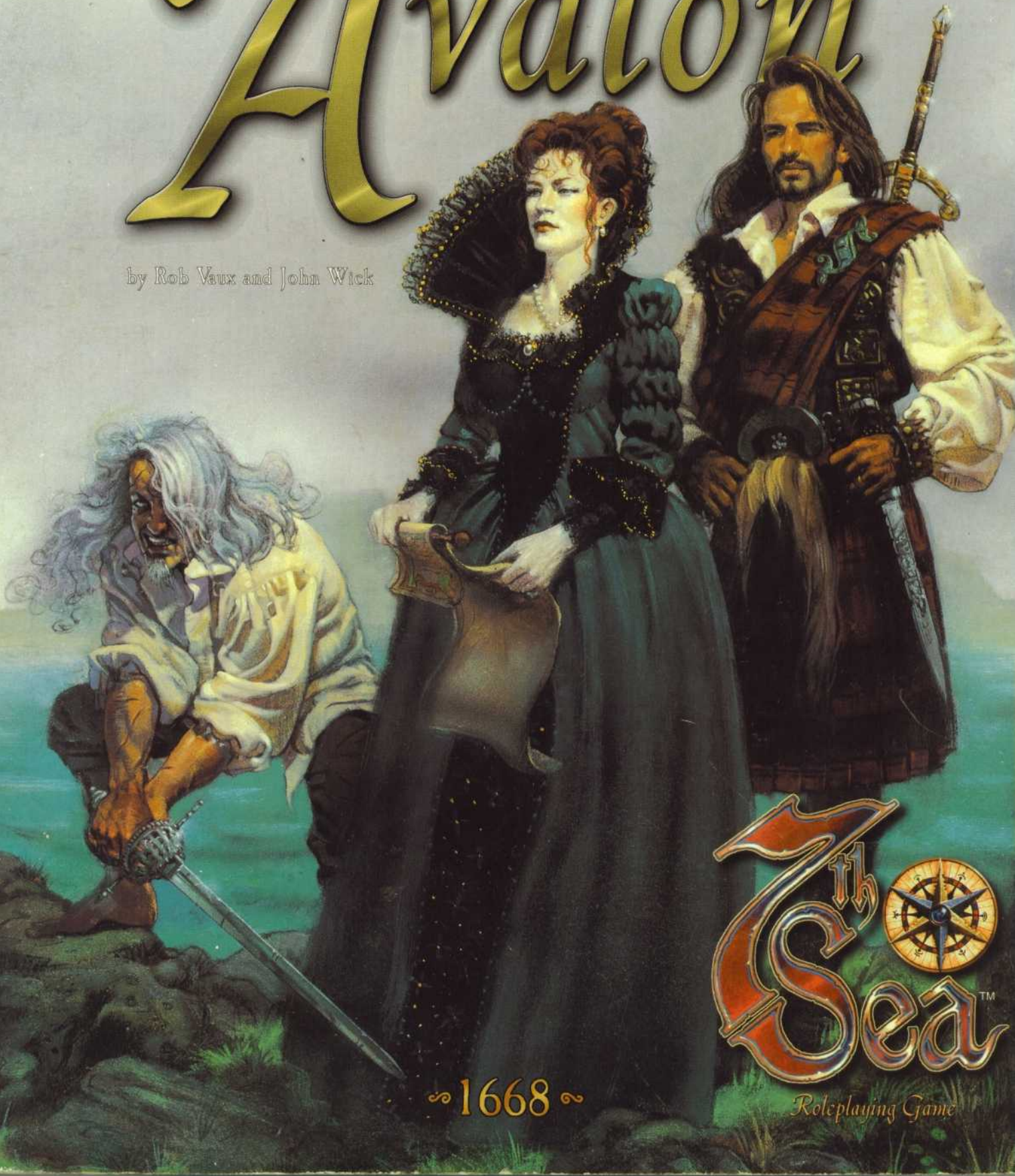


Nations of Théah: Book Two

Avalon™

by Rob Vaux and John Wick



7th Sea™

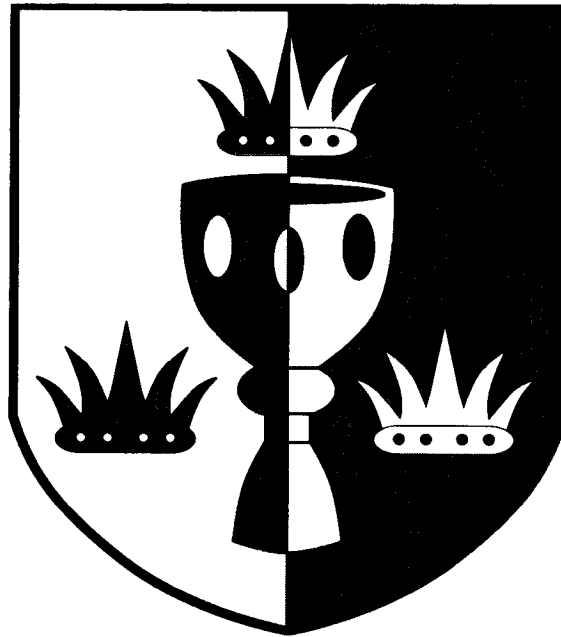
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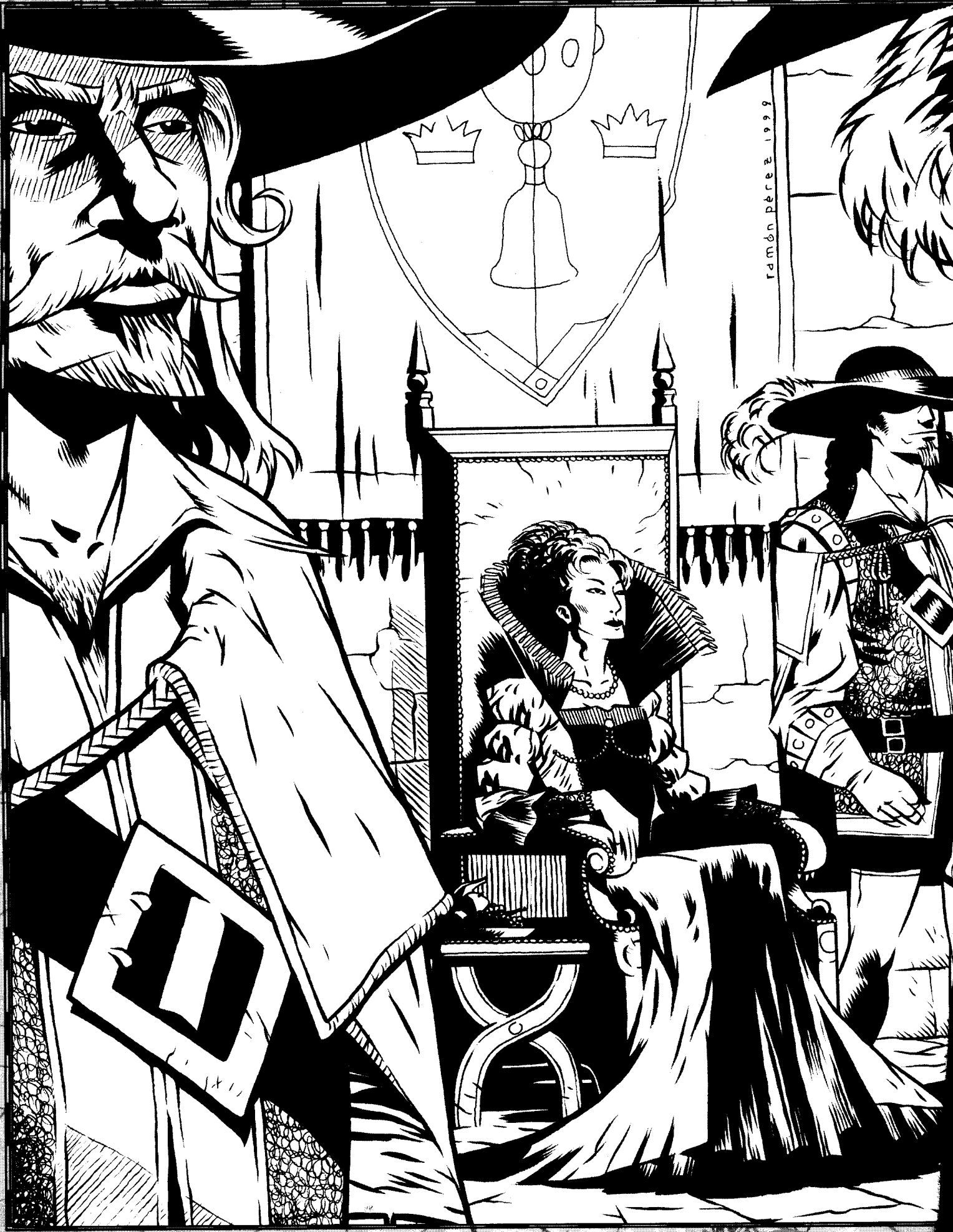
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Avalon

The Glamour Isles



“Once Upon a Time...”





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Dedications

*I never dedicate books to anyone who won't notice, so I'll dedicate this one to someone I hope will notice.
To my grandfather, the real John O'Bannon, who is probably looking over my shoulder right now grumbling,*

"It's about time, Johnny."

And he's right.

- JW

*To my cousins, Beth and Alicia Colson,
practitioners of that delightful form of madness called "being English."*

- RV

Authors' Note

After everything's said and done, this was a book written by an Irishman and a Scotsman.

Avalon is not England, the Inish are not Irish, and the Highlanders are not Scots.

They are familiar distortions, like many things on the Glamour Isles.

If, at any time, you find yourself bothered by the matter,
consult *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Puck's final soliloquy.

- JW & RV

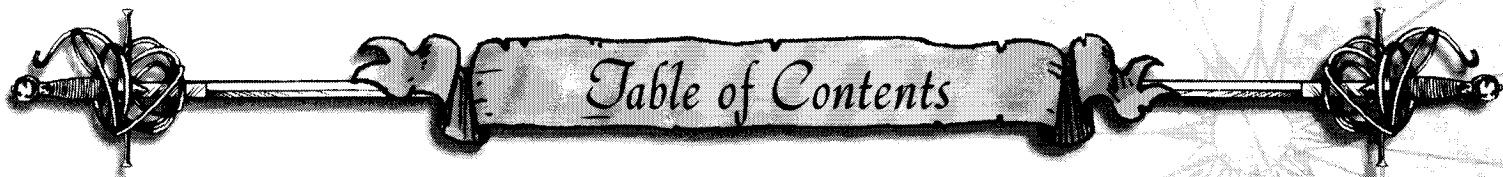


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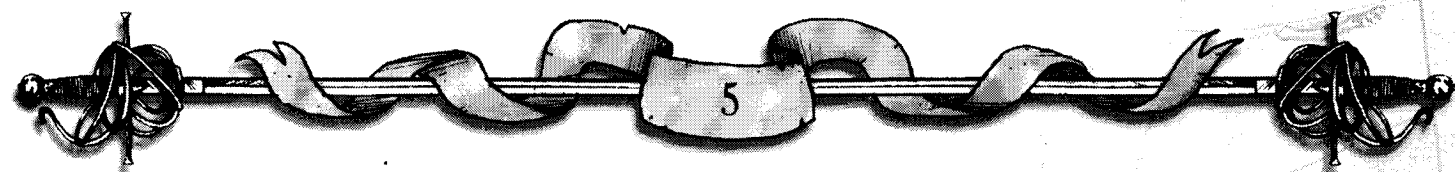
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The Danger of Dreams

*Men are children in their dreams,
And boys, their father's equal.*
— Montgomery Peerson

Dreaming. She knows she is dreaming.

