

Swashbuckling  
ADVENTURES™

# Strongholds and Hideouts™







# Strongholds and Hideouts

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**Special Thanks:**

LISA: TO TO MY HUSBAND, FOR ALWAYS BEING THERE FOR ME!

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JOHN: ETERNAL THANKS TO SHELLEY, JESSICA, AND ALL THE GAMERS IN FAYETTEVILLE.

ROB W.: THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO EVERY WIDE-EYED PERSON PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE THAT I'VE CONNED, PLEADED, AND BEGGED TO PLAY A GAME. THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME HAVE FUN.

To use this companion, a Dungeon Master also needs the *Player's Handbook*™ and the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*™.

A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*™.

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# Fish Out of Water

A wall and roof to hide my form  
A cot to rest my head  
A hearth that trophies do adorn  
A balm for want and dread

Men may walk both far and near  
Their footsteps distant roam  
But one place calls them without fear:  
Their warm and loving home.

— traditional Highland song

The moon shone on the rooftops as a white-faced figure swung effortlessly across the square. Pressing a hidden latch on his grappling gun, he disconnected the rope from the remainder of the mechanism and touched down effortlessly on the cobblestone streets.

Behind him, the sounds of pursuit grew louder. He tucked the gun to his belt, then turned to see a band of Inquisitors emerge on the far side of the square.

"You're a long way from home, Vagabond," the leader snarled.

El Vago's face remained hidden beneath his grinning mask, but his eyes shone with un-suppressed glee.

"As are you, my scarlet-clad friends. I did not realize that Verdugo's lapdogs had reached Montaigne."

"Theus's work extends to all nations... as do heretics in need of our care."

"Indeed. Then you won't miss one less."

"What have you done with Mendoza?!" The Inquisitors advanced steadily across the square.

"He is beyond your reach, vulture. As is his daughter."

The Vagabond drew a pistol. "I suppose Castille will have to find a new diplomat to fill his post."

"And WE will have to find someone to fill his place on the pyre." The lead Inquisitor increased his pace. "You will do quite nicely."

"You have to catch me first, amigo." The Vagabond fired the weapon, then turned and fled down the beckoning street. Behind him, the Inquisitors broke into a run. The sounds of pursuit echoed closer as the vigilante turned right, then left. Suddenly, he paused. This wasn't the street he remembered. Where was the statue of Carleman marking the intersection? Charouse was not San Cristobal, and so much had changed since the Revolution...

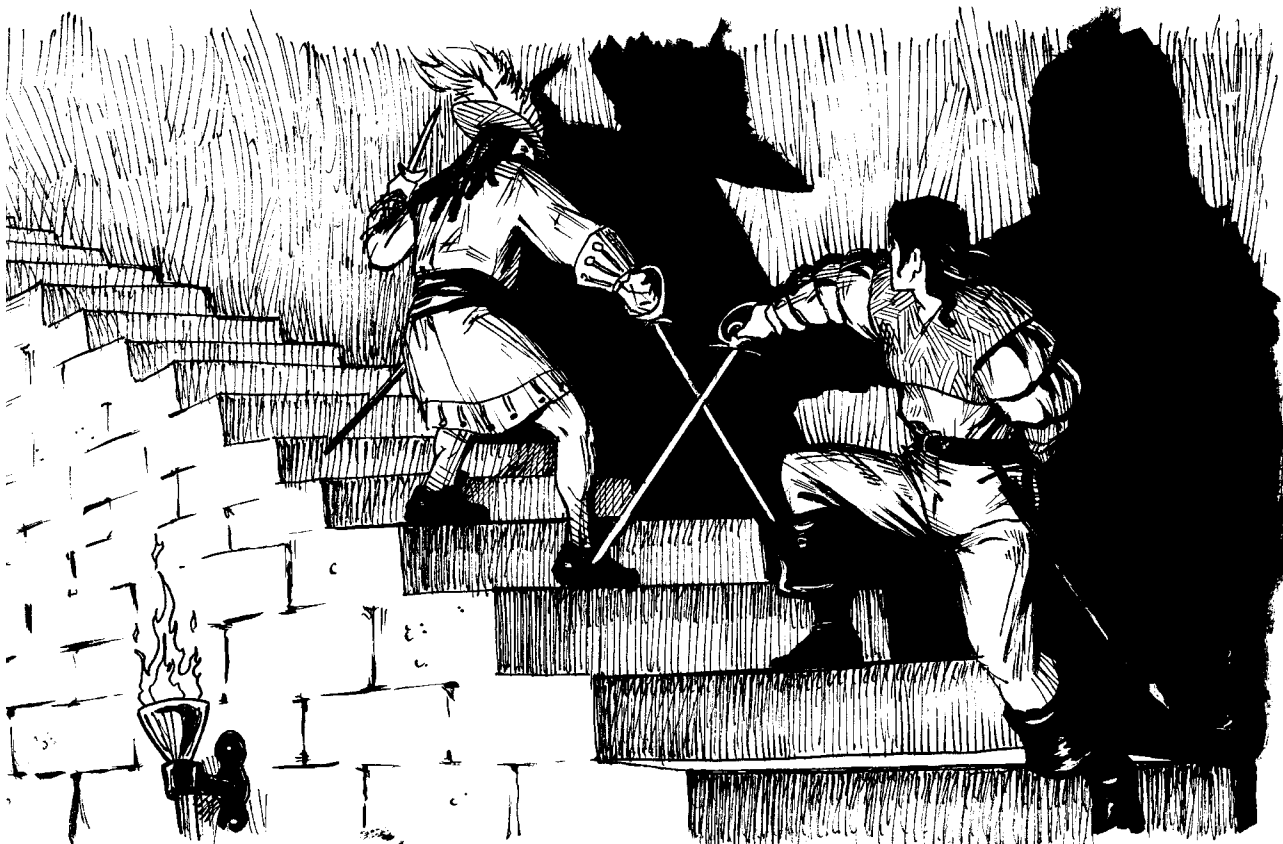
A shout of triumph rose from the Inquisitors as they rounded the corner to face him. Without thinking, he pulled a small bag from his pouch and threw it to the ground. A flash of gunpowder lit the street like day; the Inquisitions gasped in surprise and raised their hands to shield their eyes from the glare. El Vago took full advantage of the moment; the sound of his retreating footsteps rose from the flagstones again. Cursing and shaking their heads from the glare, the Inquisitors began the chase anew.

More streets. Vendor's carts, covered for the evening. The masked Castillian took another turn, to face a block he had never seen before. "Lost!" he cursed beneath his breath. He dared not slow down to get his bearing; another pause like the last one, and his pursuers would have him. He breath came in short gasps as he began to look for a place to make a stand. One wrong turn, one dead-end, and the chase would come to a most unpleasant—

"Psst! Vagabond! Over here, quickly!" A voice suddenly beckoned from a nearby alleyway.

El Vago skidded to a halt. "Who...?"

"No time!" A white hand reached out from the shadows. "They're nearly here!" Without further pause, the Vagabond clasped the speaker's fingers and stepped into the shadows. A looming doorway, cunningly fashioned to appear part of the wall, stood open in the gloom. He stepped through it, then watched as the speaker





sealed the portal behind him. The sound of angry pursuit thundered through the nearby street, then slowly faded into the distance. The Castillian waited until he could no longer hear them, then exhaled in a long slow sigh of relief.

“No time for relaxing,” his mysterious benefactor whispered. “We’ve a ways to go yet.” He beckoned to a set of stairs.

“The sewers?”

“It’s the quickest way to get where we’re going.”

They descended into a maze of pipes and dripping water. The smells of Charouse rose up to greet them, as the stranger lit a torch and gestured ahead.

They walked in silence for some time. The Castillian vigilante did not speak, but readied himself for any new surprises. Mysterious benefactors had a nasty way of being too good to be true. Finally, however, his curiosity got the better of him.

“How did you know to find me?” he asked.

“We knew you were in Charouse the moment Mendoza disappeared. He’s been invaluable in aiding us in our cause.”

“Which is—?”

“Not dissimilar to your own.” The man smiled. “You protect Castillians. We protect Montaigne.”

El Vago considered for a moment. “The Rye Grin?” he asked at last. The man nodded.

“I’ve heard of you,” El Vago said.

“It’s a good thing WE’VE heard of YOU; otherwise, you might have finished the evening roasting in a bonfire Ah. Here we are.” The man pulled open a trapdoor, emerging into a relatively clean corridor. A short while later, they clambered out of what appeared to be a large oven, into a spotless kitchen of an inn or large restaurant.

“You’ll be safe here,” the man spoke reassuringly. “We’ve kept many people out of harm’s way in this building — more secure than El Morro itself.”

“That is a relief.” The Vagabond flexed his shoulders; his exhaustion had finally begun to take its toll.

“We can get you out of the city, but you’ll need to find your own way back to Castille.”

“I think I can manage,” El Vago removed his glove and offered his hand to the man, who took it in his own.

“You’ve made a new friend today, Montagnão.”

His benefactor smiled. “Avalonian, actually. Welcome to Le Cercle de la Chanson.”

## Introduction

Welcome to *Strongholds and Hideouts*,™ *Swashbuckling Adventures*’ definitive answer to the game of hide-and-seek. It contains a variety of castles, dungeons, secret lairs, and other locations designed for use in a swashbuckling campaign. The world of Théah holds numerous such locations, from the secret lairs of daring vigilantes to the lost hideaways of dark and terrible villains. Ten of them are included in this volume, complete with maps, pertinent monster and NPCs stats, and adventure hooks if appropriate. We’ve endeavored to vary them as much as possible, providing an idea of just how much material the swashbuckling genre can encompass. They can each be run as simple dungeon crawl adventures, used as a recurring location for your party to visit, or expanded to become an integral part of an entire campaign.

The first chapter, “Secret Places” contains a quartet of locations designed for privacy and hidden agendas. It starts with something for the players: an innocent-seeming inn that makes an ideal hideout for swashbucklers and derring-doers of all varieties. It then moves to more sinister locales: the Forbidden Cove, a trap-filled catacomb where the infamous pirate Reis buries his stolen treasure; an altered Montaigne mausoleum that now serves as a headquarters for the fearsome Inquisition; and the underground dungeons of Théah’s blackest villain, Giovanni Villanova.

The second chapter, “Castles and Strongholds,” details three ancient fortresses housing a variety of denizens. The first two, a haunted estate in war-torn Eisen and a cursed stronghold in the heart of Ussura, are designed for lovers or intrigue and straight dungeon crawlers alike. The third is at once safer and more threatening: the fortress-city of *Eisenfürst* Fauner Pösen, one of the mightiest strongholds in all of Théah.

The third chapter, “Where Brave Men Will Not Venture,” covers a trio of the most dangerous place in the world, places far from civilization where human footsteps rarely disturb the inhuman monsters lying in wait. The first, The Temple of Longing, springs from the heart of the Unseelie Sidhe, and from a lost member of that race who yearns vainly to return to his people. The second, the Great Puzzle Maze of the Coruscites, is one of the deadliest Synchronic ruins in Théah... and the source of the pirate Kheired-Din’s seeming immortality. The final entry, the Wreck of the *Vigilant*, contains the remains of a centuries-old sailing ship which ran aground and now serves as the home of some most inhospitable creatures. Finally, we’ve included a brief appendix containing rules pertinent to this book: both for classic 7th Sea players and those who prefer the d20™ System.

As with other material in the *Swashbuckling Adventures*™ line, these locations are designed to be easily transferred to other campaign worlds. Each of them has specific tie-ins to Théah characters and settings, but their essence is generic enough to exist anywhere from historic earth to any number of fantasy settings. In addition, many of them are designed to be expanded upon, or inserted into other preexisting locations at your convenience. The Great Puzzle Maze, for example, could easily exist in the heart of a much larger dungeon, and the Forbidden Cove and other locations are designed with easy access points to layouts of the GM’s own devising. If you don’t wish to expand them, simply eliminate those access points, and the location becomes self-contained.

No self-respecting hero can be happy without a place to hang his sword. And no villain worth the title could exist without a place to plot his evil schemes. *Strongholds and Hideouts*™ provides a place for them to call home, and for friends and foes of all variety to come calling. Turn the page and find out where the other side goes to get away from it all...

## CHAPTER ONE:

**Secret Places****Heroes' Hideaway:  
The Rye Grin**

*Le Cercle de la Chanson* (formerly *Cercle du Chant*, see *The Montaigne Revolution*,™ page 74) is one of the newest restaurants in Charouse. Adrian Fletchyr, an Avalon singer, turned the former bakery into a dinner theater before his recent demise. Now his wife, Antoinette, owns and operates the fashionable eatery where reservations are required and payment is always made in advance. A number of patrons have actually taken to reserving tables for weeks at a time, then offering them as gifts or rewards to their associates. Few would turn down an opportunity for an evening of song and entertainment in the trying times of the Revolution.

However, *Le Cercle* is more than just a restaurant. It is also the headquarters of a secret society known as the Rye Grin, a heroic group of counter-revolutionaries who use the building as a meeting place, storehouse for equipment and source of information. Secret compartments and passages hidden throughout the building make it a good resource for members of any secret society.

**The Owner**

The current owner of *Le Cercle de la Chanson* is the recently-widowed Antoinette Fletchyr. Several years ago she was a well-known singer, dancer and actress in the theaters of Charouse. Her beauty was renowned and her sweet temperament legendary but that all changed during a ballet performance for the Montaigne Court at *L'Empereur's*

palace. The troupe was performing on a raised stage in an unfamiliar room, a stage smaller than their normal one. Antoinette was dancing the lead role and the performance was going well until her solo. Because of the cramped quarters, Antoinette collided with one of the other dancers and fell off the small stage into the makeshift orchestra pit. She landed badly upon her knee, which shattered, ending her dancing for good. In the weeks that followed, she brooded, growing bitter over her lost career. She lashed out at everyone close to her and drove them away until she became a recluse from society.

One day Adrian Fletchyr paid a call. A rapidly rising star of the Avalon stage he had come to Montaigne to perform for the court. One of Antoinette's old fans had asked him to pass along a note to her and he was happy to oblige. When he found her living in squalor without patron or friend, he refused to leave her side. Despite her foul temper and shrill condemnations, he brought her to better quarters, saw that she was attended by his own servant and showered her with gifts. She acted horribly to everyone, but Adrian persevered and slowly her heart melted. The two fell deeply in love and were married. Adrian spent years performing in Avalon and Montaigne until he saved and borrowed enough money to purchase a bakery and refurbish it. He knew that even a healthy dancer could not perform forever and planned to start a little shop where he and Antoinette could retire in relative comfort.

The Fletchyrs opened *Le Cercle de la Chanson* shortly before the Montaigne people rose up in rebellion. In addition to the good food and wine, it provided entertainment to distract the patrons from the grim conditions of the Montaigne streets and thus became an immediate success.



While they always felt for the poor and oppressed people of Montaigne and often distributed leftover goods from the restaurant to those on the streets, the Fletchyr's wondered who would help the Revolution's victims. They agreed with many of the peasant's grievances, but as the Revolution went on, it became apparent that innocent men and women were being killed by the score for no crime other than having noble blood. Adrian set about contacting people willing to assist them in smuggling nobles out of the country and Antoinette made numerous modifications to the restaurant to enable them to hide those in danger. While they were still planning, one of their most loyal patrons, Lady Jamais Sices du Sices was arrested during a performance.

Adrian immediately gathered a small group of customers and launched a desperate attempt to rescue her from *Le Coiffeur*. They were successful and the Rye Grin was born. A secret society dedicated to the proposition that no man should pay for the crimes of another, the Rye Grin attempted to rescue innocent nobles and others from the Revolutionary government. Before much could be done however, Adrian died during a rescue attempt. Luckily the authorities did not recover his body, so his connection to *Le Cercle de la Chanson* was never discovered.

With the death of her beloved husband, Antoinette suffered a second horrendous loss but this time she did not take to her bed. Despite the disability with her right leg, her mind is sharp and her singing talent undiminished. She assumed management of *Le Cercle* herself. She also aids the members of the Rye Grin in their activities and ensures that they will always have at least one place that they can call home.

## The Staff

The staff of *Le Cercle de la Chanson* consists of performers and entertainers from across Théah. Currently there are ten servers, three chefs, a woodcarver and several assistants.

Five servers are on duty any given night. They are responsible for serving the food, ensuring that everyone's glass is full, and performing on stage several times a night. Three of the female servers formed a trio of singers. Maeve O'Sullivan, Bethany Carmichael and Juliet Hunt came to Charouse in hopes of performing for the court, but never made it that far. Instead they wandered from one odd job to another until Antoinette took them in and gave them a place to live and work. While they did not initially enjoy their duties, the pay and hours were better than they got when working on the streets. They are currently still working on the language. While they can understand Montaigne, their accents are so outrageous they cannot find work on the stage here in Charouse. Many of the patrons find their mangled Montaigne quite fetching, due no doubt in part to their beauty and their singing voices.

Of the other female servers, Josette du Mar is a trained Montaigne opera singer whose voice was simply not adequate for solos. A Vodacce woman known only as Carmilla is an acrobat who came to Montaigne to escape some sort of difficulty with her family. She always dresses in pants and the patrons enjoy watching her pick up their empty plates and glasses with her feet as she walks past their tables on her hands. Margareta is a *bailarina*, skilled in dozens of Castillian dances

These three occasionally work on stage as well as in private homes. Antoinette has no problem with that, but insists that if they learn anything unusual they inform her immediately, for the protection of the restaurant. None of the servers or chefs knows anything about the Rye Grin. They do know that Antoinette occasionally entertains guests after hours, but are smart enough not to ask questions these days.

The male servers are all jugglers who toured outlying regions entertaining lower class crowds. Banding together for a more spectacular show, they were able to command larger purses for a time but life on the road and the uncertainty of employment convinced them to settle down in Charouse. They were struggling to make ends meet when Adrian offered them jobs. They devote much of their off-duty time to performing on the street for extra money. Antoinette allows them several nights off every week as long as at least two of them are on duty every night. They insure that glasses are always full and trouble is quickly quelled. They often toss items to each other over the heads of the crowd as well as juggling, acrobatics and singing.

The chefs at *Le Cercle* serve one meal a night, which they start preparing around noon. Typical fare includes *duck a la orange*, salmon fillets, a rich beef stew with wine and onions, and pork tenderloins with fresh mushrooms. Fresh bread and vegetables always accompany the meals. Ales, wines and selected spirits are all available. One of the chefs is Bradford Darlington, an Avalonian whose preference runs to beef and seafood. He is an enormous man with a large appetite for life and fine food. He was an actor in Carleon and when he emerges from the kitchen, he generally bellows out soliloquies from ancient Numan comedies, some of which can be quite bawdy. Timothy le Grange, a thin Montaigne poet whose work was a critical but not commercial success, produces the poultry items and performs his latest poems for the audience. The two chefs have a friendly rivalry and are both well-liked by customers and staff alike.

The third chef is a baker named Felipe Patros. He creates all of the bread, pastries and deserts for *Le Cercle*. His specialty is braiding loaves of bread together into wreaths, emblems and designs. He also works with the two chefs to create enticing dishes *en croute*. (Bradford says that in Avalon such pastry coverings are called "coffyns" but Timothy and Felipe prefer the Montaigne term, so as to avoid tempting *Le Coiffeur*.) The chefs have already named one of these dishes, a beef tenderloin encased in a pastry shell and then topped with an incredibly rich Bordelaise sauce "Beef Baveux" after the famous member of the Council of Eight. Numerous bakers from across Montaigne come to the restaurant to see if they can crack Patros' techniques, but so far no one has achieved his level of culinary mastery.

Bartholomew is a carpenter from Avalon and one of Adrian's best friends. He made his living as a stage magician until he grew too old to perform the more popular tricks. Adrian offered him a position as *Le Cercle's* wood carver and carpenter. Bartholomew gratefully accepted and has worked here ever since. Most of the redecorating took place under his direction and now he focuses his attention on the tables of the main room, carving each one into a work of art. He still performs an occasional magic trick for the crowd, particularly one in which he takes a curtain fall from the chandelier and mysteriously vanishes when it rises. The entire staff treats him with great kindness and respect. At the GM's discretion he may serve as a member of the Rye Grin,

although he feels that he is too old to undertake missions so he simply supports their activities and covers for members.

Antoinette Fletchyr acts as *Le Cercle's* accountant, hostess and manager. She rarely performs herself but the crowd is always pleased when she does. She is as lovely as ever and her voice as fresh; a tinge of sadness lends depth and soul to her songs that was not present before she married Adrian. When not performing, she greets — and occasionally flirts — with customers.

In addition to their other performances, the staff of *Le Cercle de la Chanson* stages a play at least three times a week. Antoinette selects the production and ensures that everyone is given a chance to perform important roles. Plays are chosen from those in vogue throughout Théah. While most are performed in Montaigne, several are performed in their native tongue every month. The plays usually take place on both the Main Stage and the Second Stage, and actors serve food between their scenes.

If members of the Rye Grin wish and have some talent for performing, Antoinette will happily hire them. If they possess no theatrical talent, they may hire on as chefs or carpenter's assistants. They receive very little pay, but get help from the staff to develop their skills until they are ready to become full members of the staff. And of course, they are well fed.

## The Economics

Money never changes hands at *Le Cercle de la Chanson* at night. Seating is by reservation only and must be arranged in advance. The typical patron sends payment during the day and his or her name is placed upon the guest list. The restaurant's reputation for excellent entertainment and food has driven the price for reservations quite high, but most of the upper class still within the city are willing to pay it. There is a strict rule against politics or fighting inside the restaurant. Former noblemen sit beside revolutionary leaders without fear, for any disturbance is enough to ban the person from *Le Cercle*; despite the Revolution, this is still Montaigne and reputation still matters. If a scuffle does break out, the servers quickly move to break it up and expel those responsible. The restaurant is open every night between 5:00 p.m. and midnight. Most of the patrons arrive after 8:00 p.m. and stay until the restaurant closes.

Many of the patrons pay the high price for a season, which entitles them to a seat in *Le Cercle* every night. Few patronize the restaurant that often, but several offers the seats to others as gifts, bonuses or even bribes. (Note to GM: This works well as an adventure hook to introduce the party to *Le Cercle* and the Rye Grin.)

The staff is well paid. Although they receive very few tips from the patrons, they hold a high profile among the patrons of the arts and many have already moved on to larger roles on the stage. Antoinette uses the remainder of the profits to feed the poor and provide monetary aid to the Rye Grin. Before the restaurant opens, all of the money is taken to a local banker under heavy guard.

## The Exterior

*Le Cercle* stands near the center of town, on a main street between two central areas. The staff shares responsibility for keeping the cobblestone street in front of the restaurant

clean. The building's exterior is rather drab; in fact, on first glance the place appears to be a warehouse. There are no windows and only two doors. Oaken walls reach up almost two stories high to a slanting slate roof. A large sign hanging above the main entrance features a circle of braided bread surrounding the words *Le Cercle de la Chanson* written in blue. The restaurant relies heavily on word of mouth for its business.

## The Entrance and Coat Room

Upon entering the building, the visitor sees a single-story room, barely ten feet square. The walls and ceiling consist of beautifully stained walnut planking. The only features in the room are two other doors and a lectern where Antoinette usually stands, although Josette du Mar manages the post when the owner is not available. The lectern holds the guest register and reservation list. During the day, Antoinette takes the money and writes people's names on the register. The money goes into a locked strongbox beneath the lectern and the only key is locked in Antoinette's desk.

At night, every guest must check in and verify the reservation. Almost everyone else is turned away. Antoinette keeps two tables open at all time in case prominent government officials show up unannounced. If a visitor causes trouble, Antoinette calls through the door to the Main Room for the servers' assistance. Since it is well known that the money is removed before the night begins, there have been only two attempted robberies; both failed due to the diligence of the staff.

If the patron is wearing a cloak or coat, Antoinette always asks if they would like to keep it in the Coatroom. If a person does so, he receives a plaque of walnut roughly two inches square bearing a brief quote from a play. The plaque is returned to the hostess when the patron leaves and she matches the quote with the correct coat. However, Antoinette has several special plaques she can use to pass a secret message along to a Rye Grin member. Members learn the meanings of these plaques (*see below*) and can check their coat at the door regardless of the weather.

### Rye Grin Plaques and Their Meanings

**Quote:** "While dawn's red fingers claw across the sky"  
**Meaning:** Remain after the show.

**Quote:** "Till 'morrow shall I wait for thee"  
**Meaning:** Return tomorrow.

**Quote:** "Hide thee from mine sight"  
**Meaning:** Stay hidden for fear of unfriendly eyes.

**Quote:** "All mine plans do shatter unto ruin"  
**Meaning:** A change of plans has occurred.

**Quote:** "Only in mine heart shall thee find thy answer"  
**Special:** This plaque is actually a well-crafted puzzle box approximately half an inch thick. By rotating the capital "O," the plaque is unlocked and a hidden compartment revealed in which Antoinette can hide a slip of parchment with further instructions.



A door leads east into the Main Room. The door to the north leads to a cloakroom measuring eight feet by eight feet where guests' cloaks hang during performances on hooks, each of which has a brief quote from a play engraved above it. There is an easily located hidden door in the northern wall which opens inward revealing another room with a large assortment of costumes ranging from peasant garb to nobleman's velvets. Several chests with more props and costumes rest along the wall. Ostensibly for the performers' use, the garments are available to members of the Rye Grin who may need them in an emergency. Almost anything can be found here including Musketeer and guard uniforms. The construction quality is low and a moderately keen observer can spot them as fakes but in the dark on a fast horse, they pass as authentic.

Another hidden compartment can be found upon the east wall, but this one is very well concealed because it contains high quality attire that will pass even careful examination. Musketeer and military uniforms, foppish finery and a wide variety of outfits for any occasion can be found in this small cupboard.

## The Main Room

The Main Room of *Le Cercle de la Chanson* dominates the building. Even empty, the place is impressive, with a round stage whose 20-foot diameter is surrounded by two rings of tables. Twenty feet above the stage, an enormous chandelier hangs from the ceiling beams. In the center of each wall, a lantern hangs beneath a crossed rapier and musket, adding to the dramatic environment. Curtains shroud the corners of the room from view. Another stage lies above the entranceway to the room.

At night when the patrons fill the tables with happy chatter and the staff fills the air with song and entertainment, the place can be quite overwhelming. The acoustics allow the sounds on the stage to carry throughout the room and someone is entertaining the crowd at all times either singing, juggling, dancing or simply posing for the audience. Servers move constantly throughout the room, ensuring that all the glasses are filled and the dirty plates are cleared.

## The Tables

The tables in the Main Room are all six feet wide and well constructed although they did not start out as tables; they were originally spools used on the docks to hold anchor lines and cables. Adrian Fletchyr bought twenty spools of cable and transported them to the navy shipyards. His profits were meager and he was stuck with twenty empty spools in the bargain. The spools consisted of a central barrel three feet wide with outer flanges six feet wide. He had one of the flanges cut off before sanding and staining everything else a walnut hue.

In the year since the spools were brought to *Le Cercle*, Bartholomew carved images onto the tops of half of them. Some are simple pictures of rural settings such as farms or hunts. Others contain elaborate Inish Crosses or geometric designs. However, all the carvings contain a hidden surprise: the image all contain the letters of the alphabet except one and a different one is missing from each table. Patrons of the restaurant love to spend rare quiet moments staring at the tabletops in search of the missing letter. Discriminating patrons take care to reserve specific tables to enjoy this game, but doing so requires a slightly larger deposit.

During performances, four comfortable walnut chairs surround each table and a large candle is placed in the center. Each table also boasts a breadbasket filled with specialty breads and a small crock of fresh butter. Servers make certain that both the basket and the butter crock are always full.

Besides ornate carvings, some tables contain other surprises. One hides a hidden doorway to the crawlspace leading to the stage. Several contain secret compartments where extra utensils and tableware are stored. The table in the northwestern corner of the room has a compartment that holds a number of weapons for the Rye Grin's use including fencing weapons, pistols and knives.

The two tables closest to the kitchen are the most interesting. In each of these, the table's top has been split so that there are actually two tops. If the upper tabletop is twisted clockwise, it unlocks and can be lifted off of the lower tabletop. Sandwiched between the two are detailed maps and important documents. One of the tables contains a very detailed map of Charouse showing sewers, tunnels, the homes of many noblemen, government buildings and possible escape routes. The other table contains forged documents, lists of possible allies and agents, correspondence and all the other incriminating evidence needed to continue the Rye Grin's work — or utterly destroy it. For this reason, the pedestal of these two tables each contains a barrel of gunpowder. While primarily used as a supply for the Rye Grin's firearms, should the need arise, one of the slats of the pedestal can be opened and the fuse inside lit. The fuse will burn for a scant thirty seconds before exploding. Of course, this is a last ditch diversion that will destroy any documentation still within the table.

## The Main Stage

Rising two feet off the ground, the deeply burnished oak stage fills the center of the room. Steps lead down from the stage at the northern and southern edge, although many performers simply leap on and off for dramatic flair.

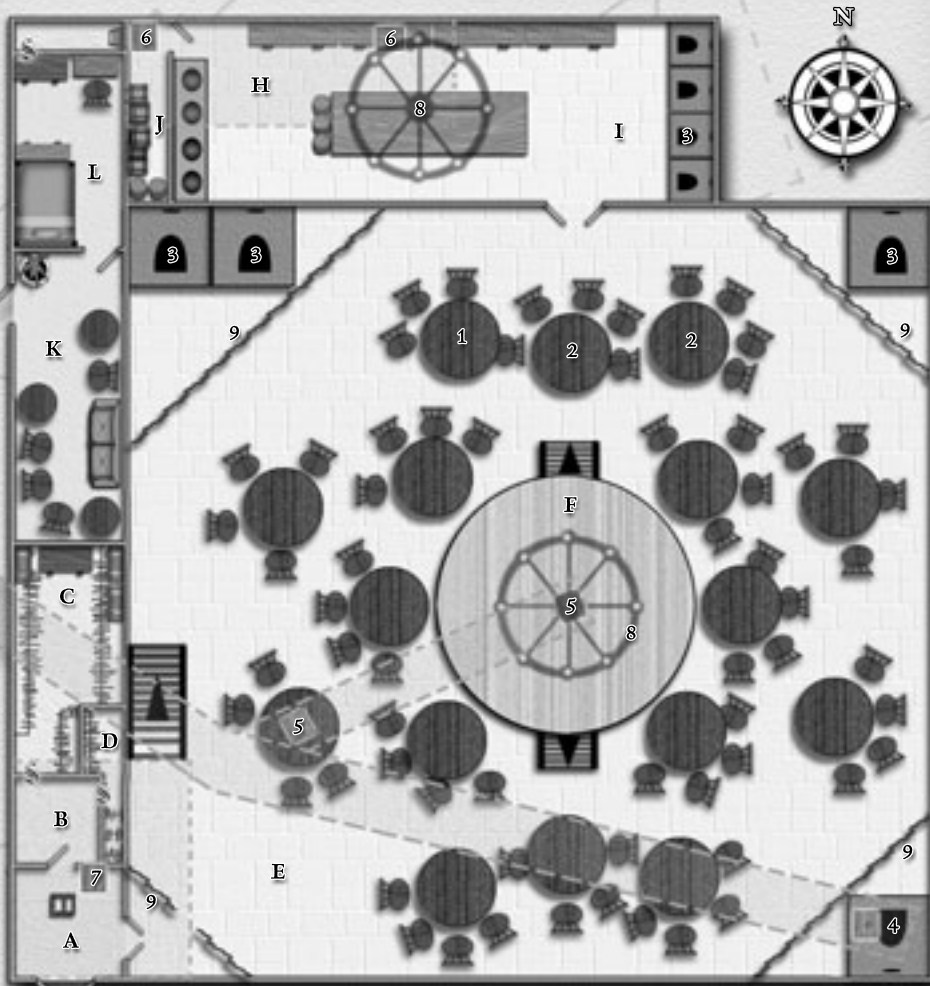
There are several hidden compartments in the stage that serve as storage for stage props like as juggling clubs, blunted stage weaponry and oil for the lanterns as well as dried goods like onions, potatoes and spices. In the exact center of the stage is a small knothole. Lifting it up reveals that four of the slats in the center of the stage form a trapdoor over a crawlspace. The crawlspace leads twenty feet away, where it ends beneath one of the tables. The table conceals a door that allows anyone in the tunnel to exit out into the restaurant. This has been used a number of times by Bartholomew as a stage illusion. Another hidden door leading up to the secret passageway lies next to the trapdoor.

The chandelier is a made of wrought iron in the shape of a circle from which candles sprout. It is raised and lowered by a rope-and-tackle arrangement near the kitchen door. A red curtain is fastened to the chandelier's frame and when released drops down to the stage, blocking the center of the stage (and the trapdoor) from sight.

## The Second Stage

A set of stairs along the west wall leads up to the area directly above the Entrance and Cloak Room where a second stage has been created. Several of the steps on the staircase lift up to reveal small storage areas underneath. Currently this area holds lanterns, ropes, chains, and block and tackle. The second stage area serves primarily as a balcony or a seated minstrel gallery that is illuminated by a set of lanterns along

# Le Cercle de la Chanson

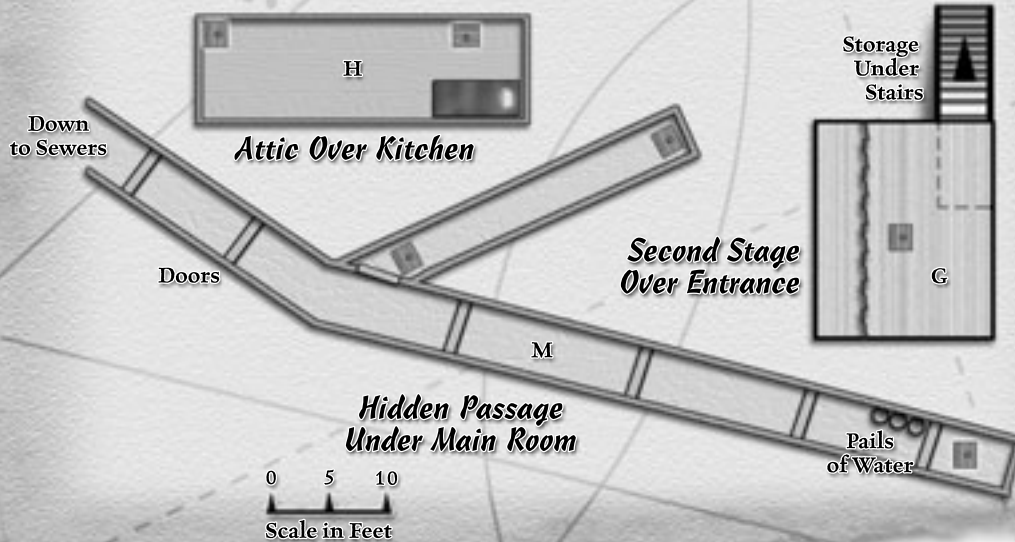


0 5 10  
Scale in Feet

- |                             |                                       |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| A. Entrance Room            | I. Kitchen                            | 4. Oven with secret door to 'M' |
| B. Coat Room                | J. Pantry                             | 5. Trapdoor to 'M'              |
| C. Costume Room             | K. Salon                              | 6. Trapdoor to 'H'              |
| D. Uniform Closet           | L. Bedroom                            | 7. Trapdoor to 'G'              |
| E. Main Room                | M. Hidden Passageway (see Map 2)      | 8. Chandelier                   |
| F. Main Stage               | 1. Table with secret weapons store    | 9. Curtains                     |
| G. Second Stage (see Map 2) | 2. Tables with secret document stores |                                 |
| H. Attic (see Map 2)        | 3. Ovens                              |                                 |



# Le Cercle de la Chanson



the front of the stage. A curtain behind which more supplies can be hidden covers the back of the stage. The center of the stage contains a trapdoor identical to the one on the main stage; the opening underneath leads to the Entrance Room. This can be extremely useful when guards appear to prevent anyone leaving the Main Room; however, the Rye Grin rarely uses this area for that purpose since it is always the first place searched.

## The Ovens

The Main Room contains four ovens, a holdover from the days when the building served as a bakery. During performances, the curtains of the main room shield them from sight, but are pulled back during the day to allow their use. Each of the four ovens measures nine feet tall and six feet square. Thick clay walls contain the heat of the fire built in the lower section of the oven and trays of bread are placed in the upper section to cook. Felipe Patros uses the two ovens in the corner closest to the kitchen to prepare the daily assortment of breads and pastries. Another oven in the far corner has developed a large crack in the clay; rather than repair it, Antoinette uses it as a storage area for the restaurant's cutlery and dishes.

The last oven is not in use either, apparently due to a crack; in actuality, it contains a secret door leading to the Hidden Passageway (*see below*.) To reach it, the user must climb inside the firewell, slide a panel aside and crawl through the narrow passage. Other than Antoinette and Bartholomew, none of the staff is aware of this feature, however. (Members of the Rye Grin probably are, at the GM's discretion.) This oven currently holds linens in the upper tray.

## The Hidden Passageway

When the Fletchyr were renovating the buildings, they discovered a passageway that led to the Charouse sewers. They decided that rather than wall it up, they would use it themselves, so they built two entrances. One is in the Main Room, through the oven farthest from the kitchen. The other is from the short crawlspace connecting the Main Stage to one of the tables; this passageway runs from the oven to the crawlspace, then slopes gently down to the sewers.

Several doors are always kept closed and locked along the path to prevent unwanted visitors or the stench from the Sewers seeping into the restaurant. Behind the first door stand several pails that are always full of water and supplies meant to allow the person using the tunnel to clean up before heading back to the restaurant. The Rye Grin uses this passageway to enter and leave the building undetected. While there is not enough room to meet in the tunnel comfortably, it is possible to wait there until any unwanted guests have departed *Le Cercle*.

## The Kitchen

The kitchen is really a large open area off the Main Room. A large stand-alone wooded counter sits in the center with a built-in cutting block. Several ovens line the eastern wall, while the west wall contains a doorway leading to the pantry and several large sinks where servers wash dishes and cutlery. The northern wall contains a cupboard filled with spices and cooking utensils. Lower cupboards on this wall hold copper kettles and pots, wrought iron skillets, colanders and ladles, and several knife racks mounted on the wall. The island

countertop serves as both a cutting board and a serving area where the chefs place customers' orders. The shelves beneath it hold spices and utensils for the final stages of food preparation.

The chefs normally work on the northern side of the counter when preparing food while the servers use the southern side. They rush into the room, gather the plates from the counter top and then head back through the door which is usually left ajar during the busiest moments of the evening. The servers have become quite adept at traffic management, so there are rarely any accidents.

When food is not being served, the pace in the kitchen is almost leisurely and the staff engages in friendly banter and practical jokes. During meal service, however, the staff focuses intently on their task and moves like a well choreographed dance as they prepare food for up to 100 patrons. Any strangers in the room will be escorted out of the area immediately; if violence erupts, the chefs are well trained with knives and not afraid to use them — though they try to avoid fatalities if possible.

## The Attic

While the main room is almost two stories high, the kitchen is only a single story and the area above it is actually a small hidden garret with two entrances. One is through a small trapdoor in the wall fifteen feet above the floor. While the chandelier is raised, the rope crosses directly in front of the trapdoor. The only way to enter is to climb the rope to the trapdoor; even then the trapdoor opens outwards and the rope crosses directly in front of it, preventing access. Only when the chandelier is lowered can someone climb up the rope and enter the attic. The other entrance to the room is via a ladder in the corner, which descends into Antoinette's quarters.

The attic is small, cramped and stuffy. It lies directly over the kitchen ovens, so it is always hot. The only furniture is a small pallet bed on the floor. The Rye Grin occasionally hides fugitives here while they arrange to smuggle them out of the country.

## Antoinette's Home

Antoinette Fletcher's personal quarters — a bedroom and a salon — occupy one corner of the building. The bedroom contains a four poster feather bed and a small collection of elegant furniture. Antoinette keeps her clothing and personal items in a dresser and a tall wardrobe. She conducts her personal correspondence with performers across Théah at a small, delicately crafted desk. Many of the people with whom Antoinette has contact do not realize how the information they provide will be used, but they trust her to act honorably.

A hidden door in the back of the wardrobe permits access to a ladder leading up to the Attic of *Le Cercle*. The salon contains chairs and small tables for a half dozen people, although Antoinette rarely allows that many in here. One wall is dominated by a painting of the proprietress from her dancing days while a portrait of Adrian smiles at her from the opposite wall. Both pieces are excellent although only Antoinette knows that her beloved husband was the artist. The door from the salon opens onto a small alleyway that runs along the back of the restaurant. There are no entrances between this area and the restaurant.

## The Society

The Rye Grin is a secret society dedicated to a single concept: no one should pay for the crimes of another. No noble should die for the crimes of an entire class. The Rye Grin works to rescue nobles and innocents from execution at the hands of the new Revolutionary government. They fight from the shadows because they know that brute force will not accomplish their missions, but daring rescues and heroes willing to take outrageous chances can. As a group, they are barely a few months old so their resources are still quite limited. (Presumably, the Rye Grin consists mainly of player characters, though the specifics may vary in different campaigns.)

*Le Cercle de la Chanson* is their only base of operation and Antoinette can explain their presence in a number of ways. She may tell the staff that she has taken on a new partner, which might give an adventurer access to the building during off hours. If anyone in the party has a skill with performing, she will happily hire them to work at the restaurant which also gives them a good cover should the authorities get too curious.

Antoinette is willing to aid them, but she is not their leader, nor is she an adventure-seeking hero. She will ensure that the group always has a hot meal, clean clothes, the supplies they need and a place to meet in relative safety, but the rest is up to them.

## Other Worlds

In world other than Théah — or even in Théah countries outside of Montaigne — *Le Cercle de la Chanson* is meant to function as a restaurant in a mid-size to large city for the upper middle class and noblemen while still allowing lower class heroes some access. Any secret society or band of adventurers could use it as a base of activity. The restaurant relies upon hidden compartments and misdirection rather than any spells or magic, which makes it perfect for a thieves guild headquarters or the hiding place of a spy network. Because the staff is apparently unaware of the establishment's clandestine nature, this is not an appropriate place for high powered combat-intensive groups or mystical organizations, though, in worlds where magic is more common, Antoinette can ensure the place is protected with powerful anti-detection and other useful spells. Another possibility would be to replace the entire staff with members of the organization to ensure that there is no interference with the group's plans — unless of course they were infiltrated...

## NPC Statistics for Le Cercle de la Chanson

All hidden compartments and secret passageways are sturdy and very well constructed. However, once found they are easy to open (no further check required).

### D20™ MECHANICS

A Spot check (DC 20) is required to find these locations, except the Uniform Closet, which requires a DC of 25.

### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Perception check (TN 25) is required to find these locations, except the Uniform Closet, which requires a TN 30.

### Antoinette Fletchyr (A20™)

**Montaigne Théan Bard 6:** HD 6d8; hp 26; Init +6; Spd 30; AC 12; Atks: knife +6 melee (1d4+1); SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17; AL LG; Skills: Balance +5, Craft (cooking) +5, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +6, Gather Info +9, Hide +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (accounting) +7, Knowledge (bardic) +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Music (bardic) +9, Perform +9, Sense Motive +9, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Tumble +8; Feats: Appearance — Above Average, Improved Initiative, Membership (Rye Grin), Weapon Finesse.

### Antoinette Fletchyr — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3  
**Reputation:** 30  
**Background:** None  
**Arcana:** None  
**Advantages:** Montaigne (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Connections, Membership (Rye Grin), Stunning Appearance  
**Courtier:** Dancing 3, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 3, Gossip 3, Oratory 1, Scheming 3, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3  
**Performer:** Acting 3, Dancing 3, Oratory 1, Singing 4  
**Merchant:** Accounting 2, Cooking 2, Innkeeper 2  
**Spy:** Bribery 3, Conceal 2, Disguise 3, Shadowing 1, Stealth 1  
**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3

### Restaurant Staff Brutes (A20™)

**Théan Bards 3:** CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d8; hp 15; Init +6; Spd 30; AC 12; Atks: knife +4 melee (1d4+1); SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 15; AL any good; Skills: Balance +5, Disguise +5, Gather Info +6, Hide +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (bardic) +2, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Music (bardic) +2, Perform +6, Tumble +6; Feats: Appearance — Above Average, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

### Restaurant Staff Brutes (7th Sea™)

**Threat Rating:** 3  
**Weapons:** Medium (Knives, Kitchen Implements, and Fencing swords).  
**TN to be Hit:** 20  
**Skills:** Throwing 3, Attack (Knife) 2, two Perform skills (Juggling, Acting, Singing, Dancing, etc.), one at level 3 and one at level 1

## Inquisition Stronghold: The Mausoleum

On the storm-tossed north coast of Montaigne, a few miles west of Dechaine, lies a large cemetery time has forgotten. Weathered tombstones crawl slowly uphill towards forbidding cliffs rising high above the sea. A mausoleum stands at the cemetery's center, hunched, worn down by centuries of the sea's fury, a long-forgotten family's final monument. Constructed in the twelfth century, the mausoleum's squat exterior would barely be noticed but for the spire that juts skyward from its center, as if pointing an accusatory finger at Theus himself. Under the spire's roof sits a balcony adorned by a solitary bench facing east toward the city. Under the moss and dirt, evidence of centuries of neglect, an inscription

in Théan reads "Only by the grace of Theus is this yours."

In 1172, Edouard Duhamel, the first Duc of Dechaine, commissioned the finest architects to build a memorial as a final resting-place for his descendants to remember their forefathers and a testimony to the glory of *les ducs de Dechaine*. Duc Edouard was a sorcerer, the power in his blood eclipsed only by the strength of his piety. Disgusted by ages of his family's sinful nature, he determined that the taint could only be eradicated by achieving a reputation as the Prophets' faithful servants. He atoned long and hard, and saw to it that his children never discovered the unnatural powers they wielded. In this he succeeded, for they were devoted worshippers of Theus.

Unfortunately for the house of Duhamel, Edouard's peers saw no merit in his piety. Within a generation a series of unfortunate accidents rendered his line extinct and the city of Dechaine came under the jurisdiction of the du Crieux family. On a cold spring day in 1217, Edouard himself became the last to be interred in his mausoleum. The change in demeanor during the final months of their gentle and pious lord's life had terrified the people of Dechaine. With each child he laid to rest in the crypt he saw the ancient Duhamel name die away and he became bitter and withdrawn. On his deathbed, he swore revenge against those who had wronged him. So great was the venom in his dying breath that even his most faithful servants were terrified, and spent many days at the cemetery, praying for their old master's soul. Nothing, however, would make them stay there past nightfall.

Over time, the cemetery began to develop a reputation. Wild tales were told in hushed tones late at night that the Duhamel cemetery labored under a curse. In 1224, a pauper was buried on the grounds near the mausoleum. The ceremony was conducted hurriedly, and the priest sped away as if Legion itself were at his heels. They were the last souls to set foot in the cemetery for over four centuries.

Time marched on without the Duhamels; as moss covered the edifice Edouard had raised to honor his family, the cemetery was forgotten. Then, in the winter of 1666, Montegue made his inspired stand against Inquisition forces. Under the Montaigne general's leadership the Church's disorganized armies were pushed back across the Castillian border and Léon XIV pronounced revenge on Castille, the home of the Church. Even as the once-proud army fell apart before Montegue's advance, the great general noticed a difference in the enemy. There was no steel in their eyes, no wit in their tactics, none of the brilliance that had almost brought the most powerful nation in Théah to its knees. It was as if the Inquisition's leadership had simply crumbled to dust and blown away on the morning breeze.

While Montegue's firing line held Verdugo's finest soldiers at bay a lone Knight Inquisitor viewed the distant battle with grim resignation. He saw in Montegue what none of his fellows did: a foe they could not defeat, an obstacle that neither faith nor strength could overcome. Guillaume de Marrec brought his horse sharply around and left the battlefield. Some spat at him and called him a coward; others questioned his faith and denounced him as a traitor. But de Marrec did not spare them so much as a glance for he was already planning the next stage of *his* war against the sorcerous heretic Léon. As de Marrec and his most trusted men sped across the valleys and fields surrounding Charouse, they hid where they would not be sought in disguises so ingenious that even the most sharp-witted musketeer would not look at them twice.



While in the library of a small college nestled in the shade of Dechaine's walls, de Marrec stumbled across a moldering journal apparently misfiled among a collection of fourteenth century Eisen hymnaries. It was not the misfiled book's title that caught his eye — the personal diary of one Duc Edouard Duhamel — so much as the dedication, couched in humble terms to St. Averro, the first High Inquisitor and scourge of all sorcerers. De Marrec had always regarded St. Averro as his personal guide and mentor, so that alone was sufficient to keep the Knight Inquisitor reading. Edouard's writing impressed de Marrec with its unswerving devotion to the Prophets' message and his contempt for sorcery in all its guises. The journal meticulously described every aspect of Duhamel's life including mention of a mausoleum he had constructed. Moved by the Duc's piety, de Marrec prayed for guidance at the nearby cemetery, and when he looked up, there was the entrance to the mausoleum.

After beating the rusted iron gates open, Guillaume entered the dilapidated ruin. Rainwater from centuries of coastal storms had carved a channel in the moss-coated steps that led down into the darkness. When de Marrec entered the chamber, he was initially assailed by the suffocating stench of rotting leaves and damp earth. A dim grayish light filtered down from the spire above, highlighting the filth strewn about the floor of a large central chamber. Above him, in the cobweb-shrouded alcoves statues of the Prophets and the saints stood silently, marred indelibly by hundreds of tiny scratches that testified to warring rats.

De Marrec was appalled that a tomb dedicated to the Prophets' faithful servant would ever be allowed to fall into this condition. He fell to his knees and gave thanks to Theus — this holy place would provide the perfect refuge for the faithful to plan their revenge against those who had wronged them. Within the week, he had communicated his plan secretly to Cardinal Verdugo and before the month was out, a construction crew arrived in the dead of night. For the remainder of 1666 the mausoleum, forgotten by all save its new inhabitants, became a hive of activity and by the new year, the Inquisition had a new base of operations within Montaigne.

## Layout

The Duhamel Mausoleum consists of four main areas: the ground level, the spire, the upper crypts and the lower crypts. The new inhabitants have not changed the spire or ground floor. They have removed just enough debris to insure a safer footing but have not cleaned the ground level entrance completely for fear of detection. They have, however, altered the crypt areas to suit the Inquisition's needs. For the most part, these chambers were already empty. Those that already held members of the Duhamel family remained sealed; de Marrec insisted the sacraments must never be compromised, no matter how vital the Inquisition's mission is to the salvation of mankind.

### Room 1 – Mausoleum Main Chamber

A weathered arch shelters the rusty iron door from the Trade Sea's constant squalls and piles of rotting leaves clog the drains and gather under the carvings of saints and prophets that adorn the outer walls. The mausoleum's heavy rusted iron main gate had been locked for centuries. The Inquisition has altered the door; two stones can be removed to allow opera-

tion of newer hinges added to the lock side. If these stones are spotted the PC can open the door effortlessly. If not, use of a suitably heavy object will force the gate open.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

A Spot check (DC 20) is required to notice the stones.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Wits check (TN 20) is required to notice the stones.

The ground level is one large chamber approximately thirty feet long and half that across. The main chamber is austere guarded by hollow-eyed saints who stare down at the unlikely visitor as if in judgment. Empty torch brackets line the soot-coated walls at regular intervals. Upon the east wall, shrines depict the likeness of St. Jerome, the patron saint of scholars, and St. Averro, the first High Inquisitor. Anyone with a working knowledge of Vaticine theology can identify their spheres of influence.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20) is required to identify the saints.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Wits + Theology check (TN 25) is required to identify the saints.

The west wall contains two statues: a carved likeness of St. Martinus (a Numan soldier-saint) and that of a 12th Century nobleman. A competent scholar of Vaticine knowledge will be able to determine that the nobleman (the only statue in the mausoleum that is not a saint) is Edouard Duhamel. The last Duc stands over a large but empty stonework scroll. De Marrec chose this statue as the new entrance into the crypt because he was unable to bring himself to treat the Church's saints as hiding-places for secret doors.

