, and developed a new identity in order to infiltrate it. Her motives for doing so are unknown, but she has never told her sisters in the Order about it (the Daughters have not yet learned of NOM's existence, though they have suspicions). She has been inducted into NOM three separate times in the last century, each as a different guise. The members of NOM currently know her as a male. Under the assumed name of Aden Wigsfield, an Avalon scholar and a member of the faculty of the University of Kirk (Emeritus), Reune keeps her attention divided between their actions, and the skillful guidance of Arciniega's work.

She keeps her membership in NOM by producing a few (less dangerous) Synrath items every now and then, or by hatching some masterful plot that actually furthers her own ends. She is patient and villainous – she will stop at nothing to get her way. In many ways, Reune is no longer human. She has lived for so long that she has become jaded and cynical toward human life, and no longer cares about keeping an individual alive. She sees the world in terms of white and black, and the war to keep the Fourth Prophet from arriving is no more than another chess game. She is determined not to lose, but no longer for the sake of the world. Instead, it is because her pride will not let her accept defeat, and so she will do anything to stop it.



Esteban Valentin de la Cruz: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 5
Panache: 3
Reputation: 29
Background: Vow
Arcana: Loyal

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Commission, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Sidhe Blood (Child of the Earth)

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Politics 4, Sincerity 4

Scholar: History 3, Law 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 1, Research 2

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Leaping 4, Sprinting 3, Swinging 3, Throwing 3

Aldana (Journeyman): Feint (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Desaix) 4

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Esteban genuinely believes in Castille, and in King Sandoval, and his loyalty is true. He was approached by the Los Vagos for membership early in the history of that organization, but turned them down. "I cannot abandon the King for the sake of the country. I believe in Castillian freedom," he said to them. "You go, and make the country free, and I will ensure that there is a good man to rule it." He is true to his word, and would give his life for Sandoval, whom he dearly loves.

Esteban has tried to make contact with Lawrence Lugh on several occasions, but the Avalon knight has never responded. Esteban believes that the two have much in common, and could learn a great deal from each other. Unfortunately, the pain of Lawrence's exile – and the enmity between the two countries they serve – may keep them from ever becoming friends.

Bishop Ferenc Orlund von Durenstadt: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 2
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 2
Reputation: 42
Background: None
Arcana: None

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Appearance (Above Average), Connections (Countessa Catarina), Faith, Ordained, Patron (Church), Servants, University

Courtier: Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 3, Politics 2

Doctor: Diagnosis 2, Examiner 1, First Aid 3, Surgery 1

Scholar: History 2, Law 2, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 3, Research 3, Theology 5

Although the Daughters have no formal contact with Bishop Ferenc, they believe that he might make a useful ally if properly approached. The Bishop is extremely open-minded and his political ideas match several important tenets in the Daughter's philosophy.

Recently, Bishop Ferenc has found himself quietly but significantly at odds with the Inquisition on many issues. These differences are becoming more and more pronounced as time passes without a Hierophant to control the Inquisitional excesses. Although this is not a crime yet, many suspect he has Objectivist leanings and is therefore heretical. He has not expressed a public affiliation or even mild sympathy with any secret order, but he has been recently seen in the company of Contessa Maria Catarina Nicoletta di Caligari, a noblewoman of some renown.



Viscounti Tigran Lorenzo: Villain



Brawn: 5
Finesse: 5
Wits: 5
Resolve: 4
Panache: 4
Reputation: -79
Background: None
Arcana: Ruthless

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Alchemist, Appearance (Stunning), Dangerous Beauty, Evil Reputation, Indomitable Will, Noble, Secret Laboratory (Small, Secret Entrance), Servants, Sidhe Blood (Slow Aging and Immunity from Disease), University

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Politics 5, Scheming 5, Seduction 3, Sincerity 4

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 3, Law 5, Occult 5, Research 4

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 3, Forgery 4, Lip Reading 2, Poison 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5

Villanova (Journeyman): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Stop-thrust (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 5

Viscounti Tigran Lorenzo despises anyone and anything that interferes with the accepted way of Vodacce life; that is, the accepted place of women in society and the deference owed to nobility. He is proud of his lineage and quick to punish those who scoff at it or criticize its excesses. He is a throwback to his ancestors: amoral, sadistic, cruel, passionate, extravagant, capricious, and devastatingly handsome. If looks and noble heritage and brilliant intellect weren't enough, Fate (perhaps with some help from Legion) had dealt young Tigran an extra card; Unseelie blood flows through his veins, granting him extended agelessness and peak physical skills.

Lawrence Lugh: Hero



Brawn: 5
Finesse: 6
Wits: 4
Resolve: 6
Panache: 5
Reputation: 92
Background: Romance
Arcana: Courageous

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Appearance (Above Average), Dangerous Beauty, Combat Reflexes, Elaine's Knight, Large, Major Gesa (may only be killed while kissing his True Love)
Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 4, Politics 4

Athlete: All Knacks at 5

Buckler: Attack (Buckler) 5, Parry (Buckler) 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5

MacDonald (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike 5, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 5

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Wrestling: Grapple 4, Bear Hug 4, Break 4, Escape 4, Head Butt 4

Lugh's iron hand prevents him from using Glamour of any sort. In addition, while the hand is attached, he loses the benefits (and curses) of his Sidhe Blood. This means that he is not affected by MacEachern weapons (beyond their normal damage, of course). Lugh's barehanded damage with the iron hand is 0k2.