*She can feel her body twitching from the phantom movements.
She can feel the sweat making her skin stick to the sheets.*

Derwyddon's voice:

"Knowing that you're dreaming doesn't make the dream any less dangerous."

One of her first lessons. Her first lessons...



"...daydreaming," her father's voice says.

She looks up. In the dream, she looks up.

Seventeen years old she is. Seventeen. Ten years ago.

She looks up into her father's face. They're standing in the middle of cows. She has a bucket in her hand. The milk is spilling.

"How long have you known?" he asks.

"Y-yesterday," she replies. Her lips move without command. "The well women, they..."

He nods his gray chin and raises his hand. "I know all about the well women," he mumbles. Then, something else.

He raises his eyes to meet hers. She is taller than him by at least three fingers. Taller still than her brother. He steps forward, placing his hands on her shoulders.

"You say that you love him."

She nods.

"And he says that he loves you."

She nods again.

He closes his eyes. They're already showing signs of tears.

"Then by all that's holy I see no reason why you cannot be married."

She drops the bucket; milk pours over their feet. Her arms reach out and pull the old man close and tight. He laughs and she feels the laughter in his belly against her own.

Her own blossoming belly.



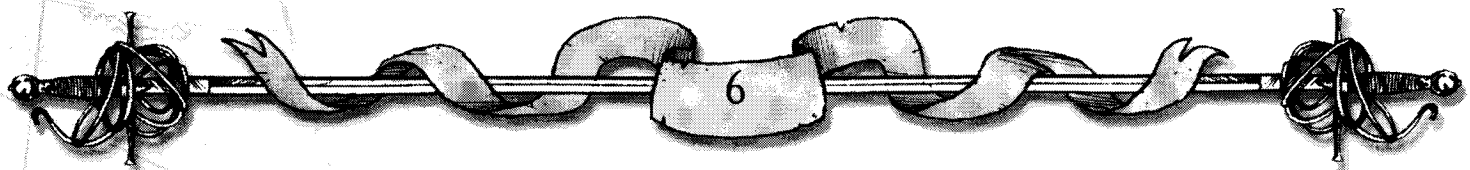
Father Time has no invitation into the realm of dreams. Years can pass without even a whisper.

The Old Watcher watches through the bars of the gate and never complains.



Her wedding day.

Her cousin helps her dress for the event and sees her belly. She vows she will never tell a soul. Even pricks her thumb and presses it to her heart.





Introduction

In her dress, she marches up to the altar. Her tears flow as she sees the man she loves waiting for her there. Together, they will go to her cousin's house over the hills. They will stay there for two seasons and return with a three-year-old child.

The parents are there, standing on either side. All of them crying proud tears.

Then a shadow steps forward. A shadow undispersed by the rays of the sun. Its face is cruel, its eyes knowing, and its lips twisted in a grin that seems a stranger to its own face.

Her father sees her expression and turns. All the color runs from his face like a rabbit runs from the hound. His knees go weak and her brother must help him to stand.

The crooked man pushes the priest aside and stands in his place. She reaches the altar, her bridegroom fascinated by the dark figure. Suddenly she knows his name.

"Derwyddon," she says.

He nods. "You cannot marry him," he tells her. "You are already promised to another."

He extends his fist. She looks down. The hand is like a dead spider, curled and fetal. The fingers uncurl and there in his hand is a ring.

She turns to her bridegroom and his face is green and rotten like a bad apple. His eyes are gone, eaten away by the worms that squirm there. His teeth are black as his tongue and pieces of his hair fall to the floor, making the sound of dropped porridge when they hit.

She wakes from the dream clutching her throat, screaming his name.



Swallowed by darkness, the echoes of her scream surround her. She gasps, sucking air into her body.

"My Queen?" the darkness asks.

She shakes her head, speaking the darkness' name. "Derwyddon."

"Are you well?"

She nods. "Only a dream."

"They are getting worse, my Queen. Perhaps there is something you wish to tell me?"

Elaine suddenly gains focus. She peers into the dark room, finding the sorcerer's flowing shape and his flaming red eye.

"I told you. It's only a dream. Leave me."

The half-hidden figure bows. "Very well, my Queen." Then, as the words fade, so does his shape. The last thing to disappear from the darkness is his shining devil-eye.



The man in black paces across her courtroom floor like a great, angry cat. The sword at his side shines like a cat's claws and his teeth glisten. His fist shakes as he speaks, his words edged and wicked.

"Perhaps you do not understand me, Your Majesty. I am not asking for his head. The crowned King of Castille demands it."

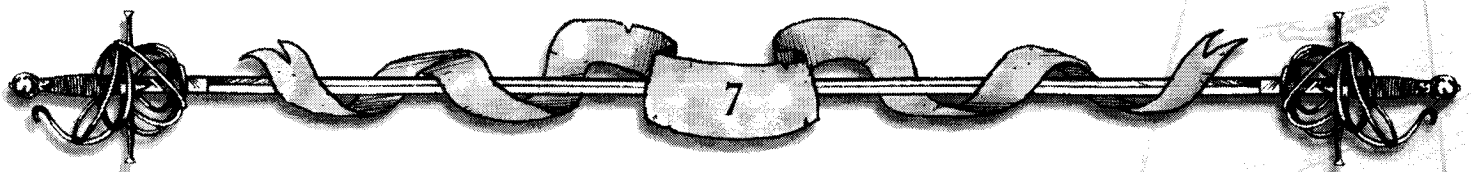
She sits perfectly still, a wry smile on her lips. "From what I hear, the King of Castille demands very little... except a bottle before bedtime."

The Castillian ambassador's pacing stops. He does not face the Queen.

"Your Majesty presumes too much."

"I presume?" She stands and the entire court — all one hundred and ten of them — falls to its knees. Except for the Knights. They put their hands on their swords.

"You come to my court, insult my people, make unsubstantiated claims, and demand from me what is not mine to give."



She steps forward from the throne and every Knight follows her. "You are making enemies here, Lord Ambassador, when you should be making allies."

"Your Majesty—"

"Enough! Do not add insult to injury." The ambassador bows low and she turns her back on him, returning to her throne. "Castille is in the heart of war, Ambassador. You need allies. You need Avalon. Has Castille ever considered the fact that if she and Avalon were allies, Avalon pirates might spend more time hunting Montaigne gold?"

The ambassador stands silently, numbed by her boldness. She does not relent.

"You are in the middle of a war, Ambassador. A war you seem intent on drawing us into. After listening to you, I do not think we will be joining Castille any time soon."

"Your Majesty—"

She ignores him. "But the fact that I must embroil my people in a war is not what grieves me the most." She pauses. "What grieves me the most is that you have forced me to consider sending my people to join the armies of... the Montaigne."

The ambassador has nothing to say. She smiles to herself.

"Go now. Be gone from my sight before one of my Knights loses his temper and I am forced to reward him for killing a coward in my court."

He bows, turns on his heel, and walks away, followed by his entourage. It is like watching a leather-clad stormcloud leave the room. When they are gone, she turns to her musicians. "Play us something... wiseful. To clear away the foul smell from our court."

They oblige her and the dancers begin their movements.

That's when MacDuff moves from the crowd, bows respectfully to her Knights, and steps up the dais to stand at her side. She hides her smile well.

"You made an enemy today, I think," he whispers just under the music.

"Castille means nothing. They are already engaged with one enemy and cannot afford another." She pauses as a servant fills her cup. "My spies report that Montegue has turned his army about and even now marches toward his homeland."

"I have heard the same in the Empereur's court."

She allowed herself a small smile as she looked into his deep blue eyes. "You spend far too much time on the continent for my taste, my Lord."

"Someone must represent the alliance, Your Majesty. Would you have the O'Bannon—?"

She laughs openly, a deep belly laugh that makes many turn and look. "He would certainly make an impression."

"Yes, an impression on the Empereur's skull, I think."

One of the MacDuff's men comes forward and bows to the Knights. Elaine gestures to let the boy pass and they nod. The youth hands a small envelope to the King of the Highlanders. Elaine watches him open it with his large hands. He reads carefully, then folds the paper and slides it into his doublet.

"A secret, my Lord?" she teases.

"No secret." He turns and takes her hand. "Berek has returned and brings news from Montaigne."

"He asks to see you? That doesn't sound like my Berek."

"It is a personal favor, my Queen."

Her smile broadens. "A Montaigne lady has won favor with our James MacDuff?"

The Highlander does not return her smile. Instead, he turns to her and takes her hand in his own. "There is only one lady who can hold my heart. And her name," he kisses her hand gently, "is 'Avalon.'"

Elaine watches him leave, her heart pounding against her chest. At the very last moment, he turns and she casts her gaze her way. Then he bows and is gone.



She sits at the dark man's feet, his eyes flashing colors that no eyes were meant to be. She dreams of dreams, when she was his student in the Twilight Lands, the Dreaming Lands – Bryn Bresail, the Land of Snowfallen Spring.

The lessons pass quickly as her belly grows. Her teacher watches with his glowing eyes.

Now, dreams within dreams within dreams. Dreaming of dreaming in the Dreaming Lands. Dreams of blood and pain, weight on her belly. A child's scream. A mother's scream.

She wakes in her dream in the Dreaming Lands, two words on her lips.

"A girl," she whispers. She sees Derwyddon sitting in the shadows, his hands no longer stained with blood.

"It was a girl," she says, her voice louder, more daring.

"Yes," he says. "Yes, it was."

"Where is she now?" she asks.

"With her father," he answers.

Her face falls into her hands and she cries tears straight from her soul.

Derwyddon's hands are on her shoulders and he squeezes hard enough to bruise bone.

"No tears!" he screams at her, his tiny teeth gritted tightly. "No tears!" He raises a gnarled hand to slap her, but she swallows her sorrow down hard.

Derwyddon nods, relinquishes his grip, and stumbles backward. "No tears," he whispers as he settles back into the darkness. "She's with her father."

Elaine waits to ask the question in her heart. Waits long enough for the old man to slip into the twilight between waking and sleeping.

"What is her name?" she asks.