The Duc's statue is now weighted and designed to swing open on one corner. (Edouard's statue lacks a halo and other attributes; therefore he is not a saint.)

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Make a Spot check (DC 15) to detect slight scrape marks on the floor where the statue swings open.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Make a Perception check (TN 20) to detect slight scrape marks on the floor where the statue swings open.

Pushing on it reveals a narrow man-sized tunnel lined with a series of iron rungs in the earthen walls that leads down to the guardroom in the upper crypts. The opening is narrow but wide enough for careful descent; however, characters plagued by claustrophobia will find it quite uncomfortable. To return to the central chamber from the ladder, the PC can use a handle hidden underneath the statue to open the "door" one-handed.

A simple altar in the north wall stands in front of a mosaic of the First Prophet preaching to the Numan Senate. The altar is kept clean because Knight Inquisitor de Marrec uses it to conduct vigils. An astute observer is likely to notice that the mosaic's style is not twelfth century Montaigne but rather more recent.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

Spot check (DC 15) is required to notice that the altar is too close to the mosaic behind it. A Knowledge (art) check (DC 20) is required to notice that the mosaic's style is not twelfth century Montaigne but more recent.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Perception check (TN 20) is required to notice that the altar is too close to the mosaic behind it. A History check (TN 25) is required to notice that the mosaic's style is not twelfth century Montaigne but more recent.

Under the Inquisition's direction, the elaborate north wall was created to shield the main entrance to the catacombs. A thin layer of bricks masks a rounded arch behind which long stone steps lead down through a twisting passageway to the upper crypts. Little light has shone here since the de Marrec ordered the passageway sealed and dust coats the steps now. The mosaic is fragile, and can be easily demolished either by brute force or explosives

**D20™ MECHANICS**

The walls of the mausoleum have a hardness of 8 and 600 hp per side.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

Demolition rating 5.

Even if the mosaic is taken apart very carefully, the appearance of light at the head of the stairs may be masked. Anyone taking such a great length of time (like an Explorer's Society team) is almost certain to encounter Inquisitors coming or going through the statue. Forcibly demolishing the mosaic will alert the Inquisitors below, who will muster all available forces and prime all traps. Anyone moving against the Inquisition so blatantly will have the fight of their lives.

**Room 2 – The Spire**

Stairs that spiral up around a thin central pillar dominate the main room. The stairs themselves contain no rail or handhold and can be tricky to climb.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Balance check (DC 12) is required to navigate the stairs safely.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Panache + Balance check (TN 15) is required to navigate the stairs safely.

Almost thirty feet above the mausoleum floor, the spire stands, albeit unsteadily, as a place of quiet contemplation. The spire's solitary room, a circular balcony sheltered by a roof atop four pillars, is open to the elements. On windy days the spire sways slightly and on rainy days the floor becomes slick. The spire balcony measures approximately eight feet square and contains one small stone bench on the east side. The staircase emerges flush with the floor, and can be tricky to negotiate in adverse (rough weather or nighttime) conditions.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

Anyone attempting any sort of quick movement in wet weather must make a Dex check (DC 20) or fall flat.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

Anyone attempting any sort of quick movement in wet weather must make a Finesse + Footwork check (TN 25) or fall flat.

People moving near the edge or center of the balcony may face additional problems, either falling down the stairs or out onto the mausoleum's lower roof.

**Room 3 – Upper Passageway**

The blocked staircase twists around upon itself and appears at the north end of the main passageway that runs through the upper crypts. During their work, the Inquisition's engineers have weakened the ceiling above the staircase and if a particular beam in the guardroom (Room 4) is broken, the ceiling will collapse almost at once, trapping anyone on the stairs under a heap of rubble. Use of this trap will cause serious structural damage to the mausoleum so the Knight Inquisitor has ordered that it only be used as a last resort.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Ref save (DC 25) to avoid 6d6 damage.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

No spot or disarm TN, guards are alerted by noise from above to operate trap, Wits + Footwork TN 30 to avoid 5k5 damage.

Ten doors lead off the passageway at regular intervals, although only five are currently operational; the rest have been filled in with bricks. Approximately 20 feet down the tunnel, the floor rests on a pivot. Anyone stepping on the floor will likely fall into a concealed pit. The pit walls are 12 feet high and difficult to climb although it is possible to dig footholds into the soft earth. PCs can avoid the trap by keeping close to the wall and the pivoted floor may be wedged in place easily from the southern side.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Spot check (DC 18) is required to notice, a Balance check (DC 18) is required to avoid falling. Damage from the fall is 2d8.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Perception check (TN 20) is required to notice, a Wits + Balance check (TN 20) is required to avoid falling. Damage from the fall is 2k2.

At the southern end of the corridor, a flight of rough earthwork steps leads down into darkness and the lower level.

Most of the upper crypts are part of the original construction. They are eerie sight; stone-faced walls bear many carvings of death and the eternal struggle between Legion and Theus. Lanterns burn day and night, hanging from new hooks in the walls. Originally, the crypts consisted of a single passageway leading off into identical tombs where future Duhamels were to be buried. Many of the tombs have been slightly altered to serve as barracks, and the corridor itself has been trapped to prevent interlopers.

## Room 4 – Guardroom

The Inquisition usually posts four guards in this room at all times, except during a shift change when there are two sets of four Inquisitors. (See the “Standard Inquisitor” below for statistics.) The room itself is little different from its original use as a tomb. The only furnishings are four rough-hewn chairs around a large wooden slab that rests atop the empty crypt and serves as the guard’s dining table. A ladder on the west wall leads up to the mausoleum’s main chamber and the weakened beam by the north wall (which can be destroyed to collapse the ceiling above the stairway in Room 3.) The new door is little more than a barred iron gate that allows the guards to see into the corridor beyond.

## Room 5 – Barracks

The engineers knocked out the walls of three empty tombs to make the barracks. More than three times as long as a standard tomb, the barracks is nonetheless cramped as it provides sleeping accommodations for a maximum of twenty-four Inquisitors; on any given night, the barracks houses between fifteen and twenty Inquisitors. Much of the time, however, the barracks are empty or contain only a few men, usually those who may have been wounded or over-exerted themselves and are recovering. Any potential thieves are sure to be disappointed in the barracks’ contents. Aside from the tools used in the line of duty, the Inquisitors keep little in the way of personal possessions. Their singular focus and dedication to Theus’ work keeps them enriched spiritually but as poor as the soil above their heads.

## Room 6 – Surgery

Knight Inquisitor de Marrec believes that his men must be healthy and whole, both spiritually and physically so he has designated this tomb as a surgery to ensure that the Inquisition’s soldiers remain ready to combat evil whenever it rears its head. The surgery has every modern tool available, making the doctor’s work much easier.

### D20™ MECHANICS

Any Heal check receives a +4 bonus.

### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Checks on any Doctor knack receive two free raises.

## Room 7 – Armory

A massive armory, which also serves as a sparring and training area, dominates the east side of the upper crypts. Any number of Inquisitors can usually be found here, as de Marrec demands that his troops are always ready for combat. Originally four tombs, the armory now contains an archery range, practice dummies and wooden weapons, weapons and armor racks and a small forge for repairs. A chimney running up from the forge pokes out the side of the cliff facing away from the town. The opening is not wide enough to admit a human but it would be possible to roll a grenade or some other item down the flue if its location were known. Constant fog and rain dissipate most of the smoke; however, if someone sailed by on a clear day when the forge was in use, wisps of smoke would be visible.

The armory houses the Inquisition’s favored weapons — greatswords, *zweihanders* and bastard swords. A locked iron chest on the opposite side of the room houses a barrel of powder.

## Room 8 – Edouard’s Tomb

The heavy stone door to this room has remained sealed for over four hundred years and de Marrec has been wise enough not to open it. If he did, he would see the four sarcophagi of Edouard Duhamel and his three children, Claude, Louis and Vivienne. Anyone foolish enough to violate the duc’s last resting place would certainly fall under almost immediate attack from Edouard himself (see page 20). In terms of grave goods, potential tomb robbers would be disappointed to learn — just before they die — that the Duhamels were buried with nothing more valuable than a now severely moldered winding sheet. (Note: GMs in both systems should feel free to “reward” such blatant desecration, perhaps with some sort of Reputation loss, removal of Drama Die or other loss to the PCs’ mental stability.)

## The Lower Crypts

The lower crypts are a different matter entirely from the upper crypts. Under de Marrec’s direction, they have been dug almost entirely from the earth to form the center of Inquisition operations and house the stores, private chambers and a secret passage leading to the base of the cliff.

## Room 9 – Storehouse

The steps from Room 3 above descend directly into the center of the storehouse, a large earth and stone chamber. Wooden planks rise a foot off the floor to keep the Inquisition’s provisions dry. Conceivably, people could hide beneath these planks, although larger people are going to find it a tight squeeze (those without the Small advantage/feat are unable to enter this crawlspace.)

The room is stacked high with crates that form a regularly shifting labyrinth that only de Marrec, Mendoza and Brother Vegetius, the cook, can navigate safely. However, the crates, sacks and barrels are stacked unevenly across the room and can be climbed, quietly moved or barged down by those pressed for time. The three doors from the storehouse lead to the kitchen (Room 10), the short passage (Room 11) and the cliff walk (Room 15).

## Room 10 – The Kitchen

As facilities are limited, the Inquisitors are expected to eat their meals in the armory or the barracks rather than the kitchen where Brother Vegetius prepares the food. However, his primary duty is to monitor intelligence the Inquisitors gather on their travels through the countryside and report to de Marrec. Vegetius expends neither thought nor effort on meal preparation. In truth, he fell into the task by default, as he and Mendoza are the only two permanently stationed in the mausoleum. The Inquisitors know better than to complain when their potatoes are too soggy or that their meat cannot be cut with any weapon known to man — they have a higher cause to work towards than petty sustenance.

As a result of Brother Vegetius’ other duties, the kitchen will be empty save for the hour before mealtimes when it will contain one particularly irritated Inquisitor. Aside from Vegetius, the kitchen contains bottles, cupboards, knives, cleavers, spoons, large pots and a stove with the occasional pot of boiling water — in short, anything an adventurer might need during a desperate escape.



### Room 11 – The Short Passage

A rough earthen tunnel connects the storehouse with the detention facilities and de Marrec's private chambers. The area is too cramped for effective combat. Doors from the short passage lead to the cells (Room 12), the confessional (Room 13) and the private chambers (Room 14).

#### D20™ MECHANICS

All combatants are denied Dex bonus to AC.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

No footwork passive or active defense.

### Room 12 – The Cells

Although the Inquisition keeps few prisoners for any length of time, de Marrec imprisons those held for questioning in one of these cells that have been specifically designed to thwart any sorcerous attempts to escape. A tiny locket containing a Mirror Ghost is concealed in the wall between cell 2 and cell 3, and manacles of cold iron are bolted to the floor. Each cell contains small alcoves with Prophets' Crosses and blessed relics designed to thwart sorcerous prisoners and chastise them as emblems of the true faith. Although the cells prevent anyone from exercising Porté or Glamour, the only thing preventing any other kind of magical power from operating is the baleful influence of Edouard Duhamel. Were Edouard to be exorcised, the Inquisition would be shocked to discover that nothing could keep a sorcerer from using his or her powers to escape.

When a prisoner is taken into the confessional, all connecting doors are left open so that any other prisoners can hear the Inquisitors at work. At the moment, the cells contain only one prisoner — an unfortunate Crescent named Rasuli ibn Haroun who continues to puzzle his jailers. Mendoza is in favor of simply executing him, but de Marrec has forbidden it, stating flatly that they cannot let the man die an infidel.

### Room 13 – The Confessional

A morbid joke of Monsignor Mendoza's, the "confessional" is little more than an extremely well-stocked torture chamber. The confessional contains some of the most harrowing torture devices known in Théah excused as adherence to Cardinal Verdugo's ethos of "save the soul even if it costs the body." The devices, including an iron maiden, branding irons, thumbscrews and a rack, are used to extract "confessions" of sinful behavior from those unfortunates whom the Inquisition has detained. Although the devices are capable of grievous harm, the Inquisition torturers are adept at keeping their charges alive — none have ever died under their care although many die shortly after confessing their sins. To date, their efforts have surpassed Bishop de Marrec's expectations.

### Room 14 – Private Chambers

This large cell was originally supposed to serve as de Marrec's private quarters but the demand for space converted it into a war room. A massive amount of tactical information is either pinned to the support beams, on the large map of Montaigne on the north wall or stacked on the floor in an order known only to de Marrec and Brother Vegetius. Destroying the information in this room could save hundreds of lives from both the Inquisition and the Committee for National Welfare.

### Room 15 – Cliff Walk

This passageway, wide enough for two men to walk down abreast, leads from the Storehouse to the base of the cliffs below the mausoleum. Located at the end of a cave, it is hidden from view by a lip of stone. The walk leads down to a small but sheltered cove. It is most commonly used for smuggling items into the mausoleum, such as the guns and supplies.

The door at the kitchen end is locked.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

An Open Lock check (DC 30) is required to open.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Wits + Lockpicking check (TN 30) is required to open.

Brother Salvator holds the key because it is his duty to bring the supplies from the small vessels that draw up alongside the cliffs on moonless nights. Reaching the passage from the cliff side is tricky, requiring climbing, handy piloting of a small vessel, or swimming from a larger vessel.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

A Climb check (DC 20), a Profession (pilot) check (DC 25), or a Swim check (TN 20) is required to reach the passage.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Brawn + Climbing check (TN 25), a Finesse + Pilot check (TN 30), or a Brawn + Swimming check (TN 25) is required to reach the passage.

During a storm, access to the secret passage is impossible. Only the foolhardy or suicidal would attempt such a feat (double all TNs/DCs).

## Using the Mausoleum

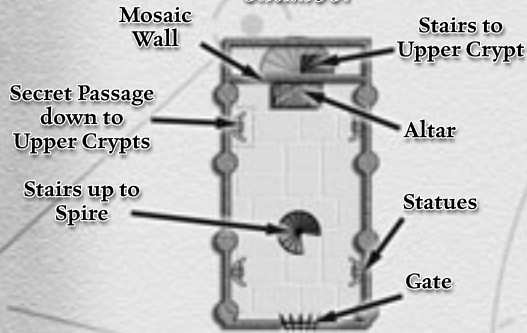
The Inquisition uses the mausoleum to conduct operations throughout this section of Montaigne. Player characters could encounter them in almost any situation, pursuing them back to their lair to smoke them out, spy on their activities, or perhaps rescue a captured friend. Alternately, the party can be allied to the Inquisitors, sent by the Church to exorcise the crypt's unhappy spirit or other less confrontational role.

In campaign worlds other than Théah, the mausoleum can be a small, secret headquarters for any clandestine organization that despises sorcery. Sorcerers may just as easily cross swords with a gruff Dwarven version of Guillaume carrying out the will of Moradin as with the Montaigne equivalent. It can also serve as a base for any secret organization that has a malevolent effect on society — for example, a cult of vampires, a foul demon who rules over an entire religion or a cabal of hideous mind-flayers who exert their mental control over a human ruler.

In more historical settings, one can easily lower the magic involved by changing the dwellers' focus to "heretics," and/or eliminate the presence of the ghost. In worlds with a higher level of magic, the mausoleum could accommodate some form of magical trap or a more stringent form of anti-magic defense. On the other hand, the Inquisition is a group or sect within a larger religious organization that uses extreme methods to save the Church — and the world. Using it as it presents interesting possibilities, should Inquisitors exert

# The Mausoleum

## 1. Mausoleum Chamber

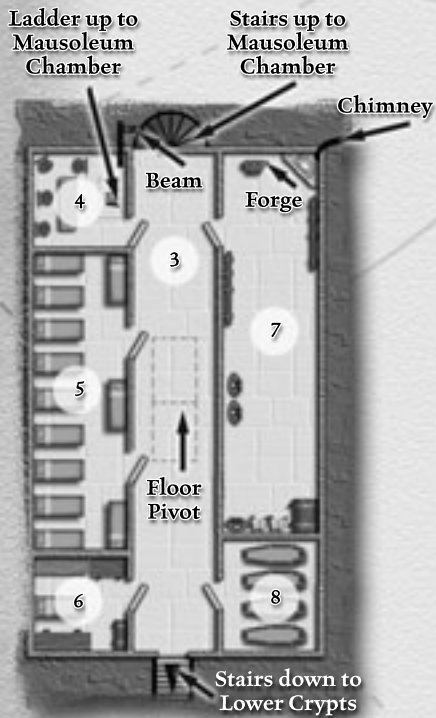


## 2. The Spire



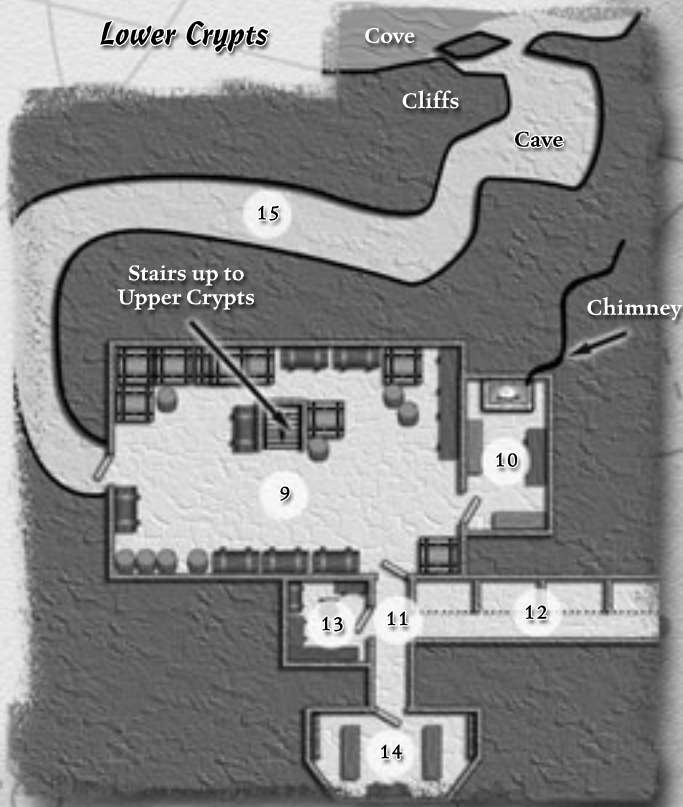
0 5 10 25 20

Scale in Feet



## Upper Crypts

## Lower Crypts



their influence on the PCs' favored non-canon place of worship. Such action would undoubtedly result in a quest to free their fellow worshippers and priests from the clutches of these fanatics.

## NPC Statistics for the Mausoleum

### ***Knight Inquisitor Guillaume de Marrec***

For Guillaume de Marrec, the Revolution was sent from Theus. At last, Montaigne's decadent and sinful nobility was swept away, and the practice of sorcery once again publicly condemned. Along with his allies in the Inquisition, de Marrec did everything he could to turn the people's murmurs of anger into roars of rage as he rode the length and breadth of the country, hunting members of *L'Empereur's* family. Although he is regarded as something of a hero amongst his troops, he is a modest man, intensely focused on ridding Montaigne — and hopefully the rest of Théah — of sorcery's taint.

Sorcerers lurk in strange places, even among the apparently faithful. There is something about the Bishop Corantine d'Crus — leader of the Inquisitors in Montaigne — that does not sit right with Cardinal Verdugo but he lacks the time to attend to it personally. He has privately commissioned de Marrec to keep an eye on the d'Crus whom he feels is gaining far too much personal power.

### ***Guillaume de Marrec (120<sup>m</sup>)***

**Montaigne Inquisitor 16/Valroux Swordsman 3:** CR 19; SZ M (humanoid); HD 16d8 + 56 plus 3d10+16; hp 157; Init + 1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+1 Dex, +12 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: rapier +18/+13 melee (1d8+5), dagger +15/+10 melee (1d4+5); Str 17, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 17; SA Defender of the Faith, Fanatic Strength (2), Gaze Into The Abyss, Knight Inquisitor, Malediction of Theus, Off-Handed Fighting, Piercing the Veil, Raise the Stakes, Righteous Fury, Skill Improvement, Sorcery's Stench, Untapped Reserves (2), Voice of Theus; SV Fort +17, Ref +5, Will +16; Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +10, Climb +9, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +17, Gather Information +16, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +10, Jump +7, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Read Lips +6, Ride +12, Search +13, Sense Motive +11, Speak Language (Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne, Ussuran, Vendel, Vodacce [alternately, any seven languages from your campaign]), Spot +7, Tumble +8; Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Detect Lie, Evil Reputation, Faith, Misled, Ordained, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Weapon Expert (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Focus (main gauche).

*Note:* Guillaume possesses a relic — a *Mask of St. Averro* — which allows him to add +2 to any single die roll he makes. The mask may be used once per day.

### ***Guillaume de Marrec — Villain (7th Sea™)***

Brawn: 4, Finesse: 4, Wits: 4, Resolve: 5, Panache: 3  
Reputation: -43  
Arcana: Misled

*Advantages:* Montaigne (R/W), Avalon, Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Ussuran, Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Connections (many), Faith, Indomitable Will, Keen Senses, Linguist, Membership (Inquisition, Rilasciare), Noble, Ordained, Personal Relic (the mask of St. Averro, first High Inquisitor), Righteous Wrath, University  
*Courtier:* Dancing 1, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Gossip 3, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4  
*Priest:* Philosophy 3, Theology 3, Writing 2  
*Scholar:* History 2, Law 4, Mathematics 3, Research 2  
*Spy:* Cryptography 2, Interrogation 5, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 4, Stealth 4  
*Athlete:* Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Long Distance Running 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3  
*Commander:* Ambush 4, Cartography 2, Incitation 4, Leadership 5, Logistics 3, Strategy 3, Tactics 4  
*Fencing:* Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4  
*Firearms:* Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3  
*Knife:* Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 2  
*Polearm:* Attack (Polearm) 3, Parry (Polearm) 3  
*Riding:* Ride 4  
*Valroux (Journeyman):* Double-Parry 4, Feint 4, Tagging 4, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5  
*Note:* Guillaume's mask allows him to add one unkept die to any roll. The power may be invoked twice per scene. If he ever loses the relic, he suffers a loss of -1 Resolve until it is recovered or replaced.

### ***Monsignor Antonio Mendoza***

Antonio Mendoza was born within a mile of the great Cathedral at San Cristóbal to a merchant family who always believed he would become a source of pride to his family by taking holy vows. Although his faith was not deep, he respected his parents' wishes. Over the years, however, he grew more and more cynical as he used his considerable speaking skills to convince the peasants of glories and miracles he himself had never felt. When the Hierophant died Mendoza, now an astute politician, saw the Inquisition as the emerging dominant power within the Church, and approached Cardinal Verdugo. Using his skills as a dissembler and his knowledge of theology he was able to convince the Cardinal of his zeal and devotion.

Mendoza's rise through the Inquisition's ranks has been nothing short of meteoric, due largely to his hard work to keep the Cardinal's favor. When de Marrec began construction of an Inquisition stronghold beneath the Duhamel mausoleum, Verdugo ordered Mendoza to serve as the Montaigne's adjutant. He was not happy with the situation. As far as he was concerned, this Castillian lapdog knew nothing about Montaigne; Mendoza, however, was most pleased. Although he regards de Marrec as unorthodox, he knows that the Knight Inquisitor is fast becoming one of the Inquisition's rising stars.

Over the years, he has gathered a small body of evidence against de Marrec as "insurance" should the Knight Inquisitor ever overstep his boundaries. It is a dangerous gamble, one that could tear the Inquisition within Montaigne apart but Mendoza is willing to take that chance. After all, why shouldn't he be sitting at the Cardinal's right hand? If de Marrec ever learns about Mendoza's activities against him, the Castillian will undoubtedly end up in one of those holding cells hidden deep under Montaigne soil.



**Monsignor Antonio Mendoza (120<sup>m</sup>)**

**Castillian Inquisitor 7:** CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d8+7; hp 35; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atks: knife +5 melee (1d4), pistol +8 ranged (1d10); SA Defender of the Faith, Malediction of Theus, Skill Improvement, Sneak Attack +2d6, Untapped Reserves, Vanishing Act; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 15; AL LE; Skills: Balance +4, Bluff +9, Climb +2, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +4, Gather Information +7, Heal +2, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Read Lips +6, Search +5, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Castillian, Crescent, Montaigne, Théan, Vodacce [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]) Spot +5; Feats: Alertness, Ambitious, Castillian Education, Dodge, Keen Senses, Ordained.

**Monsignor Antonio Mendoza — Villain (7<sup>th</sup> Sea<sup>m</sup>)**

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 3

**Reputation:** -37

**Arcana:** Ambitious

**Advantages:** Castillian (R/W), Crescent (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Castillian Education, Connections (Cardinal Verdugo), Membership (Inquisition), Ordained

**Courtier:** Dancing 1, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 1, Gossip 3, Lip Reading 2, Mooch 3, Oratory 2, Politics 4, Sincerity 4

**Priest:** Philosophy 3, Theology 4, Writing 3

**Spy:** Bribery 4, Cryptography 4, Interrogation 3, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3

**Athlete:** Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Swimming 3, Throwing 2

**Dirty Fighting:** Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 3

**Firearms:** Attack (Firearms) 3

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 3

**Rasuli ibn Haroun**

Rasuli was always a curious child. As a youth, he was always caught looking anywhere that was forbidden. His grandfather, who raised Rasuli and his sister Jamila, shook his head and warned the boy that his nature would get him into a great deal of trouble one day. The Crescent lad just laughed and said that if the Creator had never meant him to look for things, He would never have hidden His most fascinating treasures. Over the years, Rasuli's curiosity and lack of respect for authority led him down the inevitable path to crime. After an unlucky brush with the Sultan's guards, he felt he had worn out his welcome in the Crescent Empire and stowed away upon one of the Bernoullis' smuggling vessels. Another series of unfortunate coincidences found him in Montaigne in the Revolution's early days.

The cathedral should have been quiet — after all, it had been boarded up for years. Behind the altar was a secret panel, inside of which he found a golden box that looked valuable, and indeed it was — it contained the right hand of St. Jerome. Of course, Rasuli did not know that, and his apologies to the three Inquisitors who wrestled him to the ground went unheard. He was taken blindfolded to Dechaine and is now held in a cell beneath the mausoleum. De Marrec suspects he is part of some Crescent conspiracy to destroy the Vatican's most holy relics. Rasuli has remained alive for the past months only because of his silence. If his will were to break and he were to confess to anything, he would be dead within the day.

**Rasuli ibn Haroun (120<sup>m</sup>)**

**Crescent Rogue 4:** CR 4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6+4; hp 20; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: scimitar +2 melee (1d6), sling +8 ranged (1d4); SA Evasion, Sneak Attack +2d6, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 15; AL CG; Skills: Appraise +6, Balance +8, Bluff +4, Climb +5, Disable Device +4, Escape Artist +7, Gather Information +5, Hide +10, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Pick Pocket +7, Read Lips +3, Search +6, Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Castillian, Crescent, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +3, Tumble +8, Use Rope +6; Feats: Increased Manual Dexterity, Rash, Small, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Weapon Focus (sling).

**Rasuli ibn Haroun — Hero (7<sup>th</sup> Sea<sup>m</sup>)**

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 3

**Reputation:** 8

**Arcana:** Rash

**Advantages:** Crescent Accent (Aldiz'hali — Dakalan'ya Islands), Castillian (R/W), Aldiz-baraji (R/W), Tikaret-baraji (R/W), Ruzgar-baraji (R/W), Vodacce, Zodiac Sign — Cikar (The Rat), Accurate Slinger, Keen Senses, Small

**Criminal:** Cheating 3, Gambling 3, Lockpicking 3, Pickpocket 3, Prestidigitation 3, Shadowing 2, Stealth 4

**Performer:** Acting 1, Cold Read 3, Dancing 3, Oratory 1, Singing 2, Storytelling 2

**Streetwise:** Socializing 2, Street Navigation 4, Underworld Lore 3

**Athlete:** Break Fall 4, Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Leaping 3, Sprinting 3, Swinging 3, Throwing 1

**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 2

**Sling:** Attack (Sling) 3, Snapshot 4

**Edouard Duhamel**

For four hundred years, Edouard's spirit has haunted the mausoleum. His failure to ensure his family's legacy anchors him to the material world, and his hatred of sorcery and fury at his entrapment in the tomb drives him to inflict any suffering he can on any magic-users foolish enough to brave his lair. Despite his almost blind fury at his condition, Edouard has come to respect his new residents; after all, their mission is not so different from his.

As a spirit, Edouard can make himself invisible at will and travel wherever he likes within the mausoleum. De Marrec and the other Inquisitors know nothing of his presence, although if Mendoza allows expansion of the barracks into his crypt they will come to know him personally. Due to Edouard's presence in the mausoleum, no sorcery whatsoever will function in its bounds.

To date, Edouard has attacked three sorcerers held prisoner by the Inquisition, killing one in his cell. The corpse was found huddled in the corner with an expression of stark terror frozen on its face. De Marrec believes that a supernatural entity is watching them but he is convinced that whoever — or whatever — it is has faced Theus' judgment and can do them no harm. If any party manages to infiltrate the mausoleum, the ghostly Duc would know about it immediately and will almost certainly find a way to alert his tenants.

When Edouard manifests himself physically, he appears as an old man with long hair and a bitter expression, composed entirely of smoke.

Edouard is a Mirror Ghost with two differences. No sorcery whatsoever will work in any same building he inhabits and he can launch a physical attack against anyone who possesses sorcery.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The mirror ghost attacks at +8, ignores armor, cannot be parried, deals 1d6 damage per level of any magic-using class to target.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The mirror ghost has a 7k4 attack, damage equal to 2k2 per mastery level, no active defense.

He can also attack anyone who opens his crypt.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The mirror ghost attacks at +8, ignores armor, cannot be parried, deals 1d6 damage for every two character levels the target possesses.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The mirror ghost has a 7k4 attack, dealing 5k3 damage, no active defense.

Otherwise, he follows the stats as outlined below. (These stats are reprinted from the *7th Sea Game Master's Guide*™ and the *Heroes, Villains and Monsters*™ sourcebook).

### Edouard Duhamel (d20™)

**Medium-Sized Undead:** CR 12; SZ M; HD 10d12; hp 75; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 15 ft (fly); AC 10 (special); Atks: none (*see below*); SA Judgment (*see below*) SQ Commune, Porté Dissonance, Rejuvenation, Sense Weakness, Trap, Turn Resistance (*see below*); SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +9; Str –, Dex 18, Con –, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 20; AL CN; Skills: Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (sorcery) +12, Knowledge (theology) +12, Listen +15, Search +8, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Avalon, Castillian, Montaigne [alternately, any three languages in your campaign]), Spot +15; Feats: Alertness, Blind Fight, Commanding Presence +3, Fanatical, Iron Glare 1/day, Iron Will, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Seduction, Taunt.

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES AND QUALITIES

**Commune (Sp):** By smearing fresh human blood upon the mirror, a person may commune with the mirror ghost, as per the spell of the same name (as though cast by an 18th level cleric).

**Judgment (Su):** Once per turn, the mirror ghost makes a ranged touch attack. This attack can only target an opponent with a Flaw or Hubris, but automatically hits and can affect corporeal creatures. When using its attack, the mirror ghost inflicts 5 points of damage per use of the Flaw or Hubris during the last week of game time, as though the ghost struck the target with a +5 weapon.

**Porté Dissonance (Sp):** Mirror ghosts negate all nearby attempts at Porté sorcery (as though surrounded by an antimagic field cast by an 18th-level sorcerer; this only affects Porté sorcery). This effect continues even if trapped (*see below*), and arouses no suspicion from Montaigne authorities; even before the Revolution, many nobles considered trapped mirror ghosts to be a fine conversation piece.

**Rejuvenation (Su):** In most cases, it is virtually impossible to truly destroy a mirror ghost through simple combat: the “destroyed” spirit will restore itself in 2d4 days, and even the most powerful spells are incapable of stopping this process. An otherwise destroyed mirror ghost returns to its old haunts with a successful level check (1d20 + ghost’s level or HD) against a DC of 16. As a rule, the only way to permanently banish a mirror ghost is to discover and set right the tragedy that led to its present state of existence. The exact means varies from ghost to ghost, and may require a great deal of research.

**Sense Weakness (Su):** Mirror ghosts can innately sense the presence of individuals with Flaws or Hubrises, and track such individuals as though they had the Track feat. Mirror ghosts have a +8 racial bonus to such checks.

**Trap (Su):** If a mirror ghost travels between two mirrors which face each other, the mirrors trap the ghost within them. The ghost appears within the mirrors, and pounds at their surfaces. Should the mirrors ever move such that they no longer face each other, the ghost frees itself. Trapped mirror ghosts cannot attack, but may use their Commune and Porté Dissonance abilities.

**Turn Resistance (Ex):** A mirror ghost has +4 turn resistance.

### Edouard Duhamel — Villain (7th Sea™)

Brawn: –, Finesse: 3, Wits: 4, Resolve: 5, Panache: 1

Reputation: 0

Background: None

Arcana: Fanatical

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Castille (R/W), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Oratory 4, Politics 5, Scheming 5, Sincerity 3

Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 4, Research 2, Theology 4

Note: Edouard is a mirror ghost, and has all the appropriate abilities thereof.

### Standard Inquisitors

There are thirty Inquisitors under Bishop de Marrec’s command. Currently, they serve a number of duties throughout Montaigne, including capturing, questioning and executing sorcerers; confiscating contraband materials; and searching for the nine Montaigne bishops who vanished mysteriously during *L’Empereur’s* reign. The Frenzy allowed de Marrec to allocate more resources to this end, which would be pivotal to reconstructing the Church in Montaigne, but he is having little luck. Currently, the Knight Inquisitor suspects that someone within the Vaticine Church, perhaps even within the Inquisition itself, is sabotaging his efforts.

### Sample Inquisitors (d20™)

**Castillian Inquisitor 4:** CR 4; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 26; Init –1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (–1 Dex, +6 feats); Atks: masterwork long sword +7 melee (1d8 +2), masterwork dagger +6 melee (1d4 +2); SA Malediction of Theus 1/day, Untapped Reserves; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 14; AL LE; Skills: Climb +4, Gather Information +6, Heal +2, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +2, Sense Motive +3; Feats: Beat, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Weapon Focus (longsword).



**Castillian Inquisitor 6:** CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d8+6; hp 35; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 shield, +5 breastplate); Atks: masterwork long sword +8 melee (1d8 + 3); SA Gaze Into the Abyss 2/day, Sneak Attack +1d8, Vanishing Act; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 15; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +4, Disguise +4, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (religion) +2, Move Silently +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3; Feats: Improved Bind, Ordained, Pommel Strike, Shield Proficiency.

**Standard Inquisitor — Henchman (7th Sea™)**

Brawn: 4, Finesse: 3, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Panache: 3  
 Reputation: -21  
 Arcana: None  
 Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Faith, Large, Toughness  
 Priest: Oratory 3, Philosophy 1, Theology 3, Writing 1  
 Spy: Disguise 1, Hand Signs 3, Interrogation 4, Stealth 2, Shadowing 3  
 Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Leaping 2, Side-step 2, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1  
 Commander: Ambush 3, Incitation 3, Strategy 1, Tactics 3  
 Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 3  
 Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2  
 Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4  
 Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Jab 2  
 Rider: Ride 2

## Reis's Secret: The Forbidden Cove

In Théah, The Forbidden Cove lies somewhere along the Vodacce coast near the Castillian border. Virtually unassailable by land or sea, the Cove holds a fearsome reputation as a place few men have reached, and from whence fewer still have returned. It is as if nature herself has fortified the Cove against intruders. The approach is a maze of shallows and shoals almost impossible to navigate safely. The land approach is just as fierce, a maze of bogs and marshes thick with quicksand.

Worse still, the inhospitable terrain is not uninhabited. Sharks, sirens, and other, darker beasts roam the deadly waters, and vicious predators stalk the swamps surrounding the Cove. Ghostly lights illuminate the water's surface at night which sailors too often mistake as a guide to safe landfall. In truth, these Will o' Wisps are more likely to lead the unwary sailor to a sodden grave among the coral.

Those few who survive these dangers will find Skull Island, the grim centerpiece of this menagerie of terror. Reaching nearly a hundred yards above the deceptively still waters, the island resembles nothing so much as a leering skull with several small horns protruding from its crown. The island is barren of animal life, and plants grow poorly, clinging to life only by the thinnest of roots. Even the wildlife that infests the waters surrounding the island is loath to stray too close.

Apparently, however, the island is not unassailable. In recent years, the dread pirate Reis and his Crimson Rogers have made this grim rock one of their many hidden safe houses, where they store gunpowder, ammunition, food and water. Naturally, word of this has stirred speculation among the wags that the site also hosts some of Reis' accumulated booty, buried somewhere within the gruesome landmark.

## Reaching Skull Island

Although the island is well nigh impregnable, such challenges are the meat and drink of adventurers. There are two possible approaches, both of which are quite dangerous.

### Approaching by Land

Approaching the Forbidden Cove on foot means traversing the thick bogs that surround the shores. Though no predators roam these forbidding swamps, they are rife with sandpits that can easily drag an unwary adventurer to his doom. Worse, Will o' Wisps float through the dimly lit swamp, often leading the hapless victim directly into deadly pools of liquid sand. The bog's thick canopy plunges it into shadow, and Wisps appear within even during the day.

At its narrowest point, the marsh is almost a mile wide, and the thick vegetation slows intruders' pace to a crawl. Traversing the bog by foot takes no less than two hours, even when equipped with the appropriate gear (such as strong blades to cut through the foliage). Mounted travel is impossible; even the bravest horse refuses to enter the swamp.

Of course, the above assumes the characters don't stumble into a bog of quicksand or are led astray by Will o' Wisps.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The party must make a Spot check (DC 18) for every half hour of travel into the swamp; failure indicates the leader (determined randomly if necessary) stumbles into some quicksand.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The party must make a Wits roll (TN 20) for every half hour of travel into the swamp; failure indicates the leader (determined randomly if necessary) stumbles into some quicksand.

Extricating the unfortunate character is difficult at best. The character can save himself with a Swim check (DC 20) or Brawn + Swimming roll (TN 30). Alternately, a nearby companion may throw the drowning character a line with a Rope Use check (DC 15) or Finesse roll (TN 20). Rescuing the victim is only possible for the first round, after which he disappears from sight. The drowning character can continue to try swimming free although he suffers drowning damage for each round he remains submerged.

The Will o' Wisps exacerbate the quicksand problem. Every ten minutes, there is a 10% (a roll of 1 on a d10) chance a character notices a glimmer of Wisps floating in the distance. If any party member is led astray by such an encounter, he stumbles into a pit of quicksand after only two rounds of following the Wisps.

Once the characters emerge from the swamp, Skull Island is only a stone's throw from the pebbled shore. Although predators lurk in the shallows on the far side of the island, the water here is not deep enough to play host to such beasts. Characters may simply wade across to the island without incident.

## Approaching by Sea

Approaching the island by sea means navigating through a maze of vicious reefs and shallows, any one of which is capable of stripping the bottom from the sturdiest of long boats. Intruders who end up in the water are in for a difficult swim; although the waters are deceptively still, adventurers may find themselves entangled in all manner of underwater flora, the worst of which is actually carnivorous. Additionally, sharks and sirens both patrol the cove, each eager for a meal of its own.

Protecting the cove are two bluffs that encircle the dangerous waters and allow entrance through a small gap only 20 feet wide. Maneuvering between these pincers of rock and sand is tricky.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

A Profession (sailor) check (DC15) is required to maneuver between the obstacles.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

A Finesse + Pilot roll (TN 20) is required to maneuver between the obstacles.

Once in the cove itself, safe navigation is even trickier.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Profession (sailor) check (DC25).

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Finesse + Pilot roll (TN 30).

Three successful checks are required to reach the shore of Skull Island from the tiny inlet. Failure indicates the party's launch has foundered on the rocks and is taking on water. It is not going anywhere except down, so the party must make its way through the dangerous waters without it. For each round the characters spend in the water, there is a 50% chance they attract the attention of a local predator, either a shark or a siren (determined randomly). (Sirens can be found in *Swashbuckling Adventures: Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*,™ page 69 or the *7th Sea Game Master's Guide*,™ page 161; we have reprinted their stats on page 27 for your convenience. Sharks are detailed on page 27.)

Once the adventurers are closer to shore (within 30 feet), the sharks and sirens seem to lose interest. Although this would seem to be a blessing, they are soon beset by tangleweed. The waters surrounding Skull Island are thick with the predatory weed, and it is simply impossible to reach the Island without passing within reach of at least one tangleweed, and possibly two or three.

## Skull Island

Upon moving landfall on Skull Island, the party finds it almost devoid of life (barring the possible presence of Reis, Gerald Hohne or other Crimson Rogers — see "*The Rogers' Retreat*," below). Excepting the occasional ragged weed jutting between rocks, neither plant nor animal thrives on this island. If they arrive at night, however, the party will probably encounter a glimmer of Will o' Wisps. If any member succumbs to their lure, the Wisps lead him on a dangerous climb up the side of Skull Island



**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Climb check (DC 20) is required.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Brawn + Climbing check (TN 25) is required.

If he manages to follow the Wisps to the pinnacle of the Skull, the creatures lead him into a fall from one of the horns, from which he plunges nearly 300 feet to the rocky shore below.

There is not much to find until the party descends into the mouth of Skull Island, a passage that leads to the depths below. The adventurers' launch (provided it survived the journey) can easily be moored on one of the jagged rocks that seem to form the skull's lower teeth.

**Note to the GM:** This is an extremely dangerous and potentially fatal adventure, and should not be undertaken by novice-level players or characters.

**The Mouth**

*As you step past the jagged teeth of Skull Island, the passage descends sharply before you. Although the footing seems solid, a wave brought in by the tides would make the tunnel's floor dangerously slick. Any natural light shed by the sun dies a quick death in the mouth of Skull Island, and the passage quickly plunges into darkness only a dozen feet ahead. Just short of the point where the cavern goes pitch black, a pair of side passages branch off from the main tunnel, leading up a shallow incline.*

Advancing straight ahead takes the party into the depths of Skull Island, right down the "throat." Unless they have a light source, they will be totally blind by the time they reach the Throat (further entries, however, assume the party can see their surroundings). The two side passages lead slightly up for about 40 feet, then double back at a much sharper grade. This climb takes them to the eyes of Skull Island, from which they can see beyond the bluffs that encircle the Forbidden Cove.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Climb check (DC 10) is required.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Brawn + Climb roll (TN 15) is required.

Marching order from this point is an important factor when exploring Skull Island so ask the players to establish it before they begin their exploration and remind them to tell you whenever it changes.

**The Throat**

*As you descend into the heart of the Forbidden Cove, the tang of salt air rises from below. The grade gradually grows sharper until your downward progress is slowed to a crawl. A tiny crack in the floor dribbles seawater into the passage, making footing slick and treacherous.*

The Throat is the first entirely natural hazard the party faces within the Island (unlike the perils to come.) Over the years, a small inlet beneath the waterline has eroded to the point that the Cove's waters are leaking slowly into the underground caverns, only to drain off into the submerged exit. Once the party descends below this point, their footing is uncertain at best. Descending further requires some skill.

Failure indicates that the character slips on a damp patch of stone and tumbles the rest of the way down the passage. Falling adventurers come to rest in the Pool.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Climb check (DC 15) is required or the character will fall suffering 1d6 points of damage.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

A Finesse + Climb roll (TN 20) is required or the character will fall, suffering 2k2 dice of damage.

**The Pool**

*You stumble into the tiny pool at the bottom of the passage with a small splash. The water is shallow, and reaches only a couple of inches above your ankles. Run-off from passage behind you collects here until it overflows in a thin stream running along one side of the tunnel ahead. Several rocks rest beneath the surface, probably tumbled down from above long ago.*

Any character who makes a Spot check (DC 14) or Wits roll (TN 15) notices that while the water in which they are standing appears clear and clean, dozens of dead insects have washed up onto the stone floor, near where the pool overflows. (Although the party does not have any way to determine this, the insects were killed by an electrical charge through the water, released by a Syrneath trap.) When sufficient pressure is applied, a wide rusted panel on the tunnel floor releases the charge into anyone who touches it. "Sufficient" pressure would be asserted if a character stepped on the panel or a large head-sized rock landed on it.

Ordinarily, the electrical charge would be enough to kill a man where he stands, but the water has degraded the charge enough so that it is only sufficient to injure; unfortunately, water conducts. If the trap is triggered, every character still standing in the pool suffers damage.

**D20™ MECHANICS**

A Search check (DC 20) reveals the panel. If the panel isn't discovered, the first hero to move forward out of the pool trips the trap and every character standing in the pool suffers 3d6 points of damage.

**7TH SEA™ MECHANICS**

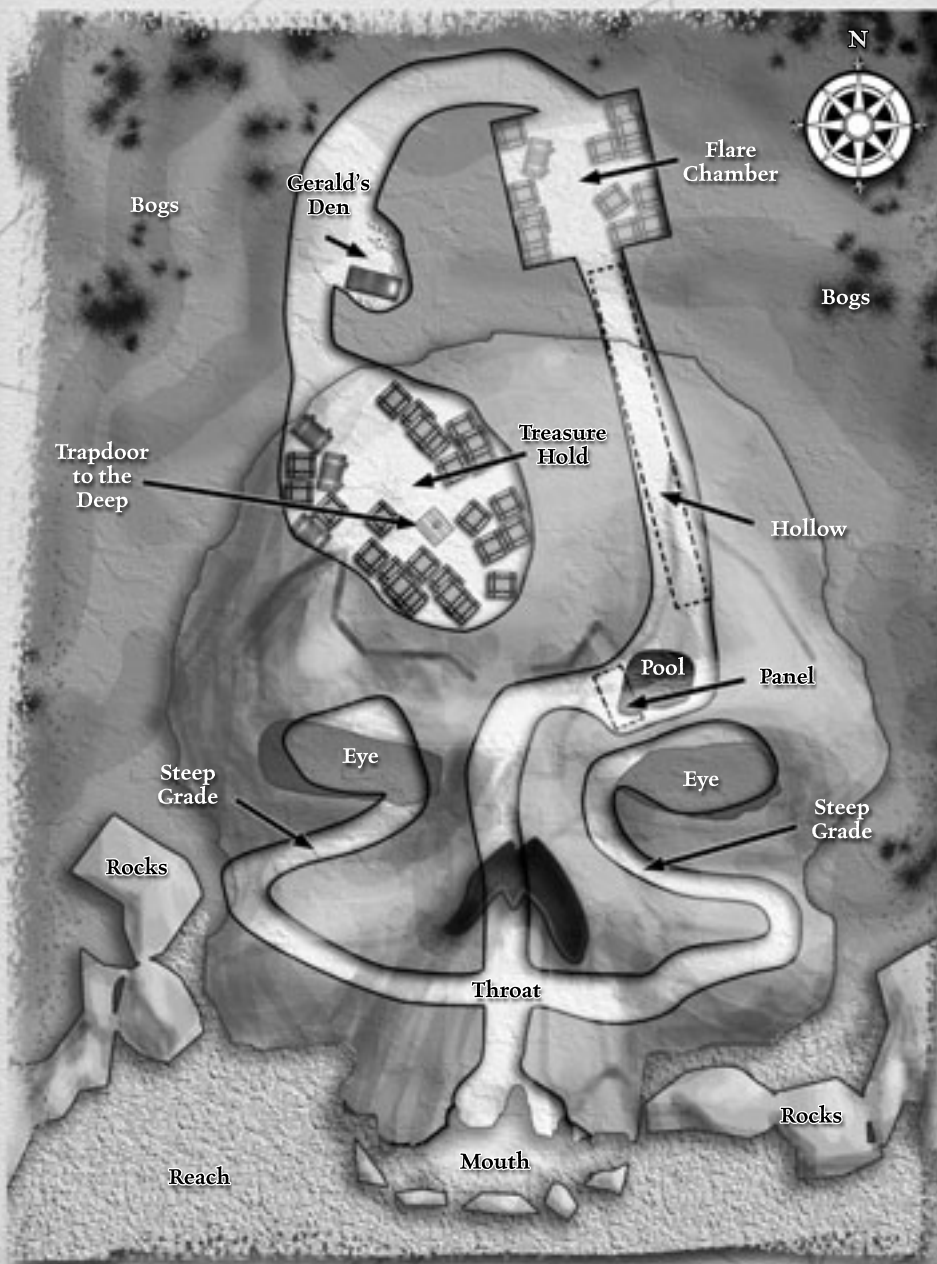
A Wits check (TN 25) reveals the panel. If the panel isn't discovered, the first hero to move forward out of the pool trips the trap and every character standing in the pool suffers 3k2 points of damage.

**The Hollow**

*The quiet ripple of water is the only sound accompanying the shuffle of your feet as you descend deeper into Skull Island. Since you reached the base of the Throat, the passage's slope has been shallow, yet still noticeable.*

At this point, secretly roll a Listen check (DC 15) or a Wits roll (TN 20) for each character, beginning with the first. Whoever brings up the rear does not receive this check; by the time he notices the difference, it is too late. Success means the leader notices that his footfalls are now accompanied by practically inaudible thud, as if the floor beneath his feet was hollow. Further, the tiny stream of water running from the pool has stopped, draining away to some unknown

# The Forbidden Cove



location. The floor of the passage for the next 50 feet is actually a giant trap door, the hollow beneath dug out by Reis' crew over several months, then embedded with vicious spikes.

The trap door is built to support a few hundred pounds, then fall away when its capacity is reached, spilling intruders into the spikes below. If every character until the last fails the Listen check, the floor collapses beneath them when the last character in line steps upon it.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Each character suffers 2d6 points of falling damage, in addition to 2d8 points of damage from the spikes. The additional damage can be avoided by a Ref save (DC 18).

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Each adventurer suffers 2k2 falling damage, in addition to 4k2 points of damage from the spikes. The additional damage can be avoided by a Panache + Rolling roll (TN 25).

Climbing from the pit is easily accomplished, and no roll is required. The party may avoid setting off the trap by proceeding over the hollow area one at a time (as long as they do not cross all at once, the trap fails to spring). That said, if they are particularly laden down with goods pilfered from the island, the trap may be sprung by fewer of them than would otherwise be the case.

### The Flare Chamber

*The passage levels off, leading into a smoothly carved chamber approximately 25 feet square. The four walls and ceiling are perfectly squared off, and a thick coating of iron gray dust covers both the floor and the piled crates. Several boxes of goods, ranging from pistols to salt pork and hard tack, are stacked against one wall, and an arch similar to the one you entered beneath frames a passage on the far side of the room, which leads deeper into the tunnels.*

Secretly roll a Spot check (DC 18) or Wits roll (TN 15) as each adventurer enters this chamber. On a successful roll, the character in question notices a circular depression approximately the circumference of a man's forearm carved into the side of the stone arch that surrounds the chamber's entrance. A successful Search check (DC 24) or Wits roll (TN 30), both of which must be requested by the player, locates a stone cylinder of precisely the same size tucked away behind a crate. Inserting the peg into the depression prevents the Flare Chamber's trap from completing its deadly work.

The dust scattered on the floor is a mixture of Syrneth powder and traditional gunpowder. The slightest touch of flame to the dust causes it to erupt into flame. Although it burns hot and fast, it does not burn for long nor is it concentrated enough to cause a proper explosion (canny adventurers may notice that none of the labeled crates contain gunpowder — surprising, since at least one crate is full of pistols and another, ammo).

However, it is enough to spring the trap. The sudden pressure difference caused by the flash fire burning off oxygen is enough to trigger a Syrneth mechanism that slams a slab of stone down through the center of each archway, sealing the room airtight. Although it still works, the mixture of gunpowder into the explosive dust has mitigated the trap's efficiency, allowing the party precious seconds to escape before the archway slams completely shut.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

If they attempt to exit the room *immediately* when the fire exhausts itself (which only takes a round — six seconds), give each a Ref save (DC 18) to escape in time. Any character who does not make it will be buried alive.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

If they attempt to exit the room *immediately* when the fire exhausts itself (which only takes a round — six seconds), give each a Wits + Footwork roll (TN 25) to escape in time. Any character who does not make it will be buried alive.