Lawrence is deeply in love with Queen Elaine, but never shows it. The Lady of the Lake has told him what horrors would befall Avalon if she ever returned his love. So he pines for her from afar; each day brings new lessons on how much pain his now-human heart can suffer.

Louis-Claude du Sinjin: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 6
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 6
Reputation: 102
Background: True Identity
Arcana: Lecherous

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Crescent, Able Drinker, Dangerous Beauty, Membership (Rose and Cross), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble, The Secret (Rose and Cross), Rose and Cross Vow

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Politics 4, Scheming 4, Seduction 5, Sincerity 5

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 3, Natural Philosophy 4, Philosophy 3, Research 2, Theology 2

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 4, Disguise 4, Read Lips 4, Shadowing 4, Stealth 5

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Sprinting 4, Swinging 3, Throwing 3

Desaix (Master): Double-parry (Fencing) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Desaix) 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Louis-Claude's Desaix Skill grants him the following abilities: he ignores the off-hand penalty when using a dagger or main-gauche; he gains a Free Raise when parrying with one of those weapons in his off hands; he can spend one Action die to perform two attacks on the same target (at a penalty of two unkept dice to each attack's Damage Roll); and he may spend one Action to perform an Active Defense using an Interrupt Action. The benefits of his Rose and Cross Advantages can be found in the *Knights of the Rose and Cross* sourcebook.

Louis-Claude has begun to suspect that the Daughters are closing in on him, and has turned to the Knights of the Rose and Cross for aid. If the Daughters attempt to assassinate him, they may find themselves at odds with more than a few of the ageless dandy's brothers in arms.

Gateways to Bryn Bresail

The Daughters have established many entrances to the land of Bryn Bresail — pools, rivers, any body of water under the sway of the Lady of the Lake can be used. Most are located in the Glamour Isles, but a few can be found elsewhere. While countless dozens exist throughout Théah, the following twenty are the best-established and most closely watched by the Daughters. Check the map on page 123 for their precise locations. It is assumed that all Daughters (including Heroes) know the location of at least one of these gateways, and can use them if they have the proper gifts. The GM should feel free to his or her own gateways to match the particulars of the campaign.

1. Loch Westmoreland in northern Avalon.
2. A deep patch of coastline below the white cliffs of Surluse. The only way to access the gateway is to dive off of the cliffs — a daunting prospect, even for experienced athletes.
3. A set of tide pools on the shores of Avalon, near Carleon. The pools fill with seawater every high tide, then are left surrounded by rock during low tides. The gateways only function when the tide is out.
4. An eddy of the Bran river in Avalon. The eddy wafts through a series of idyllic glades, which are often frequented by the nereid attendants of the Lady of the Lake.



Avalon Scryer

Traits		Advantages	
Brawn	2	Avalon (R/W)	(0)
Finesse	2	Castille (R/W)	(2)
Wits	2	Montaigne (R/W)	(2)
Resolve	2	Vendel (R/W)	(1)
Panache	2	Linguist	(2)
		Membership (Sophia's Daughters)	(5)
		Patron	(3)

Civil Skills

Scrying (Full-Blooded)

Scry 3, False Potions 1, Elixir of Tongues 2, Healing Balm 1

Scholar

History 3, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 3

Spy

Cryptography 1, Shadowing 1, Stealth 1

Martial Skills

Knife

Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 1

Income: 60G starting / 20G per month

Castillian Son of Lugh

Traits		Advantages	
Brawn	2	Castillian (R/W)	(1)
Finesse	3	Montaigne	(1)
Wits	2	Swordsman's Guild	(0)
Resolve	2	Swordsman's School	(25)
Panache	2	Membership (Sophia's Daughters)	(5)

Arcana: Intuitive

Background: True Identity

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Sincerity 1

Hunter

Fishing 1, Stealth 1, Tracking 1, Trail Signs 1

Spy

Shadowing 1, Sincerity 1, Stealth 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1

Aldana Swordsman School

Feint (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1, Tagging (Fencing) 2, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 1

Income: 21G starting / 1kIG per month



Montaigne Porté Mage



Traits	Advantages
Brawn 2	Castillian (R/W) (2)
Finesse 2	Montaigne (R/W) (1)
Wits 2	Théan (R/W) (3)
Resolve 2	Appearance (5)
Panache 2	Membership (Sophia's Daughters) (5)
	Noble (5)

Civil Skills

Porté (Full-Blooded)

Attunement 1, Bring 2, Bleeding 2, Pocket 1, Walk 2

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Scheming 1

Scholar

History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1

Income: 1500 G starting
/500 G per month

Vodacce Swordswoman

Traits	Advantages
Brawn 3	Vodacce (R/W) (1)
Finesse 3	Théan (R/W) (1)
Wits 2	Swordsman's Guild (0)
Resolve 2	Swordsman's School (25)
Panache 2	Membership (Sophia's Daughters) (5)

Arcana: Rash

Civil Skills

Spy

Shadowing 1, Stealth 3

Streetwise

Socializing 1, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 1, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Ambrogia Swordsman School

Feint (Fencing) 1, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 1, Riposte (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Ambrogia) 1

Income: 24G starting/1k1 G per
month