He mumbles the answer, only half-aware that he's done so. Elaine lies back down on the blanket and pulls another over her shoulders. As she falls back to sleep, she whispers the name. As she does, somewhere above her, a raven cackles.



She is alone in the library, reading a translation made for her about a Vodacce woman named Veronica. A herald opens the door and approaches slowly with his head bowed.

"My Queen." The herald's voice is broken and breathless.

"What news do you bring?" she asks.

"An audience is requested."

She nods. "I am not in my court. Who asks to see me in private?"

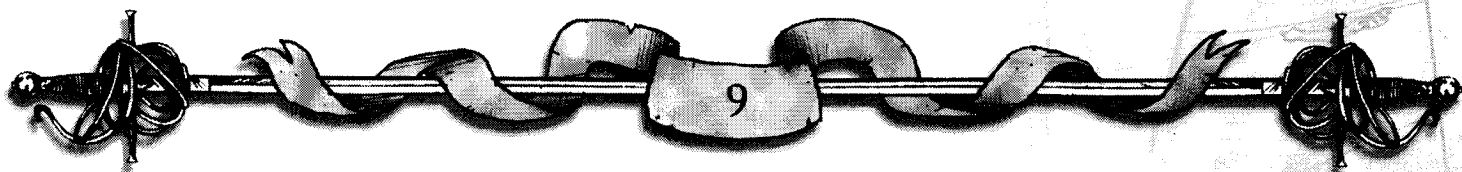
The herald pauses, the fear in his heart spilling over into his voice. "Sh-she claims to be a daughter of Queen Maab, your Majesty."

Elaine wonders if the boy saw the tremble that went through her bones when she heard the name.

"Then bid her enter, good fellow. Any kin of the Three Sisters is welcome in my home."

The herald bows low and turns on his heel, exiting the room. Elaine sets the book down and watches the empty doorway. Soon enough, a small girl enters the room and Elaine can hear the gasp her breath makes.

She is a tiny doll, no more than twelve years old. Her skin is perfect with a slight tinge of green. Her hair is the color of seaweed and her eyes like an oyster's pearls. When she speaks, her voice echoes like the ocean hidden inside a shell.





“Good Queen Elaine, Keeper of the Graal and Champion of the Lady of the Lake,” she says.

Elaine nods. “How come you to my home, child?”

The girl smiles. “I am looking for my mother.”

There is a silence in the room then. The kind of silence that lets you hear dust settling.

The girl continues. “I never knew my mother. Only my father. He went looking for her when I was newly born, but his ship was swallowed by the sea. I was spared by Queen Maab and allowed to live as her daughter.” The little girl’s teeth glisten. “But now, I seek my true mother.”

Elaine felt all the moisture in her throat dry up. “And how can I help you in your quest?”

“I am wondering,” she says, her eyes never leaving Elaine. “What mother could leave her child behind?”

Elaine’s fingers grip the book in her hand. “A grieving one,” she replied.

The girl’s smile curls. “Grief enough to be Queen?”

Elaine remains silent.

“Grief enough to forget she even bore a child?”

Again, no words come to Elaine’s lips.

“Grief enough to lust after a barbarian from the north?”

“Enough!” she screams, and stands quickly from the table, her chair falling behind her.

“Bad fortune,” the little girl whispers, looking at the chair on the floor. “Best to keep your luck in hand, Queen of the Avalons. There will come a time when you need it.”

Elaine watches the little girl turn and walk toward the door. A single name is burning in Elaine’s mind, the same name Derwyddon told her long ago. She wants to call out to her, to hold her, to beg her forgiveness.

But she is a child of Queen Maab. A daughter of dark waters. Elaine knows better than to beg of the darkness.

As the girl turns the knob, she pauses. Then, she turns.

“That name means nothing to me anymore. I am not my father’s daughter. Nor my mother’s daughter.” She looks Elaine straight in the eye.

“I am Maab’s daughter. I am Meryth.”

She leaves the room, leaves Elaine behind. The only thing that remains is the smell of the ocean and a pool of water where she had stood.

Elaine’s eyes fall on the title of the book before her.

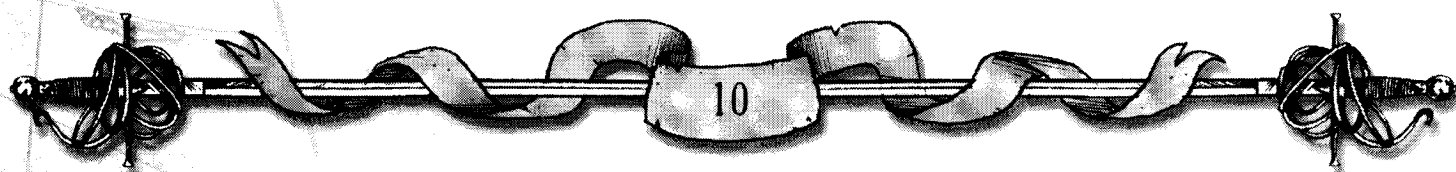
Fate’s Daughter.

For the first time since that night in the Dreaming Lands, the Queen of Avalon allows her tears to fall.



The Glamour Isles

Welcome to the second book in the *Nations of Théah* Series. This volume, *Avalon: The Glamour Isles*, gives you details to the geography, personality, and secrets of Théah’s most fantastic nation.



Introduction

Many have called Avalon a “living fable.” They aren’t too far off course. It is a place where legends are more important than history, where heroes walk the land and giants, goblins, ogres, and bog hags lurk in the shadows. It is also the home of the Sidhe, a race older than man but a race on its last legs.

Avalon is a beautiful yet terrifying place, where heroes never die and monsters live on forever. Are you ready to meet them?

How To Use This Book

Like every other book in the *7th Sea* game line, everything here is modular and optional. These are tools to be used as you see fit. If anything doesn’t work in your own campaign, feel free to change it as you like.

All *Nations* books follow the same format. The book is divided into four chapters.

Chapter One details the three kingdoms that make up Avalon: the island of Avalon itself, the Highland Marches, and Inismore. It goes through each nation’s history, culture, and traditions, as well as filling in the blanks of geography and political structure. It also includes a short section on the Sidhe, their history and culture, and the beings who rule them.

Chapter Two gives you descriptions for the most famous Heroes of Avalon, including the noble Queen Elaine, the shrewd James MacDuff and the mysterious Jack O’Bannon.

Chapter Three gives you all the new rules you’ll need to play Heroes from Avalon including three new Martial Schools, rules for Druids and the Sidhe, and directions on playing a member of Elaine’s order of knights. It also includes new Glamour knacks, magic items unique to the Glamour Isles and a Destiny deck for use with Avalon Heroes.

Finally, Chapter Four serves as a sourcebook for both players and Game Masters. It includes an essay on using Avalon Glamour, the secrets of the Heroes in Chapter Two which the players shouldn’t necessarily know, a description of some infamous monsters (and how they got to be that way), and rules for running the Sidhe – including the option to make full-blooded Sidhe Heroes if you wish.







*The
Glamour
Isles*



History

Avalon does not have history as much as it has legends. It is not until 1028, when Montaigne invaded Avalon shores, that actual "history" begins. Until that moment, Avalon's story is told in myth and metaphor.

The Time of Legends

For centuries, the Avalon concept of "recorded history" was oral tales of heroes and their deeds. Not only did they keep their history in their heads, they never kept dates. As the stories were passed down from generation to generation, tiny details changed, making it difficult to keep track of exactly what was truth and what was story. The stories below make up Avalon's Time of Legends. There are no dates attached to these stories, but we have listed them in a rough chronological order. However you tell Avalon's story, it always begins with the Sidhe.

A Pact with the Sidhe

A long time ago, a great flood covered the world. Only a handful of people survived the flood, carried away on a small boat. Eventually, the boat floated into Bryn Bresail and the people met the Sidhe. The Sidhe were fascinated

by men and vice versa. A pact was made and the Sidhe showed the men to the only island that survived: an island called Avalon.

The Old Empire

For centuries, the Avalons believed they were alone in the world. That changed when the Old Empire arrived, sending legionaries from their colonies in Montaigne. General Julius Caius led the conquering army across Avalon, destroying all organized resistance. Fascinated by these strange new humans with their plumed armor and disciplined units, the Sidhe let them do as they pleased. They watched the foreigners build colonies, tax the locals and slowly integrate the island into the Empire.

One hundred and fifty years later, they were finished watching.

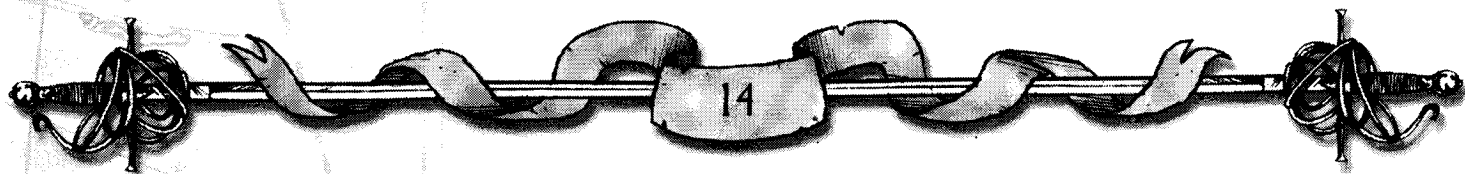
Suddenly the Empire lost all contact with Avalon. Ships trying to reach the colonies from Montaigne or Castille become hopelessly lost in a series of strange storms. No vessel emerged from its shores, and efforts even to spot the island were in vain. It had vanished. The Emperor declared Avalon cursed, and refused to endorse any further expeditions to reclaim it.

Fifty years later, the storms ceased. Avalon's inhabitants were unaware that anything had changed; indeed, they hadn't aged a day. The foreign colonists left on the island slowly adopted Avalon traditions. Within ten years, the Empire's invasion had faded from memory. Sidhe magic had wiped away two centuries.

King Elilodd

There came a time when Avalon was divided by many kings, all claiming to be the "high king" of the land. As divided as they were, they could not stand against the Vesten invaders from the east. Their longboats rode up on the waves, crashed on the shore with the sound of thunder, and struck down the people like strokes of lightning.

Elilodd (EL-i-loth), king of Eastern Avalon, stood against them, but his people were unready. He retreated, reformed his armies and counterattacked. They pushed the raiders



back to the sea, then built ships to chase them across the waters (the first record of an Avalon navy) where he fought them on their own ground. In the bloodiest battle ever fought, he defeated their King and demanded his surrender. In exchange, Elilodd promised alliance rather than allegiance. The King, faced with the alternative of death, agreed to Elilodd's terms.

With his Vestenmannavnjar allies, Elilodd united his island under a single crown... and Avalon began to change. While the rest of Théah followed a man who called himself "the third prophet," Avalon scholars began to study the stars, determined that the moon influenced the tides, speculated on the spherical shape of the world, and imported Théan books, translating them into Cymric.