The slabs can be lifted though not without a great deal of effort; a Strength check (DC 22) or Brawn roll (DC 35) is barely enough. That said, once the archways are opened, they remain so, as the mechanism secures the stones once more in place.

Characters caught within the chamber find the fire has done more than trap them, it has burned off most of the room's oxygen, making their time very short. The chamber has enough oxygen to sustain one character for ten minutes (or two for five minutes, three for three minutes and twenty seconds, etc.) unless the chamber is opened once more.

While careful heroes are unlikely to be snared in this trap (thanks to the lack of a proper trigger mechanism), this is an excellent place for Hohne to make their lives difficult. If he is somewhere ahead of them, he may double back and wait just beyond the second arch for them to arrive. Once several of them enter the chamber, he will emerge from hiding just long enough to toss a match into the chamber and take off running down the tunnel. Hohne knows that fire in the chamber springs the trap, although he does not understand the mechanics behind it. The Rogers discovered this chamber on their first visit to the island (to the regret of three crewmen) and have since reset the trap with gunpowder and a touch of Syrneth powder from the stores.

### Gerald Hohne's Den

*The rich smell of raw meat assaults you as you round a bend in the tunnel, and your lantern casts a grisly scene into stark relief. The interior of the bend has been hollowed out into a small, shallow cave. Bones — most of them human, by the look of them — are strewn about the floor, a few with scraps of putrefying flesh still hanging loosely from the ends.*

If Gerald is on the island, this is where he makes his stand. Even if he is completely rational at the time, he will not allow them to witness his secret shame and leave this place alive. Any chance they may have had to bargain with him evaporated the moment they discovered his occasional den.

The party need not fear trick nor trap here, as Gerald is careful to make his home in a relatively safe area of the tunnels. Further, he was leery of setting up traps of his own too close to his bed, lest he stumble out of sleep and into his own snares. Once Gerald has been dealt with, the party may proceed. The tunnel doubles back around Gerald's den until it seems to run parallel to the passage they have followed thus far.

See page 26–27 for details on Gerald.

## The Treasure Hold

After the passage leads you on a short and shallow ascent, it widens out into a chamber hewn directly from the stone with hand tools. The light from your lantern shimmers across untold riches, which spill forth from open crates strewn about the room. At last! One of the Rogers' legendary treasure holds!

The Rogers' treasure hold contains no small amount of wealth and the adventurers are free to take as much as they can carry. Unfortunately, there's a catch: the legend of Reis has become so associated with the treasure holds he has secreted around Théah that he is immediately aware of any thievery. Further, allowing burglars to make off with his hard-won loot runs the risk of damaging his fierce reputation and therefore makes him vulnerable.

He will not stand for that.

Adventurers who make off with Reis' treasure would be well advised to sleep with both eyes open, for one never knows when Reis' scythe might carve through their chamber doors.

Regardless of the adventurers' choice in this matter, they can either exit the way they came in (with the attendant dangers) or open the trap door set into the floor. Beneath, a perfectly cylindrical stone chimney descends into the darkness, iron ladder rungs set directly into the wall.

## The Deep

If you wish to extend Skull Island deeper — perhaps to fit into a larger dungeon — then the trap door in the treasure hold can lead down into the deepest bowels of Skull Island, and if there is indeed a Synchronism secret to be found on this island, as legend holds, it lies somewhere below. Of course, deadly and ingenious traps, terrible monsters beyond the understanding of contemporary man and other such horrors doubtless guard it closely. If you are not ready to lead your party into the depths below, simply ignore the trap door... or perhaps an ancient and powerful Synchronism ward seals it shut, locking away the secrets of Skull Island. Perhaps someday the key will be discovered...

## The Rogers' Retreat

It is entirely possible that the party arrived at the Forbidden Cove looking for trouble. In this case, trouble's name is probably the Crimson Rogers. Fortunately for the adventurers, only a few Rogers actually row to the Island itself (the better to keep secrets). Unfortunately, two of them are Reis and Gerald Hohne. Reis is probably more than a match for the group (for his full statistics, see *Swashbuckling Adventures: Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*,™ page 17–18 or *Waves of Blood*,™ page 153–154) although if they are up for the challenge, they may want to have a go at the famous pirate. Alternately, you can simply leave Reis on his ship and let the party take on his underlings.

The heroes will most likely encounter the Rogers by unfortunate coincidence, particularly if they had hoped to relieve them of some of the loot Reis reputedly stashes on the island. In this case, Gerald Hohne stalks the island thirsty for blood. It is possible the party may also encounter one of the unfortunate sailors Reis leaves for Gerald. For more on Gerald's story, see *Waves of Blood*,™ page 156. His statistics and a brief overview are reprinted below for your convenience.

## NPC and Monster Statistics for the Forbidden Cove

### Gerald Hohne

Gerald is a deceptively terrifying member of the Crimson Rogers pirate band. He wears a strange Synchronism mask on his face. Every six months, the mask induces a fit of madness which compels him to violently attack anyone in the vicinity. His increased strength and other abilities ensure that no one survives the experience. The Rogers use him as a weaponsmith, and he does his job well... well enough for them to keep a few disposable sailors around to use during his bouts. They normally send him to Skull Island just before another attack, along with an unlikable sailor or two. They pick him up, shamefaced and alone, a few days later. If the characters are unfortunately enough to visit the island during one of his spells, they may be in for quite a fight.

If Gerald is, in fact, on Skull Island, he has retreated into the depths of the labyrinthine tunnels, ashamed of his curse. Provided his next victim is still alive, Gerald will accompany him underground, blissfully oblivious to his grisly fate. If, on the other hand, the party arrives after Gerald's frenzy, they may find his victim's remains somewhere in the tunnels or on the surface, rotting in the sun.

Whether the crewman is alive or dead is immaterial; if the adventurers intrude on Gerald's "sabbatical," he attacks them somewhere within the island's depths. He is intimately familiar with the tunnels of the island, as well as most of the traps within, and uses this knowledge to his advantage when combating the heroes. It is entirely up to the GM whether Gerald is in the grip of his madness when the party encounters him (indeed, this may even change from encounter to encounter if you choose; one moment, Gerald is rational — if unfriendly — and the next, he might be a savage beast). Regardless, those who try to talk to Hohne during one of his more rational moments find him articulate and civil, if extremely reclusive. He encourages them to leave the island in the strongest possible terms, though he stops short of attacking them.

Characters who wheedle Gerald's story out of him and sincerely offer their aid (and convince him that their help is worth anything) may gain a guide to Skull Island, an invaluable resource in the hours ahead. Short of this, Gerald ignores anything they say, instructing them to get away from the island. If they fail to comply, he stalks off into the darkness; the next time they encounter him (and every time thereafter) he has succumbed to his madness.

### Gerald Hohne (d20™)

**Eisen Fighter 7:** CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d10 + 21; hp 64; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +10 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: bare hands +9/+4 melee (1d3+2); SA See below; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8; AL CN; Skills: Appraise +2, Balance +2, Climb +4, Craft (weaponsmith) +4, Knowledge (history) +1, Profession (sailor) +4, Speak Language (Castille, Crescent, Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Use Rope +2; Feats: Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner),



Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (master).

The statistics above reflect Gerald when he is in control of his own actions. When he descends into his bloody madness (which should be most, if not all, of the time the heroes are on Skull Island,) he gains +6 Str, +6 Con, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), and Weapon Specialization (unarmed strike), and deals 1d8 damage (base). This increases his attack bonus to +13/+8 and his total damage to 1d8+7. Further, he gains 21 additional hit points, bringing his total to 85. Should he suffer damage while in his frenzied state, it is subtracted from these extra hit points first, possibly leaving him unscathed when he recovers his senses.

### Gerald Hohne — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 3, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 4, **Panache:** 3  
**Reputation:** -16  
**Advantages:** Eisen (R/W), Castille, Crescent, Montaigne  
**Merchant:** Appraising 4, Weaponsmith 4  
**Sailor:** Balance 3, Climbing 4, Knotwork 3, Rigging 2  
**Scholar:** History 3, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Law 3  
**Heavy Weapon:** Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2  
**Panzerhand:** Attack (Panzerhand) 3, Parry (Panzerhand) 4  
**Firearms:** Attack (Firearms) 2, Reload (Firearms) 2  
**Note:** During Gerald's bouts of madness, he gains 2 ranks of Brawn, 2 ranks of Resolve, Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, and his barehanded damage becomes 0k2.

### Shark, Medium-Size

#### Medium-Size Animal (Aquatic)

**Hit Dice:** 3d8+3  
**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)  
**Speed:** Swim 60 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)  
**Attacks:** Bite +4 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 1d6+1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Qualities:** Keen scent  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2  
**Abilities:** Str 13, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2  
**Skills:** Listen +7, Spot +7  
**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

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**Climate/Terrain:** Any aquatic  
**Organization:** Solitary, school (2–5), or pack (6–11)  
**Challenge Rating:** 1  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Always neutral  
**Advancement:** 4–6 HD (Medium-size)

Aggressive and powerful, these carnivorous beasts are likely to consider any nearby creature a potential meal. Smaller sharks, as detailed here, range from five to eight feet while larger specimens can grow as long as 20 feet.

### Combat

Sharks circle and observe potential prey, then dart in and bite with their powerful jaws.

**Keen Scent (Ex):** A shark can notice creatures by scent within a 180-foot radius. Further, they can detect blood in the water at distances of up to a mile.

### Sharks — Brutes (7th Sea™)

5 per pack  
**Brawn:** 4, **Finesse:** 3, **Resolve:** 4, **Wits:** 1, **Panache:** 2.  
**Threat Rating:** 2  
**TN to be hit:** 20  
**Attack Roll:** 5k3 bite  
**Damage Roll:** 3k3 bite  
**Special Abilities:** The shark's keen sense of smell enables it to home in on potential prey from up to 180 feet away. If there is blood in the water, the shark can detect it from up to a mile away and follow the scent to its source.

### Siren, Théan (120")

Further details on sirens can be found in the *7th Sea Game Master's Guide*™ and the *Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*™ sourcebook. Their stats are reprinted below.

#### Medium-Sized Humanoid (Aquatic)

**HD:** 4D8+4 (20 hp)  
**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)  
**Speed:** 5 ft, swim 60 ft  
**Armor Class:** 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)  
**Attacks:** 2 claws +1 melee, bite +1 melee  
**Damage:** Claw 1d4 +1, bite 1d6 +1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Qualities:** Amphibious, keen scent, underwater sense  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 6  
**Skills:** Bluff +5, Listen +5, Spot +6

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**Climate:** Any aquatic (oceans and seas)  
**Organization:** Solitary, shoals (2–5), or colonies (11–20)  
**Challenge Rating:** 2  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Chaotic evil  
**Advancement:** By character class

### Combat

**Amphibious:** Sirens normally breathe water, but they can also survive indefinitely on the land. They ignore rules for drowning unless special circumstances are involved.

**Keen Scent:** Sirens can detect blood in the water at ranges of up to one mile and follow it unerringly to its source.

**Underwater Sense:** Sirens can locate creatures underwater within a 50 ft. radius. This ability negates the effects of invisibility and poor visibility. Sirens are not fooled by figments while underwater.

### Siren, Théan — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Points:** 120  
**TN to be hit:** 25 (5 on ground)  
**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Panache:** 2  
**Attack roll:** 5k2 Grapple, 4k3 Bite  
**Damage roll:** 3k3 Bite  
**Skills:** Acting 3, Swimming 4  
**Special:** After making a successful Grapple attack in the water, the siren drags its victim underwater. A Hero bitten by a siren while holding his breath must make a Resolve test against the amount of damage he just took (in addition to his normal Wound Check) or open his mouth and begin to drown immediately. Sirens ignore drowning rules, but move very awkwardly on land.

## Tangleweed

A tangleweed is a form of carnivorous aquatic flora. Though rooted in place, it has little difficulty hunting. It simply waits until it senses a passing creature by the disturbances in local water current, then grasps the potential meal with its powerful tendrils. Usually, the tangleweed feeds on small fish and other sea life, though occasionally a particularly hearty morsel falls into its grasp. Although tangleweeds tend to sprout in clumps, usually all but the weed with the longest tendrils dies of malnutrition.

The tangleweed feeds by puncturing its victim's flesh with barbed "teeth" that sprout along the length of its tendrils. These hollow barbs drain the blood of creatures entangled by the plant. While a hungry tangleweed floats lightly in the water, a recently gorged specimen lies limp in its sandy bed, its normally dark green exterior flushed blood red. Tangleweeds are neither malicious nor mischievous; they lack even the most basic thought processes. They are driven solely by hunger. As such, they pay no notice to the assorted items or coin that may fall from their victims, and even the youngest tangleweed is often surrounded by the wealth of its past victims.

A tangleweed is generally found in waters shallow enough for a man to stand in, although if its victim is entangled in its grasp, it quickly drags him beneath the surface to drown. The plant's reach is extensive but its tendrils are not strong enough to move without the additional buoyancy granted by its watery home. It usually only attacks targets that are at least partially submerged.

### Tangleweed (120")

**Medium-Size Plant**

**Hit Dice:** 2d10

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 0

**AC:** 10

**Attacks:** Bite +2

**Damage:** Bite 1d3+1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft. (20 ft. tendrils)

**Special Attacks:** Constrict, improved grab

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight, damage reduction 25/slashing weapons,

**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -5

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int -, Wis 1, Cha 1

**Skills:** None

**Climate/Terrain:** Tropical Aquatic

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** Double standard

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

### Combat

While awaiting a victim, the tangleweed is virtually indistinguishable from more benign aquatic flora. When it detects a victim within reach of its grasping tendrils, however, it erupts in a blur of motion, roiling the shallow waters in which it rests with a flurry of attacks.

**Constrict (Ex):** The tangleweed can constrict for 1d6+1 damage.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** When the tangleweed successfully grapples its victim, it immediately drags him beneath the

surface. For each round a victim is grappled, he suffers drowning damage in addition to Constriction damage. Once the tangleweed has grappled a target, it ceases all other attacks and focuses on subduing its meal. Other characters may cut the victim free, although any successful attack that is not a critical hit deals a like amount of damage to the tangleweed's victim.

**Blindsight:** The tangleweed senses its prey through minute disturbances in the nearby current. Whenever a living creature passes within reach, the tangleweed automatically attacks unless it is already feeding or is gorged.

### Tangleweed — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**TN to be hit:** 15

**Brawn:** 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Wits:** 1, **Panache:** 2.

**Background:** None

**Advantages:** None

**Weapons:** Tendrils, *see below*

**Attack roll:** 4k2

**Damage roll:** 1k1

**Skills:** None

**Special Abilities:** If the tangleweed successfully strikes its victim with a single raise, it automatically entangles him in its barbed tendrils and drags him underwater. In the following and each subsequent round, the victim suffers 1k1 damage from the tangleweed itself, coupled with drowning damage. Escaping the tangleweed's grasp requires a Brawn check, opposed by the tangleweed's own Brawn. Once the tangleweed entangles a victim, it ignores other targets in favor of its struggling meal. The drowning character's compatriots may free him by killing the tangleweed, although any successful attack with a slashing weapon deals a like amount of damage to the victim unless the attacker makes two raises.

**Blindsight:** The tangleweed automatically senses any prey that enters its reach of 20 feet and attacks immediately unless it is already feeding.

### Will o' Wisp, Théan

Will o' Wisps are the unquiet spirits of travelers who died on the road through misfortune. Resentful of their fate, they attempt to lure others to a similar end, hoping to gain some bitter satisfaction from the knowledge that others can be as unfortunate as they. They appear as glowing balls of light, and will lead an unwary traveler to his death, should he attempt to follow its wavering glow. Unfortunately, not only are they difficult to identify at a distance, but gazing upon them has a hypnotic effect which compels the victim to follow, usually to his death.

It is rare to encounter only one Wisp in the vicinity of the Forbidden Cove. More frequently, a victim encounters a glimmer of Will o' Wisps floating in the distance (often on the far side of dangerous terrain, such as a pit of quicksand or a hidden chasm). Should he approach the glimmer, they simply float away, leading him on to further mishap. Unfortunately, by this time, the Wisps' spell has taken hold, and the victim is compelled to follow into further danger. When questioned later, the rare survivor cannot explain this fascination, claiming only to have been "curious."

Will o' Wisps are never spotted in full daylight because they cannot be seen in any light brighter than twilight. That said, they seem to be nocturnal creatures by necessity only.

## *Will o' Wisp, Théan (20<sup>m</sup>)*

**Tiny Aberration**

**Hit Dice:** 1d8

**Initiative:** +4 (Dex +4)

**Speed:** Fly 60 ft. (perfect)

**AC:** 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex)

**Attacks:** None

**Damage:** None

**Face/Reach:** 2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft./0

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight, Lure, Regeneration

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 2, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 18

**Skills:** None

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**Climate/Terrain:** Any

**Organization:** Solitary or glimmer (1–8)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** True Neutral

**Advancement:** None

### **Combat**

Théan Will o' Wisps have no combat ability whatsoever. They do not fight back if attacked; they continue to drift away from the assailant, drawing him into further peril. That said, they are all but impossible to destroy.

**Blindsight (Ex):** While the Will o' Wisp has no eyes, it seems to have no trouble deciding on the most dangerous path through which to lead a victim. Presumably, it possesses some preternatural sense upon which it relies for guidance. This "vision" extends 500 feet (the furthest distance at which it can sense a victim) and is always active.

**Lure (Ex):** Gazing upon a Will o' Wisp exerts a strange control over the viewer that compels him to advance for a closer look, regardless of whether the victim is within range of the Wisp's blindsight. Any character who looks at a Wisp must make a Will save (DC 11) or be forced to advance towards it. This compulsion is so strong that the victim ignores impending danger and walks directly toward the light regardless of any threat to life and limb.

At the end of each round of movement, the victim may attempt the Save again, although the DC rises by +1 for each previous failed attempt. Further, if a victim is faced with a glimmer of Will o' Wisps, resistance is that much more difficult; the Will's Save DC increases by an additional +1 for every Wisp beyond the first.

**Regeneration (Ex):** Will o' Wisps cannot be killed by any means. When struck with even the weakest blow (which must deal at least 1 point of damage), a Wisp simply seems to wink out of existence. It reappears the 1d6 minutes later in any square adjacent to its previous location. If all adjacent squares are occupied, the Wisp reappears as close as possible, although never in the same square in which it was initially extinguished.

## *Will o' Wisp, Théan — Brute (7th Sea™)*

4 per pack

**Threat Rating:** 1

**TN to be Hit:** 25

**Brawn:** —, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** —, **Resolve:** —, **Panache:** 4

**Attack Roll:** None

**Damage:** None

**Skills:** None

**Special Abilities:** The Will o' Wisps' preternatural senses extend in a 500 feet diameter. Although not true sight, the Wisp navigates unerringly through dangerous terrain and moves just slowly enough to keep its victim in sight.

Once the Wisp is spotted, it may lure its observer in for a closer look. The Wisp rolls Panache against the potential victim's Resolve. Should the Wisp win, the victim moves toward it at a walk, ignoring any dangers that threaten him, even to the extent of stumbling blindly over a precipice. The Wisp must make a subsequent Panache roll (again, against the victim's Resolve) for every 30 feet the victim follows. For each previous roll in which the Wisp beat the victim's total, the Wisp gains an extra Unkept die for the roll. Similarly, a glimmer of Wisps often cooperates to hypnotize a single victim; each Wisp beyond the first adds an Unkept die to the glimmer's Panache roll.

A Wisp is extinguished by even a single point of damage, but reappears nearby minutes later to continue vexing its attacker. Will o' Wisps are impossible to destroy permanently.

## *The House of Silent Anguish: Villanova's Dungeons*

One of Giovanni Villanova's first acts as a prince of Vodacce was to build himself a summerhouse. It was to be a simple one-story cottage on a small island on the edge of Dionna, far from anything of importance, to serve as a gentle retreat from the Great Game. However, it became an embarrassment — the building was beset with problems, and took over five years to complete. The courtiers laughed at the new prince and his inability to get his builders to finish the job.

Few realized that Villanova was actually clearing out what lay beneath it. He wanted a cover story to fool the inquisitive minds of the courts. By looking like a fool he caused his enemies to underestimate his power as a new prince. (He did execute several builders in mock rage, just to keep up appearances.) The story of what lay beneath the house, and why Villanova wanted it, began nearly 100 years earlier.

When Giovanni Villanova's grandfather Vincenzo became a prince, he wanted to build a new house, something large and grand to impress the other Vodacce princes. It had to be something that was both an architectural and engineering marvel, so he selected a beautiful section of Dionna and hired scientists and architects to make his dream a reality. He demanded that the house have a spectacular view, which required the creation of a small pseudo-island alongside the high hills. Hundreds of tons of earth were used, and (it is rumored) a few Synchron devices but no one could corroborate that because the site was so well guarded.

When the house was finished, it looked like a small castle floating on top of the hills. Prince Vincenzo would take his guests up to the top floor and tell them "There is nothing you can see that I do not own." He was so pleased with the new house that he moved his entire family and businesses into it.

A year later, the builder came to the prince, his knees shaking in terror — the house was sinking because the island foundation could not support the weight of such a huge

structure. The only good news was that the island was crumbling into itself, which meant that it might not topple sideways — if they were lucky. There was nothing to be done. The building was simply too heavy to brace or stop its passage and the prince would have to move his people to safety.

There were the usual suspicions that a rival prince had sabotaged the construction in some way but the truth was that Villanova had built his house on shifting sands. He was furious and embarrassed. His pride and joy was sinking and he would be the laughing stock of Vodacce. On top of that, he was forced to move his entire operation *again* and apparently in a hurry.

Never one to be outdone by mere nature, Villanova ordered the installation of huge pumps initially driven by the servants — and later by the pressure of the water outside — to hold back the seepage. Despite this, the house continued to sink and the lower windows had to be bricked closed. In case of emergency, huge metal doors were hastily installed that could seal off whole sections. By the time another year had passed, the ground floor was underwater and six months after that the next floor followed suit. Eventually Prince Villanova moved his business to one of his other houses on the island, as far away as possible from “Vincenzo’s Pump House,” as the sinking building was called.

Firm in the belief that out of sight was out of everyone else’s mind, Villanova ordered a huge earthwork built around the upper parts of the house. He would rather people speculated about the odd shape on the far side of island than see a single brick of his mortification. Once that was completed, the house was evacuated and left to sink.

That was until Giovanni Villanova decided he needed somewhere to house his more difficult prisoners. A dedicated student of Scarovese’s masterwork *Means to Ends*, Giovanni knew that not every enemy or pawn needed to be killed when no longer useful and in fact, some people were better kept in chains than killed. He needed a very secure and secret place, easily accessible, and from which no one could escape. His grandfather’s folly might have a use after all. Villanova sent trusted men to inspect it, and found the keys to the old house from his ancestor’s possessions. When his men eventually found the small island near the coast, Giovanni began planning a sinister renovation.

The prince hired inventors and technicians to install pumps to clear the lower floors. By now a full four floors were completely underwater. The fourth floor was partially submerged, but the remaining four floors were above the water. However, these floors (the fifth to eighth) were underground, still covered by Vincenzo’s attempt to erase his mistake. Surrounded by earth, it had all become a low hill on an unremarkable horizon.

It was perfect. No one spoke much about Vincenzo’s Pump House anymore, which ensured that no one would notice his changes. But the really good news was that it had stopped sinking. The structure had finally settled on bedrock and could go no further. Amazingly, some of the original pump system was still operational and the work began in earnest. To give his workers cover, Villanova decided to build his own personal summerhouse on top of the structure. He only visits the summerhouse occasionally, leaving his “guests” to their own devices. After all, if he were to go there too often, people would become interested in the place again.

## Layout

From a distance, the unremarkable building rests atop a high hill on a reasonably unspoiled area of the island with a good view of the surrounding countryside. There are a few guards, as anyone would expect on a noble’s property. Occasionally, Villanova entertains guests who visit for a time. Two in particular, however, stay there on an almost permanent basis — a cousin of Giovanni’s named Vorentz and his wife Rosa.

The well-appointed and richly furnished summerhouse has an inordinate number of small staircases for a single story building. There are two living rooms and 10 bedrooms as well as a modest servant’s quarters and good-sized kitchen. The place makes a nice retreat but is certainly not big enough to hold the grand parties for which Villanova is famous. It does however have a large and well-stocked wine cellar.

The wine cellar is actually located in what was the top (eighth) floor of the original house. The original roof and attic were removed to flatten the area for the new foundations. A thick stone wall separates the relatively small “cellar” from the rest of the floor. The only access through the wall is a door concealed in the brickwork. Removing a certain brick reveals the keyhole; Vorentz and Rosa keep the key. Turning the key activates a series of weights that swing open a small section of wall. This is the only way into Giovanni Villanova’s dungeons.

Spotting the door is difficult, Spot check (DC 20) or a Wits check (TN 25). Finding the keyhole is also quite hard requiring a Disable Device or Spot check (DC 15) or a Wits check (TN 20). Anyone who finds the keyhole can make the same roll to realize that only the right key will open the door. No form of open locks roll is likely to be good enough, although the GM may allow such a roll if he wants to give the characters a chance to get in. In such a case it should still require an Open Locks or Disable Device skill check (DC 30) or a Lock-picking or Trap Lore roll (TN 30). If such subtlety is out of your players’ grasp, the wall can be smashed down like any other solid stone wall.

Ironically there is always a low level of water in the cellar. A complex pipe system keeps a small flow dripping into the area which allows Villanova to complain to guests how this house is too close to the water line to make a proper cellar.

Once through the secret door there is little else to this floor. Most of the internal walls have been removed to allow it to become a gathering point. In case of attack, a large number of men can be assembled here to repel any intruders. There is a wide-open space around the door and some of the internal walls have been kept at knee height on the opposite side to provide cover for defenders. Behind these low walls, a set of stairs leads down to the next floor.

The next three floors have been knocked through to make one high open area linked by wooden ladders. Like the rest of the house, these floors are all set at a 30-degree angle, which takes rather a lot of adjusting. The house itself listed a little as it sunk, and rests as such. It would be too expensive and too time consuming to level the floors at this point, even for Villanova. Such leveling took place on the top floor, because Giovanni wanted a normal-appearing cellar.


Leaving the floors at an angle gives the defenders a home advantage. Anyone unused to fighting on this difficult terrain suffers a penalty  $-2$  to hit or 1 Unkept die on any combat action.



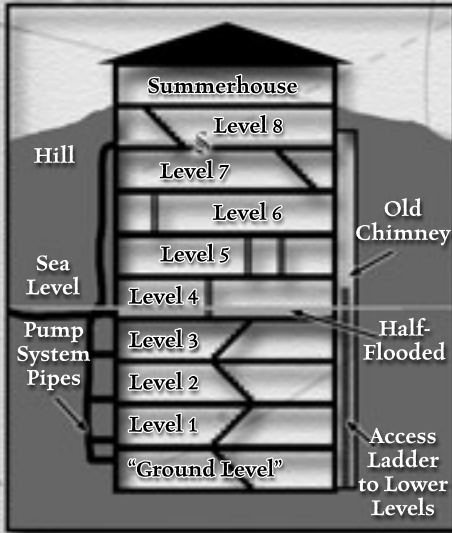
# The House of Silent Anguish



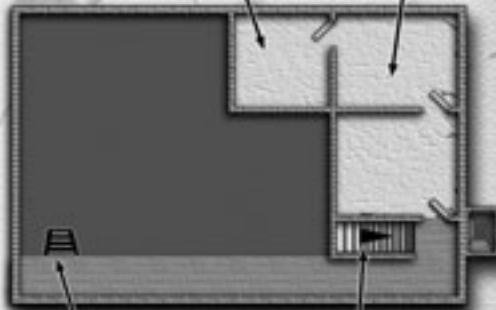
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Scale in Feet

§ = Secret Door  
 = Ladder

Side View



Level 7 Torture Chamber Villanova's Apts.



Ladder Down to Level 7

Stairs Up to Level 8

Level 6

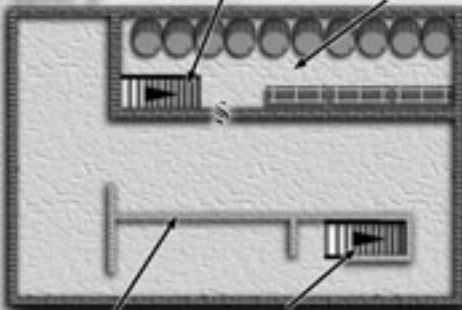
Ladder Down to Level 5



Ladder Up to Level 5

Ladder Down to Level 5

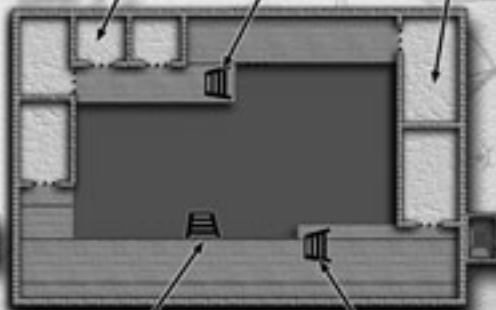
Level 8 Stairs Up to Summerhouse Wine Cellar



Low Walls

Stairs Down

Level 5 Cells Ladder Up to Level 6 Cells




Ladder Down to Level 4

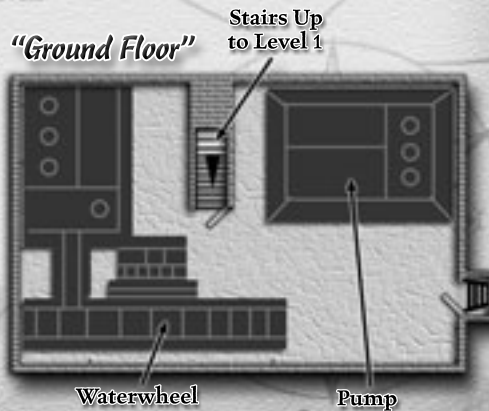
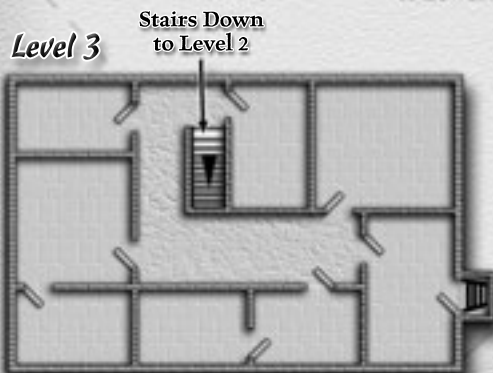
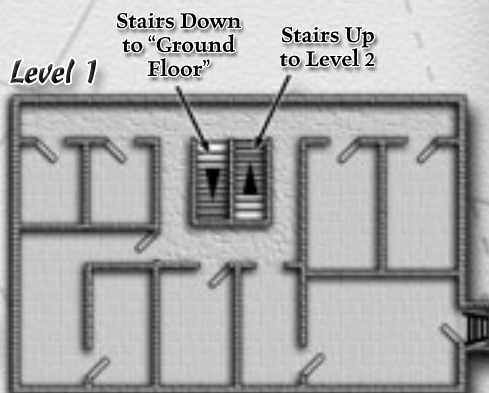
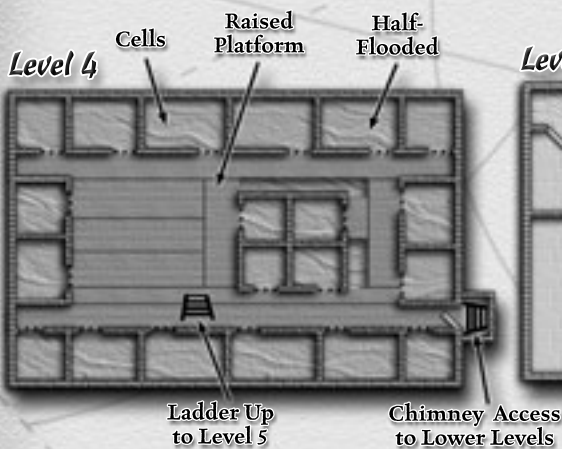
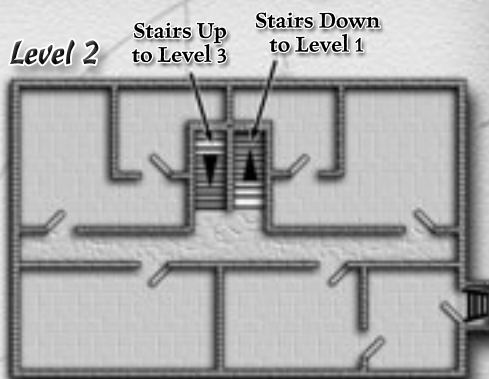
Ladder Up to Level 6

# The House of Silent Anguish



0 5 10  
Scale in Feet

 = Ladder



This section of the house is still underground but not yet under water. Vorentz maintains a richly appointed apartment at the top as his office; he also uses it as a rather plush torture chamber. He likes to bring certain prisoners up here to torment them in more comfortable surroundings. Besides, the acoustics are such that from up here their screams echo nicely down through the floors to the other prisoners below. Vorentz and Rosa also use the rooms and equipment for an entirely different purpose, and the noises they make are no less chilling than the screams.

The guards use the middle floor of this set as a barracks where there is plenty of space to rest or play dice; however, there is no guard's common room. Vorentz and Giovanni do not want them to get comfortable in the prison. They have enough space to sleep and remain fit, but having no one place to settle down encourages them to wander the prison and keep an eye on things. It also gives them reason to take their boredom and discomfort out on the prisoners, something neither Vorentz, Rosa, nor Giovanni bothers to discourage.

There are a few prison cells at the bottom of this section, reserved for prisoners who have proved themselves worthy of special attention. At least half contain prisoners who are too old to pump with the others, but too useful to "cancel." The remaining cells, which are in better condition, are used for those who still serve some purpose, like engineers and some of the pump experts. After all, only people who realize how much worse things could be do their best work to avoid such a fate.

The last category of "special" prisoners includes spies and collaborators. Vorentz regularly puts spies into the lower cells to gain information about any potential escape plans or insurrections. Prisoners are encouraged to come to him with information in exchange for a few weeks in the privileged cells. Sometimes Vorentz selects a random prisoner to receive better treatment for a week or two. This is not intended to ease their suffering but to sow dissent and paranoia among the others. It makes them wonder what the fortunate prisoner has done to earn better treatment. The more he professes ignorance and innocence, the more his fellow prisoners distrust him.

The next floor down is reserved for punishment and solitary confinement. This level is partially under water, which Vorentz does not intend to drain. It contains twenty small cells, although usually only half of them are in use at one time. The water on this floor rises to about waist height, and makes living here very uncomfortable. Those deemed deserving of a more long-term punishment than a torture session are left to rot alone, their only comfort a pair of manacles graciously provided by their host. There is no bed above the water level so they are forced to sleep hanging from chains to avoid drowning.

Most are kept in this way for about three days, which is usually sufficient to teach them a lesson. Guards who need to be punished are put on suicide watch in this area. They have a slightly better time than the prisoners because planking allows them to stand or sit above water level. To check on the prisoners they still need to wade into the water, and if a prisoner dies during their watch, their life is forfeit.

The last and deepest four levels are technically underwater but not flooded. Like all the floors in the house, large iron doors and shutters were placed over every window or door back when Vincenzo Villanova was trying to salvage the building. The door/shutter system allows the structure to

deal with the pressure, and filler was poured into all the cracks to seal against the sea outside as the building sank so the leak was reduced to gradual seepage.

The pumping system itself takes up most of the "ground floor" but there are pumps on all the upper floors as well. The main stairs have been sealed so the only access is by a ladder running through what used to be a wide chimney down the side of the building. Pumping this out is a system priority, which enables access in case of an emergency. This system allows the fourth floor to remain partially flooded, but the ones below it to stay dry. The irony is that the entire system was actually very well designed and if the waterwheel system in the ground floor were engaged, it could keep the whole house from flooding.

Well aware that idle hands breed rebellion, Giovanni wants to keep the prisoners occupied. Each prison floor (floors 1–3) has a pumping system activated by levers. If the levers are not pulled 24 hours a day, the floor will flood with sea water. It is in the prisoners' interest to keep their floor pumped out; otherwise, they will drown.

This system ensures against escape and rebellion. If the prisoners wish to escape they will all have to go together or there will not be enough people to work the pumps. No one is allowed the individual dream of escape, which works to actively sabotage any attempts. A mass breakout is the only answer but to plan and carry out such a vast plan requires time and effort. After spending all day pumping levers, most prisoners are too tired to think, let alone plan an escape. Despite that, Prince Giovanni is happy to leave them with a little determination and desire to escape. After all, if they lost hope completely they might decide to stop pumping and drown. Occasionally someone will stop working but the others force them back to work. The guards do not patrol this area, except to bring more prisoners, remove the dead or ease their boredom by tormenting the exhausted workers.

Like the other floors in the old summerhouse, the lower levels rest at an odd angle, but apart from that they are much as they were when the house sank. Although each floor has been under water for a while, the fittings and elegant stonework are still very much in evidence. The white marble is faded and dank, but the carvings (and even of some of the remaining wood) are clear and well preserved. Some of the prisoners use their limited rest time to clean the marble and restore a little of the incredible grandeur around them. It allows them to pretend they are guests in one of the greatest Vodacce houses ever built rather than its prisoners. Their efforts serve as a potent reminder of how little hope the prisoners have of escape.

The ground floor contains the main pumping equipment and is always knee high in water, even though it is pumped before any of the prisoners' floors. Originally it was a huge open hall, which made it the only place capable of housing the massive water pumps. The floor is a mass of piping that constantly leaks and drips. It echoes perpetually with the grinding noise of the system moving water through gears and pumps. Two huge pumps take up most of the room; connected to them is a waterwheel and trough no longer in use. Water used to blast down the trough, turning the wheel to drain the house but Villanova put a stop to such easy living. Marcello Prizza, the great-grandson of the system's original designer and a talented inventor himself, is the only person who spends any time down here.

Luckily for the prisoners, the system itself is quite resistant to damage, but unfortunately not immune. It all depends where you attack it. The venting tubes that draw water out of the floors are sunk into the floors and walls of the areas they drain. This makes them difficult to damage. The pumping levers for the prisoners extend from two shafts (one for each of the two pumps) that are driven as one unit through all of the lower floors, terminating directly into each pump on the ground floor. These shafts are made of metal but are not difficult to damage given the precision and delicacy of the lever system inside. So be warned, with everything centralized in two shafts, bashing away at them is just as likely to destroy the lever mechanism of the floor above as much as the one on the floor the damage occurs.

The best place to strike at the mechanism is unfortunately on the ground floor. The draining pipes here are not enclosed and easy to break and tear down. This will start to flood the ground floor as water will pour out of the broken pipe. If only one or two pipes are broken this way the pumping system can cope, but any more will be to fill the ground floor with water. The effect on any of the other floors is up to the GM. The system is too complex for anyone but Marcello to understand, although he could possibly tell the saboteurs which pipe's destruction would stop it draining a particular floor. However, each floor is drained by at least five or six pipes, and at least three would have to be destroyed to begin flooding the floor.

The pumps themselves are very large and solid, however they are built very precisely. If enough damage was done to the outer casing the unit would stop working. It relies on vacuum, so holes or ill-fitting (i.e., damaged) components will let in air. Any attack that could significantly dent or put a hole in old steel will cripple the device. Destroying one of the pumps will be enough to begin flooding the entire building. Water will rise at about an inch every three minutes, on every floor at the same time! That number increases to two inches every three minutes if both pumps are disabled. This flooding includes the chimney, the only exit, which will flood far more quickly (one foot every three minutes) if the pumps fail.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The pumps have a hardness of 10 and 45 hp apiece.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The pumps have a Demolition Rating of 6.

A more gentle way to stop the system is to allow the ground floor to flood. Breaking the specific pipes on that level will bring the water into just that floor. This will not affect the pumps for a number of minutes equal to  $15 \times 1d10$ . They will eventually stop as they are not completely watertight, and any water inside them makes them work harder to pump. Prisoners will notice their work getting harder and less water pumping out; the GM can determine the exact rate of the flooding. Eventually the system will stop completely, but by then every floor will have been slowly flooded. Luckily for saboteurs the chimney will still be pumped as a priority.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The pipes have a hardness 8 and 10 hp apiece.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The pipes have a Demolition Rating of 3.

No one is going to escape such an attempt and stay dry. They had also better be sure what they are doing, as once begun, there is very little that can start the pumps going again without a full engineering crew and several months. The saboteurs had also better make sure Vorentz doesn't figure out their plan. He is likely to make the guards chain a few prisoners to the wall as the levels flood... if only to kill off some of Giovanni's secrets, or have a last bit of fun. He'll see the same happens to the saboteurs if he can.

## NPC Statistics for Villanova's Dungeons

### Vorentz and Rosa Villanova — the Jailer and his Wife

The overlord of Villanova's dungeons is a sadist of the highest order, in keeping with the reputation his cousin the Prince has earned for the family name. Only his wife's matches his taste for pain and suffering. Vorentz came to Giovanni's attention when his sexual tastes led to an uproar following the grisly death of a girl he had taken as mistress. She was not the first whom Vorentz had broken in bed but she was related to the wrong people and they wanted vengeance.

Vorentz came to his Prince to beg for his protection. After a brief conversation, Giovanni realized Vorentz had no political ambitions, and decided to make use of the man's unquiet tastes. Vorentz didn't want money or power; he wanted to practice his sadistic urges on as many people as he could. Giovanni recognized the usefulness of a man without ambition, and more so the use of having such a man in his debt.

When the dungeon was completed and Giovanni needed someone to run it, he turned to Vorentz. By then, his cousin had learned subtlety in his proclivities and was looking for a wife. He found Rosa Caligari, a minor daughter of the Caligari line, but one blessed with potent *Sorte* magic. Unfortunately, Rosa's station was a little too high and Vorentz had an unpleasant reputation even for *Vodacce*. If Giovanni could arrange a marriage, he would agree to serve as his jailer.

The deal proved easier than expected. Rosa knew all about Vorentz and found him fascinating. She saw him as a challenge and wanted to tame him. Furthermore, she despised her own family, the Caligaris, and leapt at the chance to jump ship. It cost Giovanni very little to see them wed, and as a wedding gift, he sent them to live in the summerhouse.

The couple was pleased to discover that they wanted the same things out of life, namely the opportunity to hurt other people. They shared a mutual lust but neither wanted to be the one tied up and beaten. So they came to an arrangement. For many *Vodacce*, such arrangements involve other people outside the marriage but there was no one else in the summerhouse except the prisoners and servants. Luckily the newlyweds realized that unlike most with their "special interests," neither liked having a consensual partner.

So the Villanovas' arrangement became the prisoners' horror. The couple played intricate games with the prisoners, and have developed quite a range of "experiments." Both of them hate repetition, meaning that each new session brings a heretofore unseen agony to their victims. Torture and suffering have become foreplay for the couple. Their games range from "I bet he will scream after the fifth lash of the whip," to "If his eye is cut out, I wager he will not stop whimpering for more than two hours."



This plan worked wonders for the couple in the beginning, and the Prince let them continue since they seem so happy in their work. But now, several years later, they are beginning to tire of each other. Their games grow more dangerous and terrible as their twisted intimacy satisfies them less and less. Soon they may begin to damage important prisoners permanently, which will undoubtedly catch the Prince's eye. It is also possible that one of them may grow so bored with the lifestyle that they could murder the other in one last act of brutal carnality.

Vorentz is a tall well-built man with long unkempt dark hair and a constant scowl. He dresses in expensive clothes that may as well be rags. He has little time for personal grooming or any desire to adjust his laces or do up buttons properly. He always looks as if he has just awakened and dressed hurriedly, which gives the impression he is a slob. Nothing could be further from the truth. He simply feels that dressing well and grooming are things you do to impress and attract other people. He just does not care about how other people feel or regard him, and what he wants, he takes.

Rosa is very different from her husband. She is extremely precise and her clothing is always arranged and accessorized perfectly. She is a stunning beauty, and dresses provocatively to keep Vorentz on edge. However, she never looks as obvious as a courtesan; after all, she is a Villanova noblewoman and the daughter of one of Vodacce's ancient families; no matter how outlandish her outfits, they always remain the traditional Fate Witch black in color. She is very tall, and always seems to be looking down on everyone she meets. Those who get too close discover to their dismay that behind her beauty is the personality of a true monster.

### Vorentz Villanova (d20™)

**Vodacce Noble 8/Courtier 2/Villanova Swordsman 3:** CR 13; SZ M (humanoid); HD 11d8+11 plus 2d6+2; hp 86; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+2 Dex, +7 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: rapier +11/+6/+1 melee (1d6 +1), dagger +11/+6/+1 melee (1d4 +1); SA Commanding Presence +2, Focused Training (dagger), Friends in High Places, Iron Glare 1/day, Seduction, Stop-Thrust, Style and Grace, Talent, Taunt, Wealth; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17; AL NE; Skills: Bluff +8, Climb +5, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Innuendo +10, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (pain) +10, Listen +7, Perform +5, Profession (torturer) +10, Read Lips +7, Ride +5, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Castille, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +7, Swim +5, Tumble +3; Feats: Detect Lie, Gifted Liar, Iron Will, Leadership, Pain Tolerance, Sex Appeal, Tyrant, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

### Vorentz Villanova — Villain (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 3, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 4  
**Reputation:** -38  
**Background:** None  
**Arcana:** Lecherous  
**Advantages:** Vodacce (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Connections (various Villanova including cousin to Giovanni), Dangerous Beauty, Evil Reputation, Governor, Indomitable Will, Noble, Pain Tolerance  
**Athlete:** Climbing 2, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 2  
**Courtier:** Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 5, Scheming 5, Seduction 5, Sincerity 5

**Criminal:** Cheating 4, Gambling 3, Quack 2, Scrounging 4  
**Spy:** Shadowing 3, Stealth 4  
**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 3  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 2  
**Villanova (Journeyman):** Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 4, Feint 4, Stop-Thrust 4, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 4

### Rosa Caligari Villanova (d20™)

**Vodacce Noble 5/Fate Witch 11:** CR 16; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d8+10 plus 11d6+22; hp 100; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: dagger +8/+3 melee (1d4); SA Blessings and Curses, Commanding Presence +2, Fate's Friend, Friends in High Places, Preternatural Dodge, Seduction, Sense Strands, Sorte Checks +5, Spell Casting, Spreads (Arcana, Cups, Staves, Swords, Coins), Stretching Strands, Taunt, Tugging Strands; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +11; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17; AL NE; Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +12, Gather Information +11, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (pain) +11, Listen +6, Profession (torturer) +13, Ride +8, Scry +12, Sense Motive +10, Speak Language (Castille, Crescent, Montaigne, Vodacce [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]); Feats: Appearance — Above Average, Detect Lie, Full Blooded Sorte Sorcery, Pain Tolerance, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

**Note:** Rosa's dagger has been imbued with 2 Destiny dice, each of which she may call upon once per day. When used as a free action, the die adds 1d6 to the users' attack roll, damage roll, or AC for a single attack. Further details may be found in the *Swashbuckling Arcana*™ sourcebook, pages 18–19.

### Rosa Caligari Villanova — Villain (d20™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 3  
**Reputation:** -5  
**Background:** None  
**Arcana:** Proud  
**Advantages:** Vodacce (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W); Intimidating, Noble, Pain Tolerance, Twisted Blade\*, Toughness  
**Athlete:** Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2  
**Courtier:** Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 3, Scheming 4, Seduction 4, Sincerity 2  
**Spy:** Shadowing 2, Stealth 4  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2  
**Sorte (Adept):** Arcana 4, Cups 4, Swords 4, Staves 4, Coins 4

\*The twisted blade is a long dagger Rosa made for herself with 2 Destiny dice (which she may spend before making any roll which involves use of the weapon). Vorentz constantly rages at her that she should make one for him. However, he is unwilling to submit to the "price" she requires for it. She only made the dagger to enrage him and carries it always to remind him that he must find a way to pay before he can have one. She hopes he never does as the annoyance it causes him makes her cold heart beat faster.

### Argento Villanova, Captain of the Guard

Argento is a very dangerous man, but unlike many in his family, he also very honorable. He dedicated himself to the blade as a young man and fought in as many wars and legal duels as he could to hone his craft. His mastery of the Villanova School is almost peerless; in fact he taught at the school for many years until scandal forced him to depart in

disgrace. Renowned as a brutal and unforgiving teacher, his career ended when the son of a powerful relation was killed during one of his exercises. It wasn't really Argento's fault. The exercise was difficult and any student who paid attention and showed dedication to the task would have been safe. The boy in question was young and arrogant in true Villanova manner, and both traits got him killed. Argento found himself unemployed and (due to the boy's father) unemployable. There are very few jobs for an aging swordsman... but Giovanni Villanova had the perfect position for his disgraced relative.

Argento has since served as the captain of the guard for his Prince's dungeons. He loathes everything about Vorentz and Rosa, especially the flagrant expression of their lust but is bound to obey their orders. The one thing he does control is the state of his men. He will stand for no dishonor or laziness among the guards. He regularly challenges them to non-lethal duels to keep them sharp. If the opponent fights below his ability, he gets a nasty scar. If he fights with arrogance, sloth or dishonor, Argento kills him. These deaths happen very rarely; otherwise, Vorentz or Giovanni would have to intervene. For the moment, however, they care little for the loss of a few time wasters and are pleased with Argento's conduct.

Captain Argento could undoubtedly overpower either of the jailers, but where would he go? He knows that his life would be worth nothing if he were spotted on the streets. Thus, he only leaves the compound when he has to escort unconscious prisoners or blindfolded replacements to their new home.

### Adventure Seeds

Argento had to kill a guard whose term was up because he overheard the man telling his widow what happened. Now the woman wants revenge but knows enough to go about things quietly. So she engages the party's services. Can the adventurers find Argento on one of his rare trips outside the house? Can they defeat him in a duel if they do, and avenge the widow of the man he murdered? This is dangerous Villanova business... should they even try?

Juliette and Valentina need to make contact with Liana. They cannot go near the house for fear of Giovanni recognizing them. Can the characters get close enough to find out what Liana knows without revealing her cover or ending up pulling levers in perpetuity?

Villanova has a job for the adventurers. It pays well and lasts a year. He just needs a few men to do some guard duty. The party may smell a rat when they find themselves at midnight, blindfolded, trussed up and tossed into a carriage. Knowing that there is a chance they will not survive the year or the depredations of the jailers or the guards, should they play along and try to infiltrate Villanova's operations? Will they learn dangerous secrets the powerful Prince wants buried? Assuming they can get out of the dungeon, will they be allowed to live?

### Argento Villanova (d20™)

**Vodacce Fighter 8/Villanova Swordsman 5:** CR 13; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d10+24 plus 5d8 +15; hp 130; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+4 Dex, +9 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: rapier +13/+8/+3 melee (1d6+4), dagger +13/+8/+3 melee (1d4+2); SA Feinting, Focused Training (dagger), Invite the Attack, Stop-Thrust, Unexpected Strike, Weapon Specialization (rapier); SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 11; AL LN; Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +5, Climb +3, Craft (weaponsmith) +6, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +8, Jump +5, Listen +5, Ride +3, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Castille, Eisen, Vodacce [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +4, Swim +3, Tumble +2; Feats: Beat, Blind Fighting, Combat Reflexes, Death Blow, Disarm Master, Dodge, Evil Reputation, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Weapon Focus (rapier).

### Argento Villanova — Villain

**Brawn:** 4, **Finesse:** 5, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 4, **Panache:** 4

**Reputation:** -30

**Background:** Code of Honor 3

**Arcana:** None

**Advantages:** Vodacce (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Evil Reputation, Grand Master (Villanova), Keen Senses, Left-Handed, Membership: Swordsman's Guild

**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4  
**Courtier:** Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Scheming 2

**Spy:** Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

**Dirty Fighting:** Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 5, Eye-gouge 5, Kick 5, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 5, Throat Strike 5, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 5

**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5

**Villanova (Master):** Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint 5, Stop Thrust 5, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 5

### Standard Prison Guard

Many of the guards are no better off than the prisoners. They are recruited from the mid-range of Villanova's forces: prisoners are too important to be guarded by incompetents, and the work is too tedious and unpleasant for the Prince to waste his best. The guards are told it will be a plum assignment but anyone who trusts a Villanova that much deserves to end up in the summerhouse. They are paid rather well (although they have nowhere to spend it) and serve a term of at least a year.

Such terms are most often served by graduating students of the Villanova School who need to pay off a favor. Most are blindfolded and brought to the house at night. They live inside for their entire term and may not go above ground, on pain of death. Most of them have no idea where they are. Ironically, some may find themselves guarding the summerhouse later with no idea that they used to work below it. The guards are mostly a surly and vindictive lot who hurt and abuse the prisoners out of boredom and a need to remind themselves that they are better off than the poor wretches chained to the slime-covered walls.

### Standard Prison Guard (a20<sup>m</sup>)

**Vodacce Fighter 5/Villanova Swordsman 1/Noble 1:** CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d10+10 plus 2d8+2; hp 54; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: rapier +7/+2 melee (1d6+1), pistol +7/+2 ranged (1d10); SA Commanding Presence +1, Focused Training (dagger), Friends in High Places, Stop-Thrust, Weapon Specialization (rapier); SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL any non-good; Skills: Balance +2, Bluff +4, Climb +4, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Ride +6, Sense Motive +4, Speak Language (Castille, Vodacce; [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Swim +3; Feats: Assassin's Hand, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Weapon Focus (rapier).

### Standard Prison Guard — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2  
**Advantages:** Castillian (R/W) and/or Vodacce (R/W)  
**Reputation:** 5  
**Background:** Any  
**Arcana:** None  
**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2  
**Courtier:** Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Scheming 3, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3  
**Spy:** Shadowing 3, Stealth 3  
**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2  
**Villanova (Apprentice):** Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 2, Feint 2, Stop Thrust 3, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 2

### Standard Prisoner

Prisoners are a sorry lot no matter where they are, but the ones incarcerated in the summerhouse are particularly pathetic. Anyone who Villanova wants out of his way usually ends up floating face down in the canals of Dionna so each man or woman here has some sort of use. Oddly, most are nobles. Giovanni knows it can often be dangerous to kill another of his class. The time may come when he needs to produce the “lost son or daughter” of a rival to avoid a vendetta.

There are, however, other kinds of prisoners — hardened killers and criminals whose skills may be useful. Giovanni keeps them around in case he needs an expendable assassin for a dangerous job. He offers them freedom if they do what he wants and assures them that they will die if they fail. Usually he sees to it they die after the mission anyway but he has kept his word to a select few.

The place is not so full that anyone needs to share, so each prisoner has a private cell. Apart from the occasional visit from bored guards (or the jailers) in need of entertainment, the prisoners are mostly left to their own devices. Both men and woman are kept here, although there are fewer women than men, given the smaller number of ladies involved in the Great Game. Just to make the place more uncomfortable, the prison does not accommodate separate quarters for men and women.

Vorentz and his wife also like to encourage relationships between prisoners. Couples whose love is the only beacon in dreadful circumstances make interesting victims for their diversions. Here, their sick and demented games take on an even viler twist.

While there are prisoners from many nations here, there are no sorcerers. They are often too dangerous and unpredictable, so Giovanni either has them working for him under his direct supervisor, or killed. That goes double for Fate Witches.

The statistics below are for rank-and-file prisoners: those strong enough to work the pumps. There are many in the dungeons, too many to detail here, with a wealth of skills in many areas. The GM is encouraged to allow the players to meet all manner of characters trapped in the dungeons. There are a few high level assassins and nobles here, hoping that Villanova will offer them a task in return for freedom. Remember, though, there are no sorcerers of any kind in the dungeons — at least none Villanova knows about...

### Standard Prisoner (a20<sup>m</sup>)

**Théan Fighter 2/Noble 1:** CR 3; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d10+6 plus 1d8+3; hp 29; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: none; SA Commanding Presence +1, Friends in High Places; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10; AL any; Skills: Climb +2, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +2, Jump +2, Listen +4, Sense Motive +4, Speak Language (any three languages), Spot +4, Swim +8; Feats: Blind Fighting, Dodge, Pain Tolerance.

### Standard Prisoner — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 1, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 1  
**Note:** These statistics reflect the prisoners in their current state of ill health.  
**TN to be hit:** Depends on the prisoner, but usually 10  
**Background:** Any  
**Arcana:** None  
**Advantages:** Pain Tolerance (for the older prisoners who have survived this long)  
**Note:** Skills depend on the prisoner, but most should at least have the following:  
**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 2, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3

### Marcello Prizza, Privileged Prisoner

Marcello is the great grandson of the original designer of the pumping system, and a talented (if greedy) inventor himself. He redesigned and reworked the old system and got it running for Villanova. He guessed a little at what the house would be used for but the large sum of money the prince paid him made him ignore his doubts. He should not have been surprised when Giovanni locked him in here with the others so that he could keep the system working. He is one of the lucky ones with a cell on the upper floor. He also gets to eat a fine meal with Vorentz and his wife each week so he can report on the state of the pumping system.

But for all his privileges, he is beaten and abused almost as much as any other prisoner. Being close to the jailers makes it difficult to avoid their attention. None of the other prisoners will talk to him, knowing that he is basically the architect of their continual torture. They consider his fate just desserts for his greed. It is a shame they ostracize him, because he alone of the prisoners knows where they are. No escape attempt can succeed without the participants knowing their location. Marcello also knows that sharing this information with anyone would get him killed, so he keeps his lips sealed... although he may be persuaded otherwise should any new prisoner propose an escape.

### Marcello Prizza (d20™)

**Vodacce Alchemist 6/Courtier 2:** CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d6+16; hp 46; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atks: none; SA Brew Potions, Craft Elixir, Iron Will, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 12; AL N (and selfish); Skills: Alchemy +5, Bluff +6, Concentration +5, Craft (blacksmithing) +8, Craft (mechanics) +12, Decipher Script +2, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +6, Forgery +5, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +8 Listen +2, Speak Language (Castille, Montaigne, Vendel, Vodacce; [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +6; Feats: Spark of Genius (Engineering), Tinker.

### Marcello Prizza — Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2  
**Reputation:** 10  
**Background:** Defeated  
**Arcana:** Greedy  
**Advantages:** Vodacce (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Brilliant, Handy, Linguist, Small, Spark of Genius (Tinker)  
**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4  
**Courtier:** Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 2, Oratory 4, Scheming 2, Sincerity 4  
**Professor:** Mooch 3, Natural Philosophy 4, Oratory 4, Research 4, Tinker 5, Writing 2

### Liana Foracci

Liana seems to be little more than a common serving girl at the summerhouse. In fact she is a spy for Juliette and Valentina Villanova — Giovanni's former wife and mistress, and perhaps his most dangerous enemies — and connected with Sophia's Daughters. Juliette became aware of Giovanni's secret prison and other secrets as well when she shared his bed. She told all she knew to her friend Valentina. When the pair left Dionna and Villanova's wrath behind, they realized his prison should be watched, so they engaged Liana to infiltrate and see what she could learn. Thus far she has been unable to gain access to the prison itself, but she does know where the door is. Like Juliette and Valentina, she knows that many of Villanova's darkest secrets lie buried in this place, secrets that would be very grateful for the chance to escape.

### Liana Foracci (d20™)

**Vodacce Spy 10/Assassin 2/Necare Assassin 5:** CR 17; SZ M (humanoid); HD 12d6+36 plus 5d8+15; hp 125; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+4 Dex, +8 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: dagger +13/+8/+3 melee (1d4 plus poison); SA Alias (2), Ambush Attack (+1), Brilliant Getaway, Concealed Blade, Contacts, The Deadliest Strike, Death Attack, Face in the Crowd, Focused Training (weapon specialization and dagger), The Light Touch, Poison Mastery, Poison Use, Sneak Attack (+5d6); SV Fort +9, Ref +15, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 15; AL CG; Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +12, Climb +4, Decipher Script +5, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +8, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +5, Forgery +4, Gather Information +12, Heal +4, Hide +8, Innuendo +5, Jump +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +9, Profession (servant) +8, Read Lips +8, Search +6, Speak Language (Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce; [alternately, any five languages from your campaign]), Spot +6, Swim +4; Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Gifted Liar, Increased Manual Dexterity, Skilled Liar, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

### Liana Foracci — Hero (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 5, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 4  
**Reputation:** 10  
**Background:** Vendetta (Villanova)  
**Arcana:** Adaptable  
**Advantages:** Vodacce (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Connections (Sophia's Daughters), Keen Senses, Man of Will  
**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4  
**Servant:** Etiquette 3, Fashion 3, Gossip 5, Menial Tasks 4, Seneschal 3, Unobtrusive 5, Valet 3  
**Performer:** Acting 4, Cold Read 5, Dancing 3, Disguise 4, Oratory 4, Prestidigitation 5, Singing 2  
**Spy:** Conceal 5, Lip Reading 5, Shadowing 5, Stealth 5  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5  
**Necare (Master):** Conceal 5, Corps-a-Corps 5, Poison 5, Exploit Weakness (Necare) 5





## CHAPTER TWO:

# Castles and Strongholds

## The Forgotten Castle: Schloss Wittgenstadt

Eisen is full of mystery and shadow. Every traveler who passes near the *Schwarzen Walden* has a story about the eerie superstitions and practices of the peasantry. Anyone who grew up in Eisen has a dozen gruesome bedtime stories about poor children who failed to heed their parent's warning and ended up in the belly of some shadowy beast. But even among those well-versed in strange Eisen folklore, few recognize the name of Baron Wittgenstadt and his lonely castle in the mountains. Is it because the name is too horrible to remember or because the story told here is merely a false combination of Eisen's other, more famous ghost stories?

Stay close, dear reader, and you shall learn, but mind that you don't sit quite so close to the shadows...

### History

Baron Wittgenstadt was a great and noble man. His lands prospered under his rule and his bravery in battle was unshakable. Many thought that he might make a bid to seize the title of Archduke from his lord, but Wittgenstadt was a loyal man.

Loyal, at least, until a fateful day near the *Schwarzen Walden* when he was returning from defeating some clever bandits who had been using the legends of the Dark Forest to extort money and favors from the local populace. As he and Bader, his *rucken*, rode along the highway, they came across a woodcutter whose cart was stuck in a ditch off to

the side of the road. After Wittgenstadt and Bader helped free his vehicle, the woodcutter thanked him and pronounced that a man of such noble breeding and humble bearing would make an excellent Archduke. While Wittgenstadt chuckled at the woodsman's compliment, somewhere deep inside of him a seed of jealousy was planted. The long ride to his manor was uneventful but allowed the seed to germinate. Even Bader encouraged the Baron to look above his station and see what he could accomplish.

Wittgenstadt's ambition lay dormant for a few weeks until he received word that his lord was planning a visit to reward him for loyal service. His *rucken* mused aloud about the merits of the lord's unexpected death and even volunteered to do the foul deed. Wittgenstadt refused but plans began forming in his head. The Archduke paid him a great compliment by promising the hand of his youngest daughter, Odessa, but the baron was upset that he was not offered more lands, a better title, or a prettier daughter to marry. It proved enough to tip the scales. Wittgenstadt and Bader waited until everyone was asleep and then quietly took care of business: the Archduke never awoke.

The murder of an Iron Prince is not an easy thing for anyone to attempt and Wittgenstadt, while an excellent general, was not a clever conspirator. As soon as word of the lord's death spread, numerous contenders for his title began to arrive at the castle to claim their right. Wittgenstadt realized that other noblemen held stronger ties to the position than he. Unsure of what to do, he confided in Bader and once again took his *rucken's* ghastly advice.

As a gesture of peace, he invited all the nobles to dinner. Skirmishes among the many forces that had come to claim

the throne had caused much strife and suffering and for the good of the region, he wanted to lay it all to rest. He did just that — by poisoning the food, Wittgenstadt eliminated his competition quickly and efficiently.

It was the fateful dinner that damned the young noble. The people of the land were not fooled by his sorrowful manner as he quietly ascended to power. Their unrest fed his paranoia and he began punishing and then executing his servants for both real and imagined slights. Soon, only his most trusted soldiers were serving him dinner and the only voice he would listen to was that of his loyal friend Bader.

It got worse. Wittgenstadt swore that he heard the murdered Archduke's voice in the night. Bader attributed the ghostly visions to the lack of a good night's sleep but Wittgenstadt soon refused to leave his room (which oddly enough was the same room in which he had murdered his lord). The new Archduke spent a week locked inside, alone with his ghosts. When Bader finally ordered the soldiers to break down the door, they found the new Archduke stone cold dead on his bed, his hair turned frosty white and a strange smile on his pale face.

Bader, who cleverly disassociated himself from the death, found himself installed as the new lord of Schloss Wittgenstadt. Soon after, however, strange things began to happen, almost always in the black of night. The soldiers who served under the previous lord saw the same madness and paranoia descend upon the new one. Bader soon killed his wife and sons, afraid that they were plotting against him. He stopped wearing the precious piece of *dracheneisen* he inherited from his friend, claiming that it was covered in blood that he could not wash off. Before his death, he often appeared running though the halls of the castle naked, screaming about the tides of blood chasing him. When Bader died, he too was found stretched out on his bed, an eerie smile on his face.

These are the two most famous stories of Schloss Wittgenstadt. They are not often told and in the wake of the War of the Cross, few remember them. The Eisen people know full well about strange spirits and shadows. Those not of that land may ask about the castle, but they receive only blank stares at best and doors slammed in their faces at worst. The place is undoubtedly cursed and the less said about it, the better.

Recently, however, the castle has been occupied again. A distant relative has been found, and she and her husband have taken up residence. They know nothing of the castle's tragic history and the locals have not seen fit to warn them. Yet even as they establish themselves in their new home, the dark forces surrounding the estate have begun to engulf them...

## The Castle

Schloss Wittgenstadt is tucked into a small pass in the Drachen Mountains and very difficult to reach. A single muddy road branches from the main pass, its only indicator a small stone marker covered in a strange reddish-brown moss. The castle's name is carved on it but some of the letters have faded.

The mountain road winds along and cuts through a dead forest. No matter the time of year, the trees here always remain leafless and their branches a sickly gray. Wolves are common in the area; sometimes their howls echo throughout the entire evening. The good news is that local bandits and highwaymen stay clear of the place. Inquisitive travelers may

hear a local story that the castle is that of "Smiling" Himmelspach, a thief who ran afoul of the things that live in the forest. Somehow, his considerable charm and wit allowed him to strike a deal with the creatures. As long as he wore a rowan wood charm, they would not harm him and so he could go about his villainous business. One night, he entered the woods without the pendant. They say he could be heard screaming a mile away. His fellow bandits went looking for him but never found him or the things that had taken him. To this day, towns near Schloss Wittgenstadt sell small "Himmelspach tokens" to ward off the creatures hiding in the forest.

Schloss Wittgenstadt first becomes visible after rounding a curve that overlooks a nasty ravine called Odessa's Despair. Local legend says the ravine is where Baroness Odessa threw herself after discovering that her husband had murdered her father. Hardy travelers unfazed by the forest must still beware of the dangerous ravine. Rockslides are frequent and some travelers mention that they have seen the body of a young woman lying on the ravine floor. The unquiet spirit seems to have a penchant for showing up just before a rockslide occurs... usually right after some brave soul has traveled to the bottom to help the young girl.

The castle, surrounded by a high stone wall, was built on a relatively flat section of the mountains and the imposing building definitely commands the eye. Heavy iron gates open onto a wide stone courtyard that is just as impressive as the exterior facade. The inner keep is four stories high and the building is built in classic Eisen style. Arched windows, external pillars and unique carvings could keep a student of architecture enraptured for days. A pair of stone griffins guards the doorway, casting their long shadows upon those who enter.

The disrepair becomes most evident in the castle exterior. Tapestries dangle precariously on the walls and suits of armor lie in pieces where they were knocked to the ground. The furniture in the main areas of the house is covered with linen sheets to protect against dust. The living areas are eerily undisturbed.

### The Study

Joern, the current Baron Wittgenstadt and a well-known novelist, does most of his writing here... oblivious to the deteriorating condition of his castle. His desk is littered with a large collection of books and numerous stacks of papers. (The study's chaos should reflect the nights of madness as they wear on: more stacks of books lie about, more piles of crumpled papers, ink stains on the carpet, etc.)

### The Lady's Bedroom

Baroness Kessa stayed in this room until the day she removed the large sheet covering the wall and was shocked to see that she bore a striking resemblance to the large portrait of Baroness Odessa. That night, Kessa had a disturbing dream about the poor lady and her murdering husband. She woke up screaming and swore that she saw blood on the sheets. Since then, she will not sleep near that room, which has grown quite dusty.

### The Garden of Graves

Behind the castle is the beginning of what looks like a topiary garden but beyond the first row of unkempt animals stands a series of ornate graves. The first two belong to Baron Wittgenstadt and his wife Odessa. More graves lie beyond

that, with each pair of stones proclaiming that Baron Wittgenstadt and his wife are buried there. The further down the row one goes, the graves grow progressively smaller and less ornate. At the end of the garden is a pair of unmarked graves that appear to be only a few months old.

### Helmut's Quarters

By far, the servants' quarters on the first floor are the worst and dingiest place inside the castle. There are holes in the floor and no well-placed lamps. Helmut is usually found here and does not want to be disturbed. If someone insists on asking questions, he fires a warning shot, followed quickly by shots of a non-warning variety.

### The Foyer

Formerly a beautiful and grand entrance into the castle proper, the foyer is now draped in dust covers and cobwebs, hardly a fitting welcome to Schloss Wittgenstadt. A grand painting hangs in the foyer and suits of armor stand at attention along the walls, but the room seems somehow enslaved by its former glory.

### The Dining Room

This is where the claimants to the Archduke's title were murdered. There is a large dining room table with several heavy chairs set alongside it. Although there is room for almost 15 people at the uncovered table, the current Baron and Baroness only use one side of it. The rest of the room remains covered except for the large mirrors on either side of the room. They run the length of the table and allow both sides to see all of the dinner guests, if there were any. The meals Helmut serves are fairly prepared if you can get past his gruff presentation.

### The Hauntings

Strange things occur to the brave souls who visit Schloss Wittgenstadt:

- Late at night, drunken singing can be heard in the dining hall. The songs are the kinds that soldiers sing after a great victory about pretty girls and dead enemies.
- The griffins do not seem to stand still. Subtle changes in position occur sometimes, like the tilt of the head or the position of the paws. Sometimes the creatures' mouths are open, sometimes they are not.
- The clank of armor echoes through the halls. The locations of the fallen suits changes during the night and sometimes the weapons appear covered in blood.
- Ancient weapons will appear randomly on the courtyard stones. They are extremely cold, even for metal.
- The master bedroom is always cold. People standing in it can usually see their breath after a short while. Because of this (and possibly other reasons,) the current residents stay in warmer areas.

- The study is often strewn with papers. Mixed in with the manuscript of Baron Joern's next book are strange notes in someone else's writing. (When the PCs first view them, the notes seem odd but they soon take on definite menacing qualities.)
- In the hall stands a large painting of the former Baron and his *rucken* heroically depicted defeating bandits. Wittgenstadt is shown wearing a *dracheneisen* breastplate that has never been found on the castle grounds.
- Horses and animals are easily spooked when left in the stables. (If left unattended, the PCs may wake up one morning to find their mounts gone.)
- During meal in the dining room, the poisoning scene appears in the mirror. Bodies are sprawled about in horribly contorted poses, with food and blood spewing out on the table. The Baron moves quickly with his *misericord*, ending the lives of those not done in by the poison. If the viewer turns away, the scene halts abruptly and when the viewer looks back, the mirrors are normal once again.
- The graves in the garden are freshly disturbed. Alternately, two new graves are dug in the night, still open and ready to be filled.
- If the PCs first instinct is to flee, dramatic storms, blizzards and rockslides seem to trap them in the castle, as if it is loath to let them go until the mystery is solved.
- Howling wolves keep everyone up all night. In the morning, a dozen wolf carcasses lie in the courtyard but there do not appear to be any wounds or marks on them.
- As the PCs bed down for the night, one of them sees her door start to rattle and shake. On the other side, screams and pleading can be heard. After a single loud thump, the shaking stops.
- A young girl dressed in white is sometimes seen walking towards Odessa's Despair. She appears to be crying and will stand on the edge of the ravine until the viewer looks away. A ghastly shriek rings through the air but when the viewer turns back, the girl is gone.

### The Residents

#### Joern Morden, Baron Wittgenstadt

Joern Morden began life as an orphan in a Vendel orphanage. He was a small quiet boy who spent most of his time reading and never got into trouble, which is probably what drew his parents-to-be to him. He would not be a big headache, he would grow up to be a sensible young lad and would follow in his father's necessary but uneventful occupation — accounting. "We sail a thrilling sea as well, my boy. It's just accountancy." His father laughed at that joke every time he made it. That is one of many reasons why, as soon as he was able, Joern ran off to become a sailor.

Unfortunately, life as the only son of an accountant and a homemaker did not prepare him for life at sea. His head had been filled with fictitious adventure stories and tall tales told

by sea captains in the waiting room of his father's office. The gritty life onboard ship knocked him around and more often than not, he became more trouble that he was worth to the crews with whom he signed. His only saving grace was the training in the Rasmussen pistol school. At least he could shoot, even if he spent the rest of the voyage fighting the purple heaves instead of scurvy pirates.

He had another talent as well, one he discovered completely by accident. He had become enamored with one of his crewmates, a Vesten *skald* named Frieda, and decided the quickest way to her heart was by telling stories like she did. While the *skald* was unimpressed, the publisher of the *Remy* books was looking for a new series to keep the presses moving. Joern's first novel was full of clichéd plots, paper-thin characterization and prose of the vilest purple. The public ate it up and "Kadla the Skald" was born.

Joern returned to Vendel to write a few more books. He met a young artist at one of Master Val Mokka's Guild dinners and fell in love. While the boy was not an accountant, at least he was not an adventurer, so his parents encouraged him to propose to young Kessa Ringersma. Although Joern wrote about high adventure, he never expected such a dramatic wedding. An uninvited guest named Helmut Plauski interrupted the Objectionist ceremony with an amazing revelation — Kessa Ringersma was the long-lost heir to the Wittgenstadt title!

Soon after their marriage, the couple moved to Schloss Wittgenstadt. Joern, as the newly-made Baron, looked at it as an excellent place to write, away from his meddling parents. But then things began to happen. He heard sounds echoing through the castle. Kessa found bloodstains on the floor. Joern the accountant's son wanted to leave but Joern the author, nay, the would-be adventurer, wanted to get to the bottom of the mystery.

### Joern Morden (120<sup>m</sup>)

**Courtier 5/Rasmussen 1:** CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d6 plus 1d10; hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 cloak); Atks: pistol +4 ranged (1d10); SA The Better Part of Valor, Focused Training, Gossip, Iron Will, Style and Grace, Talent, Two-handed Quick Draw, Versatile, Wealth; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 15; AL NG; Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Concentration +4, Craft (writing) +5; Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (accounting) +9, Profession (accounting) +9, Sense Motive +9, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]), Spot +6, Use Magic Device +4; Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Linguist, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (pistol).

### Joern Morden — Hero (7<sup>th</sup> Sea<sup>m</sup>)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 3  
**Reputation:** 32  
**Background:** True Identity  
**Arcana:** None  
**Advantages:** Eisen (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Inheritance, Linguist, University  
**Artist:** Writing 3  
**Courtier:** Dancing 1, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 1  
**Merchant:** Accounting 3, Appraising 2, Printer 2

**Sailor:** Balance 1, Climbing 1, Knotwork 2, Rigging 2  
**Servant:** Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 2  
**Athlete:** Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1  
**Firearms:** Attack (Firearms) 3  
**Rasmussen School (Apprentice):** Pommel Strike (Firearms) 1, Reload (Firearms) 2, Trick Shooting (Pistol) 1, Exploit Weakness (Rasmussen) 1

### JOERN'S SECRETS

Joern is not as wealthy as he pretends to be. His family is successful but benefits more from his mother's stern money management than his father's accounting skills. The Wittgenstadt estate, while physically imposing, contains far fewer resources than Joern and Kessa expected and efforts to restore the place on their meager income have gotten as far as draping sheets over everything. The *Kadla* books are Joern's main source of income, so he needs each one to be better and finished faster. With all the strangeness around him, he is now afraid that the castle will drive him mad; however, he does not wish to alarm Kessa so he does his best to remain calm.

### Kessa Ringersma, Baroness Wittgenstadt

Eisen is a place for soldiers and mercenaries. Artists are neither needed nor well-regarded there. Kessa Ringersma grew up in the waning years of the War of the Cross and her young eyes saw much as her family drifted from town to town. While she remembers her mother worked as a barmaid and jack-of-all-trades, she understands now that Frau Ringersma was also skilled in other arts that men desired. However, practical Kessa found no shame in it. It might have been a path she herself would have tread were it not for the intervention of Master Val Mokka.

As a young woman, Kessa made her way to Kirk where her money ran out. She had set up a small stand across the street from the largest Jenny house in Kirk. She knew that all she had to do to get off the street was cross it and walk through the door. She started selling apples. When they ran out, she sold scraps of cloth as hair ribbons. When she could get no more cloth, she began sketching pictures with pitch she found in the street.

The pictures were rough and unskilled but she captured the people's stark emotion and places she remembered from her travels throughout Eisen. This emotion caught Master Mokka's eye. This girl had potential that could be honed with formal training. Patronage of the arts had become the rage in Vendel, and Mokka was always listening to the other Guild members prattle on about this painter or that poet. He approached Kessa, made her an offer which she accepted. Soon she was ensconced in his beautiful house.

As if this were not enough of a fairy tale, Kessa met her Prince Charming at a Guild dinner party. Joern was adorably flustered in such high society and Kessa felt an instant connection with him. They were both poor children raised in the clothes of rich and they shared a love of art. His parents did most of the arranging for the marriage but she knew Joern was hers the moment they gazed at each other.

The wedding held one more surprise. In the middle of the ceremony, a rough little man appeared and introduced himself as Helmut, the steward of a noble Eisen house. Kessa was the long-lost granddaughter of house Wittgenstadt and he had come to return her to her ancestral estate. Chills ran down the bride's spine. But her new husband encouraged her





in the adventure and off they rode to their new life as Baron and Baroness Wittgenstadt.

Since moving into the Schloss, Kessa's life has been anything but wonderful. She has watched her beloved Joern's sanity begin to slip. He wanders the halls and calls out at night. When she visits the study where he is supposedly hard at work on the new Kadla novel, all she can see are blank pages strewn everywhere and a dry inkwell.

Baroness Kessa is a practical girl and does not want to believe the whispered rumors about the Schloss and its curse but every day she sees increasing evidence that it all may be true.

**Kessa Ringersma (120<sup>m</sup>)**

**Spy 6:** CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d6; hp 24; Init 0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks: dagger +4 melee (1d6); SA Alias, Brilliant Getaway, Contacts, Face in the Crowd, Sneak Attack +3d6; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 18; AL CN; Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +9, Decipher Script +4, Disguise +9, Diplomacy +9, Gather Info +9, Open Lock +8, Read Lips +6, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]); Feats: Gifted Liar, Sex Appeal, Skilled Liar.

**Kessa, Baroness Wittgenstadt — Hero (Villain) (7th Sea™)**

**Brawn:** 1, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 3  
**Reputation:** 20  
**Background:** True Identity  
**Arcana:** None  
**Advantages:** Vendel (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne, Patron (Val Mokk)  
**Artist:** Drawing 3  
**Scholar:** History 2, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 2, Research 2  
**Servant:** Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 2  
**Spy:** Shadowing 3, Stealth 3  
 (Add skills as appropriate to Kessa based on the needs of your group.)

**KESSA'S SECRETS**

Kessa is a dead ringer for Odessa. If anyone reveals Odessa's painting from behind the covering in the study, it may cause her to fall into the same madness that Joern is currently suffering.

**Helmut Plauski, Loyal Servant**

Helmut is a balding, beady-eyed, strange little man. He wears a servant's coat that is at least fifty years old but he does not look a day over thirty. Always unobtrusive, he only obeys the lord and lady of the castle. He is surly and unfriendly and seems to view his position as a terrible burden. Joern and Kessa wonder why he stays with them but are afraid to ask him. After all, if he thinks about it, he may find there is no reason and leave.

Helmut wears an ill-fitting set of servant's clothing. His hair is greasy, his teeth are yellow, he smells of cheap liquor and he scares animals and children. The PCs are an odious inconvenience that he must bear to serve his master.

**Helmut Plauski, Creepy Manservant (120<sup>m</sup>)**

**Medium-size Humanoid**  
**Hit Dice:** 3d6 (as level 3 thief)  
**Initiative:** +0  
**Speed:** 40 ft.  
**AC:** 13 (+2 natural, +1 leather armor)  
**Attacks:** Dagger +4 melee  
**Damage:** Dagger 1d6+2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Qualities:** None  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Will +0, Ref +2  
**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8  
**Skills:** None  
**Feats:** None

**Challenge Rating:** 3

**Treasure:** Dracheneisen breastplate possessed by the spirit of the former Baron von Wittgenstadt  
**Alignment:** CE  
**Advancement:** None

**Helmut Plauski — Henchman (7th Sea™)**

**Points:** 50  
**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2  
**TN to be hit:** 15  
**Weapon:** Nasty Dagger (Small)  
**Attack Roll:** 3k3  
**Damage Roll:** 3k3  
**Skills:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry 2, Pistol 2

**NOTE TO GM**

Helmet is one of those taciturn fellows who can intimidate with a raised eyebrow and a grunt. He should be used to move the story along if needed but should not become an integral part of the action. Helmut takes his enemy by surprise as much as possible and fights dirty to the last.

**The Secrets of Schloss Wittgenstadt**

**Warning:** The following is for GMs only!

There are many reasons behind the strange happenings at Schloss Wittgenstadt. In case your players failed to heed the warning above, here are three different scenarios for the castle. A PC could easily take the place of one of the masters of the house to make the story a bit more personal; he or she could have inherited the castle through an elderly relative, and now suffer the same affliction that the Baron and Baroness do. Alternately, the heroes could be contacted by the Baron's parents — or possibly Val Mokk — and asked to ensure the couple's safety... which would require confronting the dark forces at the heart of the castle.

**Option A: Odessa's Locket**

Baroness Kessa is not alone in her body. Unbeknownst to Joern, Helmut visited the bride the night before the wedding and gave her Odessa's locket as a gift. She has worn the beautiful thing since her wedding and the spirits inside of it have begun to possess her. Thieves took the locket off the original Odessa's body and the spirits inside have been trying

to get it back to the place where the poor Baroness died. They believe that if Joern dies, Kessa will be overcome with grief and throw herself over the edge of the ravine just like her predecessor. Thus the cycle will be complete and the locket will return its original owner.

The strangeness in the castle is a product of the spirits therein working in concert with the necklace. Although she does not realize it, Kessa sometimes sleepwalks and takes a hand in producing the strange happenings. The spirits can manifest through sound and vision but cannot affect the material plane so they inhabit her body, causing her to knock things over or fiddle with the placement of armor parts throughout the castle. In the morning, Kessa remembers none of this. (An insomniac or inquisitive PC may catch her in the act late at night.)

The young Baroness has quite a dilemma. She knows that Joern is losing his grip on reality. She has also learned something terrifying: the necklace does not come off. She has tried to remove it but to no avail. When Joern asks her about it, she says that it makes her feel more "at home" in the castle and he is too wrapped up in his own problems to question her further.

The sight of Odessa's portrait could trigger a series of visions in which Kessa both sees and experiences the young baroness's unfortunate demise. Kessa has a growing sense that if she were to follow in Odessa's footsteps, the castle and Joern will be at peace. If she finally decides to do this, the castle will animate whatever it can to prevent the PCs from stopping her. Books will hurtle off the shelves and things will fly about trying to impede anyone's progress except Kessa's. The most dangerous elements will be the suits of armor, which animate and attack those attempting to save the Baroness.

### **Suits of Armor (d20™)**

**Medium-Size Construct**

**Hit Dice:** 4d8 (16 hp)

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+4 natural)

**Attacks:** Long sword +1 melee

**Damage:** Long sword 1d8 +1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** None

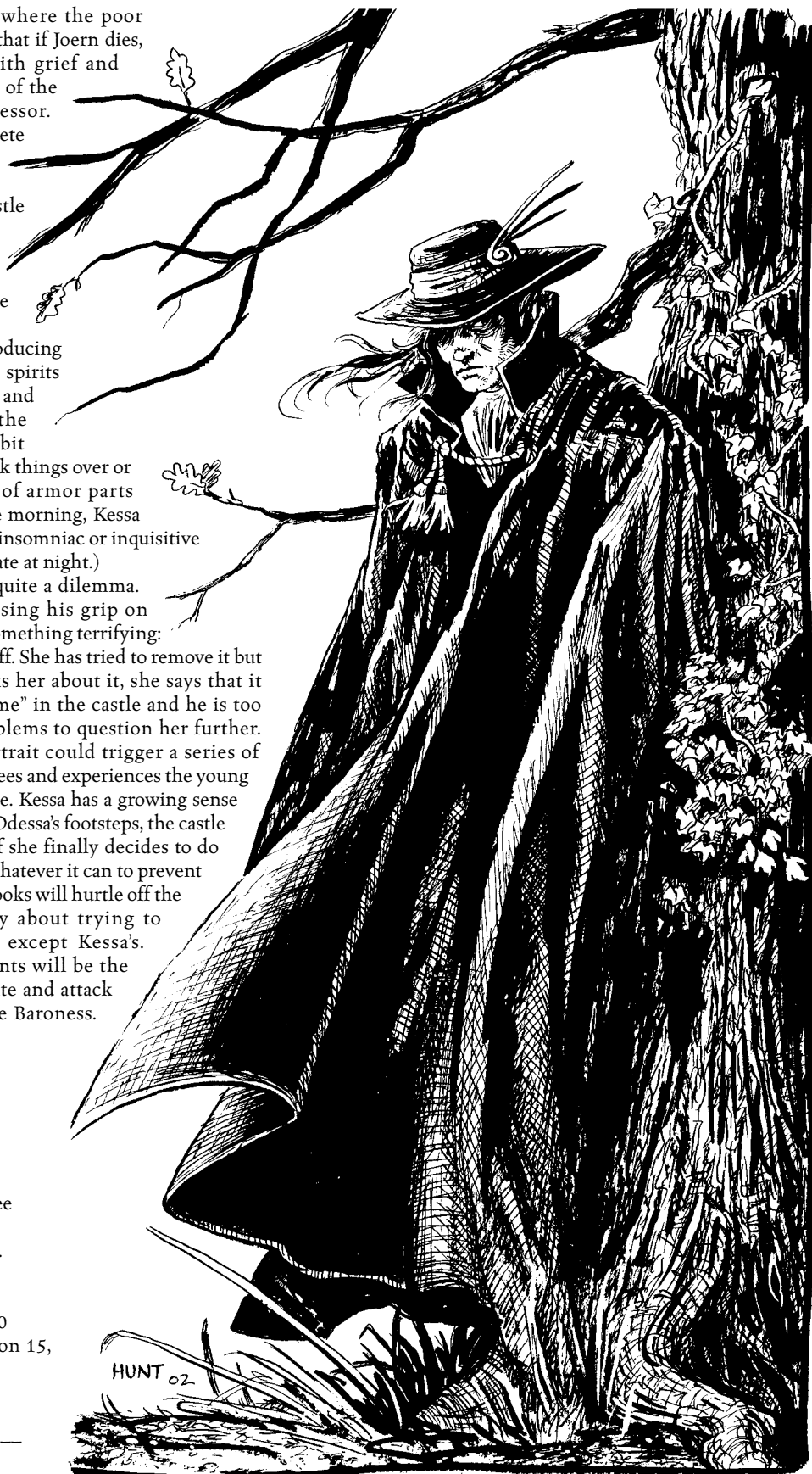
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15,

Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 5

**Skills:** None

**Feats:** Power Attack



**Climate/Terrain:** Schloss Wittgenstadt  
**Organization:** None  
**Challenge Rating:** 2  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** LE  
**Advancement:** None

**Suits of Armor — Brutes (7th Sea™)**

4 per pack  
 Threat Rating: 4  
 Weapons: Shortsword, Longsword  
 TN to be Hit: 20  
 Attack: +1

If the armor isn't enough of a challenge, the spirits can manifest in the 2 stone griffins guarding the gate. They will animate and attempt to kill anything chasing Kessa.

**Stone Griffin (d20™)**

**Large Construct**  
**Hit Dice:** 6d10 (34 hp)  
**Initiative:** + 0  
**Speed:** 40 ft.  
**AC:** 16 (+4 natural, +2 bonus)  
**Attacks:** 2 claws +3 melee, 1 tail +2 melee  
**Damage:** Claw 1d6, tail 1d10+2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Qualities:** None  
**Saves:** Fort +6, Will +0, Ref +3  
**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8  
**Skills:** None  
**Feats:** Power Attack

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**Challenge Rating:** 5  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** LE  
**Advancement:** None

**Stone Griffin — Henchman (7th Sea™)**

Points: 100  
 TN to be hit: 20  
 Brawn: 3, Finesse: 2, Wits: 1, Resolve: 4, Panache: 2  
 Weapons: Tail (Heavy), Claws (as per Knife)  
 Attack roll: 4k2 tail, 3k2 claws  
 Damage roll: 4k2 tail, 3k3 claws  
 Skills: Heavy Weapon (Tail) 4, Parry 2

**Option B: All Work and No Play Makes Joern a Dull Boy**

Helmut is still serving the original Baron. He was there when Bader first proposed the murderous course to make his lord a prince. The Baron's soul was trapped in the *dracheneisen* breastplate stained with his prince's blood. All but forgotten, the armor truly holds a place close to Helmut's heart — he wears it under his clothing. Barely discernable it protects him, while giving him the appearance of being something more than human. People have stabbed him in the chest and he has only laughed.

Helmut is merely the messenger. Once the happy couple moved into the old house, the spirit of the Baron went to work on his successor. He has come to believe that the only

way for him to find rest of any sort is to eliminate the last of his line, so he made a deal with his faithful servant. As long as a relative of his lived, Helmut would as well, charged to seek out and eliminate the relatives one by one. Unfortunately, he discovered Kessa after she had become the darling of the Vendel parlor scene.

The murder of someone that prominent was always messy (Helmut can testify to *that* from experience!) but he truly believes she is the last and once she is gone, he can finally sleep. He tried to eliminate her a few times while on the way to the castle but Joern bumbled his way into rescuing her. Now that they are in the castle, Joern's sanity is questionable (thanks to Helmut who suggested that his master punish the young Baron for being so inconveniently in the way).

The Baron — who inhabits the armor — uses Helmut as his agent in the real world. If the GM chooses to use this option, there are two ways for the adventure to end. Either Kessa dies or the armor is destroyed. Neither choice comes without risks. Kessa's death can be faked or she can be taken from the castle but that will leave her vulnerable at some other time to attack.

Helmut will only relinquish the armor when he is killed but his deal with the Baron should allow him a great deal of movie slasher-style stamina. While his stats above are unchanged, the GM can certainly find ways to delay final death if he wishes. Just when the PCs think he's dead, he crashes through the window or turns up as the driver of their runaway coach. Helmut should prove to be quite an implacable foe.

Destroying a piece of *dracheneisen* is no easy task either. There are ways to do it but they are very difficult. Tossing it into a volcano or returning it to the *Nibelungen* are both possibilities but each holds obvious restrictions. An exorcism might also be feasible but would probably give the players an even bigger scare. Joern might start spouting incoherently about deep secrets and dark betrayals that could cut the bonds of the adventurers' camaraderie deep.

The exorcism is by far the easiest method to destroy the Baron but it could also have the worst overall effect on the group. This option is best suited for a GM looking for a mystery with supernatural overtones. The old Baron's spirit does not show itself until the last act and does so only in a bloody and grotesque manner. Until then, players should wonder if the castle is really haunted or if Joern is simply mad. Joern (or a suitable PC replacement) should prove to be a sympathetic character who is not easily dispatched without severe pangs of conscience.

**Option C: There's No Such Thing as Spooks**

Baroness Wittgenstadt is a sham. While the legends are real, the current incarnation of the haunted manor is a clever scam perpetrated by Kessa and her band of con men. The path to Kirk is lined with suckers who fell for Kessa's face, and the path back will be as well. Everyone connected with the house — with the exception of the Baron — is in on the con. Helmut is her right-hand man. She has a staff of thieves who help her "spook" up the house, helping to drive Joern mad. She wants the Baron to kill himself. As his widow, she would be part of a wealthy merchant family, and can take his grieving parents for all they're worth. She'll insist they keep sending her cash so that she can attend to matters in "the barony."

Kessa's story is like any good fabrication; it has a basis in truth but the rest is fancy. She did travel through Eisen with her mother and sisters but they were tramps and thieves of the vilest sort. She learned the sweetheart hustle at a very early age and knows that even the bravest soldier sweats and fumbles at the proper application of feminine wiles. She built up a sizable fortune bilking the Montaigne nobility, but the Revolution cut off her main source of funds and she soon found herself in need of a new mark.

Vendel is now the richest country in the world but things are done differently there. The nobility would never admit that they had been swindled but Vendel men would have no qualms about turning her over to the authorities. She sank most of her fortune into creating her latest "persona," knowing that she had to shoot for the jackpot to live comfortably for the rest of her life. Her pigeon stumbled into her and spilled his drink; he was instantly infatuated.

She was planning to off Joern after he sent a few spooky letters back home telling his family about the strangeness of the castle. The arrival of the PCs, however, has seriously affected her plans. She had to take the "spook" game up to the next level and is now trying to arrange for an unfortunate "accident" to take out the Baron... and any pesky PC interlopers as well. If that doesn't work, she will try to cut the most appropriate PC in on the con if he or she will sell out the rest of the party. If he refuses, cue the fight music.

Alternately, the climactic scene could come as the thugs, dressed as the dead, storm the castle, clutching at the windows, moaning, calling for vengeance and so on. If the PCs discover that they are not quite as dead as they look, Kessa will try to escape — with or without Joern.

This is a great ending to throw the players for a loop. It is also the lightest of the three options with a seeming damsel in distress, a nefarious plot to foil and thugs to trounce by the score.

### Con Men Thugs

These are classic black-clad thugs. They do not say much beyond monosyllabic acknowledgment of orders, although they do tend to laugh menacingly when causing pain to the PCs. Despite their bravado, the thugs are not much for stand-up fights, and will try to trick their way out of danger rather than face the characters head-on. Some of them might rifle through a hero's room in the castle or try to rough one up of the adventurers in the dark, but they will only fight if they have no other recourse.

### Con Men (d20™)

**Eisen Fighter 2:** CR 2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d10; hp 15; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atks: rapier +2 melee (1d6), pistol +3 ranged (1d10); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10 Wis 12, Cha 10; AL NE; Skills: Climb +2, Intimidate +2, Jump +2, Speak Language (any two languages), Spot +4; Feats: Blind Fighting, Dodge, Pain Tolerance.

### Con Men — Brutes (7th Sea™)

4 per pack (3 packs per PC)  
Threat Rating: 2  
Weapons: Rapiers, Pistols  
TN to be Hit: 10  
Attack: +1 knife/pistol

### Option D: The Plot Buffet

Obviously, it's very easy to blend these various plots into a composite whole. Maybe Kessa is a con artist but Helmut only joined up with her to forward his long-dead master's plan. The Baron and Odessa could be continuing their war from beyond the grave, each blaming the other for their predicament, and Joern and Kessa are caught in the middle. Perhaps Kessa is marrying Joern for his money but Odessa has other plans. Or perhaps the secrets of Schloss Wittgenstadt are something devised entirely by the GM...

## Dark Echoes: Valaamzhensky Castle

One of the most terrible periods in Ussuran history remains entombed in ice, high in the mountains: a living testament both to the power of Matushka's wrath and the terrible threat of those mighty enough to defy her.

### History

The history of the castle is steeped in the history of the land around it — Veche, a bloodthirsty Ussuran province which has long housed the bloody and the debauched. It begins around the time of the First Prophet, when the warlord Vladimir Aryov and his followers established the pagan principality in the southernmost Gora Sorivdgrastov Mountains.

Fifteen years later, heirless and on his deathbed, Aryov picked his most ruthless general, Boris Tomiech, to succeed him. However, Tomiech did not receive control of Aryov's fortress, but rather was given a rugged mountain region to the north in the Mountains of Smoke. Aryov reasoned that if Tomiech was half the man he was, and worthy of his kingdom, the young man would hold Veche together with one fist and carve out his own stronghold with the other.

To prevent Tomiech from returning to Aryov's fortress and slaughtering the remaining members of his family, the aged Knias forced him to swear an oath and shed his own blood in an ancient tradition. Satisfied with the act, the dying Ussuran presented Tomiech with his youngest daughter for his wife. Like her father, Ansheva Aryovna was a hard woman with a vicious personality. She rode at the head of his army and her eyes glimmered when the streets ran with her adversaries' blood. Tomiech knew she would kill him without hesitation if she thought he was betraying her father's wishes.

As the first winter snow began to fall, Vladimir Aryov was laid to rest to the family crypt. Boris Tomiech and Ansheva Aryovna rode away from Aryanski Castle accompanied by their personal armies, who watched each other with a mistrustful eye. Huddled together that first harsh winter and forced to close ranks against those who dared to usurp their power, the unlikely couple discovered a softer side of each other.

In AV 27 Ansheva and Boris Tomiech celebrated their seventh anniversary, the birth of their third son and the completion of their new home, Tara Oasalui castle. The cornerstones and great support columns were stained with the blood of traitors. The dungeon floors covered the bones from broken bodies of those who dared to speak out against them within Veche's boundaries. The roof of the domed tower



was made of the rarest yellow glass in the land and able to pierce the veil of clouds to steal the warmth from the sun.

Nearly 300 years later, their descendant, Aleksandr Borisovich Tomiech followed in the cruel and sadistic path of his ancestors. When reports of an advancing Kosar army — led by the infamous Jaala Khan — reached him, he dispatched his fastest riders to the garrisons along the threatened borders with secret orders: round up the old, the insane and infirm, and those who refused to fight, and kill them. Hollow-eyed bodies littered the countryside in the path of the advancing army. Upon sighting the carnage, the Kosar leader decided that perhaps Veche was not such a desirable place after all.



Two hundred more years passed during which Veche's peasants stopped questioning the ways of its rulers — they had learned the hard way that questions meant death by varied and unpleasant means. They lived under the iron rule of their Tomiech masters until the summer of 518 when things took a turn for the worse. When Saska Tomiechevna, the beautiful black-eyed daughter of Veche ruler Romain Tomiech, toured her father's kingdom she insisted that his liegemen come to her tent in the dead of night. Those who refused were found ripped to bloody shreds in the misty morning light. From that day forward, it was as if something old, something of malignant evil had awakened and stretched its dark, eerie force across the land. In broad daylight strong men shivered with fear. Shrieks of domesticated animals carried off in the night by unseen beasts echoed in the silence. Watch dogs whined in terror.

Three years later Tomiech's wife died suddenly and shortly thereafter the people of Veche were greeted with a strange announcement: Romain Tomiech was planning to marry his own daughter. The stunned populace was further shocked and appalled at the wedding, which the couple celebrated by bathing in the fresh blood of 1,000 peasant girls at the command of the ruthless princess.

The day after Saska's son, Ilhyna, was born, Romain died and the young woman seized control of Veche without opposition. She was a ruthless leader who screamed at her generals, her pale, slender body shaking with unquenchable fury at the slightest precept. Exhausted by her wild emotions and the needs of her small child, Saska would take refuge in her bath, which was filled not with water, but with blood. She would laugh and sing softly to herself as she watched the warm red fluid run through her fingers. *Foolish peasants*, she thought, *don't they know what happens to girls who think themselves as beautiful as I?*

One evening, her sanguine reverie was disrupted by the sudden appearance in her private chambers of an old woman who warned the dark sorceress that the destruction of her kingdom was eminent. She must join forces with other nearby lands, uniting as one under the hand of the great goddess Matushka. A warlord from nearby Eisen threatened to invade, and unless all stood together, Matushka could not protect them. Recovering from her start and vowing to kill the guards who let the meddler in, Saska arose from her bath and flicked her hands, laughing as blood speckled the woman's face.

"What do you know of war, old crone?" Saska sneered, wiping up her bloodstained body with the long sleeve of the interloper's gown. "Your toothless prattle will not stop the Eisen any more than those weaklings in Rurik and Somojez. I, on the other hand, wield great power. Let them come. They will learn that blood is power."

"You are a foolish girl," the old woman said as she pulled her sleeve from Saska's grasp. "I know who and what you are."

"Do you, hag? I think not," Saska said coldly as she walked from the room. "Go find a child to help deliver. I shall kill it soon enough."

Three days later the very foundations of Tara Oasalui quaked with violent tremors. Servants fled in every direction the great towers swayed and a brilliant light shot out of the glass dome. Horrific sounds of roaring, unearthly shrieks and wails rumbled out of the ground in every direction. People ran for their lives down the road and away from the castle. Some, when the ground ceased to tremble, turned back to

watch, and saw the light in the dome and the windows grew brighter. A frigid, bitter wind suddenly blew up the mountainside toward the castle as it knocked the peasants to their knees with its overwhelming frigid force.

Above the wail of the wind, Saska's mouth opened with a single inhuman scream. A moment later there was utter silence. Saska and Ilhyna disappeared without a trace that day. No one could be persuaded to search at any length for them. From the heart of the mountains a grim mist rose up to further obscure the sky and some say that Matushka froze Saska and young Ilhyna in a block of solid black ice for all eternity. The smoky mist has not abated to this day.

Despite the disappearance of Veche's rule, the war continued. The Eisen army was dispatched in 523 by a monstrous snowstorm which sprang seemingly from nowhere. Valentin Vadimovich Tomiech, cousin of Saska, and the new Veche Domiator, arrived at the castle in the midst of the turmoil. Aware of the Eisen army's fate, he readily capitulated to Matushka's demands — for it was she who had visited Saska — and united Veche with the other kingdoms to form the new nation of Ussura. Eager to sweep away the horror of his predecessor's reign, Valentin renamed the castle "Valaamzhensky" and the brutality of Veche's rulers lessened.

So it remained until the year 1625 when, with trade increasing across Ussura, tales of a terrible sorceress and a haunted castle finally reached the ears of a wandering Knight of the Black Cross. A senior knight, in the guise of a musician, accompanied a caravan heading into Veche loaded with goods for the ruling Knias. The knight struggled to keep the shock from his face as the merchants glibly told the tales of Veche's bloody past. Four months later, the caravan returned to Rurik and the knight parted company with them. *Die Kreuzritter* decided that Veche had been too long ignored.

Currently a score of Black Crosses are working and watching within the borders of haunted Veche. At no place are they more highly concentrated than in the mountainous region around Valaamzhensky Castle. They know that the "smoke" rising from the rock is anything but natural and are becoming increasingly convinced that the legend of Saska trapped in ice is true. The trouble is that they cannot tell if the unease they sense in the air comes from the ghosts of victims past or if the evil of Saska has somehow remained alive, virulent and hidden from their watchful gaze.