Even the Sidhe recognized Elilodd's importance and delivered to him a holy artifact called "the Graal." It was Elilodd's sacred duty to guard the Graal, and the Sidhe told him "for as long as you and your descendants sit on the throne of Avalon, so shall the blessing of the Sidhe be with you." Their blessings were abundant indeed. The lands were green, the skies blue, and the crops plentiful. As Elilodd thrived, so did the land, and his lineage ruled Avalon for many generations, until the year 1028.

The year history invaded and Avalon lost its grace.

Recorded History

1028 – The Montaigne Invasion

Good King Herygh, the man who had ruled Avalon for three generations, had three sons and little time left in the world. Instead of giving his land to a single son, he divided the lands among them. Herygh's eldest two sons nodded and agreed with the division. His third son, Athrwys, rejected the idea. "The land needs a single ruler," he said.

Consumed with rage, Herygh rose up and banished his youngest son from Avalon. That would be his final act. He died on his throne moments later.

The eldest two brothers began a feud for their father's lands while Athrwys fled to Inismore. Civil war raged across

Avalon, until both brothers' armies were overcome with blood and fatigue. Then Athrwys returned with an Inish army to reclaim his father's land. At the Battle of Three Roads, the armies clashed, and by sunset, Athrwys had won the day. His brothers were brought before him and he forgave them their ambitions. "Avalon must be united," he said. "Or we shall surely fall."

His words couldn't have been more prophetic. At that moment, a scout ran onto the battlefield announcing that an army from Montaigne had invaded Avalon's shores. Led by a man named Henri du Montaigne, it outnumbered the surviving forces of the three brothers. Exhausted and decimated, the Avalons fought valiantly, but when Athrwys was mortally wounded by arrowshot, their army routed.

Athrwys fled the site of the battle, his lifeblood spilling behind him, chased by Henri's horsemen. When they returned with Athrwys' body, they said he had run to a glassy pond and shouted something in Cymric. Then he threw something into the pool, right before they gutted him. They did not know what he had thrown or why, but Henri did not care. The king of Avalon was dead, and he had taken the crown.

When he came to claim his throne, however, Henri found it covered with blood. It was a dark prophecy of things to come.

The Beloved Queen

For the next hundred years, Montaigne ruled the land and the people suffered. The native language of Avalon – Cymric – was forbidden in the courts and streets. Children were forced to learn the Montaigne language. Avalon's holy men were put to the stake and burned as defilers of the Creator's work.

In 1153, a scandal occurred that would redirect Avalon's future. Eleanor, the Queen of Montaigne, had her husband declared dead while he was away at the crusades and married the King of Avalon. This meant the King could lay claim to all his wife's lands: a good three-fifths of Montaigne.



But Eleanor quickly became just as bored with her new husband as she had been with her old. When he followed his cousins to the crusades, she disguised herself and went out into the countryside looking for adventure. Instead, she found stories.

Avalon's great storytellers, the bards, were telling the tales of Avalon's heroes at the risk of losing their lives. Eleanor couldn't understand the words, but the passion of their voices convinced her that she had found the greatest storytellers in the world.

The next time she went out to the countryside, she brought with her a monk, Christophe Flaubert du Doré, to listen to the tales and translate them into Montaigne. His translations quickly spread, and the tales became so popular that Eleanor brought the bards into the court to tell them in person. For the first time in a hundred years, the Cymric language was spoken in the noble halls of Avalon.

Slowly, Avalon's Glamour began to return. Eleanor revised the tax system and legal codes and attempted to cancel the anti-Cymric laws. She found great resistance there, so she arranged for a friend, Harold Guisard, to become the Archbishop of Avalon. She hoped Guisard would help ease the subjugation of the Avalon people. She was wrong.

Guisard turned out to be a pawn of Eleanor's brother-in-law, Charles. Charles wished the throne for himself, and with Guisard's help he clapped Eleanor in irons under suspicion of treason. She was hanged soon after and Charles became regent of Avalon until his brother returned from the crusades.

Because of her love for the people, Eleanor would always be remembered as "the Beloved Queen" by the Avalons. Charles wasted no time in reinstating his brother's anti-Cymric laws and began a new system of taxation that would bleed the land dry. But for a brief, shining moment, Avalon remembered what it once had been.

A moment was all it needed.

1157-1199 Robin Goodfellow

Charles overtaxed land, put corrupt judges into power, threw debtors into prison, and tortured anyone who spoke out against his actions. The wounded land screamed for a hero and found one in Robin Lovaine.

Robin had just returned from the crusades. Because of his popularity in the court, Charles made him the Sheriff of Lovaine. But Robin was a young man with a young man's ideals. With his mind fresh with the horrors he had seen, he spoke out against Charles's injustices. Charles stripped him of his title and lands, and threw Robin in prison for treason. But Robin quickly escaped and set himself against the wicked regent.

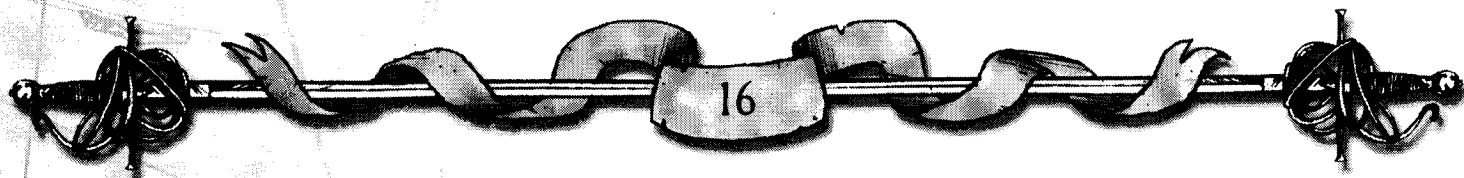
Robin had learned much in the Crusades, including tactics new to Avalon. He and his band of men ambushed Charles's tax collectors and returned the moneys to Avalon's people. Soon the name "Robin Goodfellow" was known throughout the land; Avalon had turned against its ruler in favor of a common criminal.

1215 – The Council of Free Nobles

The final blow against King Charles came in 1215. Because Robin had stolen so much of his resources, Charles lost Avalon's claims to her lands in Montaigne. In a foolhardy effort, Charles organized an army to march on Montaigne and reclaim his foreign holdings. The army was crushed and Charles was humiliated.

Meanwhile, Avalon's nobility marched their own armies on the capital. When he returned they forced him to sign a document that would prevent Avalon's monarchs from making arbitrary decisions. It was the first document that stated men had rights that could not be compromised by other men. Of course, it only protected noble men, but it was a step in the right direction.

In 1216, the rightful King of Avalon returned and threw Charles off the throne. He reinstated Robin's title, and Robin married his lifelong sweetheart – who also happened to be the daughter of Eleanor, the Beloved Queen. She wrote down Robin's story, immortalizing her husband as one of Avalon's greatest legends.



The Glamour Isles

1387-1422 — David III

The White Plague rose across Théah in 1347, devastating nearly a third of the populace. But the plague did more than just ruin Avalon's population: it seemed to leave a festering seed in her nobility that infected the throne for generations to come.

During this time, Inismore rose against its rulers, forcing Avalon to divert its attention from more important matters. Avalon's nobility was so inept that the armies it sent only aided in the Inish taking more land. With half its army across the waters trying to quell the rebellion, usurpers charged the throne. Once again, Avalon faced a half-century of civil war.

The eventual victor, King David II, lived long enough to produce an heir, which brought the war to a close. Tired of battles, he died in 1413, leaving the throne to his sixteen-year-old son, David III. Over the course of five years, David unified the squabbling Avalon nobility, revived national pride, and looked to invade Montaigne over an insult involving oranges. His meager army attacked and against all

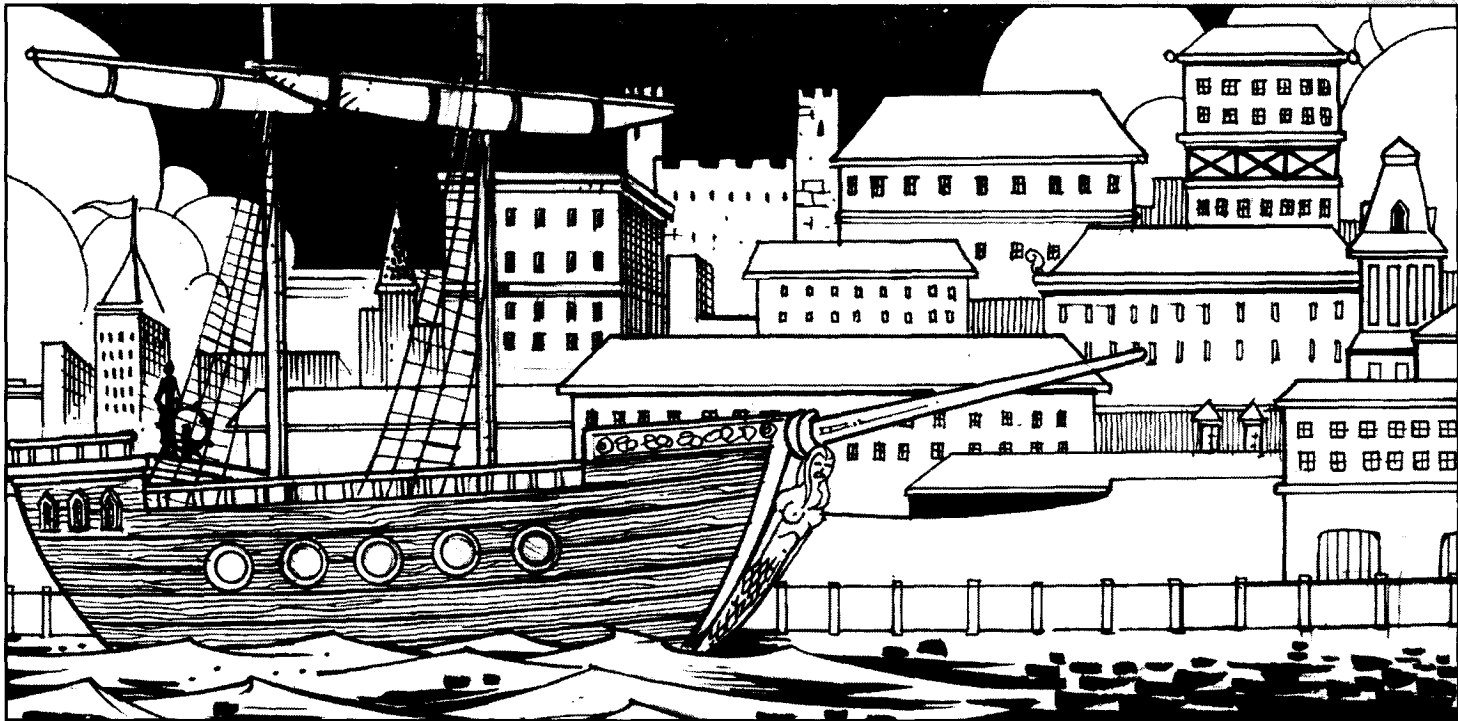
odds defeated every army the Montaigne sent against him. He gained control of several western provinces for Avalon, and declared himself the king of both countries, even though the Montaigne king refused to abdicate his throne.

David died in 1422, leaving the throne to his ten-year-old son, David IV. The younger David soon fell victim to political infighting, and Avalon forces were forced to retreat from Montaigne just a few years later.

1450-1650 — Two Hundred Years of War

In the two centuries that followed, a recurrent pattern emerged. A strong king would unify the nation, pass away and leave a whelp on the throne. Everything the strong king had built would fall apart. During the ensuing mess, a foreign power — usually Montaigne — would try to invade, which caused a strong king to come to the forefront. He would expel the invader, unify the nation, and pass away, leaving a whelp on the throne.

Two hundred years of this bloodshed killed many of the noble lines in Avalon, leaving lesser nobles squabbling for





the throne. Two families came to the fore: the Camlanns and the Lovaines. The Camlann claim to the throne came from Henri du Montaigne, while the Lovaines descended from Eleanor.

Two kings emerged from this period. The first would come to be known as “the Bloody Boar”, Henri IV of Camlann. Henri was a devout Vaticine and gained the throne when his elder brother died. He was a brilliant soldier and a good king, but history would paint him in a much darker light.

His chief rival for the throne was the sixteen-year-old Richard Lovaine. Richard was handsome and popular in court, while Henri was not. In 1527, Henri sent an assassin to do away with his rival, but the plot was exposed and war ensued. Many smaller nobles turned on Henri, who found himself attacked on all fronts. He finally faced the boy at the Battle of Bedgrane in 1531. Though his tactics were brilliant, he was badly outnumbered and died by Richard’s hands as his armies were overrun. Richard was crowned Richard II, and went on to reconquer Inismore for the Avalon throne.

1535 — *The Graal*

In the summer of 1535, an anonymous monk published a book of highly illegal stories concerning Elilodd and his noble knights, based on an earlier text compiled by the Montaigne Tómas Malreaux. This version, however, was written in Cymric and widely distributed before the authorities learned of it. Entitled *The Graal* (to capitalize on Malreaux’s work), it was an instant success.

In an unexpected move, King Richard did not seek to persecute the publisher of the book or its author. Instead, he made a public statement that he wished the book to be translated into Montaigne so he could read it.

“We are all Avalons,” he declared. “Let us start acting like the brothers we are.”

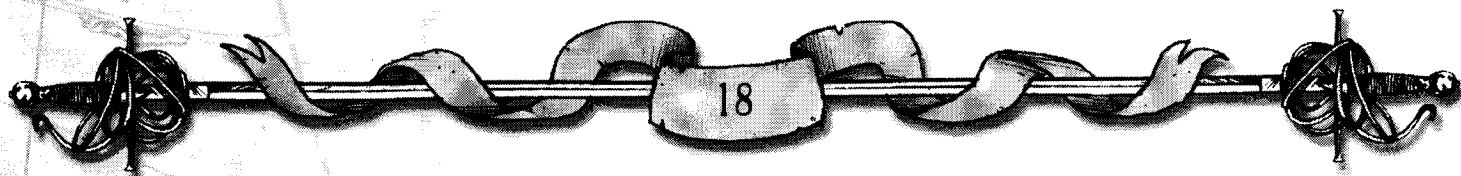
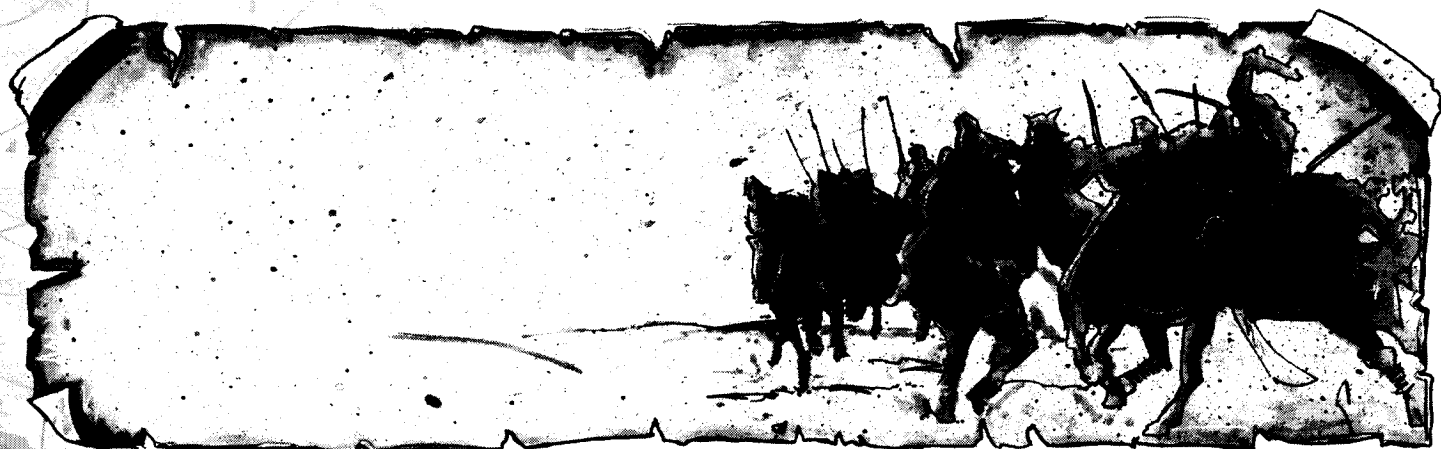
Richard’s sentiments did not fall on deaf ears. The people rejoiced and dubbed their new monarch “Richard the Kind.”

1614 — Richard IV

Richard IV — great-great-grandson of Richard the Kind — gained the throne in 1614 and faced what could have been the greatest reign in Avalon’s history since 1028. He was married to a beautiful and intelligent Montaigne wife. He was handsome, tall and popular with the Council of Lords. The Highland Marches and Inismore were both led by weak kings and provided him with little internal trouble.

Unfortunately, Richard’s head was filled with stories of previous Avalon monarchs. That in itself would not prove his downfall, but it didn’t help. Richard’s true weakness was his blind faith in the Heirophant.

Despite his father’s warnings, he became embroiled with the politics of the Church. He wrote many missives, attacking the Objectivist movement at every opportunity. The Heirophant wrote him a personal letter, declaring him “Avalon’s defender of the faith.”



Richard's second problem was the fact that he had no heir. He had no sons, only a single daughter: Margaret. That would cause dynastic problems for Avalon, something he wasn't willing to do to his nation. In 1622, with his letter firmly in hand, Richard asked the Heirophant permission to divorce his wife and remarry. The Heirophant refused.

Stunned at what he perceived as a terrible betrayal, Richard divorced her anyway. He passed an "Act of Supremacy" which created a new Avalon Church, with the Avalon monarch as the Heirophant. Then he married a common woman, Morwenna Sutter. A year later, his new wife gave birth... to a daughter.

Again, Richard was aghast that no sons had been produced. Complications with the pregnancy ensured that his bride could produce no more children. As before, he divorced her and tried again with another wife. And another. And another. None could bear him any child at all, son or daughter. He died with but two heirs — the elder Margaret, who ascended to the throne, and the younger Elaine, all but forgotten. She had been living as the child of a petty noble since birth, and never thought of herself as the king's daughter.

1656 — The Return of the Graal

Queen Margaret of Avalon was many things. She was a faithful believer in the Vaticine Church, wife of a powerful Castillian noble, and perhaps the cruelest ruler ever to sit on Avalon's throne. She tried to turn the entire nation away from "heathen" religions and burned hundreds of Objectionists and Traditionalists at the stake. Her reign was bloody, but free from the civil war Avalon had known for so long. Thus, she was tolerated by the populace, despite her oppressive policies.

At the spring equinox of 1654, at the stroke of midnight, all life left her eyes. Avalon's Iron Queen was dead. And there was no heir.

At first, some looked to Elaine to ascend to the throne. But she could not be found; she had vanished on her wedding night and had been gone for over eight years. With no apparent heir, numerous ambitious nobles made claims to

the throne. Arguments soon came to blows, and the land divided against itself. The Inish and Highlanders declared independence. The Montaigne built a navy for the purpose of gaining full control of their northerly cousin.

And then came Derwyddon, Elaine, and the Graal.

She appeared out of nowhere, arriving at the capital after ten years missing. She looked no older than she had when she left, a sprite of a girl just this side of nineteen. But she had the air of royalty about her and carried an object unseen since the Montaigne invasion six centuries ago.

The Graal.

Riding the wave of returning Glamour, Elaine quickly organized an army to end the bloodshed. After two years of fighting, the people were ready for a champion; they flocked to her with eager abandon. Some nobles resisted her, fearing her power, but she swept them all aside with overwhelming force. By 1658, she had reunited the nation and was crowned Queen in her new capital of Carleon.

Recent Events

The decade since then has heralded a new golden age for the Glamour Isles. Elaine has allied with Inismore and the Highland Marches, established a new order of Knights to defend the realm from evil, and sponsored Berek's Sea Dogs in their rise to prominence. With the sinking of the Castillian armada in 1659, Avalon established herself as a leading world power, and today Queen Elaine stands at the forefront of Théan politics. The people are happy and prosperous, and the return of Glamour has brought a newfound pride to the once-conquered nation.

But there are shadows behind the scenes: closely kept secrets which may spell doom for the vibrant young kingdom. Derwyddon strikes fear into the court with his bizarre predictions. Queen Elaine has never explained the ten years she was missing, and some whisper that she has been bewitched by the Sidhe. And sometimes, on cold afternoons, she wanders alone down to the seashore, where a child's laughter can be heard on the waves...



Avalon's golden age continues to bless her people and her ruler. But how much longer can it last? And what will happen when it finally draws to a close?

Land and Title

Appointed and Landed Nobles

Appointed titles (or "court titles") are given by the Queen and usually expire upon the lord's death. Landed titles, on the other hand, are inherited and pass down to the next generation.

Appointed titles are almost always knighthoods. They give a lord the right to tax a parcel of land, but not ownership over that land. Therefore, a man given the title "Knight of Teneborc" may tax the land, but does not own it.

Landed lords, on the other hand, *own* land as well as tax it. Not even the Queen can revoke a landed lord's title (although she can take away certain privileges, such as his position in Parliament). The only way a landed title can be lost is if the lord is found guilty of treason against the crown in a court of law.

Squire

A squire is the direct vassal of a knight. He owns no lands, has no vassals of his own, and his title is not inherited by his children.

Knight

Knights are a special case in noble status. The title "knight" makes a man noble, but also provides other benefits. When a man earns the title, he earns the right to "bear arms and mete justice." "Mete justice" is a tricky term. Knights have an obligation to uphold the Queen's Law, making them freelance lawmen in Avalon. While most counties have sheriffs to deal with rapsCALLIONS, knights still serve as the Queen's chief law enforcement agents.