## Environs of Valaamzhensky Castle

Valaamzhensky Castle remains in the hands of the ruling Knias, and is located fifteen miles northeast of Siev, the capital of the Ussuran province of Veche. Though the current Knias, Staver Siev Aryaov v'Vladomirovich, took up residence in Siev some time ago, leaving Valaamzhensky in the hands of his son Fveryot. On a rare clear day it can be seen from Siev, perched like a stone vulture on a vast, gray cliff face. The old people say that year by year a bit of the forest dies out and retreats from the castle walls.

The road to the castle, not steep until the last two miles, twists and turns through dense, dark forests. Rain and snow makes travel treacherous; mud and rockslides are common throughout the year. Common too are tales of the evil Danyogor wolves that lurk in the dark underbrush, ready to tear the throats out of man and horse.

All who travel the roads near the castle must keep careful watch and control their animals as sudden shadows or odd noises can send mounts into a sudden panic. Every year at least a score of frightened animals, along with a few riders and wagons, plummet over the steep cliffs that appear suddenly around a blind curve, or just beyond a dense stand of trees.

At the base of the mountains the road goes through a narrow pass guarded by two stone gargoyles in the image of fearsome bears, the sigil of Veche's first Domiator. Faint initials "A&BT — AV 37" are barely legible on the pedestal's granite faces. As the road continues, another massive stone gargoyle marks each successive mile. There are 13 of the creatures, each on a granite pedestal six feet or higher and each different from the last. Some are truly grotesque with distorted, snarling faces and front paws raised as if to strike. Others sit like great hounds, attentive and ready to obey the will of their master. No matter whether ugly or noble, they all have a look of intelligence in their stony eyes. No one knows which of Veche's Domiators ordered their construction.

Legend says that these stone creatures once existed as flesh and blood beasts in the Azov Forest as Matushka's pets. In the wild abandon of play they ran out of the forest and got lost in the mists of the Mountains of Smoke where they fell prey to the evil sorceress Saska, who turned them to stone.

Visitors are warned to begin their journey to or from the castle at the first light of dawn, so that they will arrive to a place of relative safety by sunset. Should a traveler be unlucky to find himself on the road at nightfall or during a storm, he should seek shelter near one of these hulking statues and pray for Matushka's aid. One hears stories, purportedly told by terrified travelers, of being guided to safety by a great shadow that moved in the darkness or in the swirling whiteness of a snowstorm.

## Valaamzhensky Castle Interior

The castle is perched on the edge of a high cliff with another sheer rock face rising up almost 500 feet behind it. A half-round tower ascends the granite cliff at the center back, rises to a plateau, then continues as a full-circle tower upward for another two hundred feet. Its onion-shaped dome is made of an unusual amber-colored glass. If the sun sets on a rare day when its light can pierce the clouds, the glass glows like a huge, yellow fireball. If the sun's light shines directly on the glass for at least ten minutes, the dome will actually glow brightly for several days. It happens so infrequently that the citizens of Siev find themselves captured by their own fascination and superstitions as they try to ignore the glowing yellow orb in the midst of the inky blackness.

Two shorter towers flank the castle to the left and right, and are part of its outer defensive walls. Once inside the outer walls there is a stone courtyard where a few hearty flowers and herbs manage to grow in gray stone pots and bordering flowerbeds. They bloom in spring but do little to alleviate the grimness of the place. Animals are housed in and around the bottoms of both towers, while the small army of Valaamzhensky Castle is housed in the upper tower floors and in small stone rooms spaced along the ramparts of the thick walls.

After submitting to a search and thorough questioning from the castle guards, visitors are allowed to enter through heavy iron gates into an inner courtyard. Approaching the castle's main entrance, they have clear view to another

wide iron-bar gate on the right that leads to a small plateau. The view from that area might make them reconsider whether coming here was a good idea. A small forest of sharp metal stakes rises from the rock floor, waiting to impale the next offender foolish enough to cross the Knias.

Like the dwelling of any Ussuran, the castle is void of unnecessary frippery; the tapestries lining the walls in important rooms are plain and void of ornament. Heavily armed guards are posted in every possible location.

Just inside the entry hall are two wide corridors on either side. To the left is the library and rooms where business is conducted and to the right are the kitchens. It's a convenient set-up, as the deep ravine falling away from the execution grounds makes a good place to dump rotting bodies as well as kitchen refuse and the contents of the castle's drainage channels. At the far end of the entry hall is a wide staircase leading up to the second floor.

The staircase leads directly to the *Zall Krovyia* or Hall of Blood where Everyot spends most of his day. There are eight doors out of the hall, four on either side, that open onto long corridors leading to the guest's quarters. There are sixteen rooms on each side of the hall.

The stairs continue up to a third floor and the servants' quarters which are small and cramped to accommodate the large staff. Part of that floor is lost to a balcony reserved only for the Knias, his family and guests. Not surprisingly, it has an excellent view of the execution grounds.

A door behind the second-floor staircase is guarded by no fewer than four men at any given hour. It leads to the rooms built inside the half round tower that belong to the ruling family. There are actually more windows in this tower than apparent from below. No one, not even the Knias's family, is allowed into the golden room beneath the onion dome, except by permission. The stairway leading to that room is heavily guarded. It is said that some of the Knias's mistresses are locked away in this warm room and that the yellow light and broad views are what kept them from going mad in their isolation.

### *The Dungeons*

The dungeons and catacombs can be reached from several areas. Both guard towers have an entrance. The staircase in the Dome Tower goes down as well as up. There are also entrances from the kitchens and the Knias's office — now used by Everyot — in the left wing. In addition a hidden door lies behind the throne in the Hall of Blood, beyond which is a staircase leading directly down into an interrogation chamber.

The first floor of the dungeon is small, consisting of a few interrogation chambers and small cells to hold prisoners until their cases are heard or until they have served their short sentences.

The second floor is split into three areas and the rooms spread out much farther into the mountain. The corridor to the left leads to a series of more recently-built catacombs where some family members are buried. The right corridor leads to more prison cells and torture chambers. There is a door here that leads down to the third level, but no one knows its location. It is lost in the darkness and covered with a layer of slimy, cold lichen that grows in dark, wet places. In four generations, this portion of the dungeon has been used infrequently.

The central tunnel, approximately seven feet high and wide enough for four men to walk shoulder to shoulder descends from the second level into the heart of the mountain. There are few rooms here, and nothing else but crevices where water seeps. Air, almost a cloying mist, sometimes flows from these crevices and makes even the toughest guards shiver. Their torches flicker and they pray to Matushka to save them from the souls of the thousands who have died here.

The tunnel continues in this way for nearly a quarter of a mile when it branches again. To the left lie the Tomiech family catacombs. Members believed that Matushka lived for a time in the heart of the Gora Sorivdgrastov Mountains and they wanted to be buried as close to her as possible. Even in their position here, they were still above the souls of the damned killed in the cold, black depths, who had the unfortunate luck to live near the castle and suffer the whims of Veche's rulers.

Arched niches containing a bizarre collection of gargoyles chained into place line the corridor leading to the catacombs. They also line the right tunnel leading down into the deepest parts of the dungeon. Not far along this right branch, the dungeon turns into a confusion of rooms and tunnels leading in every direction: a marked distinction compared the orderliness of the floors above. The passageways widen, narrow and twist unexpectedly. Sometimes they lead to cavernous rooms; other times, to a pile of rubble, or to a dead end. No one is sure who made these tunnels or when. They do not appear on the old architectural plans for the original building. Some of the few scholars who have been allowed to see the tunnels believe water and earthquakes formed them. Others more familiar with similar places in Théah have other theories. They do not voice them openly unless asked directly, and even then, they explain their theories with caution, as they do not want to raise the superstitious ire of their host.

It is unusually cold here. Even after a century of disuse, the smell of blood is still heavy in the thick air. One must be careful in this place of utter darkness as torchlight does not always illuminate unexpected pits and crevices formed when the mountain shook. Here and there huge stone gargoyles guard entrances apparently blocked by tons of broken rock.

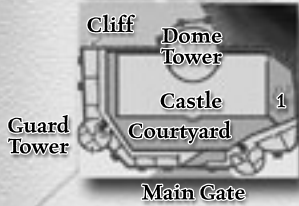
Everyot knows that things may not be as they seem down here, but he currently trusts no one to help him move stone to find out what is inside. He comes to this place of his own accord, intent on exploring. Sometimes he finds things that he secrets away in the Dome Tower, but his searches never last long. He would rather spend time in the chamber of polished snow, drawn away by the lure of the frozen beauty encased in ice.

Very few in Veche know of his secret quest to find the frozen remains of Saska and her son, and fewer still know of his recent success. He knows all of the legends concerning her great powers and knows that she must have left written notes detailing her discoveries and experiments, if only he could find them. He knows there are many powerful secrets lost in this castle and that it is his destiny to find them. His father has grown old and has been mad for years, so Everyot may seek outside help in this venture, but for now he is content to keep all the secrets to himself.

By night he stares at Saska's beauty frozen for all time in a steaming block of solid ice. He has begun to believe that the susurrus he hears whispering in the utter stillness is her voice

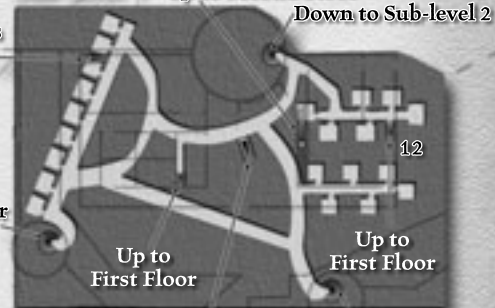
# Valaamzhensky Castle

## Castle Grounds



## Sub-level 1

Secret Stairs  
Up to First  
Floor



Down to Sub-level 2

Up to  
First Floor

Up to  
First Floor

Up to  
First Floor

Down to  
Sub-level 2

Up to  
First Floor

## First Floor

Up to Second Floor or  
Down to Sub-level 1

Secret Stairs  
Down to  
Sub-level 1



Down to Sub-level 1

To Sub-level 1

To Second Floor

## Second Floor

Up to Third Floor

Down to  
First Floor

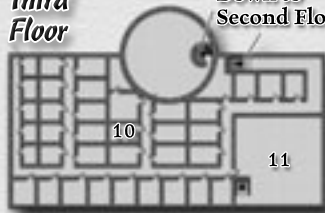


Secret Stairs to  
Sub-level 1

Up to Third Floor

## Third Floor

Down to  
Second Floor



Mysterious  
Tunnels

## Sub-level 2

## Sub-level 2

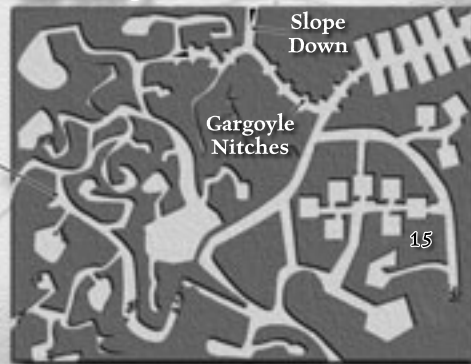
Stairs Up to  
Sub-level 1



Slope Down  
to Sub-level 3

## Sub-level 3

Slope  
Down



0 5 10 20

Scale in Feet

1. "Iron Forest"
2. Library
3. Offices
4. Fveryot's Office
5. Entry Hall

6. Kitchens
7. Pantry
8. Zall Krovyia
9. Guest Rooms
10. Servants' Quarters

11. Balcony
12. Interrogation Rooms
13. Dungeon Cells
14. Catacombs
15. Torture Chambers

trying to talk to him. A voice, that if only he could hear it clearly, would tell him how to find and use her secrets, and how to free her. He would be able to rid the land of Matushka's enemies, and cleanse it of those who pollute the Ussuran soul with their belief in Theus and the Prophets. He would reacquaint Ussura with the true soul of the land and all would bear the yoke of Veche's rule. He still relishes the day he found her. Some day, he may proclaim it a holiday.

*Note:* The catacombs beneath the Castle can extend further than defined on the map, and any number of horrors can lie ensconced there. It is intended to be expanded upon to accommodate alternate dungeon ideas, or to fit into any previously existing locales which the GM wishes.

## Items of Interest

### Zall Krovya (The Hall of Blood)

The Zall Krovya is a huge room used for many things — holding tribunal court, receiving guests, dancing, feasting, etc. The front part of the room has five narrow windows that look out over the courtyards and down into the valley where Siev goes about its business. In the center of the room is a large fire pit under a carved stone opening that catches and vents the smoke. The floor is highly polished marble and granite in white, black and red (the colors of the family's ancient coat of arms).

On either side of the fire pit a white marble mosaic bear dances in the center of three white marble birch trees, surrounded by a night of black granite. In the dead of winter, when everyone is deep in their cups from boredom, more than one bleary-eyed person has said that ghostly bears dance around the pit.

Guests often marvel at the beauty of the floor, but the room's walls unnerve them. Small red stones, many in the shape of droplets, glitter in the walls giving the hall its ominous distinction. Nowhere else in the castle are the red stones so numerous as in the main hall. In winter, when the fire burns brightest, the stones reflect the light giving the appearance of blood actually glistening and running down the walls. It is an effect that greatly pleases most of those occupying the seat of power. Anyone caught removing a stone from the wall will be lucky to escape with only the loss of his hand.

The stones vary in color from bright, clear red to a deep, almost black, garnet. They do not have the cold feel of ruby or garnets, but rather a warmer quality like amber or pearls. If one is fortunate enough gain permission to touch the stones, he will find an odd sensation trembling beneath his fingertips. The bright red creates a sense of peace, while the vibration of the darker stone sends a shiver up the spine. The castle's servants believe that the stones are the blood of the innocents slain and buried in the chambers below. The rock of the mountain, a sacred creation of Grandmother Winter, weeps their blood in remembrance of them. The dark red is the blood of the truly guilty, but because there is so much blood, the simple rock cannot separate the two. In a strange sort of way, the servants are almost right.

### Dome Tower

The Dome Tower is a place of great mystery. Only a rare few know what it looks like and what mysteries it might hold. Servants severely lacking in mental acuity are chosen several

times a year to scrub the floors, wipe the cobwebs from the walls, and remove ash from the small fireplace. A small group of deaf-mutes, usually old sailors used to climbing ropes, is employed every couple of years to climb up to the glass dome and clean it of dust and soot. Soldiers, who are missing all or part of their tongues, stand guard over all of them. Servants who fail to maintain silence may find themselves summarily "inducted" into the ranks of the guards.

It is rumored that the room is full of tables and single-tier shelves laden with glass and crystal objects gleaned from all over the Mountains of Smoke. There are pieces of the amber glass set in mirrored frames that emit light like a candle, clear crystals that glow even brighter and give power to strange objects, and a rosy mirror that seems to swim in blood and dark images. It is said many a feeble-minded servant has been driven mad by staring into its swirling horror.

### Gargoyles (Tomiech Guardians)

Only a few people currently living at Valaamzhensky Castle have seen the gargoyles in the dungeons, and fewer have any desire to see them at all. The legends of the Tomiech Guardians are enough to give the soldiers sleeping in the towers nightmares.

Legends say the gargoyles, a race of fierce beasts that lived in the haunted forests in ancient times, were caught and trained by the fierce Veche Domiators of old as a ritual test of skill and daring. Wild gargoyles have since died out in the region, or perhaps were killed off by more ferocious creatures like the Danyogor wolves. Others believe that they are the offspring of the strange gargoyles from the Azov Forest, leagues to the south. Some say they are Saska's evil creations frozen with her by the Matushka's wrath. No one believes a human hand carved them. What human would work at carving something so hideous hour after hour, much less left it standing in a workshop night after moonless night?

It is said Saska treated these creatures like pets for whom her evil knew no bounds. As a prize for good behavior, she rewarded them with a game. The gargoyles had a taste for sweetened blood wine. Saska would invite her maids and serving girls, three or four at a time, into her private chambers in the Dome Tower where she fed them honeyed cakes and heady wine and told them she would take them to the top of the tower where they could look out on the world. Instead, she led them down to the dungeons. The girls, confused by the strong wine, thought they were stopping for more refreshments when Saska handed them even larger cups and told them to drink. They never saw the gargoyles watching them from dark corners, feral eyes gleaming with anticipation. Moments after Saska took back the golden cups the gargoyles sprang at the girls from all corners of the room. Saska laughed at their screams of terror as they attempted to stumble away. The gargoyles slashed at their throats to stop the screaming, then ripped open their soft bellies to get at the sweet elixir their mistress had just warmed for them.

Everyot wonders about these tales as he walks past the Tomiech Guardians and pauses now and then to peer more closely at the creatures ensconced in their niches. He sees no glimmer in its rock-like eyes, yet its skin, if one could call it that, is mottled in a way that looks more like flesh and bone than rock. He has not quite gotten up the nerve to actually touch one of these fearsome gargoyles but the fact that he will look at them at all sets him apart from others in the castle.



## Rosy Mirrors

Visitors to Valaamzhensky Castle are quick to notice that besides the gray of stone and sky, red seems to be the predominant color. Even the mirrors on the walls do not shine with a silver luster but rather a rosy copper. No other castle in Ussura can boast as many mirrors. The larger models are in the *Zall Krovyia*, the library, at each end of the hallways connected to the *Zall Krovyia*, in Everyot's private chambers, and, rumor has it, in the room at the top of the Dome Tower. Smaller mirrors are found in some of the guest bedrooms, the entry hall, the business chambers, and strangely, in each of the guard towers.

No one knows why guards would want mirrors, but through countless years they have hung there and so have become ordinary and ignored. Curious newcomers are warned not to ask why anything is the way it is here, but simply to accept it. They are also warned not to look into the mirrors for any length of time unless they want to challenge fate. Sometimes images of the looker's death might appear or the face of some hideous demon. Sometimes the fleeting image of a beautiful woman appears in the looker's peripheral vision, making him wonder if he really saw something or not.

## Tyomkris

Rats have always been a part of life in Théah and are dealt with accordingly. However, in the past two years a new rat has invaded Valaamzhensky Castle. The *Tyomkris* are black rats ranging in size from large rat to small cat. They move in the shadows and dark passages. *Tyomkris*, "shadow rats," seem to slip in and out of the darkness like a shadow, so one is never sure whether it was something real unless direct light strikes it. *Tyomkris* have faintly glowing red eyes and their feet have evolved into retractable claws similar to a cat, which allows them to move quietly and climb.

Larger and more aggressive than normal rats, *Tyomkris* hiss and snarl when threatened. The gnawed bones of other vermin are sometimes found in the mornings near drains and other places. It seems the *Tyomkris* have a highly developed taste for raw flesh. They have been found mostly near the kitchens where meat is prepared. More than one rat has been killed by a butcher's hatchet and the immediate stench indicates that something was amiss with the animal. The corpses are immediately removed and burned in the nearest fire.

## Items of Legend

Curiosity kills more than cats in this region of Veche and only those wielding great power, martial or political, should ever dare to ask questions. Discrete servants warn foolish tongues to silence, but sometimes, even Domiators are compelled to tell a tale.

## Saska's Diaries

For many generations after Saska's demise, none of the Domiators wanted to tempt Matushka's wrath, so her possessions were either hidden or destroyed. In particular, Domiators wanted to preserve the knowledge of her great power for future use, purportedly to protect Veche from its enemies; they secreted her scrolls and diaries somewhere in the Castle. To date, no one knows where they might lie, not even Everyot.

## Sword of Light

The Sword of Light has not been seen for over three hundred years and the soldiers of the castle are secretly happy about this. On the last day of the Prophet's Mass, if there was no volunteer, the soldiers cast lots. The designated soldier was then dressed in black pants and shirt, then taken to the main gate. He was given a helm, a sword and a spear and left in the cold, trembling with fear. The captain unwrapped a bright, glowing, crystalline blade from its heavy velvet sheath and stood back as the blade rose up and easily sliced the sacrifice from shoulder to groin with a single stroke. Thus the light of Matushka's truth mingled with the blood of bravery to make Veche strong for another year. The sword disappeared in the 1300s shortly after priests of Theus began spreading His gospel in the region. No one has yet felt the need to retrieve it.

## Adventure Hooks

Valaamzhensky Castle is an unsettling place even on a rare sunny day. Its history bleeds through every crack in its grim walls and the people — servants and freemen alike — are guarded in their words and actions. Things are always a little odd in this part of Théah. What would you do on a dark night when the wind blows, wolves howl and the light of a full moon refuses to shine on this little patch of woods? Pray that Matushka's gargoyles will save you? Or are you brave enough to enter the bloody castle that sits on a barren cliff?

- Rumor has it that Everyot has found the sorceress, Saska Tomiech, and is trying to bring her back to life. They say there are men who know how to accomplish this. The PCs may be hired to provide protection services for three "priests of Theus" who are traveling to Veche to rid the land of darkness and sin. Once they cross into Veche, they realize these priests are doing things that are not exactly priestly, but it is too late to turn back if they want their guilders. As the gloominess of Veche grows, they begin to wonder what they have signed up to do...
- Cabora has risen and every secret society in Théah is on the move. The strange behavior of Veche's ruling Knias is suspect, as is the apparent inactivity of his heir. PCs belonging to one or more societies may be sent to investigate. The Knias' secretary refuses them an audience, but their probing has garnered the attention of someone at this castle. Any of the following could happen:
  - A. The group is arrested, taken to the castle and given a first-class tour of the dungeons.
  - B. The characters are "persuaded" to undertake a quest for the Sword of Light after watching one of their company tortured most horribly on the edge of a cliff.
  - C. The characters are pressed into service clearing debris in the dungeon's tunnels.

No matter what horror befalls them here, they must devise a plan to escape, perhaps with some bit of knowledge which will help their society fight the evil in the basement.

- As bold adventurers, the characters simply *must* see the fabled glass onion dome of Veche. If they offer something useful to Everyot, he may show them some of his treasures. Or, perhaps they are of a mind to go off and do their own exploring...
- Everyot's sister Apraksia has been exiled by her father and lives in a small town far away. Unlike the rest of her family, she maintains both her sanity and her political acumen. She likes to keep close tabs on her fellow voevods, her brother in particular. If the player characters are stranded in Ussura for the winter and low on funds, she may approach them and request their aid. Her offer sounds too good to pass up. A little travel to see her doltish brother and gather a few notes and observations — what could be simpler? When they reach the castle, however, they realize that she left out some very important details. Now they need to decide whose side are they on... and how can they extradite themselves from this very sticky situation.

## Game Master Secrets

The following section is for the Game Master's eyes only. Reading it will undoubtedly spoil the game for you.

### The Castle, Saska and the Whole Bloody Mess

No matter how hard it tries, Valaamzhensky Castle and most of the rest of Veche will likely never escape the power of the blood trapped in the land — the blood of Razhdost and Thalusiai alike. The final, horrific battles between these two great forces raged over the land that would one day become Veche and Molhyna. The great cataclysms on land mixed with the great waves of blood pouring from the rift in the barrier. In the utter silence of annihilation, the land settled and the blood ran into the deep cracks, veins and crevices of the mountains where it petrified.

Valaamzhensky Castle was excavated and built in a place with a high concentration of blood from both sides. The bright clear "gems" glittering in the *Zall Krovya* are actually Razhdost blood while the darker stones are Thalusiai. The very essence of good and evil resonates in these hardened drops.

Saska was the first, and last (for now) to understand the power that resonated beneath her fingertips. Like many of her ancestors, she had an odd predilection for blood-related things. As a small child, she climbed about on the mounds of excavated rock, and as children often do, she put pieces of the pretty red stones in her mouth. It wasn't long before she developed a "taste" for the dark red variety and thus began the subtle growth of her powers and the foundation for her future experiments.

The horror of blood and its associations makes an odd juxtaposition with the technology of the Thalusiai, which is found throughout this region.

General Boris Tomiech, the castle's architect and builder, was an incredibly brilliant man, although history has forgotten that part. Aside from applications for war and architecture, he was fascinated by the optical properties of the Thalusiai crystals and mirrored surfaces. Through his inventions, he was able to hammer Veche into a unified kingdom. Codes flashed by secret relay mirrors told him what was going on even when he was miles away. If he could do that

across the countryside, then was no reason he could not do it in his home. Behind the Rosy Mirror in the Dome Tower, or any of the others throughout the castle, Boris placed a series of prisms suspended in narrow black tubes. Using a series of carefully aligned prisms and mirrors, he could see anywhere in his castle. By adjusting where he stood and the angle at which he looked, he could choose a particular room at will. All of this worked perfectly until the earth trembled when Matushka froze Saska in her prison. The prisms moved from their alignments and the secret of the mirrors was frozen with her. The misalignment of the prisms reflects the color of the red gems and gives the glass its rosy appearance. If the looker should happen to see Saska's face, it is because he has stood at just the precise angle to see down into her prison. However, when startled by her icy beauty, it is nearly impossible to find the right alignment again.

The Dome Tower's amber glass is a variation of "light battery" technology found in other areas of Théah, as is the Sword of Light. It functions the same way as the Lens Knife, only larger. Because these items need sunlight to work, they are stored in the high Dome Tower, which can get a fair amount of sunlight, even in winter when the clouds sit low on the mountain. The Sword's exact location is up to the GM; while the "sacrifices" made with it have no direct game effect, they have deep ties to the supernatural beliefs of the Veche people. Anyone who uncovers the sword will have to contend with a thousand years of deep-seated superstition...

Stats for the Sword are as follows:

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The blade functions as a +3 *longsword*, and is immune to the effects of heat. It sheds light equivalent to a torch (20 foot radius).

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The blade inflicts 3k3 damage and sheds light as above.

## New Monsters

### Tyomkris (Shadow Rat)

Until Everyot opened the passageways leading to Saska's hidden chamber, the *Tyomkris* were forced to find food in the dark forest. Although he has no clue he is the cause, he has allowed them into the castle where they find plentiful food and warmth. For some reason, they watch him from their hiding places but do not attack. Like Saska, the rats began to evolve after drinking water tainted with Thalusiai and Razhdost blood that dissolved slowly in the runoff from the excavation rubble. The essence of evil combined easily with their animal minds and has made them extraordinarily large and vicious.

A scrape from their claws causes painful, feverish welts. If the wound swells, it must be lanced immediately or blood poisoning will result. Fever and delirium, temporary effects of the rat's poison, usually follows and lasts about 24 hours. A bite from their razor-sharp teeth causes the flesh to be severely and deeply lacerated or even bitten out. Depending on a man's size, five serious bites can cause a weeklong illness and 10 are enough to kill. A swarm of *Tyomkris* can devour an unarmed man down to the bone in fifteen minutes or less.

### **Tyomkris (Shadow Rat) (d20™)**

**Small Dire Beast**  
**Hit Dice:** 1d8 (4 hp)  
**Initiative:** +3 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 40 ft., climb 20 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)  
**Attacks:** Bite +4 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 1d4  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Infection  
**Special Qualities:** Scent, darkvision 60 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2 Ref +5 Will +2  
**Abilities:** Str 4, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2  
**Skills:** Balance +6, Climb +10, Hide +15, Move Silently +10  
**Feats:** Weapon Finesse (bite)

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**Climate/Terrain:** The lands around Valaamzhensky Castle  
**Organization:** Solitary or pack (5–20)  
**Challenge Rating:** ½  
**Treasure:** None  
**Alignment:** Always evil  
**Advancement:** 2–3 HD (Small)

### **Tyomkris (Shadow Rat) — Brutes (7th Sea™)**

5 per pack  
**Threat Rating:** 1  
**Usual weapon:** Small (razor-like teeth, clawed feet)  
**TN to be Hit:** 15  
**Attack:** +2  
**Skills:** Ambush 4, Stealth 5

### **Tomiech Guardians**

The result of Saska's experiments with the blood of Veche, Tomiech Guardians began life as humans born with serious physical, mental or both defects but at least limited human intelligence. She fed them various mixtures made from the pulverized bloodstones she pried from the rock. After a time, they craved the bloody drink and would obey every command to get more. They lost whatever trace of humanity they had as the blood changed them physically and the cravings made them more insane.

At first the monsters Saska created repulsed her until she realized they could be trained. She chained them in their niches when she did not require their services and began to take pleasure in her growing collection of beasts. The larger guardians resulted from direct infusions of her mixtures into their bloodstream. There are not many of these creatures as they were incredibly violent and mostly uncontrollable. Most of these are located in the farthest depths of the passageways and closest to the frozen sorceress. When Matushka's winter froze Saska solid, it also froze the magic in the guardians turning them into living stone. However, Everyot, fascinated by Saska and her domain, has rekindled torches along the walls near the niches. The tiniest bit of warmth collecting in the passageways from those constantly burning torches may do things that even he does not expect.

### **Tomiech Guardians (Gargoyles) (d20™)**

**Medium-Size Humanoid**  
**Hit Dice:** 2d8 (15 hp)  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural)

**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee, 2 claws +2 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 1d6+1, claws 1d4  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Qualities:** None  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0  
**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 8  
**Skills:** Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +3, Spot +4  
**Feats:** None

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**Challenge Rating:** 2

**Alignment:** Neutral evil

### **Tomiech Guardians — Brutes (7th Sea™)**

5 per pack  
**Threat Rating:** 4  
**Weapons:** Claws (Medium) or Bite (Medium)  
**TN to be hit:** 20  
**Attack:** +2  
**Skills:** Footwork 2  
**Surprise Factor:** should anyone other than Everyot walk past these creatures, it is by pure (GM) whim whether they will attack or not. If a PC touches them with hand or weapon, they are more prone to attack. PCs can try to escape behind a door or barricade, use heavy weapons capable of smashing rock or use vinegar which dissolves limestone marble.

## **NPC Statistics for Valaamzhensky Castle**

### **Everyot Valaamzhensky Staverov v'Uladomirovich**

As the only son of Veche's Knias, Everyot stands to inherit the entire province when his father dies. But as with so many noble children who preceded him, that fact brought him little comfort in his early years. Everyot's mother had dallied with another man, and Staver believed that the boy was not his progeny. He confined them to Valaamzhensky Castle, where the Everyot was raised from birth. His mother, prone to suicide attempts, finally flung herself from the castle walls when he was yet a child. His elder sister Apraksia was exiled to the far ends of the province when she married against their father's wishes. That left the boy alone to be raised by the servants, all but ignored by the crazed, aging Knias.

The combination of peasant superstition and the environs of the palace had a disturbing affect on Everyot's mind. He became entranced by Veche's terrible history, and by the dark practices of his line before the coming of Matushka. He begged the servants to tell him the stories over and over. When he had memorized them all, he delved into more complicated subjects: traditions, cultural practices, rituals... He soon began to emulate the ancient practices, eschewing traditional Ussuran Orthodoxy for the pagan ways of his ancestors. As he matured, he grew ruthless and cold, with a streak of cruelty his forefathers would recognize immediately. While he never traveled beyond the confines of Veche, he soon began a rough correspondence with other occult scholars, who dramatically increased his store of knowledge.

He was particularly taken with the tale of Saska, who possessed power undreamed of and dared to defy the goddess

herself. With such power in his hands, he believed he could return Veche to the “glorious days” of its past, when men trembled beneath their rulers’ fist and even the forest bent its will to the Domiator. At first, it remained an empty dream... until he found the passageway deep beneath the Castle halls where Saska and her infant child lay frozen in ice. He could hear her spirit calling to him in his dreams, begging him to free her from imprisonment. With her as a guide, his studies have turned even darker. It is only a matter of time before he finds her lost scrolls and frees her to stand at his side. His father is aged and insane. As soon as the old man dies, he will become Knias... and Veche will return to its blood-soaked roots.

More on Fveryot’s family, and Knias Staver in particular, can be found in the *Ussura™* sourcebook.

### ***Fveryot Valaamzhensky Staverov v’Vladimirovich (120™)***

**Ussuran Fighter 6/Bogatyr 2:** CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d10+16; hp 74; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+8 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: axe +11/+6 melee (1d8), pistol +8/+3 ranged (1d10); SA Accuracy With Axes, Track; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 10; AL LE; Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +4, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (occult) +5, Listen +4, Speak Languages (Teodoran, Ussuran [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Swim +4, Wilderness Lore +4; Feats: Beat, Careful, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Lunge, Power Attack, Toughness, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate).

### ***Fveryot Valaamzhensky Staverov v’Vladimirovich — Villain (7th Sea™)***

**Brawn:** 4, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 2  
**Reputation:** -36  
**Background:** Hunting  
**Arcana:** Careful  
**Advantages:** Ussuran (R/W), Teodoran, Inheritance, Noble  
**Courtier:** Dancing 1, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4  
**Hunter:** Ambush 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Tracking 3  
**Scholar:** History 3, Mathematics 1, Occult 4, Philosophy 1, Research 2  
**Athlete:** Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Swimming 2, Throwing 1  
**Archer:** Attack (Bow) 3, Fletcher 2  
**Bogatyr (Apprentice):** Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 2, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 2, Throw (Heavy Weapon: Axe) 3, Exploit Weakness (Bogatyr) 1  
**Dirty Fighting:** Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 2  
**Firearms:** Attack (Firearms) 3  
**Heavy Weapon:** Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4  
**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2  
**Wrestling:** Bear Hug 2, Grapple 2, Head Butt 2

#### **GM SECRETS**

While Fveryot searches adamantly for Saska’s lost knowledge, he is willing to explore other options to free her. At Saska’s urging, he has contacted a trio of sorcerers from the distant land of Cathay, who can free her from imprisonment. Thus far, they have spurned all advances, but Fveryot believes

he can eventually convince them — or barring that, kidnap them and force them to do his bidding. He cannot move openly while his father still lives, but he is patient. Time is on his side.

What he doesn’t know, however, is that other members of his family have plans of their own. His father’s madness was induced by a visit to the Great Maze of the Coruscites (*see page 75*) many years ago. Every five years, the Coruscites send a representative to Staver to ensure that he is still among the living. When he dies, Staver believes that they will kidnap his heir and take him to the maze to be “tested.” When Fveryot fails the test, Staver’s daughter Apraksia will ascend to Knias. The question, of course, is whether Fveryot will have freed Saska by then or not...

The people of Veche are not entirely powerless in this scenario. A quiet movement has evolved, dedicated to finding Apraksia and restoring her to her father’s good graces. If that fails, they hope to have Fveryot assassinated before he can become Knias, thus avoiding the inevitable bloodshed to follow. Should they learn of Saska’s imprisonment beneath the Castle — and his plans to free her — they will stop at nothing to see his bones added to those festering at Valaamzhensky’s roots.

As yet, Fveryot is unaware of either of these threats. Should he succeed in his ambitions, however, he (or rather, Saska) may be more than powerful enough to thwart them.

### ***Tatyana Sorvshenko***

Like many things at Valaamzhensky Castle, Tatyana Sorvshenko is a mystery. She arrived a little over a year ago in the company of half-starved, half-dressed Ussurans fleeing Montaigne troops. Having lost their way in the mountains, the castle was their first point of refuge. Some have since gone to Siev to find work and homes, while others, Tatyana among them, have decided to stay at the castle, at least for now.

Tatyana is a thin young woman of medium height, who talks quietly and walks with an air of gentility. She wears her thick blond, almost white, hair in a long braid down her back, or wrapped in a chignon. Her eyes are intensely blue. She wears a decorated dark blue leather mask that covers her nose, most of the right side of her face, and the area around her temple, ear and neck. Beneath the mask are thick burn scars left by an accident she claims not to remember.

In fact, she remembers little of her life up to the accident and has clear memory of only the last four or five years. All the rest has been lost to amnesia brought on by high fevers during her ordeal and recovery, so her memory is shadowed with questions and mixed memories.

There are some things she remembers very well, especially how to make wonderful pastries from Ussuran and Eisen recipes, and how to give massages that ease cold muscle aches of winter. Her best customers are Fveryot himself, and the Captain of the Guard, Grigor Polozhov. As these arts suggest a more genteel previous life, she has been given some authority in the kitchen and has been given one of the small, but obviously in need of repair, guestrooms on the second floor. She is never far from the *Zall Krovyia* where she is sometimes asked to work as a secretary. Fveryot, raised by *muzhiks*, reads and writes with difficulty. Tatyana’s language skills relieve him of this shortcoming in the presence of foreigners. Sometimes he locks her in the castle’s small library for days at a time

making her read and translate scrolls, piles of moldering parchments and the few books that line the shelves. It is a slow process as the documents are in fairly poor condition.

The women of the castle feel sorry for her as she is quick to avoid looking into any mirror.

### **Tatyana Sorvshenko** (d20™)

**Ussuran Spy 6/Fighter 2:** CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d10+2 plus 6d6+6; hp 46; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: knife +6/+1 melee (1d4); SA Alias, Brilliant Getaway, Contacts, Face in the Crowd, Sneak Attack +3d6; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 5; AL NG; Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +5, Disguise +8, Gather Information +8, Hide +5, Innuendo +6, Jump +5, Profession (servant) +8, Move Silently +9, Speak Language (Eisen, Ussuran, Teodoran [alternately, and three languages from your campaign]), Search +8, Swim +4; Feats: Alertness, Intuitive, Keen Senses, Membership (die Kreuzritter), Toughness, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

### **Tatyana Sorvshenko — Hero** (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Wits:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Panache:** 2

**Reputation:** 20

**Background:** None

**Arcana:** Intuitive

**Advantages:** Ussuran (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Teodoran (R/W),

Keen Senses, Membership (die Kreuzritter), Toughness

**Merchant:** Cooking 2, Masseur 2

**Servant:** Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Gossip 3, Menial Task 1, Unobtrusive 3

**Streetwise:** Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3

**Hunter:** Stealth 2, Tracking 2, Trail Signs 2

**Athlete:** Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Leaping 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 3

### **GM SECRETS**

Tatyana Sorvshenko knows very well who she is and why she has returned; she was born in the castle. Her mother was a cook and her father any one of several castle guards. Life was good until she was fifteen and started to become a woman. Her youthful vanity overcame the warnings about the rosy mirrors. She spent one afternoon looking at her beautiful face, and too late saw another beautiful face glaring viciously back at her.

The next morning as she stoked the cook fires, the flames flared out of control. The right side of her body was badly burned. In desperation, her mother begged the help of a doctor in Siev. He said he would do what he could and sent her away. The doctor set about to make his patient comfortable for death, when she started mumbling. Her repeated cries about a mirror, a woman called “Saska” and other strange things caught his attention.

He was a member of *die Kreuzritter* now faced with a decision. Instead of letting her die, he used the special balm of the Black Crosses to heal her body, though there was not enough for her face. When she awoke from her delirium, he presented her with an offer. Three weeks later, when a fierce winter storm blew itself out, Tatyana’s mother learned of her daughter’s death. Six years later, her body thin and her hair changed from black to white, Tatyana graduated from the Kippe Academy.

She now understands the scope of the danger growing at the castle and has asked to be stationed there in spite of the risk. Most people shun her because of her disfigurement, but she walks a fine line where Grigor Polozhov is concerned. She knows full well where her duty and obligation to *die Kreuzritter* lies, yet in some strange way he appeals to something deep inside her. She knows she cannot risk a romance — her duties as a spy for *die Kreuzritter* must come first — but she longs for the warmth of human contact, contact she is growing to believe only he can provide...

### **Grigor Siev Polozhov**

Except for Everyot, no one at the castle demands and requires as much respect. A master of the Bogatyr fighting style, his reputation for fighting, strategy and leadership has increased during the Montaigne conflict. Visitors are wise to make his acquaintance. He has no trouble escorting intruders through the side gate in the inner courtyard.

Born in Siev, he claims to be the bastard son of the ruling Knias, Staver Siev Aryaov vVladimirovich, and half-brother to Everyot and Apraksia. It is difficult to doubt him: his fledgling *Pyeryem* magic indicates noble blood. The Knias does not bother to dispute the claim, and it is doubtful he even remembers that he has ever heard it at all.

In his youth, Polozhov traveled through parts of Théah earning his way by riding as a caravan guard, serving as a sellsword, and doing whatever it took to stay alive. He has a much broader view of the world than most in Veche, which has convinced him that the old ways are best. He has no love for the philosophies of Theus and, as a byproduct of growing up in the castle’s dark corridors, he knows that many things in Théah are not what they seem.

He believes that Staver is working to destroy Veche if the *voevods* and *boyars*, left to their own unchecked devices, do not do it first. He knows Everyot would kill him if he could and there is no love lost between the two men. Only the fierce loyalty of his troops stays Everyot’s hand. Polozhov has overheard more than one man say he would prove his loyalty by volunteering to stand before the Sword of Light, but only if Polozhov wielded the blade. They may get their chance to prove it.

Polozhov finds Tatyana Sorvshenko attractive, despite her disfigurement. He has noticed that she does not pull her hand away as quickly as others do and he imagines many things while lying on her massage table. He loves her brilliant blue eyes and thinks that somehow, somewhere he has seen them before.

### **Grigor Siev Polozhov** (d20™)

**Ussuran Ranger 5/Bogatyr 1/Pyeryem Mage 2:** CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d10+24; hp 72; Init +0; Spd. 30 ft.; AC 15 (+5 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: axe +10/+5 melee (1d8+4); SA Accuracy With Axes, Forms (bear, owl), Favored Enemies (animals, beasts), Provided By Nature, Shape of the Beast, Speak With Animals, Transformation 1/day; SV Fort +12, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 17; AL N(G); Skills: Animal Empathy +6, Climb +4, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (nature) +9, Move Silently +7, Search +4, Speak Languages (Eisen, Ussuran [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +4, Swim +6; Feats: Cold Climate Conditioning, Half-Blooded (Pyeryem), Track, Unarmored Defense Proficiency



(beginner), Weapon Focus (battle axe), Weapon Specialization (battle axe), Willful; Spells: *animal friendship*, *detect snares and pits*, *hold animal*, *magic fang*.

### Grigor Siev Polozhov — Scoundrel (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, Finesse: 2, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Panache: 2

Reputation: -20

Background: None

Arcana: Willful

Advantages: Ussuran (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Cold Climate

Conditioning, Noble, Pyeryem (Half-Blood), Toughness

Hunter: Ambush 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Tracking 2

Bogaty (Apprentice): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 1, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 1, Throw (Heavy Weapon) 1, Exploit Weakness (Bogaty) 1

Pyeryem (Apprentice): Bear 3, Man 1, Owl 1, Speak 1

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

#### GM SECRETS

Like many a prince in his father's court, Staver Siev had his pick of girls eager to find advancement in any way they could; Grigor is the result of one such liaison. Both child and mother were banished to Valaamzhensky Castle, like many of the Knias's mistresses.

Grigor would have lived as another servant if the Pyeryem or his charisma had not become so obvious. He did not know exactly who his father was until his mother lay on her deathbed. He was seventeen and Everyot was twelve. Angry at his fate and at a loss as to what to do with his life, Grigor left Ussura to seek adventure.

He returned ten years later a changed man. His fighting prowess and unstoppable charisma quickly made him a champion of note throughout Veche, which led to his assignment at the castle. He knows that Everyot granted him his current position so that he can keep him under watch. The two men dance around each other like the great bears in the Hall of Blood. One wields the power of the castle's sorcerous secrets, and the other the power of the loyalty of men — many more than Everyot assumes. Grigor has a growing network of spies and informants throughout Veche. He sees the Knias as an insane old man although his spies tell him otherwise. Everyot's knowledge of the outside world is limited, which is useful for the time being. In the meantime, at least once a week a great owl flies silently through the night skies around the castle looking for intruders.

Incestuous relationships are nothing new to the ancient Tomiech family, but Grigor finds Apraksia distasteful; he would rather have her fealty over her body. In the deep of night he imagines a black-haired, blue-eyed beauty yielding to him in ways that make his blood run hot.

Like Everyot, Grigor wants Veche to find strength and stability in its Old Ways. Veche's bureaucrats will some day yield to him and he, in turn, will kneel to Matushka and her chosen ruler.

Polozhov's men call him the Bear of Gora Sorivdgrastov and do not grumble when they patrol the Mountains of Smoke with him. He is a huge, sturdy man with a ruggedly handsome face, chestnut hair and brilliant green eyes, the eyes of Pyeryem.

## The Island Fortress: Insel

The island city of Insel serves as the capital of Fauner Pösen's *königreich*; the location of the *Pösendstadt*, the ancestral home of the Pösen family; and the headquarters of the enormous Pösen army. Because of its geography, its defenses and its fierce guardians, Pösen is considered the most secure city in all of Théah. In spite of numerous attempts, no enemy has ever succeeded in entering the *Pösendstadt*.

The roughly oval island lies in the southwestern portion of the *Nordlache* ("Northern Puddle") and measures six miles running southwest to northeast. It is attached to the land at its southwest end by a land bridge that is only slightly above the water at low tide and completely submerged at high tide. The island rises from the level of the lake at its southwestern end to almost 1,000 feet at the northeastern end.

### History

Insel has been the site of a settlement for as long as the history of Eisen has been recorded. The earliest tribes in the region recognized the strategic and tactical advantages of an area that could be reached occasionally and then only by a narrow, easily guarded strip of land.

In 1173 Baron Gerhard Pösen decided to build a fortress there, and as the fortress became the principal residence of the Pösen family, it was dubbed the *Pösendstadt*. Profiting from the security of the island itself and the presence of the *Pösendstadt*, the village on the island grew to 25,000 people and adopted the arms of a crossed sword and olive branch.

The Pösen *königreich* suffered very little during the War of the Cross and Insel even less, partly due to the enormous army that Eisenfürst Fauner Pösen (the current head of the family), keeps standing at all times. Unfortunately, maintaining such a huge army is very expensive and Fauner's neighbors are beginning to worry that she may begin a war with one of them merely to support her army.

### Defenses

The Pösen family chose Insel as the seat of its *königreich* because of its extraordinary defensibility. There has not been a single successful attack on the island since the Pösens began to fortify it over five hundred years ago. The family and the rest of the residents of Insel are very aware of this unique history, and while they do not take their safety for granted, they believe themselves secure.

### Natural Defenses

The foremost reasons for this sense of security are the superb defenses provided by nature herself. The most obvious defense is the *Nordlache*, the large tidal lake that surrounds the island. Second in size only to the *Sudlache*, the *Nordlache* is over sixty-five miles long and thirty miles wide. It is fed by streams from the Drachenberg Mountains and the two rivers that emanate from it are quickly lost in the vast Salzsumpf marsh. Unlike its more placid southern sister, the *Nordlache* is subject to violent storms that can arise very suddenly, particularly during the long winter. Only very experienced sailors will venture onto the *Nordlache* during the winter.

Three times in Insel's history enemies have tried to use boats to land troops on the island. Twice the flotillas were destroyed by storms, and once troops were able to land on the island but were slaughtered before they got off the beach.

The second defense nature has granted Insel is its own geography. High cliffs that plunge straight down into the lake surround the northeastern end of the island where the *Pösenstadt* stands. These cliffs are several hundred feet high, and almost impossible to climb, although legendary climbers have done it several times over the past four centuries. The cliffs diminish in height to the southwest, until the island becomes almost level with the water at the point where it meets the land bridge.

On the south side of the island near the northeastern end is a fairly narrow beach at the foot of the cliffs. This is the only place that ships can approach the island safely, and a small port has been built there (see 'The City' for more information). The cliffs are quite steep here, but a zigzag road (the *ziegebahn*, or "goat path") has been cut into the cliff's face to permit mules and nimble horses to carry people and freight to and from the port. Over the last five years Fauner Pösen has commissioned a huge crane to be built. Powered by eight mules that turn a winch at the bottom of the cliff, the crane is capable of moving over a ton of freight up the cliffside every day. The port and trail are both very closely guarded.

### Man-Made Defenses

Not content with the defenses nature provided, the Pösens spent the last five hundred years adding to them. The entire city is surrounded by a crenelated wall, which adds at least 35 feet to the height of the cliffs. At the southern end of the island, where the cliffs are low to the water, the walls stand slightly over 50 feet high. Watchtowers stand every hundred yards along the wall to permit the guards a clear view of the surrounding lake. Each of these watchtowers holds two heavy cannons, placed so that they can direct plunging fire at ships below. There are also openings in each tower to permit the cannons to be turned and trained on the streets of Insel itself, in the event of a successful breach of the city gates, or (unthinkably!) a revolt of the citizenry.

The *Pösenstadt* itself is separated from the city by a thick crenelated curtain wall, so that even if an invader did somehow take the city, the *Pösenstadt* would remain defensible.

There are only two entrances to the city. The most prominent stands at the southern end of the island where the land bridge connects with Insel. This is actually a series of fortifications, the first a heavily fortified gatehouse on the land end of the bridge. While the gatehouse's design and construction are well up to Eisen standards for military fortifications, it is not intended to withstand a protracted siege but merely to hold off an attacking army long enough for Insel proper to prepare its defenses. A 12-foot wall stands on either side of the gatehouse and runs along the edge of the lake to keep trespassers from trying to swim to the causeway.

The two massive sets of gates that guard the causeway are only opened during the roughly 12 hours per day that the tide is low enough to permit passage. Travelers have to pass through the two sets of gates and the murder-ground in between under the watchful eye of guards posted at regular intervals. If they get through the gatehouse they then cross the causeway to face yet another double set of gates even more massive than those in the gatehouse. These gates are also carefully guarded, and only open during low tide

The second entrance into the city lies at the top of the *ziegebahn*. There the path ends in a small clear area outside of the walls, just large enough to accommodate two or three mules. A guard tower with a heavy gate watches over this "holding area" which is only opened once the visitors have been cleared for entrance. The gate is only wide enough for one fully laden mule to pass through at a time, so it can take quite a while for a long train to enter the city. It is fairly common to see long strings of mules waiting patiently along the switchbacks of the *ziegebahn* for their opportunity to go through the gate.

Insel's most imposing manmade defense is the *Pösenstadt* itself. The fortress walls at this point are at least ten feet thick, and rise another 50 feet over the walls that surround it. The turrets at the four corners of the fortress are armed with heavy cannons that can be trained to fire over the walls of the city at enemies below, or depressed to fire into the city if necessary. A gate and portcullis block the single entrance in the curtain wall that separates the city of Insel from the grounds of the *Pösenstadt*, and another gate and portcullis bar the main entrance to the *Pösenstadt* itself.

### The Defenders

Insel's strongest protection does not come from its natural defenses or from those that have been created by generations of Eisen; its greatest defense comes from its human guardians. The security of Insel and of the Eisenfürst is entrusted (as far as Fauner Pösen is willing to entrust anything to anyone) to her seven *hauptleute* (captains), each of whom is bound to her by blood, oath, respect and fear. All of the *hauptleute*, graduates of the Gelingen Academy, have been in her guard for many years and it is extremely rare for a new member to be initiated. In fact, it has been eight years since she last chose a new member.

Those in Fauner's inner guard are bound to her by more than just loyalty. In addition to the public announcement and celebration of the news of a new *hauptmann*, it is rumored that a secret ritual is performed between Fauner, all of the *hauptleute* and the initiate. A blood oath of some sort takes place; each member of the *hauptleute* carries a U-shaped scar, approximately two inches long, along his or her jaw line just under the chin. The *hauptleute* do not speak of such rituals, only foolish (and brave) townspeople do. *Hauptleute* never marry; they live for Fauner Pösen, and are not allowed the luxury of a life outside the service (or the castle). Anyone caught in any activity outside his or her duty would be "excused" immediately. It has not happened yet, as far as anyone knows.

The life of a *hauptleute* is not entirely dreary, however. They are fed, clothed and housed by Fauner in what passes for luxury among the Eisen. Their word is law within their own jurisdiction, except when they are overridden by Fauner (which happens more than some of them would like.) Nonetheless, the people of Insel, and indeed all of Pösen *königreich*, accord them great respect as the representatives of their ruler.

The seven *hauptleute* and their areas of concern are:

- Hauptmann Uden von Pösen (male) — overseeing the entire military operation, including the armory.
- Hauptmann Frederick Schampf (male) — overseeing security for the port and warehouses.



- Hauptmann Raine Kohl (female) — overseeing security for the main and secondary gates.
- Hauptmann Enid Festen (female) — overseeing security for the entire perimeter.
- Hauptmann Senta Fischler (female) — overseeing the security and operations of the keep and the dungeon.
- Hauptmann Randolph Kessler (male) — overseeing security for the city and marketplace.
- Hauptmann Uschi Liebel (female) — overseeing security for the lands around Lake Insel.