A knight's social rank depends upon which lord he swears fealty to. If a knight swears fealty to the Queen, his status is right below hers. If he swears fealty to a duke, his status is right below the duke's, and so on.

Baron

The title "baron" usually indicates a lord who owes fealty to the Queen. All barons in Avalon lay claim to cities. Because a baron owes fealty to the Queen and not an earl or duke (see below), many complicated political issues involve winning a baron's favor.

Earl

Earls hold large sections of land, comprising several townships and the roads and fields between them. They are beholden to the dukes above them, and serve as governors for the communities beneath them. There are currently 72 Earls in Avalon.

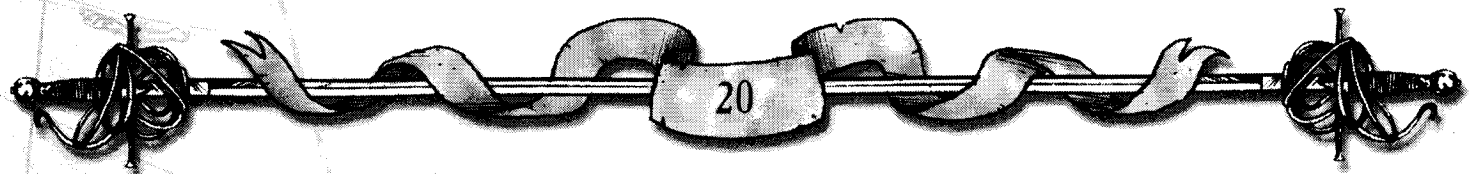
Duke

Dukes are the "high kings" who swore fealty to Elaine when she claimed the throne of Avalon. After the Queen, they are the most powerful nobles on the island. Each Duke holds an entire county — High King PIRAM holds two — making them the richest landlords in Avalon. There are currently four Dukes in Avalon: the High King of BREG, the Duke of CAMLANN, the Duke of LOTHIAN and the Duke of PERCIS.

Elaine's Knights

As an island nation, Avalon is protected from her enemies by one of the largest standing navies in the world. They have little need for an army, and Elaine filled her few garrisons with Eisen mercenaries — ensuring that no scheming noble could use his own loyal units to plot a coup.

As effective as they were, however, the Eisen were still foreigners. They lacked national pride and a concern for Avalon as an entity. Elaine wanted something more: an elite unit composed only of Avalons, which would serve the interests of the people above all else. She reinstated an ancient order of knights originally created by Elilodd as a



personal bodyguard. In ten short years, they have come to epitomize selfless valor and bravery in defense of the crown. While formally known as the Order of the High King, they are commonly referred to as Elaine's Knights.

At the core of the order stand twelve knights, the greatest heroes Avalon has to offer. These Twelve sit in council with their Queen, dispense advice, and protect her from harm. She is never seen without at least one or two of them in the immediate vicinity. Those not serving Elaine directly are usually off on "Queen's business", disposing of threats to the realm or other important missions. In court at Carleon, they stand in a semicircle on either side of the Queen, ready to defend her from any threats.

The Twelve command a loose organization of nearly two hundred knights below them, ranging from simple squires to hardened masters. They perform countless duties for Her Majesty, undertaking missions deemed too difficult for the more mundane military forces. Their blue and silver tabards, decorated with the insignia of the Triple Crown, grant them the authority to pursue criminals, defend the law, and bring urgent matters to the attention of the Queen. Their honor is unimpeachable and they act in the best interests of the Avalon people. Each one answers to a different member of the Twelve, who assigns them their duties. While many can be found traveling the countryside, most remain in Carleon in case the Queen needs them.

A list and brief descriptions of the twelve follows. Other members of Elaine's Knights can be created using the rules in Chapter Three.

Lawrence Lugh

Lawrence is currently Elaine's champion and the *de facto* leader of her Knights. More information can be found in Chapter Two, and on page 33 of the *7th Sea GMs' Guide*.

Jeremiah Berek

Berek became a Knight after he sank the Castillian Armada in 1659. While he is often away and cannot attend Elaine's revels and meetings, he does show up whenever he can. The "Knights" beneath him are actually the Sea Dogs, not members of the Order of the High King. Elaine is content to let the informality slide. More information on Berek can be found in the *Game Masters' Guide* (pages 118–119) and the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook (pages 46–48).

Bleddig (Bleh-thig)

Elaine's stepfather was the second man to swear fealty to Avalon's new Queen. While he is not the strongest, boldest, or even the most courageous Knight, none can doubt the love in his heart. He serves as a liaison between the nobility and Elaine, addressing the concerns of the various dukes and earls.

Cowan (Co-ee-un)

Cowan is Elaine's older stepbrother. He is tall for an Avalon (almost six feet), blond and handsome. Cowan is in charge of training squires in Elaine's court, and his relentless methods have earned him the nickname "the Boot."

Geriant (Ger-ee-aunt)

Geriant travels for the Queen abroad, serving her interests in the other nations of Théah. Elaine often grants his services to foreign nobles, allowing him to act on her behalf. She only does this if the cause is just: he will slay a nest of kobolds for them, but not a rival or political enemy.

Drinking from the Graal

Before any man or woman may become one of the Queen's Knights, they must drink from the Graal. Elaine warns them before they do: "If your heart is true, you shall gain the strength of Avalon's greatest heroes. But if your heart is false, the waters shall poison you and you shall die."

When she first spoke these words, Derwyddon's eyes grew suspicious. Uwaine took the test first and after he succeeded, Derwyddon took the young Queen aside, saying, "The Graal cannot poison a man!"

"They do not know that," Elaine said with a smile. "And any man who refuses to drink is a man whose devotion to me is nothing but words."

Gwydd (Goo-eeth)

Gwydd is the youngest Knight in Elaine's court, a handsome youth who showed up only two seasons ago. While the boy is no more than eighteen, his skill and beauty are almost unearthly; it is obvious he has Sidhe blood in his veins. He handles most matters concerning the Goodly Folke, and battles the Unseelies wherever they may be found.

Lamorak

Sir Lamorak once had designs on the throne himself, but threw them aside the instant he saw Elaine with the Graal. Today, he serves as the general of her armies, which in practical terms means keeping the Eisen mercenaries in line. When questions of military strategy or tactics come up, Lamorak is the final arbiter.

MacAllister

Born in the Highland Marches, Bors MacAllister served as advisor to the MacDuffs for nigh on twenty years. MacAllister now serves his lord as one of Elaine's Knights — a strange relationship to be sure, but one that has aided both the Queen and King. While Elaine still relies on Derwyddon for almost all of her counsel, she is often seen speaking with MacAllister as well. In truth, Elaine finds his simple wit a welcome relief from Derwyddon's monotone soliloquies. More on MacAllister and his unique duties to the Queen can be found in Chapter Two.

Owain

Young Owain, the son of Uwayne, is one of Elaine's newest Knights. He replaced Sir Melias, who fell during the unification of Avalon. He has no specific duties, but serves the Queen with honor and bravery.

Peppin

Sir Peppin is of average height and weight, his features are plain and he stutters. He has spent his life hunting the Mirror Beast, a foul creature that had haunted his family for generations. Peppin may never look into a mirror, for he shall see the Beast there. The Beast exists only in mirrors and cannot be fought by any mundane means. He balances his dedication to Elaine with his search for the Beast. He has yet to find a way to defeat the monster and refuses to fall in love and marry until he does.

Uwaine

When Derwyddon introduced Elaine to the Avalon nobility, Uwaine was one of the first knights to doubt her. He believed her just another pretender to Avalon's throne... until she showed him the Graal.

"I have need of knights such as you," she told him. "Knights who think with their own minds rather than allowing another to think for them."

Since that day, he has helped Elaine subdue Avalon and maintained its peace ever since. He concerns himself with the laws of Avalon, and serves as a *de facto* High Sheriff for all Avalon. Knights under

Uwaine will come to a local sheriff's assistance for particularly troublesome problems, such as Unseelie Sidhe or large bandit gangs.

Sheriffs, Constables and Mayors

Elaine's Knights cannot be everywhere in Avalon; usually, law enforcement duties fall upon three more mundane classes. *Constables* patrol small towns and cities, serving as a police force and protecting the citizens from criminals. *Sheriffs* are in charge of law enforcement for an entire county, and usually have a number of constables under them. *Mayors* are the civic leaders of towns, and can call upon both constables and sheriffs to enforce the laws. Though a sheriff may have jurisdiction over an entire county, he is obligated to assist any mayor in his jurisdiction who asks for help.

Yseult (Ee-sault)

Yseult is Elaine's only "lady knight", having served the Queen for almost seven years. She is also one of the court's most daring knights, undertaking any adventure that presents itself. If something needs to be done quickly and expediently, Yseult will get it done.



The Glamour Isles

The Lands

Avalon is divided into seven counties: Balig, Breg, Camlann, Gaavane, Lothian, Lovaine, and Percis. Each is listed below with its prominent cities, dukes and earls. The map on page 13 of the *Game Masters' Guide* shows their locations. A few hooks have been planted within them, which GMs should feel free to expand into full-length adventures if they wish.

Balig

Ruler: Conon, Baron of Balig

Population: 150,000

When Elaine sought to gain the throne of Avalon, her chief competitor was King Piram of Breg. One of Piram's first acts was to send an army to Balig, subjugate the ruler, and call himself the King of Balig as well as Breg. Elaine liberated Balig from Piram's control, but part of her agreement was that Balig would remain a vassal to Breg. Therefore, Balig has no duke, only a baron who answers to King Piram.

Balig is a study in appearances vs. reality. Technically, Baron Conon is a lackey to the King of Breg. Gold and resources are supposed to be funneled to Breg, impoverishing Balig and adding to the "King's" coffers. In practical terms, however, this deplorable state simply doesn't exist. Conon's native-Balig tax collectors don't like forking over any more than they have to, and often wait until the populace takes their goods to market before assessing them. With Carleon just a short distance away, most residents can sell their goods well before the assessors come, keeping a tidy profit while turning their "meager" stores over to Conon's men. As a result, the King of Breg believes the province to be impoverished, Baron Conon doesn't have to worry about producing much, and the people remain fat and happy.

Canguine

Canguine is a city under a curse. Legend has it that the founders offended a Sidhe Lord, who placed a terrible

curse upon it. Now it stands broken and dilapidated, a haven for pirates and criminals. Canguine is covered in detail in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook (pages 23–25).

Pomitain

Pomitain is a large village whose chief industry is fishing. It houses Conon's castle as well; unfortunately, the Baron has a problem. One of King Piram's tax collectors has discovered Conon's little system of slipping out of Breg taxes, and is on his way back to tell the king. Conon needs to stop the tax collector, or at least sabotage his message.

Breg

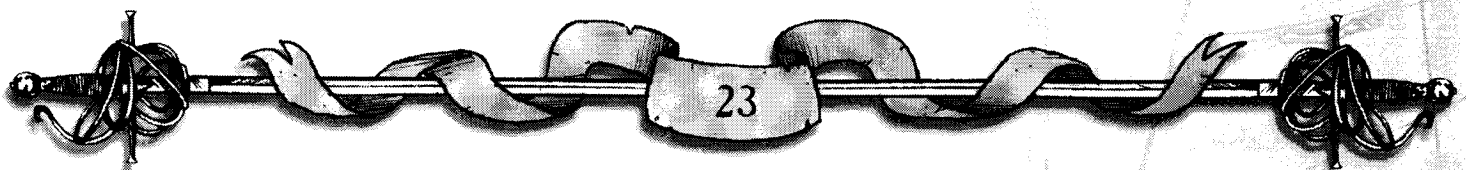
Ruler: Piram, High King of Breg

Population: 1,100,000

When Elaine came to power, many men who called themselves "High King" stood against her. When Elaine's army conquered Breg, King Piram bowed his knee to Elaine, but he did not bow his head.

Elaine allowed the obstinate Piram to remain "King of Breg" as long as he recognized her as the Queen of Avalon. Piram is one of the most prolific traders in Avalon, making his little kingdom some of the richest land in Avalon.

Dissent still smolders in Breg, although the majority of the populace embraces Elaine with open arms. Hidden bands in Brenneth and Tenebroc plot the Queen's assassination, hoping to gain freedom for their native province. They bandy about ideas on how to get to Elaine and the best way of disposing of her once they do. Luckily, their numbers remain small, and most people dismiss such malcontents as isolated troublemakers. The "King" knows nothing about their activities, but would quietly encourage them if he did. He's not willing to risk his life to overthrow Queen Elaine, but "Bomb Plot" traitors on his land give him another tool to use. If worse comes to worst, he could simply root them out, demonstrating his loyalty to Elaine. Time will tell whether these miscreants are simply full of hot air, or if they truly mean when they say.



Breg is the most developed province in all of Avalon, the cause of much of its wealth. Because of this, its inhabitants tend to be more fearful of the wilderness than most, and Unseelie Sidhe lurk in the uncivilized areas of the province.

Brenneth

In the small town of Brenneth, a group calling themselves "The Loyalists" (an ironic title) are silently conspiring to assassinate Queen Elaine. They plan to do so by placing barrels of gunpowder in the cellar directly below her throne at her birthday party.

Their plans are all complete. All they need do now is wait.

Escavalon

Escavalon is a large, rural shire that is one of the most bountiful farmlands in Breg. Unfortunately, they've been having troubles lately. Corn dies in the field, milk curdles overnight, and the chickens won't lay eggs.

The sheriff of Escavalon brought in a few Church scholars to investigate the problem, but they've been stumped. Now he's looking for a witch hunter. The people are getting surly and beginning to point fingers. Something must happen soon, or the small, happy shire of Escavalon will turn into the blood-soaked shire of Escavalon before you can say "witch hunt."

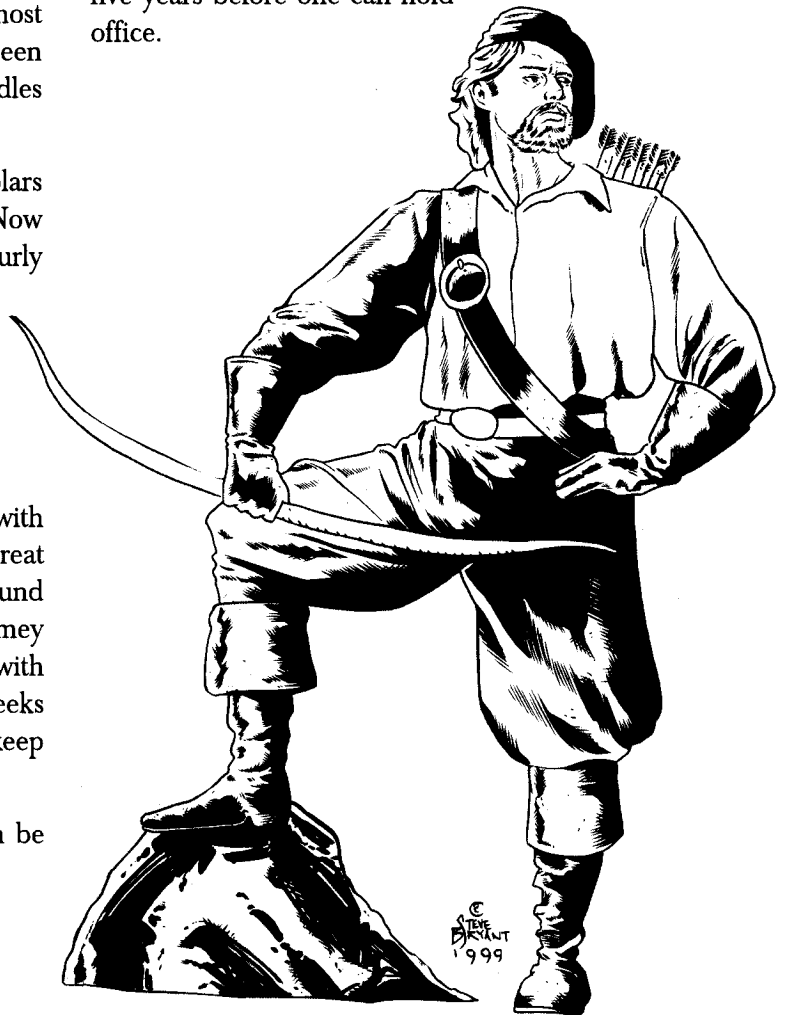
Teneborc

Teneborc is a large port city whose main trade is with Inismore. Sitting on a hill high above the city is a great stone. The hill itself has many caves that riddle the ground below the city. A lone beggar known to the locals as Brimey Stump has awakened every morning for a month with nightmares of the stone falling down on the city. Two weeks ago, he started building supports around the rock to keep his nightmares from coming true.

One week ago, the man disappeared, and screams can be heard from the caves every night.

Wandesborow

Wandesborow is known as "Sailor's Haven," the largest collection of swabbies in Théah. It sprawls along the shoreline for miles in every direction; some say that it has more docks than houses. Besides the abundant fishing, Wandesborow also has a huge ship-building industry. Sailors from all over Théah can be found here, but despite the coarseness which that implies, the city stays orderly. The constables take their job very seriously, and have the muscle to take down any number of raucous crews. The town drunk tank takes up an entire building; fines are levied against the inmates' captains, who cannot leave port until they pay up. The entire city council is comprised of former sailors; one must have served on board a ship for at least five years before one can hold office.



Camlann

Ruler: Duke Mark Garloise

Population: 400,000

Camlann is a strange land, ruled by her passions. Avalon's first kings ruled in Camlann, but invasion from Inismore left a permanent mark on her culture, and the capital was moved west to Lovaine. Because of her Inish influence, the men and women of Camlann are earthy, loud, proud, and heavy drinkers. Because of their noble heritage, they are also some of the most prolific practitioners of Glamour on the isle.

The province remains weird and unearthly: an odd mix of fading glory and contemporary legend. The people remember their ancient heritage as the seat of kings, but rather than try to resurrect a bygone era, they strive for new ways to enhance their status. The people here have seen the future of Avalon and embraced it with gusto. Their Glamour is a part of that. They use magic with eerie ease and take pride in the heroic feats their nobility can exhibit. Privateering is another part. The shipyards at Cardican are the third largest in Avalon (behind Carleon and Wandesborow), and many local young men have found their calling on the open waves. More Sea Dogs hail from Camlann than any other province in the Triple Kingdoms.

Bedegrane

Bedegrane is a hotbed of Elaine supporters. Specifically, it's a hotbed of people who want to be a part of the "new Avalon." The baron has invested almost his entire fortune into a school — Bedegrane University. Using his political ties, he's made it the most popular school in Avalon.

Just recently, he's had a problem. He built the University on lands that the Sidhe consider their own. Needless to say, his school — his entire family fortune — is in grave danger, and he's looking for someone to help him solve the situation.

Cardican

Cardican has always been a sailor's city, but recently the Explorers' Society has taken special interest in the port. Cardican's position and resources are perfect for launching

expeditions to the uncharted west. Captains are always in need of men who are brave enough to sail into the unknown.

Fenshire

The town of Fenshire loves Elaine. No, it *really* loves Elaine. It also hates Bregs. No, it *really* hates Bregs.

Every once in a while, a group of Fenshire men gets a little too drunk, a little too loud and a little too proud. They head over the border into Breg (it's within stumbling distance) and start making noise. King Piram set up a border guard to make sure the Fenshire boys don't hurt anyone. Just recently, the noise turned to violence and the two sides are starting to make very scary noises. Someone has to come in and make some peace before more blood is spilled.

Strangore

Strangore is not so much a city as a stop-over on the road to other cities. Travelers moving from one city to another stay in Strangore for a day or two at most, then move on. Strangore doesn't just get land traffic, but plenty of ships on their way to Inismore or the Highlands as well.

Strangore has seven inns, two blacksmiths (brothers who don't compete but rather cover each other's workloads), two stables and a whole house full of jennies. With all the travelers moving through its lands, Strangore also has its fare share of bandits, a problem that the sheriff is looking to solve. If only he could get some help...

Gaavane

Ruler: Derwyddon

Population: 100,000

Gaavane's ruler is one of the most influential lords in Elaine's court. Not for his wealth or his soldiers, but because of his land's heritage. Derwyddon claims Gaavane as his home; when Elaine came to power, he reestablished Avalon's holy order of druids in Norgales. The most sacred forest in Avalon — Grumweald — is in Gaavane, a haunted place where no one wanders without dire reason.

The mysterious druids gather around groupings of stone scattered across this province — marks of Faerie Circles which they have attempted to emulate. There, they conduct strange rites, making unknown pacts with whatever forces they choose. Ordinary men and women never approach the stone circles out of respect for (and fear of) the druids.

In addition to their enigmatic powers, druids also serve as the caretakers of knowledge, preserving Avalon's "old ways." They preserve texts of the Cymric language, legends from before the Montaigne invasion, and other such documents, passing their teachings on to those who listen. Small subterranean libraries dot Gaavan province; only the druids know their exact locations, but locals occasionally learn of them and do their best to maintain them.

Forest Grumweald

This eerie swath of towering trees and wispy fog has many of the same qualities as Eisen's legendary Schwarzen Walder. Smaller and less imposing, it nevertheless holds an air of hushed reverence coupled with unspoken fear. None save the druids ever cross its boundaries, and even they do so only on pressing matters. While the forest holds some animal life, the creatures are far quieter than normal and almost never show themselves. The Sidhe seem to have an unspoken claim to the forest; the rare traveler often reports shapes moving amid the distant trees, or haunted laughter heard in the dead of night. Such travelers never return to the Grumweald for a second trip.