Military observers have made much of the fact that there is no *hauptmann* in charge of the enormous Pösen army, but Fauner is completely unwilling to delegate even nominal authority over such a post. She maintains direct control over the army and remains highly involved in the defense of Insel itself.

Each *hauptmann* commands a force of soldiers (*stadtwachter*, or “city guards,”) that differs in size depending on the area for which they are responsible and their current standing in Fauner’s good graces. Currently *Hauptmann Fischler*, *Hauptmann Festen* and *Hauptmann Liebel* command the largest forces. Most of the *stadtwachter* are army veterans, and it is considered a great honor to be asked to serve. Insel may be the only city in Théah where the city watch has a higher morale than the army! Every member of the *stadtwachter* wears a tabard with the arms of the city on it.

The *stadtwachter* take their duties *very* seriously. They are completely loyal to Pösen, Insel, Fauner and their *Hauptmann*, in roughly that order. There has never been a record of a *stadtwachter* successfully bribed, threatened or seduced into shirking his or her duty, although many have tried. While the *stadtwachter* feel a certain kinship with the citizens of Pösen, there is very little congeniality between them. *Stadtwachter* sleep and mess in their own barracks, and when they go out drinking they go to taverns that cater specifically to them. Outsiders are rarely welcome in their company.

Each of the *hauptleute* takes care of his or her area of concern slightly differently. The various parts of the city are described below, along with the security measures implemented in each.

**The City:** The entire city exists under a constant state of martial law. No one other than Pösen military personnel may carry any weapon larger than a knife at any time for any reason. There is a permanent dusk-to-dawn curfew, and any place and anyone can be stopped and searched at any time. *Hauptmann Kessler’s stadtwachter* pay particular attention to this duty, and while no one would suggest that they abuse their power, even the most patriotic citizens tend to get off the streets when one of Kessler’s squads approaches.

**City Gates:** *Hauptmann Kohl* is in charge of the gatehouse and the gates into the city. During peacetime the gatehouse is manned by ten *stadtwachter*, one in each of the four towers, two at the outer gate and four at the inner gate. Anyone who wishes to enter the city will be stopped at the inner gate and asked to state their name and business in Insel. The *stadtwachter* are empowered to conduct a search of any individual and any conveyance at any time. Weapons are

retained in the gatehouse, and may be retrieved by their owners upon departure from the city.

The first gate on the island side is manned by six *stadtwachter* at all hours. The two guards posted at the top of the gate have a good view of the entire causeway when it is exposed. Two additional guards posted at the base of the gate (island side) can see outside the wall through specially constructed slats in the wood. These two guards are also responsible for opening the gate, should they receive orders from the upper guards. The final two guards stand on the seaside of the gate. They are heavily armed, which discourages any bad behavior from arriving visitors.

**Perimeter:** *Hauptmann* Festen is responsible for securing the entire perimeter of the island, save the port itself and the gates. Her *stadtwachter* are stationed at various points around the perimeter of the island at all hours of the day and night. Additional mounted guards spend their days patrolling the island — looking out to sea, down the cliffs, and in all other perimeter areas where security breaches might take place. She also commands an additional force of *stadtwachter* who patrol the waters around the island in small boats in all but the most dire weather.

**Port:** The port on the south side of the island is small by design. A maximum of two medium-sized boats can dock at any one time for unloading. There is a short pier area where boats with passengers can drop off and pick up people quickly. Only boats that provide regular ferry service to the island may use this area. All others must wait 100 yards off shore for their turn at the dock. *Hauptmann* Schampf and his *stadtwachter* maintain a vigilant watch of all incoming vessels. Each boat and crew is searched by at least two *stadtwachter*, and usually more. No visitors or goods may leave the boat until the search is complete and the proper papers have been filed with the port master.

Once the clearance has been granted, the *stadtwachter* supervise the unloading of cargo and passengers. As at the gates, visitors are questioned as to their identity and their reasons for coming to Insel. Anyone who arouses the suspicion of the *stadtwachter* is subject to search and possible arrest. All weapons are stored in the port master's office, and may be claimed by their owners upon leaving the island. Cargo is either stored in one of the warehouses, or immediately taken to the foot of the cliff for transport by crane or mule up the *ziegebahn*. The crane carries cargo only; people must traverse the *ziegebahn* either on foot or by mule. Several firms maintain warehouses at the port, as does the Pösen family itself.

**The Keep:** For more information about *Hauptmann* Fischler's demesne, see "The Pösenstadt" below.

**Mainland:** *Hauptmann* Liebel, the newest member of the inner circle, has created a new area of responsibility for herself. The *stadtwachter* assigned to this *hauptmann* were originally used in cases of emergency, or for special assignments. Bored with trolling the perimeter or walking the streets looking for trouble, Liebel identified a new need for security services. She called it "mainland security." She convinced Fauner Pösen that there is a need for an underground force on the mainland to gather intelligence concerning possible security breaches, plans of attack, theft, etc. Her crew consists of a very clever sort who are devoted to perfecting their art, and attempting to uncover something "big" with which to impress their leader. Unlike the rest of the *stadtwachter*, the soldiers under *Hauptmann* Liebel are housed in barracks on the mainland.

The last link in the chain that protects Insel is the citizenry itself. Living in Insel can be difficult. In addition to the permanent curfew, every adult is considered a member of the militia, and is expected to spend half a day per week drilling with the rest of the citizens. People's homes can be commandeered at any time to provide temporary housing for troops, and everyone is subject to search and seizure at any time.

In spite of these difficulties, most of the citizens feel enormous loyalty to Fauner Pösen, and take the inconveniences of living under her extremely watchful eye with good grace. They see her as their source of security, protection, prosperity and well being. In general the people of Insel are hard working, self-sufficient, and keep to themselves, and Fauner's leadership style suits them just fine. Visitors are often surprised at how content and loyal the citizens of Insel are. Militia practices are well attended, and Fauner Pösen and her *hauptleute* are held in high regard. Of course some feel trapped on the island, both physically and financially, and blame that in large part on their leader. Those few citizens who resent the treatment they receive at the hands of the Eisenfürst and her *stadtwachter* are careful not to show it publicly, out of fear not only for Fauner Pösen's wrath, but also that of their fellow citizens.

## The City

With a population of 25,000, Insel is one of the smallest capital cities in Eisen; only Siegsburg in Wische is smaller (and with the recent influx of Montaigne exiles there, that may soon change). Due to its huge and very well trained army and its location in the northern reaches of Théah, Pösen has been spared most of the miseries that afflicted the rest of Eisen. Insel, deep within the borders of the *königreich* and protected by its bristling defenses, has barely noticed the disturbance.

Insel still enjoys a healthy economy, and many visitors come through its gates each year. The reason it is such a relatively small city is that with over 2,500 buildings crammed onto the island, it literally has no more room to grow. Fauner has recently decreed that while visitors are welcome in Insel, new residents are not permitted.

The people of Insel are friendly, if somewhat reserved, in the presence of strangers. There is a definite sense of "us" and "them" in Insel, with "them" defined as anyone who lives on the mainland. Visitors can expect to be treated decently but should not expect a great deal of friendliness until they have spent quite a bit of time there.

## Government

Fauner Pösen is the sole power in Insel. There is no mayor, no aldermen, no "council of elders," or the like. She makes every decision, from trade agreements to the colors of the city banners. She manages every aspect of life in the city for both the military and the general population, and does not tolerate the slightest deviation from her will or wishes.

Fauner demands absolute allegiance, complete loyalty and essentially the entire lives of those who work in her inner circle. From all other citizens she demands absolute respect and allegiance. Anything less will insure a one-way ticket off the island (or the nearest cliff, care of the inner circle). She is a very suspicious and cautious person. She has eyes and ears everywhere, and is constantly on the lookout for signs of disloyalty or rebellion.

Despite all of this, she appears to be fairly even-tempered. While it is true that she expects to always get her way, if she is treated with the respect that she feels is her due, Fauner can be a pleasant, if somewhat harried, ruler. She wants life for her citizens to be as she envisions the island itself — secure, safe, strong, imposing and isolated. She wants to control every aspect of every life in order to secure her own power and kingdom.

### Crime

Street crime is almost completely unknown in Insel. The two most common offenses are prostitution and smuggling, and both exist at much lower levels compared to other cities. In fact, most visitors to Insel are amazed to discover that there is crime of any sort at all. How could criminals operate in a city under martial law, with a dusk-to-dawn curfew and the best-trained city watch in Théah? The answer is very carefully.

Only the very best criminals stand a chance in Insel, and very few of those would bother, preferring easier pickings in larger, less well-regulated cities. The few who come to Insel do so for two reasons. The first is sheer bravado. A thief who has lasted a year in Insel will have bragging rights over any mere burglar who operates in some “easy” city like Freiburg. The second reason is that in a strange way the intense concern over security operates in the favor of those prepared to take the risks. Merchants who come to Insel believe that they are completely safe in the city, and often fail to take the normal precautions that they would in other cities. Citizens often leave doors and windows unlocked, confident that the *hauptleute* will prevent anything untoward from happening, and on the whole they are quite correct. The few local thieves are careful not to disturb this sense of well being, and content themselves with rare, high-return burglaries that cause a big commotion and are then forgotten.

### Important Sites

In addition to the *Pösenstadt*, the two best-known buildings in Insel are the Chapel of the Flame and the Gelingen Academy.

#### THE CHAPEL OF THE FLAME

The Chapel of the Flame was built by the Pösen family over 400 years ago as a sign of their devotion to the Vaticine Church. Although referred to as a “chapel” for historical reasons, the building has been enlarged several times over the centuries, and can now hold over 700 worshippers. A mosaic depicting the Prophets in tiny tiles of lapis lazuli and other semi-precious stones makes up one wall, while another contains a famous stained-glass window depicting the First Prophet leaping into the flames.

On the altar at the front of the chapel is the exquisite Chalice of the Prophet, a silver goblet decorated with rubies which is said to have been the last object touched by the Third Prophet before his death. Each dawn during summer, sunlight shines through a small stained-glass window in the rear, illuminating the front wall with a shining image of the Prophet’s Cross. The Chapel is the only house of worship in Insel, with the possible exception of the Sanctuary inside the *Pösenstadt*; Father Werner Gerbeck is responsible for the spiritual well being of his Insel flock.

Fauner Pösen, while not particularly religious herself, continues her family’s tradition of staunch support for the Church of the Prophets, and she sees to it that the Chapel is well-guarded and well-maintained. Unlike many *Eisenfürst*,

however, Fauner is comparatively open-minded when it comes to religion, and the few Objectionists in Insel hold their services in a room they rent each week from Karl Heinrich (see ‘*The Pösen Arms*,’ below). Father Werner has often tried to convince her of the folly and danger of permitting Objectionists to worship in her city, but Fauner just smiles. “Better a thousand enemies in front of me than one behind me,” she says.

#### THE GELINGEN ACADEMY

The Gelingen Academy is one of the most famous military academies in the world. Although many visitors pass by the unimpressive building without a second thought, its walls are hung with the preserved heads of over two hundred and thirty monsters, all of which have been slain by the Academy’s students on their “patrols” in the Salzsumpf. The Academy has been accused of training warriors rather than soldiers, and it is true that graduates of the Academy can be notoriously difficult to command, but as Erich Sieger once said “Give me a hundred warriors from the Gelingen, and I don’t need an army.”

In addition to her many responsibilities, Fauner oversees the Academy and despite her concerned advisors, occasionally accompanies students on patrol. Her Iron Guard, the Swamp Dogs (consisting solely of Gelingen graduates), falls under her direct command, outside of the jurisdiction of the *hauptleute*.

Other sites of interest to a visitor to Insel include:

#### THE PÖSEN ARMS

Owned and operated by Karl Heinrich, this is the largest inn in Insel, where most merchants who come to the city on business stay. It is clean and well-run, with a large staff of servants who are used to dealing with outsiders. Karl Heinrich himself is the unofficial “mayor” of Eisen, though no one lets Fauner Pösen hear it. He is one of the few citizens of Insel who can speak directly to Fauner, so many citizens bring their complaints and issues to him. Karl does his best to deal with these problems himself, but on occasion he is forced to go to Fauner, something he hates doing.

#### THE DRACHENKOPF (“DRAGON’S HEAD”)

This is the tavern of choice for both the *stadtwachter* and students at the nearby Gelingen Academy. Its ancient roof beams darkened by centuries of wood and tobacco smoke, the *Drachenkopf* is a cozy place for a soldier to spend his few precious off-duty hours. Otto Hedst, proprietor of the *Drachenkopf*, retired from the Pösen army when he lost his leg in battle, and while he does not actually refuse to serve non-military visitors, he and his staff make it very clear that they would prefer such visitors to take their business elsewhere.

#### THE DRUNKEN BOAR

This is the center of what little crime exists in Insel. An Inishman named Frank Bruce, runs this tavern. He is a mean, imposing figure with a particular fondness for gems and jewelry. Frank buys and sells dubious goods, and can put a person in touch with the “right” people if properly approached. A lot of cash goes a long way with Frank. A long-time resident of Insel, he stays well below the interest level of the local *stadtwachter* patrol, and keeps his “business” close to his vest.





**STADTWACHTER BARRACKS**

*Stadtwachter* assigned to the walls, the gates or the city itself stay in these barracks. Three halls filled with bunks allow the men of each unit to stay together. Each hall also contains separate and very grand quarters for its *hauptmann*, including an office. *Hauptleuten* Kohl, Festen and Kessler can usually be found here, quarreling over some issue or another. *Hauptmann* Schampf has a smaller barracks in the port area where he stays with his men.

**INSEL SHIPPING COMPANY**

This complex of warehouses and offices is directly adjacent to the docks on the south side of the island. Frau Lutin Braus, a tough old bird who inherited the company upon the death of her husband over 30 years ago, runs this shipping firm, the biggest in Insel. Frau Braus' ships are constantly sailing between the mainland and the island, carrying the cargo that is too heavy to move across the causeway or ferrying passengers who wish to visit the city. She resents the heavy-handed nature of young Fauner Pösen's rule, and is something of a leader among those discontent with the *Eisenfürst's* leadership. For the right cause she might be prevailed upon to help a PC trying to get onto the island undetected. *Hauptmann* Schampf is aware of the businesswoman's sentiments and keeps an eye on her, but the crafty widow has a lot of tricks up her sleeve...

**FAUST SHIPPING COMPANY**

The mysterious Lukas Faust operates this shipping company in a direct competition with Frau Braus. He visits the city several times a year, bearing gifts for Fauner and her guard, and is often seen at her side when he is town. He maintains a household on the island but rarely stays there, apparently preferring to sleep at the castle. Whether he has his own quarters or not is anyone's guess.

**The Pösenstadt**

The *Pösenstadt* is the complex that contains the ancestral fortress of the Pösen family. A magnificent structure built by Fauner's great-great-great grandfather to be completely self-sufficient, it has withstood centuries of fierce weather and foolish foes. If an enemy were to take over the city, he or she would still have to face a most unwavering foe — the *Pösenstadt* itself.

**The Walls**

The stone crenelated walls of the *Pösenstadt* rise up from the cliff side and surround the entire northeastern end of the island. The *Pösenstadt* is separated from the rest of Insel by yet another wall that runs completely across the width of the island. Within this area lie the grounds, fortress, stables, armory and storehouses. The wall is approximately seven feet thick and 35 feet high. There are four manned turrets, each bearing a flag with the sword and olive branch of the city arms. The turrets rising above the walkway serve as both

watchtowers and housing for heavy cannon that can be directed at an enemy approaching from the water or from within the city itself.

The only opening stands in the middle of the curtain wall that separates *Pösenstadt* from the rest of Insel. Protected by a heavy wooden gate and portcullis, it leads to an additional gate and portcullis. *Hauptmann* Fischler handpicks the soldiers who guard the gateway for both their fighting skills and their imposing presence. The gates are opened only by the direct order or invitation of Fauner Pösen or the *hauptleute*.

### The Grounds

The *Pösenstadt's* main grounds stand between the wall and the fortress. In most areas the grounds cover a distance of 30 to 60 yards between the wall and the fortress. Ever-present *stadtwachter* on the walls monitor the area closely.

Because the island is generally damp, the grounds remain quite green throughout the year. The *stadtwachter* inadvertently keep the brush under control by their marching and patrolling. There are no workers to maintain the grounds; nor are there any statues or fountains, flowers or bushes. Fauner has no desire for such trivial objects. Unless it helps to secure the compound, it does not need to exist.

The barracks for the *stadtwachter* who guard the *Pösenstadt* are also on the grounds, directly next to the path between the gates and the fortress. The barracks contain sleeping quarters for the guards, a ready room and an extensive armory. *Hauptmann* Fischler also maintains her very elaborate quarters here.

The stables lie across the path from the barracks. Fauner has a fairly impressive stock of horses on the island — about fifty, housed in stables and exercised in a large fenced-in area nearby.

### The Fortress

The fortress itself is infinitely more impressive than either the walls or the grounds. It can be seen clearly from the mainland 30 miles away, rising above all other structures on the island. Built to keep the Pösen family safe, it has fulfilled its duty without a single failure. No intruder has ever entered; no captured enemy has ever escaped. The thick stone walls seem impervious, and the guards will cheerfully die defending their charge.

The fortress' stone exterior features a few small windows (approximately 7 inches across by 24 inches tall). There are, however, no windows on the first floor, no balconies, and no trees within ten yards of the fortress. Two small turrets rest on the north and northeastern corners of the fortress, both containing cannon that are trained onto the lake.

There are two ways to enter the fortress. The main entrance lies on the southwestern side of the castle. It features two heavy wooden doors, which require the strength of at least two men to be opened. This entrance, guarded by several soldiers, opens into a large stone foyer. The second door, a much smaller wooden one located on the east side of the building, is locked from the inside. One guard is usually posted at this door, typically used only by servants.

As with most castles, the stone interior is cold, dark, and damp and heated only through the fireplaces located in most of the larger rooms. Lighting is scarce, although torch sconces appear at regular intervals along the passageways. The castle is fairly roomy with a foyer, a great hall, Fauner's

quarters, study, sanctuary, war room, *Hauptmann* von Pösen's quarters, a secondary armory, kitchen, servants' quarters, and storerooms.

### The Great Hall

The castle's great hall is on the first floor, directly behind the foyer. It is an enormous room, decorated with banners and war trophies the Pösen family has gathered over the past five centuries. The hall is used for many functions, including a "throne room" when Fauner holds her weekly court or receives important visitors, as well as a dining hall for large feasts and extra housing for troops in times of crisis.

### Quarters

Fauner Pösen's quarters are on the third (top) floor of the castle and consist of a large reception room, a large dressing room/armory and a small, rather spare bedroom. Curiously, none of the rooms have any windows. She considers her quarters to be her fourth line of defense (island, wall, fortress, room), which is why she keeps a quantity of arms, and supplies in her dressing area. It is rumored that her famed *dracheneisen* armor is stored behind a secret panel in her quarters.

*Hauptmann* von Pösen's quarters on the second floor, directly off the war room, are considerably grander than those of his *Eisenfürst*. He spends most of his time here planning for the war he knows must come soon.

### War Room

The war room, a large, well-lit chamber, also serves as a map room which contains some of the most accurate maps of Eisen and its neighbors to be found anywhere. Several of these maps take up an entire table. *Hauptmann* von Pösen moves carved miniature wooden figures — representing units of infantry, cavalry, and artillery — on the maps when preparing his war plans.

### Sanctuary

On the third floor of the castle, just outside Fauner's study and bedroom, is a small room called the Sanctuary which remains locked at all times. No one outside Fauner Pösen and the *hauptleute* has ever been inside the room. It is possible that the initiation ceremonies take place here. There are whispered rumors that blood for the *Hauptleute* Oath is drawn by the great *dracheneisen* broadsword presented by Stefan I to Baron Pösen in 686 and which now hangs in the Sanctuary. Besides the weapon mounted on the wall and a small fireplace, the room appears empty.

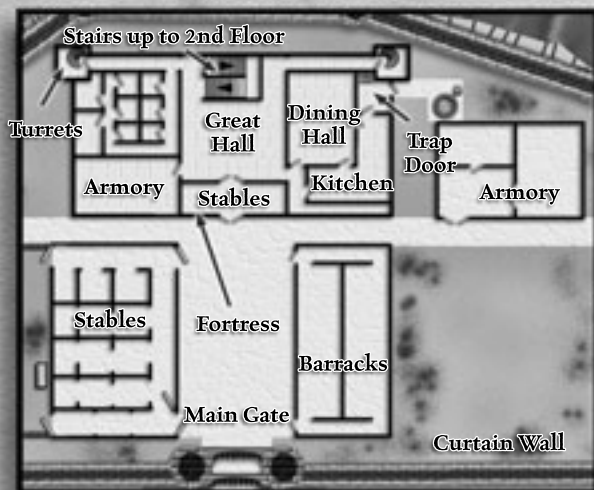
### Armory

The armory stands on the northern wall of the fortress, next to the Great Hall. It has one heavy wooden door, which is guarded at all times. While less extensive than the Armory outside on the main grounds, the individual pieces here — the personal collection of the Pösen family — are of much higher quality and value. It is also rumored that Pösen stores additional pieces of *dracheneisen* armor inside the Armory, but no one knows for sure.

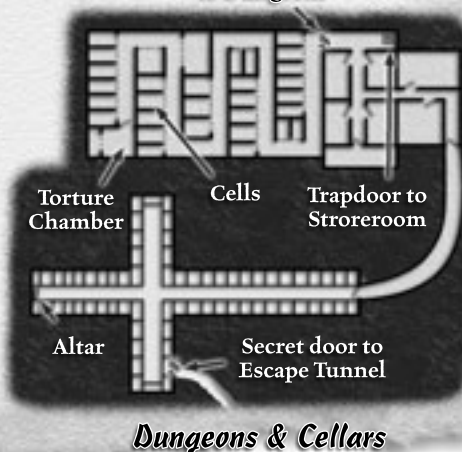
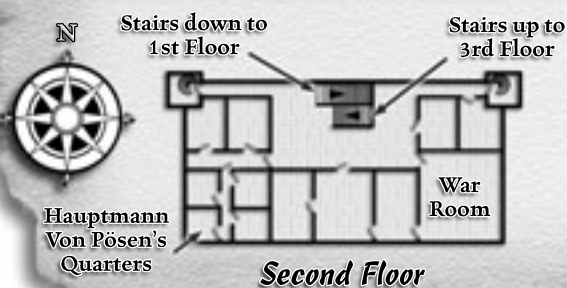
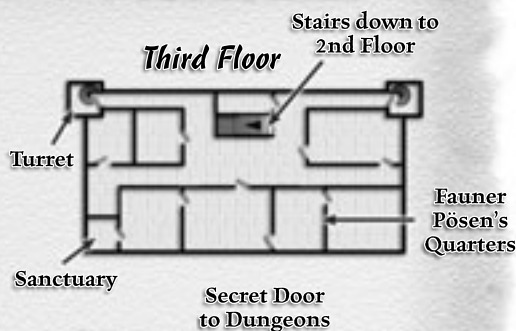
### Kitchen

The kitchen, located directly off the Dining Room, constantly hums with activity. A small army of servants takes care of the cooking and cleaning for the entire household, and also maintains the castle's store of supplies under lock and key.

### First Floor & Grounds



### Pösenstadt



#### Storeroom

This large room contains the supplies for daily operations of the *Pösenstadt*. Because of its second, smaller door into the castle, it is also used as a guardroom, and several *stadtwachter* stand watch there at all times. Supplies are delivered directly from the outside of the castle into the storeroom. In the corner lies a trapdoor that leads to the supply cellars below.

#### Cellars

Long-term supplies — dried fruits and meats, and root vegetables — are kept in the cellars in case the *Pösenstadt* is ever besieged. Since nothing even remotely like a siege has occurred within the last 200 years, some of the supplies are a bit elderly, but an army could theoretically hold out for many weeks on the foodstuffs stored here. Unknown to anyone in the fortress, a secret panel in the far wall of the main cellar room leads to the Dungeon.

#### The Dungeon

The *Pösenstadt's* dungeon has a fearsome (and deserved) reputation. Thieves who might otherwise brave the alleyways of Insel think twice when they consider the possibility of being incarcerated there in perpetuity. Mothers as far away as Hainzl threaten naughty children with being locked up in the deep, dark dungeon of the *Pösenstadt*. It is rumored to go deep into the earth, and is purportedly full of Fauner's worst enemies. Legends tell of men left in their dark cells until their own madness or something far worse consumed them. Indeed, something Far Worse is rumored to live in the darkness beneath the fortress...

#### The Vaults

The Pösen family crypt, a simple austere cross-shaped room, lies beneath the *Pösenstadt*. The dead are buried in marble vaults, their bodies parallel to the hallway. The vaults are arranged vertically, three high. Each vault contains a plaque naming the deceased, his or her relevant dates, and any noteworthy accomplishments. Of the two hundred vaults, roughly half remain unoccupied.

At the far end of the chamber, at the top of the cross, stands a small altar for candles in memory of the departed. The altar is rarely used, however, so the chamber usually remains dark. The one exception to this is the vault of Johann Pösen, who, having developed a crippling fear of darkness late in his life, ordered that a light be kept burning eternally in front of his vault. The family has faithfully honored his wishes ever since.

The vaults also house the fortress' secret escape route. One of the sets of "vaults" is actually a panel that can be released by a hidden catch and opens to reveal a small chamber. A stout beam runs across it, and a hole has been dug in the floor. On the wall of the chamber is coiled a very long, very stout rope. In the event of a catastrophe the rope can be tied to the beam and lowered into the hole. Escapees would then slide down about 300 feet to a small chamber that opens by means of a secret panel into a private warehouse that the Pösen family maintains in the port area.

## Adventure Hooks

- In a ubiquitous seedy tavern somewhere in Eisen, the PCs are approached by an equally seedy looking individual who offers them a proposition. If they will deliver a package to Frank Bruce at the Drunken Boar in Insel, he will pay them thirty guilders now, and Herr Bruce will pay them an additional thirty guilders upon delivery as long as the package is delivered safely — and unopened. The party probably realizes without being told that the contents would get them arrested if found among their gear.

All they have to do is figure out how to smuggle the package into Insel. If the package is opened (either by impatient PCs or suspicious *stadtwachter*), an amazingly accurate copy of the Chalice of the Prophet is revealed. The party will then have to decide what to do with it. An additional complication could be added if it turns out that the object they are carrying is, in fact, the real Chalice! They will then have to figure out why anyone would want to smuggle the *real* Chalice into Insel... and who that someone might be... and how to hide it... and what to say if they are caught and...

- A member of the party falls in love with a young noblewoman in Insel. Just as they are about to elope, her father discovers them and calls the *stadtwachter*. The group must now find a way out of Insel while avoiding the *stadtwachter* and the angry father.
- Stefan Heilgrund has a problem. As *Eisenfürst* he is extremely concerned about the possibility that Fauner may decide to justify her huge army by going to war... and his *königreich* is the juiciest target. At the same time he is in love with her. He must devise a way to handle both problems. If someone could be convinced to bring him the great sword rumored to hang in the Sanctuary of the *Pösenstadt* he could either use it against Fauner as a symbol of defiance or “rescue” the sword and return it to gain her love. It is not a very mature scheme, but Stefan is not a very mature *Eisenfürst*. He will offer as much as it takes to convince the party to take on the task. This is *not* a task for beginning adventurers however. The *Pösenstadt* is one of the best-guarded places in Théah and Fauner has no sense of humor — or romance.
- Fauner is beginning to look more and more haggard, and her temper has grown even worse lately. She rebuffs any questions about her health but her councilors are growing very worried, as is her would-be suitor Hendryk Brandt (see *Eisen*,™ page 71). Brandt has associated Fauner's disturbance with the rumors of the “dark lady” haunting the fortress (see *below*). He asks the party for help in ridding his beloved of the haunting. If he can be convinced of the party's good will towards Fauner, he will get them access to the fortress, perhaps as minor officials, but they will have to find a way into Fauner's good graces themselves, before they can solve the mystery.

## Game Master Secrets

Halten Bitte! The following section is for GMs only. Players who read further will spoil the game for themselves. Remember — there is always more room in the *Pösenstadt* Dungeon...

### Lukas Faust

Lukas can be anyone the Game Master wants him to be, from Fauner's secret lover to her long lost brother to a simple merchant with nothing to hide. He is intended as a plot hook on which the GM can base any number of his or her own adventures.

### The Pösenstadt Dungeons

The original plans for the dungeon can be found among the scrolls in the War Room, a fact of which only *Hauptmann* von Pösen is currently aware.

Most of the rumors about this place are true. The dungeons of the *Pösenstadt* lie deep beneath the earth, and they are virtually inescapable. At least, no one has managed to escape in recorded history. There is a torture chamber designed 200 years ago by Father Heinrich Mueller for the interrogation (and possible conversion) of apostates. He was not a madman, however, and the chamber contains nothing that would surprise an agent of the Inquisition.

The dungeon has two secrets, the first fairly well known in the fortress and the other unknown to a living soul.

The dungeon is practically empty. Fauner's ancestor Heydrich Pösen built the dungeons at a time of great unrest, and he and his descendants used them extensively. Even during the time of Fauner's father Dietrich, the dungeons were kept reasonably full of malefactors, apostates and political enemies. Fauner has a different attitude towards those who oppose her. If they represent a substantial threat she kills them, and if they are more or less harmless, she usually ignores them. Over the years those who remained in the dungeons from Dietrich's era have either died or, in a few rare instances, been released.

This does not mean that the dungeons are completely empty. Occasionally a captive will be too important to kill and too dangerous to release, or will need to spend some time in the torture chamber to encourage their willingness to talk things over in a reasonable manner. Others are too annoying to wander around free, but not so annoying as to warrant death. Hendryk Brandt, Fauner's brash and indefatigable suitor, may very well find himself in that category very soon. The betting among the *stadtwachter* who guard the dungeons run fie to two that Herr Brandt will be their guest very soon. There are currently eight prisoners in the dungeon, which can easily hold fifty or more.

### THE DARK LADY

The dungeon's second secret is much darker. When Johann, Fauner's great-grandfather, was a young man he fell deeply in love with Denise Harmann, the daughter of a wealthy but middle-class Insel banker. The difference in their status made it impossible for them to marry, but they began a dalliance that lasted for quite a while. Eventually tiring of their relationship, Denise took another lover. When Johann discovered the tryst, he was overcome with fury, and arranged for Denise to be kidnapped and thrown into the dungeons beneath the *Pösenstadt*. However, this was not enough for the

baron, who could still feel her taunting him from below. He ordered the portion of the dungeon in which she was kept walled up, and all evidence of the deed destroyed. Denise was left to die in the blackness of her sealed tomb.

However, she did not do as Johann had planned. Her terror and hatred of her former lover combined with the utter darkness to change the young Eisen woman into an Echo, something both more and less than human. She now ranges through the dungeons and cellars of the *Pösenstadt*, feeding on the fear of the living, specifically on their terror of the dark. She will happily torture a victim for weeks or months before she kills.

The *stadtwachter* have no idea of what haunts their dungeon but they know that over the years a surprising number of prisoners have gone mad and died in their dark cells, moaning about a dark, horribly emaciated woman who walks through walls. They do their best to respond to their prisoners' pleas for continual light, but the dungeon is not an inn...

Denise Harmann is not completely aware that she is dead. Driven by her original goal to wreak her vengeance on her lover, she was frustrated when she discovered that she lacked the power to get more than 50 feet from her decayed corpse. Her most recent kills, however, have strengthened her to the point that she can now move throughout the fortress, although she has been very careful to avoid being seen. She has not been totally successful, however; rumors have begun to circulate throughout the servants and *stadtwachter* of a "dark lady" haunting the fortress' hallways. Denise recently discovered Johann's tomb and knows that he is beyond her vengeance so she has shifted her focus to Johann's descendent, Fauner.

To get rid of Denise for good two things will have to happen. Fauner will have to apologize to Denise on behalf of the Pösen family for what Johann did to her, and Denise's corpse would have to be properly interred in the family plot on the mainland.

## NPC Statistics for Insel

### The Dark Lady: Echo

Echoes originally appeared in the *Montaigne™* sourcebook, page 114, and *Heroes, Villains, and Monsters™* pages 44–45. Their stats as pertinent to the Dark Lady are reprinted here for your convenience.

### The Dark Lady (a20<sup>o</sup>)

**Medium-Size Undead (Incorporeal)**

**Hit Dice:** 5d12 (21 hp)

**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** Weapon +5 melee

**Damage:** As weapon

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Terrifying presence

**Special Qualities:** Undead, rejuvenation

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12

**Skills:** None

**Feats:** None

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Advancement:** None

### Combat

**Incorporeal (Su):** This ability allows the echo to pass through walls and other physical barriers. Any type of directed physical attack, magical or non-magical, will temporarily disrupt its essence (see *Rejuvenation* below). Magical and energy attacks have no effect on echoes.

**Terrifying Presence (Ex):** This ability is similar to the standard Frightful Presence, but with some important differences. It affects any viewer regardless of level. The range is line of sight: anyone seeing the echo is affected. Each round, anyone viewing the echo must make a Fear Check to resist the effects. If they fail, they suffer the normal effects of fear and cannot attack. In addition, they suffer 1d6 damage times their level. This damage takes the form of the manner in which the echo died. For each previous failure, they suffer a –5 penalty on their Fear Check. The DC of the Will save to resist the Dark Lady's terrifying presence is 20.

**Rejuvenation (Su):** A single physical blow is sufficient to temporarily dispel an echo. It will restore itself in approximately one day. A PC can only permanently destroy the Dark Lady using the methods described above.

### The Dark Lady — Villain (7th Sea™)

TN: 20

Resolve: 2

**Special Abilities:** The Dark Lady has a Fear Rating of 4. When facing an echo, an opponent must make a Fear Check each Round, with a penalty of one unkept die for each Dramatic Wound the echo has inflicted upon him. If a Hero's Cowardly Hubris is activated, he automatically fails this Fear Check. Failure means the victim feels as though he is being murdered in the same way the original victim was killed (in this case, starving to death) and suffers an automatic Dramatic Wound. Success means he is free to act normally this Round. Any physical blow against the Dark Lady will disperse her for one day. She can only be permanently destroyed by the methods described above.

### The Stadtwachter

These stats reflect those of the standard Insel city guards, and may be used for any encounters involving them. They are groups into two categories, depending on the difficulty of the encounter.

### Standard Stadtwachter: Easy (a20<sup>o</sup>)

**Eisen Fighter 2:** CR 2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d10+4; hp 20; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft; AC 17 (+7 half-plate); Atks: broadsword +3 melee (1d8+1), panzerhand +4 melee (1d6 +1) pistol +3 ranged (1d10); SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL any; Skills: Climb +4, Intimidate +2, Ride +4, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Swim +3; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (panzerhand), Weapon Proficiency (panzerhand).



### Stadtwachter — Brutes (7th Sea™)

Threat Rating: 3  
 Usual Weapons: Broadswords and Panzerhands (Medium)  
 TN to be Hit: 20  
 Attack: +1  
 Skills: Interrogation 2, Law 2, Sprinting 1

#### Standard Stadtwachter: Medium (d20™)

**Eisen Fighter 5/Eisenfaust 2:** CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d10+10 plus 2d8+2; hp 57; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+7 half-plate); Atks: broadsword +7/+2 melee (1d8+1), panzerhand +8/+3 melee (1d6 +1) pistol +7/+2 ranged (1d10); SA Focused Training, Off-handed Fighting, Retaliatory Blow, Weapon Specialization (Rapier); SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14; AL any; Skills: Balance +2, Bluff +2, Climb +4, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Ride +6, Sense Motive +2, Speak Language (Eisen, Montaigne [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Swim +3; Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (panzerhand), Weapon Proficiency (panzerhand).

#### Stadtwachter — Henchman (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 2, Finesse: 3, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Panache: 2  
 Reputation: 5  
 Background: Any  
 Arcana: None  
 Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W)  
 Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Scheming 3, Seduction 3, Sincerity 3  
 Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2  
 Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3  
 Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1  
 Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw (Knife) 2  
 Eisenfaust (Apprentice): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 2, Bind (Panzerhand) 2, Disarm (Panzerhand) 3, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 2

#### Hauptmann Uden von Pösen (d20™)

**Eisen Swashbuckler 5/Gelingen Monster Hunter 1/Eisenfaust Swordsman 5/Loring Swordsman 5:** CR 16; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d10+6 plus 5d6+5 plus 5d8+5; hp 81; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 27 (+3 Dex, +11 Unarmed Defense Proficiency, +1 panzerhand, +2 Light Footed); Atks: panzerhand +20/+15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+1d4+7); smallsword +19/+14/+9/+4 melee (1d6+1d4); SA Dexterous, Dexterous Strike, Favored Prey (sirens), Follow-up Attack, Hook, Light Footed, Protected Disarm, Quick Disarm, Retaliatory Blow, Sunder, The Waiting Game; SV Fort +13, Ref +14, Will +9; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 10; AL LN; Skills: Balance +8, Bluff +9, Climb +8, Jump +8, Listen +10, Search +12, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Avalon, Eisen [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Spot +10, Tumble +8, Use Rope +8, Wilderness Lore +10; Feats: Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Counterattack, Exotic Shield Proficiency (panzerhand), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (panzerhand), Firm Grip, Improved Disarm, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Loyal, Sunder, Toughness, Two Weapon Fighting, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Weapon Focus (panzerhand), Weapon Specialization (panzerhand).

### Hauptmann Uden von Pösen — Hero (7th Sea™)

Brawn: 3, Finesse: 4, Wits: 3, Resolve: 2 Panache: 2  
 Reputation: 53  
 Background: Obligation  
 Arcana: Loyal  
 Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Indomitable Will, Toughness  
 Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 2, Politics 3  
 Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3, Quack 1  
 Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 3, Swimming 2, Side-step 2, Throwing 1  
 Commander: Ambush 2, Diplomacy 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Logistics 4, Strategy 4, Tactics 4  
 Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 2  
 Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5  
 Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4  
 Gelingen (Apprentice): Exploit Weakness (Sirens) 3  
 Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4  
 Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3  
 Loring (Master): Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Hook 5, Exploit Weakness (Loring) 5  
 Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 5  
 Rider: Mounting 3, Ride 4  
 Note: Von Pösen's Hook Knack allows him to add +5 to his panzerhand Damage Rolls.

CHAPTER THREE:

# Where Brave Men Will Not Venture

## *The Temple of Longing*

There are many tales of the Sidhe in Avalon. But even the bards and druids know little about this one...

There was once a knight, born of the immortal Sidhe but cursed with mortality and an iron hand that prevented him from using the power of Glamour. Cast out from the fey lands, he traveled the world seeking answers to the riddle of his new mortality.

First, he came upon a maiden, bathing in a river. He called out to her and asked her to tell him of death and mortality. She laughed and said, "I am young and life is new to me. The only loss I can consider is that of my maidenhood, but even then I will bring new life into the world. I am sorry, Sir Knight, I have no answers for you, nor do I seek such answers myself."

So the knight traveled on, and came across a mother wailing for her son who lay dead. The knight asked her the same questions he had asked the maiden. She grew angry and threw stones at him, saying "How can you ask of death? I have lost my son today to bandits and thieves. You cannot be told of death and grief, you can only understand when you lose a life you have made. Leave me with my pain, and do not seek it yourself if you have any sense."

So the knight left her, worried he might never get an answer, until he came to a cottage in a wood. He could feel Glamour and magic in the place. It made him afraid but also filled him with longing for his lost home. So he entered, for he was also tired and hoped to find rest and peace for the night. Inside was an old woman who welcomed him, and bid him ask her his question, for she had been waiting for him... She told him she could not give him the answers;

only give him what he needed to find them, but to gain her help, he would have to do a favor for her.

She asked him to swear to guard this place and keep it safe until the moon faded and the sun rose again. The knight was grateful to gain answers for just one night's guardianship so he swore to the old woman on sacred oaths that he would stand guard. Upon hearing his words, she cackled with malicious delight.

"In this place, the moon never fades and the sun never rises. But for me a long overdue life awaits."

The knight called out after her, angry at having been tricked so easily. "But what of your promise? You said you would answer my questions."

"So I will, sir knight," said the old woman. "I told you I would give you what you needed to find the answers you sought." With that she picked up a sword that lay amidst the clutter of the room and threw it to the angry young man. Then she left, calling out to him, "That will teach you all you need know of death and mortality."

The knight watched her go, and listened until her laughter faded from the cold forest.

## *Lugh's Temple*

There are places in Avalon where a mortal can pass from Théah into the faerie land of Bryn Bresail. They are guarded by a myriad of faerie creatures and powerful magic. However, there are also gates to the dark places in Bryn Bresail, the places of the Unseelie housing shadows and secrets of longing and desire. Though only fools or the hopelessly lost could find them, they must be guarded... and the guardians must be bound to their charges lest they seek to leave.

Lugh's temple and the forest around it is one such place. The knight Lawrence Lugh was tricked into guarding it, and though he managed to escape, he left an echo of his essence behind. When he first came there, it was no more than a cottage in a wood. Now the land has changed and adapted, because it is also a reflection of its guardian. Its outward appearance is a large ancient temple in the Numan style, the way Lugh first remembers humanity, and it is filled with his longings and desires.

There is magic in this place, dark and deep, drawn from the inhuman lands of the Sidhe. The bond the place shares with Lugh makes it subject to his feelings. It feels the longing in his heart and wishes only to ease the pain, so it seeks out and draws near others who share such feelings. At heart this is a Sidhe place so it does not understand any emotion but it constantly strives to gain knowledge by drawing humans to it. (Note: The magic here is not fueled with any evil intent, despite its appearance; no spells or items detecting evil will get results.)

The Temple actually has more than one guardian. Lugh's "echo" is bound to guard the human side of the gate. A powerful Unseelie who hates her task is bound on the other side where she takes out her rage on anyone she can find, especially idiot mortals who come near her realm.

Lugh's temple and the forest are designed to be encountered, not conquered. It is possible but unlikely the players may be able to pass across to the Unseelie lands by defeating the temple's guardians. This is not because the scenario is stacked against them but because the purpose of this encounter is to afford them a chance to explore their own longings and feelings. Besides, they are in a world of hurt should they put themselves into the hands of the Unseelie.

If, however, your players need monsters, there is a wide range of other fey creatures that have escaped the Unseelie realms. Take Mr Toad (see page 75) as your guide but remember that Lugh and Cicada are good at what they do, so do not let too many horrors escape!

## The Forest

Lugh's temple is a faerie gate within a temple, surrounded by a forest in the heart of Avalon (or any similar locale in your campaign). Anyone entering the dark forest may notice it is different in some way, and find themselves full of longing. If they ignore these feelings the place loses a little of its hold on them, but if one member of the group has longing or forsaken love in their heart, the temple will draw them in.

Once inside the forest, the party come across the beautiful ancient temple in the clearing. No matter what the time of day they think it is, the temple is always lit by bright moonlight. Often adventurers may wander for what seems like an entire day and come upon the temple as night falls. Someone in the party may notice an eerie silence surrounding the temple, as if the forest itself is has become deserted.

## The Temple

The temple, built of dull white marble, stands just under 30 feet high and seems to glow in the moonlight. It is a grand structure, built in the old Numan style, with imposing columns. There is little external decoration, making it difficult to determine its purpose. A small amount of lichen and ivy have taken root around the building, but not nearly as much as would be expected of something so old. A character

with history skills will be able to confirm this is either really Numan, or at least a very well researched copy of the style. It is not unheard of for nobles to build places in an ancient style, but they rarely get the design this exact. The stones feel old, but it is difficult to guess their age.

If the players check around the entire building, they will discover there is only one doorway at the front. The exterior wall, surrounded by pillars, is far too strong to break through, and the roof is also in good repair. Unless they are foolish enough to try explosives, the place can only be entered through the main doorway.

Inside, the place seems just as quiet and deserted as the forest outside. Everything is ordered neatly, but lies under a thick coating of dust. There are no footprints in the dust, and the characters get the feeling they are the first people to come here in a very long time. The whole of the inside is one room, huge and full of shadows. Unlit candlesticks surround the massive columns that hold the roof in place. The roof itself is lost in the dark, but occasionally there is a chattering or whispering sound, which could be bats. If they listen carefully to the noise they will make out words in human languages, none of which make any sense. The sense of loss and sadness is even greater inside the temple than it was in the forest.

At the far end of the room, opposite the main door, is a large stone dais on which sits an empty throne, backed by a tapestry. The tapestry is very faded and sections are seriously rotted or missing. On close inspection the party can see shapes of people, possibly walking and talking on a summer's day, but the buildings in the tapestry appear to be in a modern Avalon style.

If anyone sits on the throne they will be overcome almost immediately with feelings of loss. No matter who they are, they will soon break down into tears and only be able think of those whom they have loved and lost. (Note: While they sit there, regardless of whether they have any magical ability, they are in touch with Lugh's own feelings and emotions; other than that the throne has no effect.)

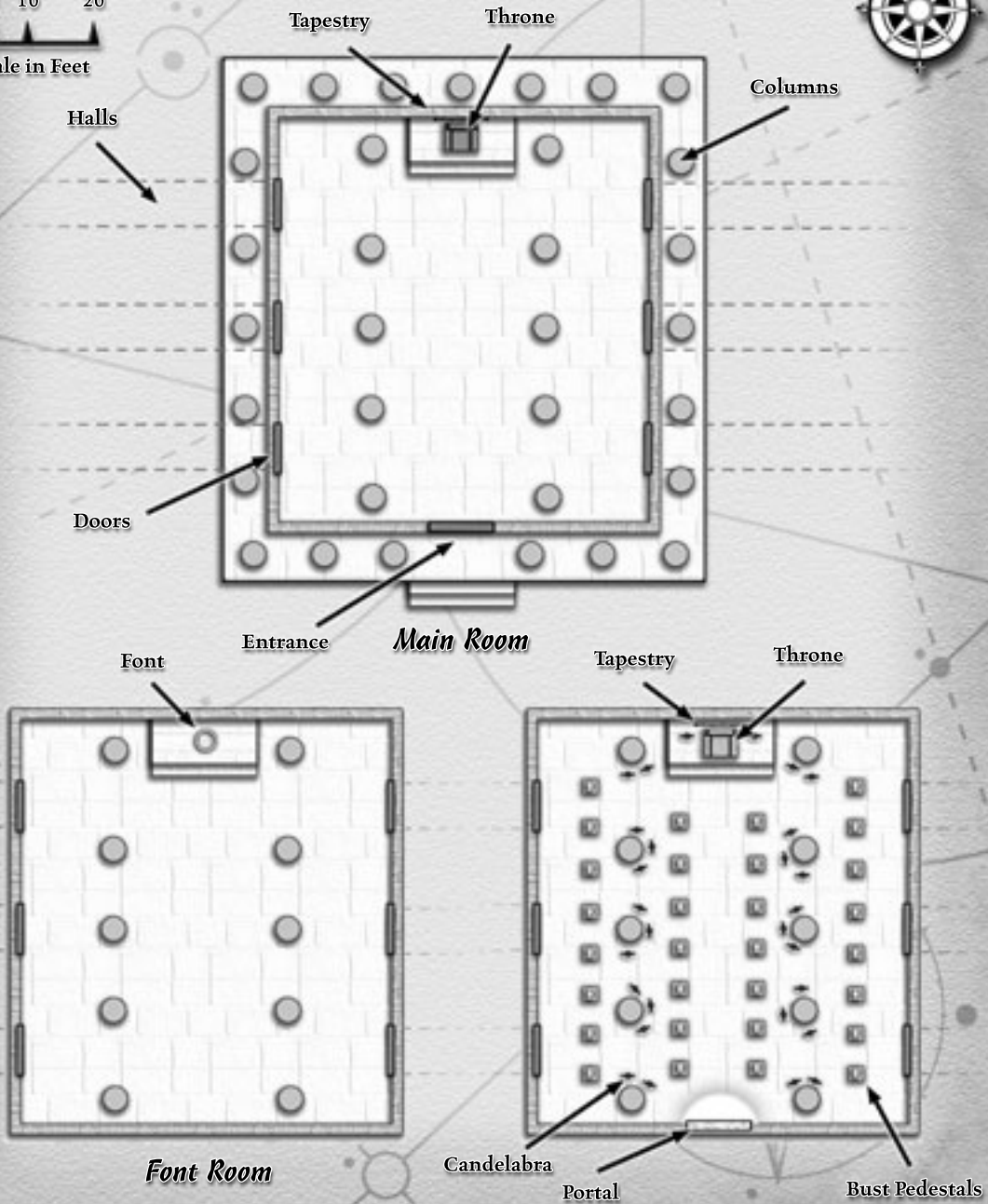
Along the sides of the room are six solid oaken doors, three on each side and each exactly the same. They look as though they lead outside, but if the party has walked the perimeter of the temple, they know that there is only one door.

The doors are heavy but unlocked. Each leads to a long corridor. The players should realize that the dimensions render the inside of the building larger than the outside, but there is no taint of *Porté*. At the end of the corridor stands another door, just like the others. This one, however, opens into a room just like the temple interior. The players enter it from the door opposite the one they came through but the room they enter is not the room they left. It may look exactly the same, even down to the newly made footprints in the dust, but characters who remain behind and then enter the room after the door has closed will find themselves alone in the room.

The other difference in the new room is that the throne on the dais has been replaced with a small font filled with crystal clear water. It is perfectly drinkable, but makes the character rather emotional. (Note: There is no game effect for this, though the heightened sensitivity may increase the character's volatility slightly. If the character is a Glamour sorcerer, it will give him an additional Glamour die that must be used before they can gain another.) Characters will also notice that a solid wall in this "font room" replaces the large door to the outside in the main room.

# Temple of Longing

0 5 10 20  
Scale in Feet





Every door leads to a similar font room, identical to the one described above. Moving through other doors will get the same effect, but not to the same room. The rooms are the link between the mortal and faerie realms. The main room stands firmly in the mortal realm. The font rooms exist between the two places, and like so many gateways to the Sidhe, contain water. Unwary character may find themselves lost in a bewildering maze of extended rooms, each one nearly identical to the last.

One of these chambers (GM's discretion) differs slightly from the others. This new (and final) room exists between the faerie realm and the mortal one, and belongs to Cicada Rose, the second guardian of the place. Instead of a wall or a doorway to the outside, there is a huge portal formed to the exact size of the doorway. The liquid-like surface glows with a deep blue light that waves and shifts. The glow provides most of the light for the room, even though there are candles lit in the various candlesticks and candelabra. The room itself is the exact dimension of the other rooms, but is clean and well tended. The white marble columns and walls gleam in the light. The throne on the dais is cushioned and inlaid with gold. The tapestry behind it is a rich blanket of color showing faerie knights and ladies enjoying a beautiful day by a lake. (Note: In this room the throne has no effect on anyone who sits on it.)

The only addition to the room is a collection of small pedestals, each supporting a stone bust. To a casual observer they all seem to be of the same woman, but in slightly different styles and attitudes. Any Avalon will recognize them all as Queen Elaine. On closer inspection, however, they actually appear to be busts of someone the character knows and longs to be with; if, however, there is no one at all the player misses then the bust is unrecognizable to them. In fact if this is the case the bust becomes quite ugly and terrifying. Staring too closely will frighten the character who is now faced with the fact that he cares for no one with any depth of feeling. The more intense the feeling for someone the more obvious the similarity to the loved one.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

This is the equivalent of the Frightful presence ability.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

This is the equivalent of the Fear: 1 ability.

Cicada is in the room, but has the power to remain unseen if she wishes. She will observe the players for a while before making contact. If they attempt to enter the portal they will force her hand, as she cannot allow them to pass on to the Unseelie lands. She will first send one or two good-sized spiders to "soften up" the group. If they dispatch the spiders, she will then appear to the characters from some hiding place and behave as a "little girl lost," asking the players to protect her from the horrible spiders in this place. She claims that she wandered into the forest, got lost exploring the temple and is now unable to get home. She will offer the characters some wine that she found, telling them that she has tried some (how terribly naïve she is!) so she knows it is safe. (Actually it will be some of her own poison mixed into the wine, enough to paralyze anyone who drinks it within about five minutes; see her character description for details)

(Note: while creating an antidote is technically possible, it would require some of Cicada's blood. The paralytic effects of

the poison wear off in approximately four hours. PCs must make a successful Resolve or Fort save to be able to talk while paralyzed, but once reduced to 0 finesse, they are unconscious so it is in the party's best interest to avoid wholesale poisoning.)

If the players attempt to enter the portal, Cicada will try to talk them out of it. If necessary she will call upon her spiders or demand that Lugh's echo protect his side of the gate from intruders.

If the players try to run (a very good idea if faced with an angry Lugh) they can return the same way they came but the previous rules apply, so they must enter a font room together and then go to the main room together. Once there, they can simply leave through the main door. If they decide to split up, they could easily find themselves chased around duplicates of the font room by an enraged Lawrence Lugh.

If the poison wine works or the characters are knocked unconscious in some other way, Lugh will see them safely removed from the place (unless they have given him reason to want them dead) despite Cicada's desire to drain their blood and turn them into husks. Most likely they will wake up in the forest. Only the foolhardy would attempt a second entry and Lugh will be more insistent that they depart with their lives.

Entering the gate is difficult. The surface will not yield to anyone unless it is fed with blood. The blood need not be the traveller's own, but must be of the same species (spider blood does not work.). The best option is to prick a finger enough so that it bleeds and hold it to the doorjamb while passing through. Of course, a character could just as easily cover his hand in someone else's blood. Although Cicada and Lugh are very unlikely to tell a character how to pass through, the gate itself might. Anyone who touches it will get a powerful impression of its desire and longing for blood. Details on the lands beyond the gate are left up to the GM.

## *NPC Statistics for the Temple of Longing*

### *Lawrence Lugh*

Lawrence Lugh is the greatest of Queen Elaine's Knights, a champion of Avalon and hero to the Glamour Isles. He is also a fallen Sidhe, stripped of his immortality and forced to live the life of a mortal. He first came to the temple in search of knowledge and understanding, hoping to gain some insight into his new condition. When the old woman cursed him, Lugh was trapped between two oaths: one to the guardian and one to the Queen. Luckily for him, Lugh possessed a more powerful essence than any normal man. After several months trapped in the temple, he finally realized that he could leave a portion of his essence behind without breaking his word.

Everyone who enters the temple leaves an echo of the visit. For creatures of Glamour that echo is so powerful that it can take physical form. Thus Lugh was able to leave, and remain at the same time. A manifestation of his yearning emotions always remains in the temple, even when he himself is outside roaming Théah for his Queen.

Any visiting characters will also leave a little of their essence behind, some portion will join the chorus of whispers in the place as echoes.



As with all things Sidhe, time has no meaning in the temple. Lawrence Lugh has not left this place since he came here but how long that is cannot be measured accurately because it exists between the mortal and faerie worlds.

The Lugh who inhabits the temple is not a copy or a duplicate, per se. The powerful longings and feelings in this place are still as powerful as they are for Lugh now. He is connected to the temple and it feels his thoughts no matter how far he goes from it. But his echo knows nothing of Elaine; he is the same as he was when the real Lugh entered so long ago. Here he is a mighty and dangerous warrior, driven to understand his newfound mortality and prone to fits of madness and violence.

This “other Lugh” wanders the forest, the main room and the font rooms. His involvement with the characters depends very much on their actions. They could encounter him in any of the areas, as the GM wishes. He will be very interested in observing them because their human emotions attract him. He will be very keen to see how they deal with them even though he has been charged with protecting the temple and expelling any invaders.

Lugh is forbidden to enter Cicada’s room unless she allows it. Although her place is not truly part of the fey lands from which he is banned, they are near enough to merit dire punishment. The proximity to his home, albeit an Unseelie version, may drive Lugh into one of his frenzies, which will be quite a challenge for the party should they encounter him there.

### “Echo” Lawrence Lugh (d20™)

**Avalon Fighter 8/ Leegstra Swordsman 5/ Champion of the Lady of the Lake 2:** CR15; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d10 + 30 plus 5d12 + 15; hp 150; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (+4 Dex, +8 Unarmed Defense Proficiency); Atks: claymore +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+1), knife +19/+14/+9 melee (1d4+1), pistol +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d10); SA Balanced Strike, Devastating Blow, *Firinbrand* +1d6, Focused Training (Cleave, Great Cleave, Toughness), Summon *Firinbrand*, Take the Pain; SV Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +11; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 17, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 19; AL N; Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +9, Climb +14, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +5, Handle Animal +9, Heal +7, Intimidate +14, Intuit Direction +8, Jump +14, Listen +2, Move Silently +5, Ride +15, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (Avalon, Théan, Sidhe; [alternately, any three languages from your campaign]), Spot +12, Swim +14, Use Rope +5; Feats: Alertness, Appearance — Above Average, Cleave, Dashing and Daring, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Expertise, Great Cleave, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Keen Senses, Mobility, Spring Attack, Toughness, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Whirlwind Attack.

### “Echo” Lawrence Lugh — Hero (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 5, **Finesse:** 6, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 6, **Panache:** 5  
**Reputation:** 30  
**Background:** Romance  
**Arcana:** Courageous  
**Advantages:** Avalon (R/W), Appearance, Dangerous Beauty, Combat Reflexes, Large, Major Gesa (as usual), Fits of Madness\*  
**Athlete:** Break Fall 4, Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Lifting 4, Long Distance Running 4, Rolling 4, Sprinting 4, Swimming 4, Swinging 4, Side-step 4, Throwing 4

**Courtier:** Dancing 4, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 4, Politics 2  
**Buckler:** Attack (Buckler) 3, Parry (Buckler) 5  
**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5  
**Heavy Weapon:** Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5  
**Wrestling:** Bear Hug 3, Break 4, Grapple 4, Head Butt 2

Lugh has yet to learn any Théan swordsman schools formally but he may use the following basic Swordsman’s Knacks as noted; he has no abilities for apprentice, journeyman or master. Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Riposte 5, Disarm 5, Pommel Strike 5.

\* Lugh’s fits of madness come upon him whenever the GM thinks they should; usually at times of great stress or mental confusion. When taken by the madness he falls into a killing frenzy. He will try to destroy anything in front of him in the most direct way possible. A lot of pain may bring him out of it, but the best way is to just let it burn itself out. While enraged he may not use any of his Swordsman’s Knacks. His dice still explode when he is crippled as the rage carries him through the pain. Cicada knows to get out of the way when the madness hits him, but the characters might not be so lucky.

### Cicada Rose

Another guardian watches from the other side of the temple gateway to Bryn Bresail. She is the outcast spirit of an Unseelie maiden who hates Lugh because he represents all she lacks in honor and virtue. She considers herself his superior because she is still Sidhe. Cicada is also a mistress of spiders (she is bound to the gateway because she tried to use one to poison the Queen of the Sky).

Unlike the guardians on the mortal side, she can never pass her curse away to an echo. Another term of her binding requires that she ask Lugh’s permission before killing anyone, and he usually spoils her fun. She maintains a demeanor of gentility and grace until she needs to reveal her true colors. She is a truly stunning woman with delicate elfin features and a cascade of bright blonde hair that flows down her back. She wears form-fitting clothing that shows off her elegant figure and pools on the floor in a train of satin. Like most Sidhe, she is remarkably deceptive, and can play frightened victim, stunning seductress, or soulless monster, depending upon her whims. She enjoys disorienting those who enter her realm, toying with their perceptions before snapping the trap shut. Lugh’s echo keeps her homicidal tendencies at bay, but the rare times when she takes a human life are savored like fine wine.

### Cicada Rose (d20™)

**Sidhe Glamour Sorceress 18/Noble 3:** CR 21; SZ M (humanoid); HD 18d10 + 36 plus 3d8 + 6; hp 152; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (+5 Dex, +9 Unarmed Defense Proficiency); Atks: knife +15/+8/+3 melee (1d4 +1); SA Brilliant Smile, Commanding Presence +1, Friends in High Places, Glamour Checks +8, Glamour of Legend, Seduction, Spell Bonus (Charm Person), Total Legends 6 (Anne o’ the Wind, Jack, Mad Jack O’ Bannon, Green Man, The Stone Knight, Thomas); SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +14; Str 11, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 20; AL NE; Skills: Appraise +6, Balance +6, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +19, Gather Information +20, Innuendo +7, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (Sidhe) +17, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Perform +14, Profession (Cook) +6, Read Lips +8, Ride +9,

Search +7, Sense Motive +20, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne, Théan, Vodacce; [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]); Feats: Appearance — Above Average, Dangerous Beauty, Detect Lie, Full-Blooded Glamour Sorcery, Gifted Liar, Skilled Liar, Slip, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

**Special:** Anyone bitten by Cicada, or consuming a liquid mixed with at least three drops of her blood, must make a Fort save or be paralyzed for 2d10 turns.

### **Cicada Rose — Villain (7th Sea™)**

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 6, **Wits:** 4, **Resolve:** 6, **Panache:** 5

**Reputation:** -67

**Background:** Exiled

**Arcana:** Righteous

**Advantages:** Appearance – Intimidating (15), Cold Hearted (Sidhe Blood Curse), Keen Senses, Poison Bite\*

**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4

**Courtier:** Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 5, Scheming 4, Seduction 5, Sincerity 4

**Spy:** Stealth 4

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Throw (Knife) 3

**Glamour (Master):** Anne o' the Wind 5, Green Man 5, Iron Meg 5, Isaac Snaggs 5, Jack 5, Thomas 5

\* **Poison Bite:** Cicada has a deadly poisonous bite. If the poison drains a victim to zero Finesse the character is totally paralyzed while it runs its course. Cicada uses the poison in two forms, as a direct bite or diluted in wine.

**Bite damage:** 1k1+poison, -1 Finesse +4k3 wound/5 phases/4 hours

**Paralysis wine:** -1 Finesse/5 minutes/2 hours

### **Adventure Seeds**

A village girl, recently left standing at the altar, has disappeared. Her grief has drawn her into the forest. Can the players reach her before she and they are drawn into the forest, where their own longings — and Mr. Toad — wait for them?

Bors MacAllister has noticed that Lugh occasionally rides away alone, telling no one where he is going and taking no one with him. He rides towards an area known as a faerie “trouble spot.” Bors asks the players to follow Lugh and make sure he is not working with the Sidhe against Queen Elaine. The players will of course be led to the temple, and a little more besides. Lugh has returned to fight a dark force attempting to enter Théah through the portal.

### **Cicada's Minions**

Cicada does not guard this place alone; she was allowed to bring a rather nasty collection of tarantulas, each at least a foot in diameter. They have a dangerous bite that delivers a nasty but not fatal poison. Cicada can call the creatures from Bryn Bresail, but not in unlimited numbers: only ten in any one day. In case of emergency, she usually has one or two of the creatures patrolling the hall. They sense when she is in trouble and dangle over the head of the character they deem most dangerous, ready to drop and attack with surprise — and poison — on her command

### **Spider Minion (d20™)**

**Small Vermin**

**Hit Dice:** 2d8 (10 hp)

**Initiative:** +5 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+5 Dex)

**Attacks:** Bite +5 melee

**Damage:** Bite 1D4+1 + poison

**Face/Reach:** 1 ft. by 1 ft./1 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison

**Special Qualities:** None

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +12, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 6, Cha 2

**Skills:** Balance +6, Climb +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +8

**Feats:** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Weapon Finesse (Bite)

**Climate/Terrain:** Underground

**Organization:** Single or packs (2-5)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Advancement:** N/A

**Combat:** The spider's poison has a save DC of 13; initial damage is a loss of 1d3 Str, and secondary damage is a loss of 1d4 Str.

### **Spider Minions — Brutes (7th Sea™)**

4 per pack

**Brawn:** 1, **Finesse:** 4, **Wits:** 1, **Resolve:** 2, **Panache:** 3

**Threat Rating:** 2

**TN to be hit:** 20 (small size)

**Attack roll:** 5k4 Bite

**Damage roll:** 2k1 + Poison Bite

**Skills:** Ambush 4, Climbing 5, Sprinting 4, Shadowing 3, Stealth 4

**Note:** The spider's poison is equivalent to vagabond root, described on page 185 of the *Game Masters' Guide*.

### **The Old Woman**

The temple in the forest has been guarded by many in its time. The old woman who watched it before Lugh stood guard for nearly 100 years. The curse of guardianship only allowed her to pass it on to a willing recipient.

The dashing Unseelie guardian seduced her as a young girl. When she became pregnant her lover decided that he should keep the child. There was nothing a young mortal could do to oppose the will of a Sidhe lord. She could not even consider the idea of leaving her child with him so she offered to take on the guardianship of the gate in return for the freedom of her child. Her lover agreed and returned to the fey realm. In truth he was unconcerned with the child and only wanted his freedom. He knew that threatening the baby would make the girl agree to anything. She was given time to pass the child on to someone who could look after it but has no idea what happened to her baby. She returned to the gate and served until Lugh arrived.

Luckily for her Lugh was easily tricked, confused by his mortal existence and utterly faithful to any oath he might take. Although the former guardian is very old, she may still be wandering the world, seeking her lost child and some of the life she lost by serving the gateway for so long. As a mortal she was bound to stay in the place, which gave her a long life in unfair trade. Her statistics are no better or worse than any

average old woman the party may encounter, but she is extremely clever, and knows a lot about the Sidhe and their ways. It is possible she may have picked up some Sidhe powers or even Glamour magic from her time guarding the portal; details are up to the GM.

### Old Woman (120<sup>m</sup>)

**Avalon Witch** 7: CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d6; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atks: none; SA Summon Familiar, Manipulate Spell; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 10; AL N; Skills: Alchemy +8, Animal Empathy +10, Bluff +5, Concentration +10, Gather Information +5, Heal +10, Hide +5, Knowledge (Sidhe) +10, Move Silently +5, Speak Language (Avalon [alternately, any language from your campaign]); Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Track.

### Old Woman — Brute (7th Sea<sup>™</sup>)

Threat Rating: 1  
Weapons: None  
TN to be hit: 10

### Mr. Toad

If the GM wishes the party to encounter further trouble near the temple, he can have them run across Mr. Toad. Many years ago, a dark Unseelie thing crossed over from the twisted lands Bryn Bresail and made a home in the forest near the temple. He watched mortals pass by and longed for the day he could break free of the outer enchantments to bring pain and death to these strange soft creatures. As Glamour rose in Avalon, he found he could venture further from the temple; now he haunts the lonely roads of the forest, preying on those who cross his path. He slices anyone he finds to ribbons and has caused the terrible deaths of several careless villagers over the years. Most people, believe the forest around the temple is completely uninhabited, and that “Mr. Toad,” as he is called, is nothing more than a darkly whimsical rhyme.

*Late at night on darkened road  
You might come by Mr. Toad.  
His coat is long, his boots are clean,  
His fingers long, his smile is keen.*

*He'll toy with you, like cat with mouse,  
He'll chase you all around the house.  
So if you would avoid his knives,  
Lock up your door and close your eyes.*

Mr. Toad is described as little more than a smile and a knife. In truth he wears a black suit of clothes over his bony thin body, as well as a black cape and wide-brimmed hat. His broad mouth is far too large for the rest of his face, and his grin looks large enough to swallow his victims whole.

Mr. Toad's Rhyme is a warning to anyone who travels the forest: should they meet him; they must close their eyes. He cannot inflict harm of any sort so long as his victim cannot see him. Should anyone catch on to his weakness, he will follow them as far as he can, chiding and screaming at his target until they fumble their way out of his range or open their eyes and are attacked. He has no mercy or feelings, he is murder personified.

### Mr. Toad (120<sup>m</sup>)

**Sidhe Thief 4/Assassin 10:** CR 14; SZ M (humanoid); HD 14d6 +28; hp 88; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+4 Dex, +7 Unarmed Defense Proficiency); Atks: knife +10/+5 melee (1d4 + 1); SA Ambush Attack +3, Conceal the Evidence, Damage Reduction 10/cold iron, Death Attack, Inconspicuous, Poison Use, Sneak Attack +7d6, Sniper, Uncanny Dodge; SV Fort +7, Ref +12, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 10; AL CE; Skills: Bluff +10, Disable Device +6, Escape Artist +10, Gather Information +4, Hide +16, Intimidate +12, Listen +14, Move Silently +16, Search +12, Spot +14, Tumble +14, Use Rope +8, Speak Language (Avalon, Montaigne, Théan, Vodacce; [alternately, any four languages from your campaign]); Feats: Frightening Countenance, Slip, Tagging, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner).

### Mr Toad — Villain (7th Sea<sup>™</sup>)

Brawn: 2, Finesse: 4, Wits: 3, Resolve: 3, Panache: 5  
Reputation: -78  
Background: None  
Arcana: None  
Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Keen Senses  
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4  
Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Scheming 4  
Spy: Shadowing 4, Stealth 4  
Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5

Mr. Toad cannot be harmed by nonmagical or non-Syrneth weapons, though MacEachern weapons will harm him and cold iron will cause him to recoil. If slain, he returns to Bryn Bresail, but will stop at nothing to reenter the mortal realm and take revenge on his “killers.”

## The Great Puzzle Maze of the Coruscites

Hidden somewhere deep in the *Muglak'kum* desert of the Crescent Empire lies the Great Puzzle Maze of the Coruscites, an ancient Syrneth labyrinth. None know its true purpose but now it guards the Prophet's Cross, which contains the soul of the dreaded Corsair pirate Kheired-Din. So long as the Cross is safe, Kheired-Din is effectively immortal, impossible to kill through steel or sorcery.

The Great Puzzle Maze is named for its mortal guardians, the Coruscites who roam the desert's surface, keeping watch for intruders and interlopers. Led by a religious fanatic named Kalem the Believer, the Coruscites regard the Maze as a sacred site. They rarely interfere with small exploration parties approaching the ancient labyrinth because they believe (correctly) that the Maze can take care of intruders without their help. Only two men have ever emerged from the Maze alive: Kheired-Din and Staver Siev Aryaov v'Vladimirovich. (For more on Kalem, Kheired-Din and Staver Siev, see *The Crescent Empire<sup>™</sup>* and *Ussura<sup>™</sup>* stats for the Coruscites are provided on page 83).

## Finding the Maze

It is practically impossible to find the Maze by accident, and only a few know its actual location. Obviously, the Coruscites and Kalem are among these but they jealously guard their knowledge. Kheired-Din, too, knows the way to the Maze, although he would kill anyone who seeks his guidance in a heartbeat. The truth could perhaps be pried from Staver Siev, but curious heroes would have to penetrate his madness first. He will not willingly reveal the location although he might be tricked into doing so.

More likely, however, is the chance that adventurers may find clues leading to the Maze in lost and forgotten Syrneath vaults, far from the location itself. Alternately, the heroes may be commissioned to follow up on similar clues unearthed by a now crippled or retired member of the Explorer's Society or a greedy member of the Bernoulli clan who does not want to risk his own skin.

## Entering the Maze

Even from Urfa, the journey to the maze is not a fast one, so adventurers intent on finding it must prepare for a long, hot, journey. The trip north from the city of Basra can take as long as a month. Throughout the last five days of their travels, the party is watched around the clock by the Coruscites although the desert warriors remain on the horizon, observing from a distance.

### D20™ MECHANICS

Noticing these shadowy figures requires a Spot check (DC 25).

### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Noticing these shadowy figures requires a Wits roll (TN 30).

Even if spotted however briefly, the Coruscites seem to disappear into the desert. When the party arrives at the location where the Coruscites were seen, the desert warriors are long gone.

Assuming the PCs reach the general location of the Maze, they may quite easily wander past the actual entrance. The desert's constantly shifting sands make excellent camouflage for the ancient ruin, obscuring the stone archway that frames the entrance.

### D20™ MECHANICS

Provided the adventurers have a good idea of the Maze's location (within perhaps an hour's journey), they may attempt a Search check (DC 30) to find the half-buried hall.

### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Provided the adventurers have a good idea of the Maze's location (within perhaps an hour's journey), they may attempt a Wits + Cartography roll (TN 30) to find the half-buried hall.

## Structure of the Maze

Unlike most structures, this labyrinth's layout is impermanent at best. Once the party passes beyond the Great Hall (location A) into the Maze proper (locations 1–11), their trespass activates a sort of ancient shell game. The Great

Puzzle Maze is constructed on a series of tremendous yet incredibly intricate mechanisms designed to change the layout each time an intruder enters a new chamber.

When the PCs exit a chamber, they find themselves in a small intermediary room with only two exits: the open door behind them and a blank stone wall in front. Nothing happens until they draw the portal closed behind them, at which time a tremendous grinding noise assails them. Eventually, the wall in front of them moves aside to reveal a new chamber. The doors behind are impossible to open; even if they were, the explorers would find nothing but tons of freshly moved earth. There is no rhyme or reason behind the shifting rooms, which appear to be a meaningless, maddening, unsolvable puzzle.

(Note: The heroes must face the first ten rooms in an order of the GM's choosing, although the seventh should not be encountered until they have defeated at least six prior challenges. The location of the final room is fixed. Once the party has activated each of the triggers in the first ten rooms, the Maze's mechanism delivers them into the final chamber.

If the GM wishes, he can place this "inner mechanism" within a much larger structure, allowing him to add his own dangers to the Maze. The complex could conceivably stretch for miles and contain any number of rooms. Regardless of how large you choose to make it, the rooms below represent the heart of the maze, and its essential *raison d'être*.)

## Locations

### (A) The Great Hall

A soft luminescence lights the entrance to the Great Puzzle Maze — indeed, the entire structure. It is impossible to determine the light's source, which is bright enough to light the path clearly. A narrow tunnel at first, only five feet wide, the passage descends gradually until the PCs are several hundred yards beneath the desert sands. Only then do they emerge into the Great Hall, a breathtakingly large chamber whose walls are covered with impossibly intricate yet apparently meaningless designs. The hall lacks furnishings of any kind save for a pair of stone double doors on the far side.

As the heroes approach the doors, a Spot check (DC 20) or Wits roll (TN 25) reveals newer carvings just above the lintel. Unlike the mysterious etchings throughout the rest of the Hall, the adventurers recognize these carvings as Crescent writing (*tikaret-baraji*), a warning left by the Coruscites to interlopers. Any PC who can read Crescent deciphers the text as follows:

*"Turn aside thy curiosity, lest thy blood stain these halls. Be it base or noble, it is thy life, and it will be spilt upon these flagstones. Beyond this threshold lies only death and madness, and no man can say which is the kinder fate."*

The doors which are not locked or secured in any way open smoothly and soundlessly with the slightest push. Beyond them, the adventurers find a small room, completely unremarkable except for another *tikaret-baraji* inscription on the opposite wall: "Enter."

## (B) Entrance

This chamber is empty and small, large enough for only a dozen men to stand comfortably. Other than the *tikaret-baraji* inscription on the south wall (the same “Enter,”) the room is devoid of furniture or markings.

Once the first PC enters this room, the doors begin to close, apparently turned on their hinges by hidden clockwork machinery. They are easily halted; even the lightest resistance stops the machinery. Adventurers who pass beyond this point do so of their own free will. Once the doors are allowed to close, however, they cannot be opened from the inside, and a thick stone slab descends from above, blocking the door. Sealed within the entrance area, the party feels the room begin to move in apparently random directions. After roughly one minute, the room halts, and the slab rises once more, revealing...

## Chamber Format

Each location entry includes several key points, presented in the following order:

**Riddle:** Upon arriving in a new chamber, the party is greeted by a voice speaking directly into their minds, in each PC’s native language. The voice recites a riddle, then falls silent.

**Chamber:** A physical description of the chamber (to be read aloud to the players.) Every chamber is a cube fifty feet on each side. The party enters at floor level at the center of one side. Directly opposite them, guarding the exit, stands a Clockwork Golem, inert until a PC activates the trigger.

**Puzzle:** This section, for the GM’s eyes only, describes the chamber in detail.

**Trigger:** This describes the trigger that activates the clockwork golem guarding the chamber. Unless otherwise stated, the golem stands directly in front of the opposite door and immediately attacks the PC who activated it. Once either the PC is killed or the golem is reduced to zero hit points, the door to the intermediate chamber opens, allowing the party to move on. (GMs who wish to lower the deadly nature of this adventure may assume that some — or even all — of them are nonfunctional, though such would obviously lessen the Labyrinth’s deadly reputation.)

## The First Chamber

**Riddle:** “*This is the first test. He who speaks, passes.*”

**Chamber:** The chamber is completely bare except for the motionless clockwork golem standing 50 feet from the party at the far side of the room which is a perfect cube.

**Puzzle:** This is less a puzzle than a lesson for those who would challenge the Syrnych labyrinth. This chamber illustrates the purpose of the clockwork golems: to attack those who pass the tests, weeding out the strong, smart, and noble — the best of the intruders — and leaving the least alive for the later challenges. This test showed Kheired-Din the strategy for conquering the Maze. He “allowed” his henchmen to solve the riddles, thereby keeping himself out of danger from the Maze’s guardians.

**Trigger:** As explained in the riddle, the first PC to speak passes the test, and is immediately attacked by the clockwork golem.

## The Second Chamber

**Riddle:** “*This is the test of patience. Wait.*”

**Chamber:** A black marble disc stretches across the length and breadth of the chamber, turning slowly and soundlessly. The lip of the disc rises approximately a half inch above the slate gray stone floor on which it rests. The two surfaces are separated by a crack seemingly no more than a hair’s breadth wide. The marble surface turns slowly enough that one could easily walk across it, were there somewhere to go. The four corners of the room are bare of featuring markings of any sort and untouched by the disc.

**Puzzle:** This puzzle is quite simple, provided the adventurers follow instructions. They must step onto the marble disc and allow it to carry them along the outer edge of the turning platform until they reach the far side of the room. At least one PC must ride the disc for at least a half revolution around the room.

Once any PC has allowed the disc to go a half turn around the chamber, the disc begins to speed up.

### D20™ MECHANICS

After a round, each adventurer remaining on the disc must make a Balance (DC 10) to maintain footing. This DC rises by 5 each round thereafter. Anyone failing to make this check suffers 1d6 damage for every round after the first during which he remained on the disc, to a maximum of 10d6. A successful Ref save (DC 10 + 1 per d6 of damage) may halve this damage.

### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

After a round, each adventurer remaining on the disc must make a Finesse + Balance (TN 15) to maintain footing. This TN rises by 5 each round thereafter. A PC who tumbles from the disc suffers 1k1 damage for every round after the first for which he remained on his feet, to a maximum of 5k5. This damage may be negated with a successful Panache + Break Fall roll (TN 10 + the amount of damage suffered).

**Trigger:** Once the disc begins to speed up, the last PC to lose his footing activates the trigger. If every PC left standing fails the roll on the same round, whoever rolled highest activates the trigger.

## The Third Chamber

**Riddle:** “*This is the test of sacrifice. Only one need fall.*”

**Chamber:** The chamber floor is divided perfectly into a grid of a thousand squares, divided only by razor thin seams between each flagstone. Suddenly, a low rumble rises behind the party as the wall of the antechamber slides forward, pushing them out into the chamber and onto the grid. The alcove shrinks slowly, until it is completely gone, and the party is forced into the chamber proper whereupon the center of the floor disappears, replaced by a ten-foot square patch of impossible darkness.

**Puzzle:** Beginning as you finish reading the description above, the floor begins to fall away, revealing only a pit shrouded in magical darkness. No sound or light issues from below, regardless of the heroes’ attempts to test the depths of the chasm. Every round, another section of tiles falls into the abyss, decreasing the “safe” zone by another little bit. It takes 50 rounds to reduce the chamber to single ten-foot square. on the 51st round, that square falls, plunging the entire floor into the abyss.



Unbeknownst to the heroes, a second floor rests only 20 feet below, concealed by the chamber's enchantments. When the final tiles fall, however, this is small comfort: seconds later, the lower floor collapses as well, and the heroes tumble into the deep. If it comes to this, each hero falls 500 feet. Those who survive find there is no natural escape from this chamber; the heroes' chance to activate the trigger has passed.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

If the heroes fall the 500 feet they suffer 20d6 points of damage.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

If the heroes fall the 500 feet they suffer 10k10 points of damage.

Events in this chamber should occur in real time. The players have one minute to decide on a course of action between the fall of each ten sections, just as their characters do. It takes five minutes for the floor to be reduced to its final segment, plus one additional round for it to collapse. Provided combat doesn't erupt (which is impossible to resolve in real time), keep careful watch on the clock.

**Trigger:** As the riddle explains, only one hero need fall. Anyone who leaps (or is forced) over the brink before the final section collapses falls only 20 feet to solid ground.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

The 20 foot fall causes only 2d6 points of damage.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The 20 foot fall causes only 2k2 damage, translating to 1 dramatic wound for every 10 points by which he fails his wound check.

Thereafter, the chamber's enchantment is lifted, and the floor beneath slowly rises until it rests directly underneath the tiles. The hero who takes the fall is considered to have activated the chamber's trigger. If more than one hero makes the leap at the same time (probably in a show of camaraderie), whichever hero suffers more hit point damage or dramatic wounds activates the trigger.

### The Fourth Chamber

**Riddle:** "This is the test of courage. Stand your ground."

**Chamber:** Before you, the room is bare save for a small stone dais set precisely in the center of the floor. It is large enough for only one man to stand upon it. From here, you can see two depressions in the stone platform's surface.

**Puzzle:** Until the heroes activate the chamber's puzzle, nothing happens. They are free to investigate the area for as long as they choose. As stated in the description above, the only remarkable feature is the stone plinth in the heart of the chamber. The twin depressions are, oddly, sized and shaped such that a man may step into them comfortably. They are deep enough that the lip of each depression rises to just above ankle height.

Once a hero steps into these "shoes," the chamber's test is activated. The hero feels the dais sink slightly beneath him, accompanied by a quiet click. A small panel in the ceiling overhead slides aside, and a large stone weight, only slightly smaller than a man's torso, is lowered from the ceiling. The oblong granite shape is attached to a longer, thinner shaft of marble. Any hero other than the victim can see that the

armature is attached to a hinge near the ceiling. A moment later, a clockwork clicking begins to echo through the chamber, emanating from the hinge. The mechanism gradually draws the weight back to the south wall, until the armature is almost parallel to the ceiling. During this time, the character is free to simply step out of the shoes and abandon the test of courage. In this case, the mechanism reverses itself, returning the weight to its home position, then withdrawing it into the ceiling. If another hero takes his place (or the same hero gathers his nerve and tries again), the test is activated once more, and the process repeats.

If the hero stands his ground for the duration of the test, the clockwork mechanism releases. An incredibly fast staccato whirring fills the chamber as the weight swings toward the hero, and ultimately smashes into him, dealing 5d6 or 5k3 damage.

**Trigger:** The clockwork mechanism is designed to measure the resistance offered at the point of impact. If the hero dodges the weight or somehow causes it to glance off him, by diverting its path, he fails the test and the chamber resets itself, awaiting the next challenger. If the hero bears the full brunt of the smashing weight — even if he is protected through magic or some other means — he passes the test, and the room's guardian attacks.

### The Fifth Chamber

**Riddle:** "This is the test of greed. Take only that which you need, and leave."

**Chamber:** The wealth of ages is spread before you. The chamber's guardian stands opposite you, a lone sentry standing watch over the chamber's hoard. Beside him, the chamber's door stands open, the next test beyond.

**Puzzle:** All that the heroes see is theirs for the taking. However, they would do well to remember the warning: "take only that which you need." Though the heroes would doubtless like to fill their pockets with the treasures of the chamber, they truly need none of it.

Most of the chamber's treasures, while valuable, are neither enchanted nor unique. The following items can be found among the loot:

#### DRACHENEISEN ARMOR

Scattered among the treasures are several points worth of Dracheneisen armor: one breast plate (2 points), 1 helmet (1 point), 1 gauntlet (½ pt), 3 joint plates — one shoulder, one knee, one hip — (½ point each), and an elbow guard (½ point). For full rules on the use of Dracheneisen, see *Swash-buckling Adventures*,™ pages 167–168, or the *7th Sea Player's Guide* (pages 160–161) and the *Eisen sourcebook* (pages 93–95).

#### TRUE COURSE

This is an elaborate compass with the words "True Course" inscribed along the rim in flowing script. When the inscription is read, and a destination named, the compass needle points the way to the location. The destination can be as vague or specific as the user likes, from the Chateau du Soleil in Charouse, to simply "home."

#### WHISPER BOX

Through some mysterious sorcery, this ornate, black lacquered box captures sound. When the box is opened, any noise made in its presence (including speech) is stored by the box for later repetition. Once the box is closed. The next time the box is opened, it repeats any words spoken or sounds

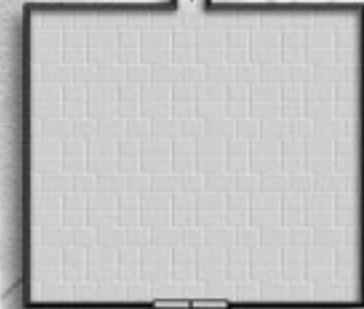
# Great Puzzle Maze of the Coruscites

Great Hall

Stairs up to Surface

0 5 10 20 25 50

Scale in Feet



1st Chamber

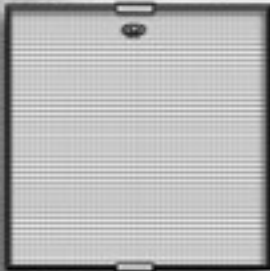


2nd Chamber



Entrance

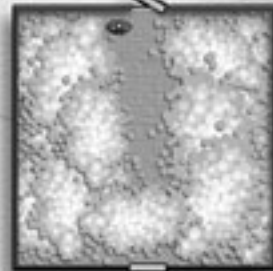
3rd Chamber



4th Chamber



5th Chamber



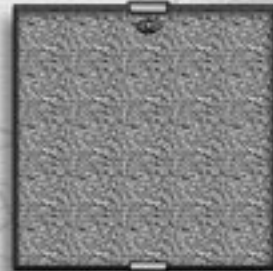
6th Chamber



7th Chamber



8th Chamber



9th Chamber



10th Chamber



11th Chamber



made in its presence, while simultaneously recording any new information. This new record replaces the old the next time the box is opened. Curious PCs who open the box for the first time hear only a raspy chortle that lasts about five seconds, followed by a cracked voice declaring, "They're all dead... all of them." More laughter follows, and abruptly stops in a few seconds. Heroes who have met Staver may recognize his voice on a DC 20 Listen check or a Wits roll, TN 25.

Feel free to introduce items of your own invention into the hoard, particularly those that can be used as springboards into further adventures.

**Trigger:** As the first hero approaches the exit, the door slams shut and the golem comes to life. If any hero has declined to take any of the treasure, he is the target of the golem's attacks in this chamber. If every hero has stolen something, they're in for a surprise: an additional golem, composed of a hodge podge of precious objects, rises from the piled treasure. This second golem has identical statistics to the clockwork golems found in the Maze, and both golems focus their attacks on the nearest potential target (which may or may not be the same hero, depending on the PCs' positions when the trigger is activated). Once any golems are defeated, the door opens once more, and the heroes may exit.

### The Sixth Chamber

**Riddle:** "This is the test of will. Do not falter or cry out."

**Chamber:** At first it seems as if you have entered a chamber of pure brilliance; you are temporarily blinded by the overwhelming light. As your eyes adjust, you realize the truth: the walls are constructed of interlocking panes of glass, and light shines forth from some unknown source. Peering into the glass reveals nothing, only an infinitude of reflections cast by countless mirrors beneath the surface.

Gradually, a low buzzing noise resolves itself at the edge of your awareness. It slowly rises in pitch until you cannot prevent your teeth from rattling together, and you squint in pain.

**Puzzle:** The high pitched buzzing noise is the crux of this test, as the heroes must endure the pain as long as they are able.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Though the din does no real damage, it is incredibly painful. Every round, each PC must make a Will save or suffer 2d6 subdual damage. The DC begins at 8, and increases by +2 each round for 10 rounds. In the 5th round, the glass walls begin to vibrate (DC 18 Spot check to notice this, which may be attempted once each round). In the 8th round, they begin to shatter, sending shards of glass ricocheting around the room. Each PC suffers 1d6 real damage in the 8th round, 2d6 in the 9th, and 3d6 in the 10th.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

The heroes must make Resolve checks or suffer 1k1 flesh wounds. This damage does not require a wound check, as the heroes may not suffer Dramatic Wounds (yet). The TN begins at 5, and increases by +5 each round for 5 rounds. In the 3rd round, heroes may make Wits rolls (TN 15) to notice the vibrating walls. In round 4, the walls begin to explode, dealing 1k1 damage (2k2 in round 5). This damage requires a Wound Check as normal.

Any hero who fails the Will save or Resolve check cries out in agony, failing the chamber's test. Any hero may simply lie down to avoid the flying shards of glass, though once again, any hero who does so is considered to have failed the test.

**Trigger:** Once the cacophony dies down, a glass panel on the north wall slides aside, revealing the exit — and the room's guardian. If any hero passed the test of will, the golem focuses its attacks on him. If every hero failed, a second golem crashes through the glass of the east wall, and each golem attacks the closest hero.

### The Seventh Chamber

**Riddle:** "This is the test of humility. You may leave, but with only your lives."

**Chamber:** This room is a barren chamber of identical dimension to each of the others, the exit opposite you. Suddenly, a terrible grinding sound sets up from the west wall, and the stonework slides aside to reveal a stairway up. Natural light shines into the chamber.

**Puzzle:** This chamber is something of a respite from the trials of the Maze, and a last chance for weary heroes to escape before facing the more difficult challenges ahead. That said, if the heroes wish to leave, they are faced with a difficult choice: they must abandon their possessions to the Maze. No one is allowed to leave with anything other than the clothes on their backs. This includes weapons, provisions, and even water. Any hero attempting to ascend the stairs with more than this finds his load suddenly lightened, and his possessions in a pile in the center of the chamber.

**Trigger:** This chamber has no trigger as such. The heroes must simply choose whether to continue or not.

### The Eighth Chamber

**Riddle:** "This is the test of pain. Step carefully."

**Chamber:** The chamber's floor spreads out before you, its granite surface covered with a maze of razor edged rocks, set into the stone floor. It is doubtful that even the thickest boots will protect your feet from injury.

**Puzzle:** Crossing the floor is difficult and painful.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Each PC must make a Balance check (DC 20) for every five foot step taken. If the check fails, the hero suffers 1d6 damage. A look beneath his feet reveals that though his soles are now leaking blood, the floor is bone dry; it absorbs his blood as it spills.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Each hero must make a Finesse + Balance roll (TN 20) or suffer 1k1 damage. A look beneath his feet reveals that though his soles are now leaking blood, the floor is bone dry; it absorbs his blood as it spills.

**Trigger:** The trigger for this room may be tripped in two ways: first, if every hero but one suffers damage from the floor, the unscathed hero is considered to have activated the trigger. Second, if more than one hero traverses the chamber unharmed, whichever hero reaches the opposite side first activates the trigger. When the golem attacks, the problem of the floor becomes more severe. Each five foot step taken by the hero still requires a Balance check or Finesse + Balance roll, as described above. Further, any hero who attempts to move further than five feet in an action faces a more difficult

check: the DC rises by +4 for every five feet beyond the first, or the TN increases by 5. If failed, the damage is also increased: for every five feet beyond the first moved, the hero suffers an additional 1d6 damage (or 1k1 damage in 7th Sea™ terms).

### The Ninth Chamber

**Riddle:** “*This is the test of faith. The Prophet protects his own.*”

**Chamber:** In the center of this chamber stands a marbled likeness of the Second Prophet, his hands outstretched in greeting. Two dozen circular depressions ring the chamber at eye level, six on each wall. It is impossible to judge their depth by sight, as the interior of each of the holes is shrouded in shadow. Suddenly, a hissing sound erupts from all around, and milky white gas is pumped through each nozzle into the room. As the gas disperses into the chamber, it mixes with the stale air, becoming invisible.

**Puzzle:** The gas is a lethal poison developed especially for this chamber. The heroes have three rounds before they begin to feel its effects:

#### Ninth Chamber Poison (120™)

**Type:** Inhaled DC 24

**Interval/Duration:** 1 round/Exposure

**Initial Damage:** 1d3 Con

**Secondary Damage:** 1d2 Con

**Price:** Not Available

**Description:** The 9th chamber poison is lethal and fast acting. Upon inhalation, the gas constricts the victim’s lungs, essentially causing them to collapse in upon themselves.

#### Ninth Chamber Poison (7th Sea™)

1 Dramatic Wound / 1 Phase / Exposure

The key to this puzzle lies in one of the poison’s components: lead. Though impossible to reproduce with current Théan science, the Syrnych had no trouble producing the formula. Unbeknownst to the heroes, the core of the prophet statue is not marble, but magnetized bronze, designed to repel the gas through magnetic principles far beyond the heroes’ understanding. All they need to know is that the anywhere within five feet of the Prophet’s likeness is safe ground.

**Trigger:** The first hero to remain beside the Prophet for 5 rounds has passed this chamber’s test. The hissing of the nozzles shifts to a high whirring sound as the gas is sucked from the room. Any heroes still affected by the gas (i.e. further than five feet from the statue) must make one more save before the gas is evacuated from the room. One round later, the chamber’s exit opens, and the guardian attacks.

### The Tenth Chamber

**Riddle:** “*This is the test of truth. The door deceives the eye.*”

**Chamber:** A five foot wide corridor extends before you approximately twenty feet before reaching a blank wall. The passage branches to the left and the right, though no markings adorn the walls. There is no way to determine which path is correct. The stone walls stretch fifty feet to the ceiling, making it impossible to simply climb over and carry on.

**Puzzle:** This chamber is an elaborate maze with no solution (*see the map for details*), save one: a hard push on the wall ahead reveals a secret door. Beyond the secret door the heroes find themselves once more within the maze, though another secret door awaits in the opposite wall. In fact, if the heroes simply proceed in a straight line from the entrance, they find that a series of secret doors takes them to the far side of the chamber, and the exit. That said, these doors are heavy. When a hero pushes against one of the doors, secretly roll a Strength or Brawn check for him, if successful, the hero applies enough pressure to spring the door’s latch, and it opens. If failed, the door remains closed and undetected.

#### D20™ MECHANICS

Strength check (DC 18) to open door.

#### 7TH SEA™ MECHANICS

Brawn check (TN 25) to open door.

However, heroes who lose themselves in the maze face more problems than a poor sense of direction. The chamber is riddled with traps at every turn, and careless heroes are likely to be skewered, crushed, or worse. Squares marked A, B, or C on the map are trapped, and any hero who enters one of these squares sets off the appropriate snare, described below. Once a trap has been triggered, it may not be set off again while the heroes remain in this chamber. Once they escape, the traps reset automatically.

#### SQUARE A

**Crushing Walls:** The hero who steps in this square feels the floor beneath him give slightly. The walls quiver momentarily as the flagstone holding them in check sinks below their bottom edge, allowing them to slam together, with the hero sandwiched between. A Ref save (DC 20) or Panache + Footwork roll (TN 25) allows the hero to escape unharmed. Otherwise, he suffers 5d6 damage in the former case, or 3k3 in the latter.

#### SQUARE B

**Bolt Trap:** When the hero enters this square, metal bolts fire down the length of the passage (originating from the nearest wall marked with a b). The hero who steps in this square may evade with a Ref save (DC 16) or Panache + Rolling (TN 20). If the first hero succeeds, anyone behind him becomes a potential target for the trap, and must make the same check to avoid it. Any hero who fails suffers 2d6 or 2k1 damage; if every hero succeeds, the bolts clatter harmlessly off the opposite wall.

#### SQUARE C

**Chamber Shift:** This trap does not harm the heroes directly, though it may confuse and separate them. When a hero enters this square, a nearby wall swings on a hidden hinge, slightly changing the layout of the maze. Any hero in a square adjacent to the wall’s new position may make attempt to move one square before the shift is complete. A successful Ref save (DC 16) or Panache + Footwork roll allows a hero in this position to choose which side of the wall he is on when it closes. There is no way to shift the wall back, save brute strength: a Strength check (DC 24) or Brawn roll (TN 35) allows a hero to reset the wall.



**Trigger:** The first hero to reach location D activates the trigger for this chamber, and is attacked by the guardian.

### *The Eleventh Chamber*

**Riddle:** “The final test: the test of valor. The prize is yours; come and claim it.”

**Chamber:** Resting on an ornate dais in the center of this chamber is the Prophet’s Cross, the key to Kheired-Din’s defeat. It is almost yours for the taking. Four clockwork golems stand sentry around the plinth, motionless — infinitely patient.

**Puzzle:** As soon as the heroes step toward the dais, the golems attack. Unlike prior chambers, the heroes are given no quarter. The golems fight until either they are destroyed, or the heroes are.

**Trigger:** The trigger in this room, unlike the prior ten, does not activate a guardian. Instead, with a rumble the heroes can feel vibrating through their chests, the rear wall parts, and sunlight and sand floods into the chamber. They have conquered the Maze of the Coruscites. The flow of sand ebbs, and the heroes clamber across the tiny dune to find the desert sun shining down on them.

### *Daylight*

It’s entirely likely that the heroes are attacked by Coruscites upon their emergence from the Maze, though it is unlikely that Kalem himself leads them. That said, it is only a token force left to guard the Maze. However, now that the PCs have conquered it, they have made an enemy of Kalem — particularly if they destroyed Kheired-Din’s cross. Surviving heroes would be wise to watch their backs in the future, lest they find Coruscite blades embedded there.

## *NPC Statistics for the Great Puzzle Maze*

### *Clockwork Golems*

These terrifying constructs serve as guardians of the Maze. Though physically imposing and utterly alien to the Théan eye, they are generally passive creatures — unless their charge is threatened. Interlopers may explore the Maze freely, but as the secrets of this ancient Syrneth site are unlocked, the clockwork golems gradually gain a semblance of life.

These terrible sentries are implacable and powerful, and may only be stopped through two means. First, their utter destruction: they must be not only torn asunder, but their components stripped and destroyed, for the Syrneth magic that binds them to the Maze also binds life in their parts and pieces. Each gear and cog slowly incorporates itself once more into a whole being, whereupon this creature resumes its lonely vigil.

The second option is one that only the bloodiest of souls would consider. The clockwork golems must be sustained by the lifeblood of intruders. While the maze stands empty, the guardians are dormant, and have no need for sustenance. However, as they stalk the corridors in search of prey, they expend precious magical energy. They attack intruders relentlessly until the party suffers a casualty, whereupon, the golem cradles the corpse against its torso, held in the vice like grip of its steel arms. Through darkest sorcery, the blood of the fresh corpse is absorbed into the golem, restoring the energy expended in destroying its victim. Once a clockwork golem



accomplishes this grisly deed, it rests, secure in the knowledge that its compatriots shall finish what it has begun. Particularly ruthless explorers may enter the maze with prisoners or dupes in order to sacrifice them to these soulless sentinels.

Kalem the Believer and his Coruscites have nothing to fear from the golems, as they have sworn their lives and destinies to protecting the Maze. The golems will never attack Kalem or any of his followers for any reason.

Clockwork golems are dormant until awakened by their respective chamber's triggers (as noted in the individual chamber descriptions, above). Once a golem is roused, it is a relentless combatant, and focuses on a single target to the exclusion of all else. This target is invariably the hapless soul who activated the chamber's trigger. The golem attacks his chosen victim relentlessly, only changing his target if its way is blocked. Even then, it is a temporary distraction: as soon as the golem destroys the obstruction, it returns its attention to its original target. The golem fights until either its target or itself is destroyed.

The destruction of one of these guardians is only a temporary solution; when one of the Maze chambers resets, its guardian is rebuilt by the ancient mechanisms. Each time the heroes enter a chamber of the Maze, they find an undamaged and pristine clockwork golem guarding the room.

### Clockwork Golem (d20™)

**Huge Construct**

**Hit Dice:** 12d10

**Initiative:** -1 (-1 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft. (can't run)

**AC:** 23 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +16 natural)

**Attacks:** 4 slams +9 melee

**Damage:** Slam 2d6+9

**Face/Reach:** 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Improved grab

**Special Qualities:** Construct, damage reduction 20/+2, magic immunity, reconstruction

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +8

**Abilities:** Str 28, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1

**Climate/Terrain:** Maze of the Coruscites only

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 12

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** None

### Combat

**Constructs:** Clockwork golems are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, disease, and similar effects. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Magic Immunity (Ex):** Clockwork golems are completely immune to all magical and supernatural effects.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** When a clockwork golem strikes a blow that reduces the target to 0 hit points or less, it may automatically grapple its victim. The golem only uses this ability against its chosen victim. Once the victim is grappled, the golem may perform a Coup de Grace on its next turn.

**Soul Drain (Ex):** Characters killed by a clockwork golem using its Improved Grab ability may not be resurrected by any means, as the victim's soul is consumed by the mechanical horror.

**Reconstruction:** The guardians of the Maze may not be destroyed, only temporarily rendered helpless by shattering them into their component parts. Once this is accomplished, a golem is helpless until the chamber it guards resets. Once this occurs, the chamber itself reconstructs the golem, pristine and undamaged. If the heroes return to any chamber a second or subsequent time, they find the golem restored to full hit points, and completely operational.

### Clockwork Golem — Villain (7th Sea™)

**TN:** 15

**Brawn:** 8, **Finesse:** 2, **Resolve:** 8, **Wits:** 2, **Panache:** 1

**Attack Roll:** 6k2 punch, 6k2 punch, 6k2 punch, 6k2 punch

**Damage:** 8k4

**Skills:** None

**Special Abilities:** Clockwork golems cannot be directly affected by sorcery. This does not prohibit (for example) a Porte mage from reaching through a portal to strike the creature, though Fate Witches find that the guardians have no fate strands on which to tug.

If a hero is ever knocked unconscious by a clockwork golem, the mechanical beast automatically grapples the hero and drains the life from him. Each round the hero is grappled, he must make a Resolve roll at a TN 20 to resist the draining, which increases by +5 each subsequent round. When a hero is killed in this fashion, his soul is completely consumed, and he may not be resurrected by any means.

### Sample Coruscite (d20™)

**Crescent Ranger 7:** CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d10+14; hp 60; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +8 Unarmored Defense Proficiency); Atks: scimitar +9/+4 melee (1d6+1), light crossbow +8/+3 ranged (1d8); SA Favored Enemy (animals, constructs), Provided by Nature, Track; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11; AL LN; Skills: Climb +4, Heal +6, Hide +10, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (Syrneth) +9, Move Silently +6, Ride +4, Search +6, Spot +6, Speak Language (Crescent, Théan [alternately, any two languages from your campaign]), Wilderness Lore +9; Feats: Alertness, Unarmored Defense Proficiency (beginner), Unarmored Defense Proficiency (intermediate), Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Note:** Alternately, you may replace Weapon Focus (scimitar) with Sulimaq I for one Coruscite in the group.

### Sample Coruscite — Henchman (7th Sea™)

**Brawn:** 3, **Finesse:** 2, **Wits:** 2, **Resolve:** 5, **Panache:** 2

**Reputation:** 0

**Background:** Obligation

**Arcana:** None

**Advantages:** Crescent (R/W), Théan (R/W), Warm Climate Conditioning

**Hunter:** Ambush 5, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Tracking 5, Traps 4

**Athlete:** Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Long Distance Running 5,

Side-step 4, Sprinting 3

**Crossbow:** Attack (Crossbow) 4, Fletcher 2

**Fencing:** Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 2

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 2

**Rider:** Ride 3

**Note:** A scimitar is a 2k2 weapon. Warm Climate Conditioning allows the Coruscite to take one less die of damage (-1k0) from Wounds inflicted due to hot weather; further details can be found in the *Crescent Empire* sourcebook.

# The Wreck of the Vigilant

In 947 AV a mysterious stranger known only as Bartholemew gifted the head of the Vaticine Church with a beautiful necklace of one hundred rubies formed into the shape of the cross and inlaid at the three main points with large amber cabochons. The Hierophant happily added the precious jewelry to his vast collection of wealth. As often happens with such treasures, much notoriety and fame built up around the piece. Legend said it belonged to the First Prophet while other stories placed it in the hands of the Second Prophet, who purportedly brought it with him from the Crescent Empire. Some stories attributed great healing powers at the same time that others swore the piece was cursed and death followed in its wake.

Naturally, the more lurid tales took hold and the necklace came to be known as “The Blood Cross;” it resided under the watchful eye of *die Kreuzritter* knights in Vodacce.

During the Hieros Wars of the tenth century the Third Prophet moved the seat of the Vaticine Church from Vodacce to Castille. While en route to their new home, three ships containing some of the Church’s most valuable treasures, including the infamous Blood Cross, were attacked by Vodacce pirates. Fortunately, members of *die Kreuzritter* defeated the attack and saved the treasures. The Hierophant rewarded their bravery by giving the Hochmeister the fabled Cross.

Almost four hundred years later, the *Kreuzritter* ship *Vigilant* headed to the Crescent Empire to re-establish ties with the original hospital their Order began so long ago. A series of terrible storms blew the ship off course and after many dark days of torrential rains and rough seas, the *Vigilant* began to take on water. She went down off the coast of the Dakalan’ya, just west of Zafara in the Crescent Empire. Great wealth and knowledge supposedly lay in its hold when it sank — including the ancient Blood Cross.

## The Wreck

Almost 250 years have passed since the *Vigilant* was lost; however, due to the nature of her demise, her sleep was never quiet. The first to search for the *Vigilant* were members of *die Kreuzritter* who had been awaiting her arrival. After months of gathering information from sailors and merchants, a group of eight set out from Zafara to find the lost ship. Unfortunately, they found no trace of it.

Soon after, word began to circulate about a secret hideout in the Forbidden Sea, shaped like a ship. The remains of the wrecked *Vigilant* had apparently reached land somewhere, and its bulk made the perfect hideaway. Its resting-place, an atoll away from the main trade routes, covered with jagged rock formations and dense jungle, was most inhospitable to merchant vessels. Pirates, on the other hand, found it a safe haven where treasure could be stored, supplies of food and water replenished and, most importantly, naval vessels avoided.

To ensure the anonymity of the hideout — and to prevent bloody fights over its possession — the pirate captains who used it took oaths to protect the “Vigilant Atoll” from being discovered by any other than themselves. Only one map was drawn up and only one crew and ship was allowed to use the

atoll for a season. Each guardian crew could use the wreck in any way they saw fit, as long as they adhered to three rules.

1. The residing crew had to make all repairs and keep the wreck and atoll in good condition.
2. Only the captain could look at the map. The penalty for anyone else was immediate death.
3. Under threat of complete annihilation, no crew could go near the wreck unless they had the map.

At the end of a season, when the captains came together once again, lots were drawn to see who would receive the map for the next season, with the understanding that no one could hold it for two successive seasons. For many pirates, this system worked well. A ship could make routine attacks along the trade routes, then duck back into the hideout on the atoll, with military scouting ships none the wiser and no unwelcome competition. One could have quite a profitable season this way.

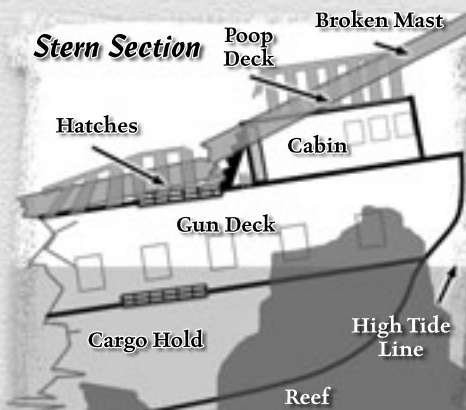
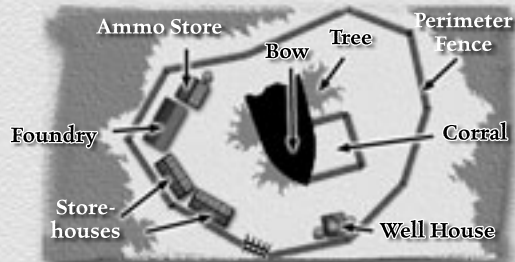
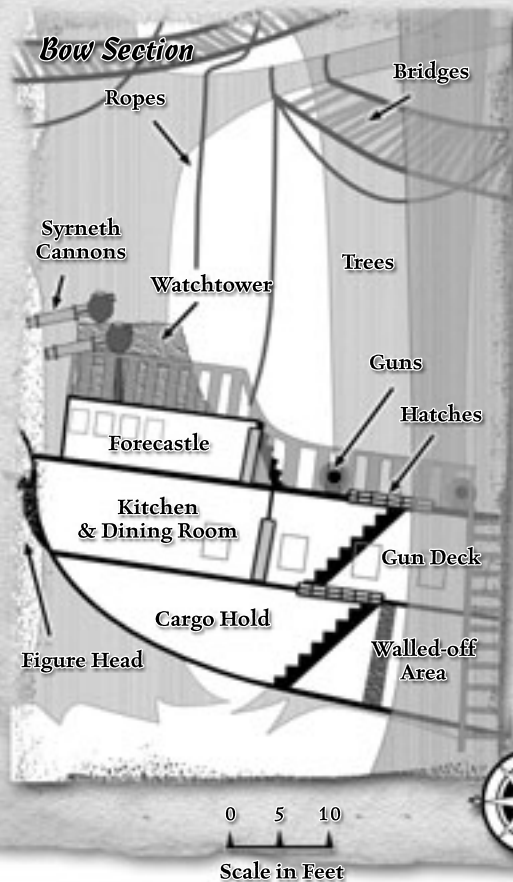
Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, greed overtook them and it was only a few years before the captains were bickering over the use of the atoll. In 1655, Alessandro de la Hoya, captain of the Castillian *Bruja Negra*, was slowly going mad. He regained possession of the map just two years after holding it for a season, and decided that he would not surrender it at the end of the year. Paranoia led him to believe that the other captains were coming to get him and the map, so to avoid this eventuality, he served himself and his crew poisoned rum. Sitting behind his desk, he sipped the deadly liquor, and wrote in his captain’s log while the groans and wails of his dying men echoed in the dark, moonless night.

His last message, scrawled across the page read, “She is too precious to me. If I cannot have her for my own, then none shall have her.” He placed the log in a bottle and threw it out to sea, where it was found many months later by a passing merchant ship. Word soon spread, and without the map, the other captains could not reach the atoll. The wreck languished for years, a near-legend whispered about over tavern fires.

Then, by the grace of Theus, the wreck of the *Vigilant* became a haven for a lone survivor of another drowned ship. While sailing the trade route to the Crescent Empire, a Vodacce ship came upon a rugged longboat floating off its port. In the boat was a man, apparently an Avalonian from his looks, lying sunburned and near death amongst books, scrolls and one plain satchel. He clutched the bag fiercely as the Vodacce crew hauled him on board. They gathered his meager belongings and nursed him back to health as best they could. In his delirium, the castaway mumbled about a ship that had been tossed into the jungle trees and how, through some wondrous miracle, it had become a home.

As he recovered, the man introduced himself as John Neder, a schoolteacher from Carleon, and told his rescuers wild stories about his adventures at sea and his yearlong stay at a tiny island with a ship in the jungle. He described how most of the furniture was rough-hewn although some were quite luxurious. In the lower decks, he found casks of wine, rum and food stores enough to feed a man for many years. When the high tide filled the cavernous bowels of the ship with fish and water, it also brought frightening monsters and hideous ghouls.

# The Vigilant



He told about fantastical wonders and treasures he discovered while trying to find a way off the island. He spoke of beautiful maidens who came to him at night, dancing and singing at the water's edge, but never venturing on dry land. He spoke of glittering roads that led up to the sky and caverns that glittered like diamonds. He explored the tunnels as far as he dared, and swore on his mother's heart that he had heard children laughing and running in the passageways ahead of him. In a momentary state of amazement, he said, he had wondered if he had found a pathway to a magical land spoken of in fairy tales. But, he asked, how could a grown man believe such nonsense?

The Vodacce sailors, being suspicious by nature, asked for proof.

"Show us these treasures. Open that sack your guard so jealously. Let us look at those scrolls, so that we too might travel there."

Neder grew angry and pushed violently at them refusing to let them come near his precious satchel.

"NO!" he cried. "You cannot! Too powerful, too powerful. I will not be responsible."

The crazed Avalonian screamed and fell to the floor, writhing in pain and foaming at the mouth. His knuckles turned white with the effort of clutching the satchel to his chest. The sailors, recognizing the signs of long-term exposure to the sun, concluded the man was mad. They shrugged their shoulders, did what they could to ease his pain, and dropped him off at the next port.

A year after being rescued, Neder returned at last to Avalon and took his finds to the Explorer's Society. He told them the stories of fantastical treasures and creatures never seen by man. The secretary, looking at Neder's diminished frame and ragged clothing, took him for another drunk looking to make quick money by selling the Society cheap trinkets. Neder, seeing the man's skepticism, opened the satchel carefully and took out a jeweled arm cuff and three small rings.

The secretary swallowed hard and sent for the Senior Explorer, Raz Dahabeed. As the Crescent Explorer carefully inspected the ring, Neder explained that these were but a few of many treasures he had found on the isle. Neder left the jewels with the Society but could not be persuaded to give up his scrolls and books. Realizing that he could not reason with an insane man, Dahabeed dismissed him but asked him to return in a week or so to discuss the details of the atoll. Neder came back once or twice, spending several hours each time telling his tale to Dahabeed. The Crescent scholar was fascinated and, having been born in a land full of tales, he knew how to glean information from the crazy castaway. With Neder's help, he managed to sketch a rough map, which he researched with his colleagues. So far no one has found the atoll, but the map Dahabeed devised may get a crew closer to it than anyone has been since John Neder.

## The Vigilant

On the day of her demise, the *Vigilant* hit rough waters at noon. By three, she was listing heavy to starboard and taking on water. The captain had already lost a quarter of his crew to 80-foot waves and the mizzenmast was badly damaged by wind and rain. By late evening, the storm reached its peak and the captain had no idea how far they had ventured off course. The mizzenmast cracked and the starboard planks weakened just below the main mast. The stress of the storm tore at the wood, and water leaked in from all around.

Suddenly a huge 90-foot wave hit the *Vigilant*, sending her flailing sideways. Without warning, another wave, as large if not larger than the first, hit the ship with such force that the mizzenmast tore off completely, pulling the poop house with it. The ship spun a full 180 degrees. The next wave finished the *Vigilant*. The starboard breach gave way and the vessel ripped in two like a paper toy. The storm tossed the three-masted caravel into the air and sent her broken pieces crashing into a small atoll.

The bean-shaped atoll is 12 miles in diameter and consists mostly of jungle and craggy beaches. The jungle runs right up to the water line in places. The atoll curves inward on the westerly side, forming a slight indentation with just enough bend to form a small lagoon. Here the water is shallow and marine life is abundant. There is a small strip of sand that runs approximately 50 yards inland before the jungle begins.

The sand and silt that has built up in the center of the atoll is rich with nutrients so the nearby trees are three times their normal size. Fallen trunks as wide as sailing vessels litter the atoll. Other brush and foliage are abnormally large. Flowering bushes have buds as big as carriage wheels and leaves larger than a kitchen table dwarfs any of the mammals and other odd creatures that inhabit this place.

The ship's bow lodged here between three monstrous trees. Over the centuries, smaller (albeit formidable) saplings from the original behemoths have grown up around her. Sometimes great roots and limbs have pushed through the remains of the ship. Lichen and vine cover almost everything from the spritsail to what is left of the fore mast.

Just outside the inner sanctum of the lagoon, harsh cliffs rise up. Formed from coral and centuries of silt, sand and shell, huge boulders jut out from the razor-sharp rock face. Both outer walls of the lagoon are like this, but more so to the east. The rest of the atoll is mostly coral, but the jungle bursts forth intermittently throughout the northern shores. For the most part, the reef is sharp, jagged and extremely dangerous to passing ships.

The ship's stern, while still in fairly good shape and held tightly within a fist of rocks, was ill favored for living purposes: the hold and part of the gun deck spend a portion of the day half-buried by high tides. The only two areas above water most are the cabin and part of the gunroom. All munitions and guns were looted long ago by earlier bands of pirates. The remains of the mizzenmast blocked the entrance to the cabin, so anything stashed there remained a mystery and it soon became clear that this part of the ship was not for the faint of heart.

No one stays near the stern for very long. The wood is still rotting in places and barely stable enough to hold the weight of a trim man; the stench is sickening and the pirates who stayed here spoke of ghouls and ghosts that roam on board at night in search of human flesh. Some say that on certain holy days, the cabin glows with an eerie crimson light.

Three to six months out of the year, a rare breed of siren inhabits the stern. They look forward to the tender morsels of human flesh, now and then, but tend to follow pods of dolphins and whales that traverse these waters. When the sea mammals move on for the season, so do the sirens. They dwell in the skeleton of the stern, eating and breeding, and their stench is enough to keep most away. Not even high tide can eliminate the smell of rotting fish, and Theus knows what other remains the slovenly creatures might have left behind.

Brave explorers who time their visit well, might come away with many treasures, both in knowledge and wealth. Some remnants of books and parchments remain in the area and an occasional gold or jeweled trinket still washes up onto the rocks nearby, especially after a storm.

The bow of the *Vigilant*, however, is a sight to behold. Even now, when one looks on the wreck for the first time, it sometimes appears a mirage. From a distance, it looks as if a fierce flying warrior is coming down out of the trees. On further inspection, it is simply the figurehead of an avenging angel. Behind the figurehead there looks to be a complete ship, the back of the vessel hidden by the dense growth of jungle. On a windy day, drunken pirates would swear that the ship appeared to be sailing on a sea of green and that the ocean is the mirage. They crossed themselves and prayed to Theus that they hadn't crossed into the 7th Sea!

Under the care of Johann Van der Bortner, a crewmember of a Vendel pirate ship, the wreck became more than rotting planks and broken timber. In his "past life" as he called it, Van der Bortner was an architect of some renown. In his second year at sea, his captain had rights to the atoll. One of the first things he noted was that the wreck was in bad state of disrepair.

Using the unnaturally light yet sturdy wood from the trees and the extremely strong fibers of the vines growing around the wreck, Van der Bortner constructed intricate rope ladders and bridges that he suspended above the bow wreckage. Many of the branches in the upper canopy of the trees were as wide as a cart path. Van der Bortner devised dwellings for the captain and crew high in the branches to keep them safe from the wild animals and unknown dangers which lurked in the black jungle behind the wreck. In the boughs of the trees, many a sailor could sleep peacefully.

Crude pulley systems hoisted the crew up to the first set of branches. From there, using the ladders and rope pulls Van der Bortner designed, a sailor could traverse quite a distance among the five or so trees surrounding the wreckage.

The captain of the Vendel ship was so impressed with Van der Bortner's designs that he requested the architect-turned-pirate to show him designs for improving the wreck itself. Little could be done to the bowsprit, and the spritsail was rotting, so Van der Bortner focused first on the forecabin. Noting its strategic view, he designed a lookout tower of sorts. On the forecabin's roof he added an additional place for two Syrneth cannon to be mounted. These cannon, confiscated from an earlier raid, added protection and ensured that no encroaching naval vessel would return to tell the tale of the pirate's hideout.

Next, Van der Bortner concentrated on the spar deck. Since it was not practical to use the original gun deck of a land-locked ship (or what was left of it), he moved the remaining guns to the spar along with ammunition, cannon balls and other weaponry. The gunroom was turned into storage rooms for food, provisions and fresh water. Van der Bortner also created two additional rooms out of the old

gunroom space, one for a dining area for the captain and his lieutenants and the other as the Captain's mess where the cook could cater to any captain's culinary demands.

The cargo hold was used for its original intent. The back of the hold, wedged tightly against the trees, was unsafe, so Van der Bortner, without even exploring the area, had a third of the hold walled up and sealed. He feared that even the smallest intrusion into that space would be disaster. What remained of the hold was used for loot.

Completing his work both above and inside the bow wreckage, Van der Bortner tore down the crude huts built by previous occupants. He set up a perimeter fence, encircling the sides of the ship, the trees and about two acres of cleared jungle. Within the enclosure, Van der Bortner built a well house, a corral for any animals they recovered during raids, stores for wood and dried meats, a small munitions room and even a foundry for melting down any precious metals they "recovered."

To accommodate loot from successful raids in the atoll, Van der Bortner planned to create three major tunnels with veins branching off to various areas of the atoll. These would provide extra storage space for the loot and allow for easy escape to the opposite side of the island if the need arose. A captain could moor his ship on the other side of the island, safe from the eyes of trespassing vessels, and travel to the wreckage safely. Also, if there was an attack and all else failed the captain and crew could escape undetected.

The first tunnel began behind the trees surrounding the wreck and ended high above the sea in the cliff face on the opposite side of the atoll. Crude stone steps chiseled in the cliff wall lead down to a small jetty where longboats could be moored. Two minor tunnels branched off of this main tunnel. One went east toward another small beach where fishing was good; the other headed west ending at the juncture of five storage caverns. All manner of pirate loot were stored here.

A second major tunnel headed west crisscrossing the first tunnels somewhere in the center of the atoll. Van der Bortner designed the intersection so that it would be difficult for anyone to follow. An antechamber with openings all around the circle made it difficult to choose which way to go and even more difficult not to get lost. It was not unheard of to step across skeletons of foolish sailors more greedy than bright.

If one could choose the proper entryway, he would come out into another five-entry chamber. One entry led deep into the densest part of the jungle. Another was used mostly for storage, a third led to pools of fresh water, a fourth to groves of fruit trees and still another to parts of the atoll not yet explored.

The tunneling expeditions were not without their share of failures. A new vein sometimes collapsed, and vicious bats or large lethal spiders claimed many victims. Occasionally strange noises, sounding like screams and moans, emanated from within the tunnel walls. Sailors regarded these as bad omens and many refused to work in the tunnels. Only threat of severe punishment and, at times, death, kept the project going.

Van der Bortner's contributions to restore the *Vigilant* to her new purpose won him the unique right to return to the island repeatedly over ten years to complete more work as well as supervise the maintenance of the current buildings and structures. He oversaw the digging of two tunnels and had completed the third just over halfway, when his time on

the atoll came to an end. He died in 1653 and is buried beneath the figurehead of the avenging angel. Whether the third tunnel was ever completed has not been determined. The golden age of the atoll's piracy days ended two years later with de la Hoya and the destruction of the map.

## The Atoll

Once they felt more secure in their annual home, some pirates began to explore the atoll, discovering both dangers and delights.

Much of the wildlife consists of small creatures: deer and wild goats live near the interior of the atoll. Occasionally, a sailor come across a boar or pig although no one knows for certain how these animals came to be on the atoll. Perhaps they are the only survivors of previous wrecks. A variety of wild fowl also provide a steady supply of meat for the inhabitants of the atoll. Strange birds taller than a man have been found roaming in a clearing west of the wreck. They do not fly, but their speed and fierce clawed feet make them a delicacy on the atoll. A sailor able to catch one bare-handed is considered a hero among his brethren.

Sweet exotic fruits and rich savory gourds are plentiful. Fresh water has been found to the northwest of the wreck. Roots, boiled properly, make wonderful teas and some men found that the leaves of a particular plant can be dried and cured into a mild narcotic pipe weed. A couple of entrepreneurial seamen were able to rig a small still with which to concoct an interesting variation of rum.

To many, it is paradise.

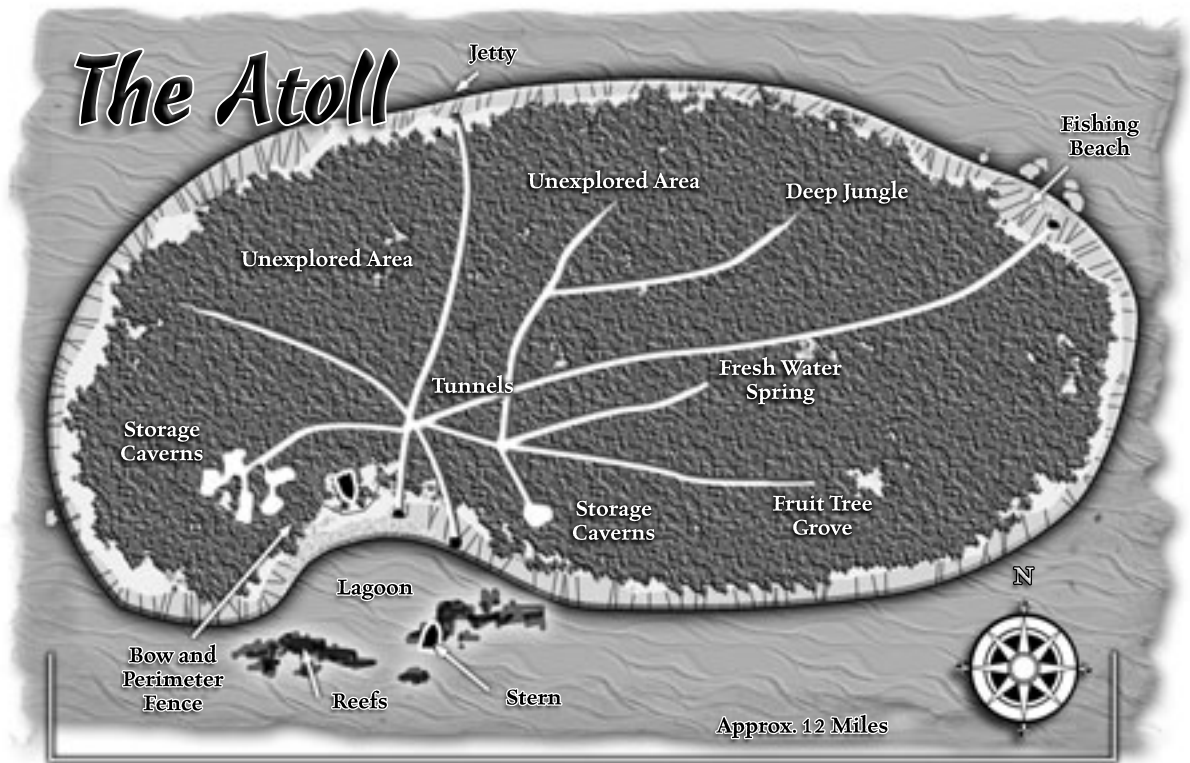
The beauty is also lethal. A small blue snake, the size of a man's palm, carries a deadly venom. Bats as large as vultures dwell in the caves close to the Eastern shore. Some of the plants can be quite dangerous as well. Poisonous thorns and rash-producing bristles have caused many deaths and sicknesses over the years.

Stories about ghosts and ghouls are actually true; due to her untimely demise, the wreck of *Vigilant* has produced many wandering entities. The stern holds the spirits of dead *die Kreuzritter* knights who are still waiting and wanting to wage war against sin and evil. While most ghosts are harmless and indeed remained unseen by all save a few lone wanderers, the ghost of de la Hoya (see page 90) is dangerous. He is liable to lurk anywhere on the atoll, including in the tunnels, and has been known to literally scare a man to death. Already suffering from staggering madness when he died, he is now on the verge of becoming an even greater terror as his feasting on fear gives him great power.

One of the most surprising discoveries was that there are other inhabitants on the island.

For years no one thought there were other humans living there. When venturing to the northern part of the island, not far from where the original tunnel opens to the sea, seven sailors found small footprints in the mud. Upon further investigation, the men found tiny huts arranged in a small circle. Crude weapons were propped against the walls of one of the huts and a small fire smoldered in the center of the circle. The occupants were nowhere to be found. The men wandered further into the jungle hoping to find them. Without warning, the band was attacked with darts and spears. Only three men made it back to the tunnel, one of them badly hurt. They reported to the captain what they had seen although he did not believe them until much later.





The men reported that wild, dark “children” had attacked them. The captain, furious with his men for telling such an outrageous drunken story, insisted on being taken to this place immediately. This time ten men plus the captain and two of the original party set out. When they arrived at the little village, the horror they beheld haunted them for years to come. The heads of three of their companions were set on pikes, while the remainders of their bodies were roasting on spits. A fourth sailor was lying on the ground, his legs and arms missing. The little people were chopping at the rest of him amidst his feeble screams and cries.

The captain drew his pistol and put the dying man out of his misery. The pygmies set upon the pirates as viciously as it had the first. But the crew was no match for these small quick creatures who could vanish into the brush. The remaining crewmembers fled quickly to the tunnel and tried to seal the entrance but it was too late. The pygmies were clever and began wandering through the new tunnels. Fortunately, they have never figured out how to get all the way out to the wreck. Many a sailor is thankful to Van der Bortner’s ingenuity and sleeps better because of it — at least for now.

Pygmies are not the only creatures that keep the sailors in the canopy of the trees at night. Many years ago, in the early days of the piratical presence at the atoll, the resident pirate crew attacked an Explorer ship carrying curious and extravagant artifacts from the Crescent Empire. The sailors opened a few of the crates, and found gold and silver objects, many encrusted with jewels. They looted as much as they could before reboarding their ship and returning to the atoll. Once back at the wreck, the captain and his lieutenants investigated the booty. When the last crate was opened, they found a small box inside, containing a large cylindrical object with curved, rounded edges. It was deep purple mottled with

ochre. The captain searched for an opening in the object but found none. It was completely smooth all around. Deciding it had no value, the captain replaced the object in the box and threw it in with the rest of the loot to be stored in the newly-dug tunnel rooms.

Weeks later, when some of the crew went back to the tunnel room to stash more loot inside, they found the room in a complete shambles. The small box had been destroyed and the oddity was gone. The captain questioned the crew, but all denied having gone into the tunnels without permission.

A few more weeks passed when sailors guarding the tunnels began to notice the remains of small rodents and animals scattered here and there. As time passed, larger remains were found. One day, when walking back from the stern of the wreck of the *Vigilant*, two sailors came upon the half-eaten carcass of a siren. They rushed back to report their find to the captain. Guards began to patrol the area.

For a while nothing more happened except the occurrence of occasional remains in the tunnel. Then one night while drinking and gambling, the men heard roars and screams coming from the jungle. A trio went to investigate but never returned.

The next time, the captain sent more men to patrol. Again, they were attacked. After that, the captain made sure that everyone was in the canopy by dusk. Still trying to catch, or at least get a look at this beast, the captain and a few of his men positioned themselves in small trees close to the site of the last attack. They tied a small goat to the tree and waited. In the early hours of morning, they felt a tremendous vibration rising up from the ground. Before them they saw small trees being pushed over and dense brush parted as easily as if it were swept away by the wind. A foul stench filled the air,

gagging and choking them. One man lost his lost balance and fell close to the terrified goat. All movement stopped as the creature sensed its prey. With lightening speed, the thing moved quickly over the ground and was upon the goat and man before the horrified captain and his crew could react. The man screamed in terror. The beast let out a deep resounding bellow that boomed like thunder. The man's screams were muffled as the creature swallowed him whole, then made a sickening slurping noise sound like sand grating against many metal gears.

Gathering their wits, the men fired on the creature whose thunderous roars were deafening. In anger, it pounded at the trees trying to shake them loose. For survival they dropped their weapons and held on tightly. In the darkness, the captain and crew could only make out a cylindrical blob shape and bright yellow glowing eyes. After several minutes, the creature tired of the game, turned quietly and lumbered off. The men continued to hold onto the trees in despair and horror as the desperate screams of their friend echoed faintly from inside the creature's stomach.

For a long time the men did not venture outside the compound. After a few years, the sailors were able to discern a pattern. The creature hunted at night and was extremely hungry. Once it found its prey and was satiated, it would not hunt again for several weeks. It apparently had the ability to store food internally for a long time. No one has ever seen the creature up close or by daylight. The only description anyone has ever recorded is that it has bright yellow eyes, a massive shape of some ten feet high and about 20 feet long. It is very dark with a mottled skin that blends into its surroundings. Other than that, nothing else is known. No one is brave enough to venture out to investigate this still unnamed creature at close proximity.

## Game Master Secrets

**Warning:** Information below is for the GM only.

The information about *die Kreuzritter* launching a campaign to find the *Vigilant* is well-known. What is not known is that they succeeded in their quest. Not only did they locate the wreck quickly, they soon determined the best way to preserve most of the recovered articles.

At the time, there was no haven for *die Kreuzritter* so the expedition voted to find a safe hiding place on the atoll itself. Many scrolls and books (more historical and theological) were left where they were found on the ship. Articles of alien design or deemed potentially dangerous were removed and secured in a secret compartment fitted into the back of the cargo hold. They buried the remaining wealth in the loose sand of the cargo hold.

It was much more difficult to gain access to the stern. Even the brave knights could not recover much from that section of the hold, and their search revealed no sign of the Blood Cross. They assumed that it was either lost at sea during the storm or buried in the mud and muck stirred up when the wreck hit the rocks.

This was most distressing because the Order only learned the true nature of the Blood Cross shortly before its disbanding. The stranger who had come to the Hierophant was actually a *Thalusai*, a race of *Syrne* who plotted the overthrow

of humanity (see *die Kreuzritter*,™ pages 101–106, or *Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*,™ pages 75–76). Sensing weakness in the prelate, the *Thalusai* gave him the Cross knowing it would remain safe in the rich man's vault.

After the demise and the re-establishment of the secret society, *die Kreuzritter* members learned about the stranger's identity. They didn't know what the Blood Cross could do, but they knew that no good could come from it. By this time, the pirates had discovered the atoll and laid claim to it. *Die Kreuzritter* knew that it must be guarded at all times, but secretly, so members quietly infiltrated each of the pirate crews, two or three at a time. Their kept guard for any sailors or explorers who might venture too close to the hidden documents and treasures. Discovery of these items was an instant death sentence, no questions asked.

One such member was Johann Van der Bortner. While he appeared to work towards the wreckage habitable and digging, he was also installing secret doors and hidden compartments in every room he redesigned. Any strange or suspect artifact the pirates recovered or stole mysteriously "disappeared" soon after they brought it to the wreck. Hidden doors within the tunnels lead to more secret chambers. Many tunnels exist beneath the known tunnels and create a catacomb of sorts where *die Kreuzritter* members could hide items and munitions of their own, and when the occasion arose, hide the body of a too-curious sailor.

The only person to venture onto the island and escape from the omniscient Order was John Neder — actually a Knight himself gone mad from traversing the paths. After his visit to the Explorer's Society, *die Kreuzritter* decided Neder was lethal and followed him to Carleon where they killed him in his sleep. They were almost discovered by Neder's landlord and had to make a hasty escape before securing his satchel. Much to their chagrin, they were unable to recover it in the weeks following and it subsequently disappeared. To this day they still search for it.

Naturally, Game Masters can use the atoll's tunnels and secret compartments for their own ends. *Die Kreuzritter* often used secret symbols and signs to mark entrances and left coded messages for future generations; the artifacts they left in these caverns may be quite ingenious... or useless junk... or actively dangerous depending on the GM's will

## Adventure Ideas

We have deliberately included a variety of adventure ideas centered around the wreck of the *Vigilant*. Treacherous pirates, secret societies, pygmies, invisible monsters, and ghosts can be quite overwhelming, regardless of the campaign. It is assumed that the GM will not use all of them, but merely pick and choose which threads work the best for him, and ignore the rest.

- The wreck of the *Vigilant* provides openings for numerous adventures just on the atoll alone. With the various creatures and ghouls, hack-and-slash gamers will enjoy the thrill of the hunt. For explorer types, there are many areas to dig around in and there is no end to the discoveries that could be made. But how do you get your group there?

- One way, tried and true, might be to let them come across a bottle washed up on the shore. Inside is a crude map drawn on thin bark and accompanied by a gorgeous bejeweled trinket. With map in hand, they can acquire a ship and launch into the adventure.



- The Explorer's Society might hire the party to go to the atoll using Dahabeed's map. They could furnish a ship, a captain and even a senior member of the Society if the characters wish. They want to recover artifacts and will pay handsomely for the party's services. It seems like a very honest and open business deal — at first — but what happens if one of their “employers” is not who he claims?
- In the years that followed the pirate days, settlers from the Crescent Empire may have set up a small community there. They followed the “old ways” and their primitive yet enlightened style is reminiscent of very early Aldiz'ahali. They built temples and worshiped the figurehead of the wreck who pointed to the stars. Over time, corruption and greed began to undermine the community. Fearing that the Unnamed Creature was a symbol of their wickedness, they sacrificed to it, simple offerings of fresh produce at first and then something more serious.
- A group of “survivors” is living in the wreck. But, to give it a gothic twist, this “family” is a group of Thalusai, searching for their lost cross. Everything seems sweet and innocent on the surface: a Vendel family marooned on the atoll has survived remarkably well for the last few years. They are thankful for the party's arrival and are excited about the chance to leave and return to their homeland. But underneath there is dark and dreadful horror. For some odd reason they continually find reasons to delay your party. The father is obsessed with finding a missing cross that “was lost when they washed up on shore.” Will the party help the nefarious creatures, or uncover their evil scheme?
- The party is convinced that the Unnamed Creature is evil, but what if it was created to “protect” the cross from getting into the hands of the Thalusai? Your party could spend days trying to sort out the truth.

## Monster Statistics for The Wreck of the Vigilant

### Alessandro de la Hoya

De la Hoya was a great captain and an even greater pirate. His strength lay in his ability to control his men with his charismatic personality and strong will as well as his keen swordsmanship. The men of the *Bruja Negra* respected de la Hoya without even realizing it.

After suffering a serious bout of Black Fever, however, de la Hoya's personality began to change. The initial symptoms were forgetfulness and occasional black-outs, but then more serious fits of rage and paranoia overcame him. By the time the *Bruja Negra* had rights to the atoll, de la Hoya was deep in the labyrinth of madness. Only his sheer force of will kept this insanity a secret.

After he drank the poisoned rum (see page 84), mental clarity came to him like a lightning bolt. When he saw what had befallen his crew, he began to search for the madman that killed them, never realizing that it was he.

Years passed before Alessandro realized he was dead. Only when Neder told him did he realize it. Part of the horror that Neder experienced came about from the agony and rage de la Hoya directed at him when told of his fate.

Now he has come to terms with his “condition” and for the most part, acts as if nothing has changed. He is cordial to PCs, helpful if it suits him and a font of knowledge about the history of the atoll. But the insanity has never completely left him. He may suddenly become sly and paranoid over the least little thing, or pop up in front of a PC at the most inopportune times (like the middle of a duel, right in front of the PC’s face). The madness that ended his life only comes out whenever he is angered, frustrated or upset. De la Hoya can be a welcomed ally or a deadly nuisance, depending upon his whims.

### **Alessandro de la Hoya (120”)**

**Medium-sized Ghost**

**Hit Dice:** 10d12 (65 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 10 when ethereal, 11 (+1 Dex) when manifesting.

Attacks are touch based and ignore armor.

**Attacks:** Weapons (sword) +10 melee

**Damage:** None except through intimidation

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Terrifying presence, corrupting touch (gains a +5 Will)

**Special Qualities:** Rejuvenation (reforms in 2d6 days), ghost immunities (cannot be killed by material or magical boundaries), persuasion (+3 whenever de la Hoya tries to convince an opponent to do/not to do an action).

**Saves:** Fort. +2, Ref +3, Will +12

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 13, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 15

**Skills:** None

**Feats:** None

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**Climate:** Bound to the atoll of the wreck of the Vigilant

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 10

**Treasure:** Special (knows whereabouts of the Blood Cross)

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

### **Alessandro de la Hoya — Villain (7th Sea™)**

**Brawn:** 2, **Finesse:** 3, **Resolve:** 3, **Wits:** 2, **Panache:** 3

**TN to be hit:** 15

**Attack roll:** None

**Damage roll:** None

**Skills:** None

**Special:** Alessandro possesses the Unnerving Countenance (Hideous) Advantage, which he may activate and deactivate at will. It gives him a Fear Rating of 1 and gains a +3k3 bonus to Intimidation attempts. Alessandro cannot be harmed by normal weapons, though Syrneath artifacts, Sidhe weapons, and the like may inflict damages as normal (GM’s discretion). A successful attack made by someone with the Faith Advantage automatically inflicts a Dramatic Wound, without rolling for damage (GM’s discretion).

### **Pygmy**

The pygmies are an abomination of Crescent magic gone wrong. A mage from Zafara concocted them in the hope of making a new race of slaves: docile, but intelligent enough to grant companionship as well as service. Unfortunately, the experiment went awry and he got just the opposite. The results were like frenzied little children, always moving, always exploring. Their curious little minds absorbed every-

thing he showed them. They were happy for the most part, but could become violent when angered.

As they grew, this frantic mental state made them more unstable. Their appetite for meat also increased. When the local farmers began to miss sheep and goats, the mage knew he had to do something. Before they caused more serious mischief, he took them to an atoll in the middle of the sea and dumped them. This was his first mistake. When the creatures realized what their master was doing, they turned on him, killed him, and ate his flesh with child-like satisfaction.

The mage’s second mistake was that he gave them the ability to breed. Now the atoll has a population of approximately 100 pygmies with a somewhat evolved culture of hunter/fishermen. Though afraid of the water, their cleverness helped them devise ways to hunt and fish using simple tools.

They are cannibals, but will eat whatever they can find. Since they have had a taste of human flesh, they go into a frenzy whenever they get the chance to “hunt” them. They are extremely fast and can climb and swing effortlessly through the trees and underbrush of the jungle. Fire, modern weapons and unusual gadgets can stop an attack and/or frighten them away. Standing only about 3½ feet tall, they also drown easily.

They have recently discovered the Van der Bortner tunnels. While they travel them extensively, their sense of navigation without landmarks is not developed. Often disoriented and confused in the tunnels, they may travel the same path several times before tracking onto a new one. So far they have not figured out the path that will lead them to the wreck, keeping the *Vigilant* and any occupants safe from their attack... for now.

### **Pygmy (120”)**

**Small Humanoid**

**Hit Dice:** 4d8 (30 hp)

**Initiative:** (+2 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex)

**Attacks:** Spear +7 melee, dartgun +8 ranged

**Damage:** Spear 1d8+3, dart 1d4 (+5 if poisoned)

**Face/Reach:** 5ft. By 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** Poison if used in darts

**Special Qualities:** None

**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 7

**Skills:** Hide +7, Move Silently +7, Listen +9, Spot +12, Search +2

**Feats:** None

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**Climate:** Inner jungle of the atoll

**Organization:** Typically in groups (10-15)

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Treasure:** (unknown) *see above*

**Alignment:** Always chaotic neutral

### **Pygmy — Brute (7th Sea™)**

*10 per pack*

**Threat Rating:** 3

**Usual Weapons:** Small (Spears and Darts)

**TN to be hit:** 15

**Skills:** Ambush 4, Footwork 3, Stealth 3, Tracking 3

## Thalusai

Information on the Thalusai can be found in *die Kreuzritter*,™ pages 101–106 and *Heroes, Villains, and Monsters*,™ pages 75–76. Their statistics are reprinted here for your convenience.

### Thalusai (d20™)

**Medium-Sized Shapechanger**

**Hit Dice:** 6d8 + 24 (48 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (+3 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 23 (+3 Dex, +10 natural)

**Attacks:** 2 lens blades (+5 enchanted weapons) +9 melee

**Damage:** Lens blades (+5 enchanted weapons) 1d8 +9

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** None

**Special Qualities:** Damage resistance 5/Sidhe weapons, spell resistance 10

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +11

**Abilities:** Str 18, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 25, Wis 25, Cha 10

**Skills:** Bluff +25

**Feats:** Ambidexterity, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Two Weapon Fighting

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**Climate/Terrain:** Any city

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 7

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always evil

**Advancement:** By character type

### Combat

**Shape Change:** The Thalusai are well aware that infiltrating Terra would be impossible in their natural forms, and they do not yet have the strength to risk exposure to the Sidhe. Imitation, however, is the sincerest form of invasion. A Thalusai who has assumed human form can be constructed using the standard rules for character creation, and is usually around seventh or eight level. Only if a Thalusai is forced to reveal itself will the heroes face it in its true form, which uses the statistics displayed above. The Bluff skill listed is used for both forms; it overrides the disguised Thalusai's normal Bluff skill check when the Thalusai is attempting to conceal its true nature.

### Thalusai — Villain (7th Sea™)

**TN to be Hit:** Varies by Skill

**Brawn:** 3–6, **Finesse:** 2–5, **Resolve:** 2–5, **Wits:** 1–4, **Panache:** 1–4

**Attack roll:** Varies by Skill

**Damage roll:** Varies by Attack, Barehanded damage is 0k2

**Skills:** Any, Ranks 1–5, Parry (Chitin Plate) 3

Thalusai are designed in the same way as any character. They receive +2 Brawn, +1 Finesse, and +1 Resolve. Their maximum Brawn is 6, while their maximum Wits and Panache are 4 (although these numbers can be modified by Advantages). They have access to any non-nationality-specific Advantages the GM is willing to let them buy. They also receive all the abilities above for free. Their main drawback is that Civil Skills and Knacks cost twice as much as normal to purchase and later advance; they automatically receive the Parry (Chitin Plate) Knack at Rank 3 for free. Thalusai may not purchase Sorcery, Shamanism, or an Arcana, and they do not receive Drama dice.

## The Unnamed Creature

No one really knows what the Unnamed Creature is. It is approximately 20–30 feet long and 10–12 feet high, and looks something like a cross between a giant slug and a gelatinous blob without a definitive front or back. The top and bottom of the creature taper off into vicious tendrils that whip around and knock a man senseless. These tendrils can extend 10 ft from the main body of the creature.

Because its yellow eyes blend in with the yellow spots and shapes that cover its deep plum-colored body, no one has determined whether it has a true face. It can engulf its prey from either end of its voluminous mouths/tails. It is asexual, laying one egg in its lifetime, which it will care for until the new creature hatches. Once the new creature hatches the older one will die, thus providing nourishment for the fledgling.

The Creature is nocturnal and spends the daytime underground in the tunnels. It can live off very little, storing energy while resting during the day.

According to reports, the creature must have an acute sense of smell, for it can sense and track humans and animals very easily. Lack of movement or being out of sight does not stop this creature from pursuing its prey.

### The Unnamed Creature (d20™)

**Large Beast (Worm)**

**Hit Dice:** 10d10 (95 hp)

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+6 natural)

**Attacks:** Tendril +2 melee, bite +8 melee

**Damage:** Tendril 1d10 (1d10+8 when frenzied), bite 2d10

**Face/Reach:** 10 ft by 5 ft/5 ft

**Special Qualities:** blindsight, engulf, poison

**Saves:** Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 25, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 5

**Skills:** Hide +10, Intimidate +10, Wilderness Lore +7, Spot +12

**Feats:** Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Track

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**Climate/Terrain:** Sub-tropical atoll, jungle

**Organization:** Solitary

**Challenge Rating:** 12

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Any, at discretion of the GM depending on how it is used — to protect the Blood Cross, to feed on humans, or some other purpose heretofore unknown.

### The Unnamed Creature — Villain (7th Sea™)

**Points:** 100

**Brawn:** 7, **Finesse:** 5, **Resolve:** 5, **Wits:** 2, **Panache:** 1

**TN to be hit:** 15

**Attack roll:** 4k2 tendril, 5k2 bite

**Damage roll:** 2k2 tendril, 3k2 bite

**Skills:** Ambush 5, Climbing 3, Footwork 2





## APPENDIX: *New Rules*

### *New Alternate Rule* (7th Sea™)

#### *Home Field Advantage*

Villains can be extremely dangerous in ordinary circumstances, but they become incredibly dangerous when confronted in their own homes. If the GM wishes, when a Villain is confronted in his own ship, house, or lair, he gains a number of Lair Dice per Scene equal to one half of the number of Reputation dice he has, rounded down. A Lair Die can be used by the Villain to add +1k0 to any roll made by himself or any of his Henchmen or Brute Squads in his home. Any Lair Dice remaining at the end of a Scene are lost. If there are multiple Villains who share the same lair, they each get their own Lair Dice.

If the lair has a Reputation score of its own (such as the Crimson Roger) then it grants a number of Lair Dice equal to one twentieth of its Reputation, rounded down, to the Villain with the highest Reputation score. In the event of a tie, the GM may use his discretion, giving the entire number of dice to one Villain or splitting them up evenly among the tied Villains.

### *New Martial Skills* (7th Sea™)

#### *Bodyguard*

Bodyguards are charged with the duty of protecting the health and well-being of another person. They must prevent harm from befalling their clients, often risking their own lives in the process.

#### *Basic Knacks*

**Interpose:** Interposing is the act of putting your own body in between someone else and an attack. When you use this Knack to protect someone else, your TN to be hit is reduced by 10 (minimum 5), and your client may use your Rank in Interpose as their Defensive Knack for calculating their TN to be hit.

Interpose may also be used for an Active Defense to protect someone else. Use your Action Dice for this, not the Action Dice of the person you are protecting. Roll Wits + Interpose for this Active Defense attempt. If you succeed, you take the damage from the Attack instead of its intended victim. If you receive one or more Dramatic Wounds from using Interpose for an Active Defense, you gain a Drama Die.

**Shadowing:** You have been trained to blend in with crowds and unobtrusively follow your targets in a city or other urban setting. Done properly, the target will never even notice your presence. This Knack is commonly used as a Contested Roll against the victim's Wits.

**Unobtrusive:** Sometimes a servant's best Knack is remaining unnoticed while his employer works off a fit of rage. This is not actually hiding, but rather blending in with the background. It plays upon a noble's tendency to ignore servants, and so works best on them. Like the Stealth Knack, Unobtrusive is used to generate a TN that those about the Bodyguard must make a Contested Wits Roll against to notice him.

#### *Advanced Knacks*

**Ambush:** You have learned to spot likely places for an ambush to occur and to watch for signs that people have concealed themselves there. Naturally, this Knack cuts both

ways, allowing you to set up an ambush of your own. Rules for the use of this Knack are located in the Drama Section of the *7th Sea Players' Guide*.™

**Cold Read:** This is the art of deducing things about a person from his or her appearance and mannerisms. Hand-  
edness might be determined from a callous upon a knuckle, while a nervous twitch could reveal much to an observant eye. With this Knack you can always enter a situation with at least a little information about the other person. More often than not, this Knack will be used in Contested Rolls against the Resolve of another, or against one of his other 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 well-guarded ballrooms, or a lockpick into a jail cell, you need this Knack. To use it, you must make a Simple Roll with it, and 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.

**Menace:** Sometimes, you can prevent an incident by intimidating a potential troublemaker. When making an Intimidate Repartee Action, you roll Resolve + Menace instead of merely rolling your Resolve.

## Sentry

Sentries stand guard at the gates and doors of strongholds, keeping a careful watch on those who come and go. They keep unwelcome visitors out, and do their best to ensure that those they do let in are not bearing concealed weapons.

### Basic Knacks

**Etiquette:** While it might be acceptable to throw the bones of your meal upon the floor in some regions, it is certain that another lady would faint upon seeing ruffian throw a greasy bone on her new rug. You have learned the niceties of events sponsored by the nobility in a certain country and can avoid such social *faux pas*. When you are using this Knack in a place whose customs you are unfamiliar with, you are at a penalty of -2 unkept dice (-2k0).

**Stand Watch:** Your job requires you to stand in one place in a stance of attention for long swathes of time. You can remain in one position without moving or falling asleep on your feet. You may use this Knack to resist any attempt to make you move from your station or otherwise distract you from your duties. You may also use this Knack when you roll to notice anyone trying to sneak past your station.



**Unobtrusive:** Sometimes a servant's best Knack is remaining unnoticed while his employer works off a fit of rage. This is not actually hiding, but rather blending in with the background. It plays upon a noble's tendency to ignore servants, and so works best on them. Like the Stealth Knack, Unobtrusive is used to generate a TN that those about the Sentry must make a Contested Wits Roll against to notice him.

### Advanced Knacks

**Ambush:** You have learned to spot likely places for an ambush to occur and to watch for signs that people have concealed themselves there. Naturally, this Knack cuts both ways, allowing you to set up an ambush of your own. Rules for the use of this Knack are located in the Drama Section of the *7th Sea Players' Guide*.™

**Hand Signs:** Words can be overheard and lips can be read, but a system of extremely subtle gestures and finger twitches (developed by the Vodacce) has cut down on such activity. With this Knack you can communicate information to a contact without ever saying or writing a word.

**Menace:** Sometimes, you can prevent an incident by intimidating a potential troublemaker. When making an Intimidate Repartee Action, you roll Resolve + Menace instead of merely rolling your Resolve.

## New Advantage (7th Sea™)

### Architectural Awareness (1 Point)

Maybe it is a keen eye for detail; perhaps it comes from growing up in an old mansion or a family castle. Whatever the cause, you have an innate talent for finding hidden doors and compartments. You receive one extra unkept die (+1k0) when you make any roll to notice a secret door or any other concealed aspect of architecture.

## New Feats (d20™)

### Home Field Advantage [General]

Both heroes and villains can be extremely dangerous under ordinary circumstances, but they become incredibly dangerous when confronted in their own homes.

**Prerequisite:** The character must own a ship, house, or some other type of lair

**Benefit:** Name one ship, house, lair, etc. When someone with the feat is confronted in that ship, house or lair, he gains a bonus equal to one-half his total character level, rounded down (minimum 1). This bonus is applied to all saves, attack rolls, initiative check, and skill checks that the character makes. Also, this bonus can be shared with a number of the character's henchmen equal to one-quarter of his total character level, rounded down (minimum 1). The bonus the henchmen receive is half of the bonus the character receives. If multiple characters share the same lair, each one who takes this feat enjoys the full advantage of it.

If the lair is particularly powerful, well-known, or well fortified, the GM can give the character (and his henchmen) an additional bonus. The amount of this bonus is entirely at the discretion of the GM, and stacks with the original bonus.

A character may take this feat multiple times. Each time, it applies to a new lair, ship, or home.

### Eye for Detail [General]

You have an innate talent for finding hidden doors and compartments.

**Prerequisite:** Intelligence 11+, Wisdom 11+

**Benefit:** Anytime you make a Spot or Search skill check to find a secret door, hidden door, concealed door (or compartment), or traps that involve masonry, architecture, or the like, you receive a competence bonus equal to the appropriate ability modifier +1.

### Ever-Vigilant [General]

You are aware of everything that happens in your presence. It could be highly active senses or an over-active mind, but regardless of the cause, you do not miss anything. Also, you seldom become distracted or misled when you are on guard duty.

**Prerequisite:** Concentration 6 ranks

**Benefit:** Whenever you are guarding or watching over something or someone or you are on guard duty (or similar circumstances) you may make a Concentration check at the beginning of your duty or watch shift. You receive a bonus to Spot, Listen, and Sense Motive checks equal to one-third (rounded down) of your Concentration check result (minimum 1). Also, if you are attacked while on guard/watch duty, you receive a morale bonus to your initiative rolls equal to one-half (rounded down) of the previously mentioned Concentration check result (minimum 1).

### Into the Woodwork [General]

You are supremely familiar with the layout of your house, ship, or lair. When you are in that area, you can utilize your vast knowledge to allow you to seemingly vanish without a trace, when you simply use shadows, architecture, and secret/hidden passages to make good your escape.

**Prerequisite:** The character must own a ship, house, or some other type of lair

**Benefit:** Select one of the following: ship, house, or lair. When in any structure of that type which you have visited three or more times and spent at least one day in, you receive a competence bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks, equal to your Wisdom modifier (if your Wisdom modifier is 0 or less, then you receive a +1 bonus) whenever you are trying to escape from anyone or anything. If you make a DC 20 check, you may move normally and remain silent (with a Move Silently check) and/or remain unseen (with a Hide check.) Further, if you make both a Hide and Move Silently check DC 30, you simply vanish completely, seeming to meld into the walls or the shadows, and can then move to any other room in the house/ship/lair instantaneously.

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