Norgales

The capital of Gaavane province, Norgales lies near a "thin spot" in the mystical barrier between Avalon and the Sidhe's native land of Bryn Bresail. The druids built it during the time of legends, and its inhabitants still adhere to

the old customs and beliefs. The street lamps are never lit on the nights of druidic rituals, and those venturing out after dark must carry a sprig of holly tree with them. In olden times, those who didn't were snatched up by the spirits of the night and never seen again. Nowadays, it usually means a night in jail and a stern warning.

Roestock

Roestock is the "official" capital of the county, a sparsely-inhabited ghost town with only twenty people. Men and women fear the city and claim it's haunted (or at least that the forest surrounding it is haunted). The people are trying desperately to bring more people to the city, but after Derwyddon came, all the peasants fled in terror of the Druid and his kind.

Lothian

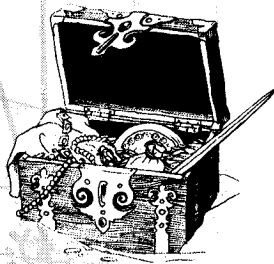
Ruler: Duke Carlyle

Population: 175,000

Lothian is a wild land, uncivilized and untamed. The lord of the land, Carlyle, is half-Highlander and likes it that way. He wears kilts to Elaine's court and speaks with a thick brogue. "Your rudeness is almost charming," Elaine once said to him. "But if you insist on wearing a dress to my court, your wife must wear trousers. Someone must wear the pants in the house, after all."

The next month, Carlyle arrived in court with his wife. She wore trousers.

Like their lord, Lothians are stubborn, headstrong and not easily swayed in their ways. They continue to practice Highland customs even though they have no formal clan structure, and viciously resist efforts to "civilize" their land. Avalon gets most of its domestic wool products from Lothian, importing the rest from the Highland Marches. Roads are hard to come by, and the northern half of the province is almost impassable during the winter. While a few good-sized towns sprinkle the province border, most people live in small villages of a hundred or fewer. Such communities tend to be very insular and distrustful of



outsiders. Every town has a local legend, usually a young hero who slays a powerful monster through perseverance and heart. The notorious giant Jack-in-Irons is seen most often in Lothian. Some believe he makes his home in the southern mountains, where he keeps the heads of his victims on gruesome display.

Cerrwidden Dun

Cerrwidden Dun isn't actually a city, but one of the oldest standing fortresses in Avalon. It was one of the last hold-outs against the invading Montaigne. The thirty-man force stood for almost a week against a Montaigne army of hundreds. A year after she came to power, Elaine commissioned a memorial to the men who fell here and left an honor guard to protect the place.

Sometimes, on moonless nights, the men who serve in the honor guard claim to hear clashing swords and the screams of dying men. No man stands guard on nights of the new moon.

Lovaine

Ruler: Queen Elaine

Population: 2,700,000

Lovaine is the largest province in Avalon and home to its two capitals: Carleon and Luthon. Because of the glamour surrounding Carleon and its Queen, Lovaine is also the most fantastic of the provinces. Beasts wander the forests, men and women fall passionately in love for no reason at all, and knights ride forth on adventures at least once a season.

Of all the provinces in Avalon, Lovaine best embodies her invigorated spirit. While the amenities of 17th-century life can be found throughout the province – the roads are well-paved, the architecture updated, etc. – a fairy-tale atmosphere pervades the entire province. The grass always seems greener

here, and the sky a little brighter. The Queen of the Sidhe and her court often appear here, and Elaine has made it a habit to meet them out in the splendor of nature rather than at Carleon. Everyone claims to have a brownie, pooka, or some other minor Sidhe residing nearby, and swords are still preferred over firearms as the weapon of choice. As the heart of the nation, Lovaine reflects a quintessentially Avalon nature.

Arroy

Arroy is Avalon's chief source of iron, gold and silver. The mines have served Elaine well, but not well enough; she still needs to import steel from Eisen.

Recently, she brought a few Eisen miners to Avalon to improve Arroy's output. In the few months since their arrival, production has almost doubled.

Of course, where there's gold and silver, there's bandits...

Black Mountains

This small mountain range – the only one to speak of in the Glamour Isles – remains largely unexplored, despite numerous expeditions through it. Trade routes between Carleon and Arroy are well guarded, and a garrison stands guard at every pass, so the main roads are safe

enough. But step off the beaten path, and you find yourself in a forbidding wilderness of granite. Monsters of every sort lurk in the hidden vales, while the caves hide creatures unseen since the days of Elilodd. They rarely trouble the main routes, but those who go wandering are fair game. Heroes sometimes venture forth to do battle with these beasts, but not very often.

Bran Bridge

There is very little left of Bran Bridge. It looks to be a large, open field with small standing stones sunk deep in the green grass. On the north side of the field is a small lake

Coal

One of Avalon's most important innovations was due to Elaine's Forest Law. At Derwyddon's urging, foresting in Avalon has been severely restricted; all wood must be used for architecture only. "Firewood" is a thing of the past. Instead, the Avalons are using something called "coal."

Coal burns both hotter and longer than wood, although it does make a black halo over larger cities – like the one that's beginning to build over Luthon. It also requires a special stove, which has become a common sight in most Avalon households.



with cool, still waters. Not even the wind can make a ripple in Bran Bridge Lake.

Six hundred years ago, when the Montaigne victory was certain, Athrwys came here with the Graal and threw it into the still waters.

It is said Elaine can be found here on rainy days, whispering to the lake. But who can trust peasant stories?

Catterick

Catterick is your standard, run-of-the-mill Avalon port. Most of its trade comes from Vendel, but recently it's had some problems with Vestenmannavnjar raiders. It's issued a reward of 10,000 Guilders to anyone who can capture the *Revensj* and her captain – dead or alive.

Carleon

They call her “The Shining Star”, the most beautiful city in Avalon. While the salons of Charouse hide decadence and corruption, and Vendel's Kirk chafes beneath unbending order, Carleon stands fresh and proud. Ten years ago, it was just another harbor: prosperous, but nothing special. In a single night, the wizard Derwyddon changed all that. He drew Elaine's castle from the foam of the sea, transformed country roads into tree-lined streets and conjured a new capital from the substance of air. The instruments of government moved from Luthon within a month, and by the end of the year, Avalon's new capital had been firmly established.

Carleon lies amid the most powerful manifestation of Glamour in the Kingdom. At the nexus stands Elaine's castle, Glenayre – an astounding edifice of gleaming white towers and marble walls. It rises from a cliff of black rock, overlooking the western sea like a sentinel. Queen Elaine holds court there, entertaining diplomats from every corner of Théah. Her twelve Knights reside there as well, awaiting her orders or preparing to travel on matters of national business. Beautiful galleries full of paintings and sculpture dot the complex, while a garden full of enchanted orange and lemon trees dominates the center courtyard. The idea

of assaulting such a structure is ludicrous; it looks as eternal as the rocks which support it.

Carleon itself stretches east from Glenayre, following a strange pattern to form streets and alleyways. Carleon's layout is confusing to first-time visitors; streets often end in a three-way intersection or loop back on one another. Few notice, however, due to the breathtaking beauty. Trees and other greenery intermingle with the buildings, forming a seamless bond with the surrounding countryside. Carleon blends perfectly with the land around it, lending it a sense of harmony and well-being. A few twisting streets can't dispel the city's magic.

A wide park called the Promenade extends due east from the castle; the park is public and open to the nearby streets, although every night constables roust the few squatters who try to bed down there. A series of buildings and monuments extends in a line down the center, starting with Glenayre and ending with a druid's circle two miles away. The national Parliament comes first: a stately, modern-looking building where the nation's leaders meet to write law and form policy. Further east stands the Reflecting Pool, a shallow pond approximately two hundred feet long. Two huge marble statues stand on either end; the first represents King Elilodd holding his hand out across the water. The second, facing the castle, represents the Lady of the Lake. She holds the Graal in her hand, preparing to bestow it upon the rightful ruler of Avalon.

Past the reflecting pool stands the National Dock, a decidedly less pleasant building than the others. The squat steel fortress holds the highest court in the land, which hears cases of vital import to the well-being of the nation. The keep holds the judge's chambers as well as courtrooms and libraries. The towers above it hold the most dangerous prisoners in Avalon – traitors, mass murderers, and others whom the crown has deemed too threatening to risk transporting for trial. Those imprisoned in the towers often have the honor of being executed on the grounds; the central courtyard contains a headsman's block of pure steel. The guardsmen there maintain a small group of a dozen



The Glamour Isles

falcons on site. It is said that when the falcons leave, the city will fall from its grace.

The last stop on the Promenade – two miles due east of the castle – is the Marking Stones, a circle of druidic rocks similar to those found in Gaavane province. During the daytime, they are the subject of idle curiosity, but no one approaches them when the sun goes down. It was here that Derwyddon cast the spell revitalizing Carleon, and he still returns here to contemplate weighty matters. He only comes by moonlight, and never likes to be disturbed.

South of the castle stand Carleon's docks, the finest in the Glamour Isles. The Sea Dogs make their home here, infesting every corner bar and seaside inn. Fully half the ships in dock belong to the Dogs, and more can be found just out to sea. (The rest belong to various merchants,

explorers, and foreign sailors.) Every ship sailing out earns a spectacular view of Glenayre to the north – a sight that inspires Avalon's sons during their long nights at sea. Berek maintains a residence in the harbor district, as do most captains based in Avalon ports. While boisterous and loud, the Carleon docks are much safer than most.

The Sea Dogs know they have a reputation to protect, and go to great lengths to maintain it. They drink and brawl among themselves, but never allow outright crime to infest the streets (they save their thievery for the High Seas). Those found breaking the law are punished severely. The story goes that a young man brought his sweetheart down here to view the ships as they sailed away. A thug from a foreign vessel snatched her moneybag from her and tore off down the streets – only be tackled by six Sea Dogs, who had emerged from a nearby tavern at the sound of her cries. They beat the thief senseless and returned the lady's bag to her with an apology and an offer of dinner. Berek knows the value of good publicity and ensures that his boys understand it as well.

In addition to these landmarks, Carleon holds numerous buildings not directly important to Avalon herself. A charterhouse of the Explorer's Society lies near the harbor, while the local chapter of the Rose and Cross maintains a building north of the Promenade. Every nation maintains diplomatic residences on the streets nearest Elaine's castle. The most prominent of these belong to the Vendel League. An entire row of fine townhouses belong to them, bordering the southern side of the Promenade. The Vendel originally petitioned to build their dwellings on the Promenade itself, offering to pay a staggering sum for the right. Elaine refused – some things weren't for sale – and the Vendel settled for the next best thing. The houses are exquisitely built and offer an unparalleled view of Parliament and the Reflecting Pool. The parties held here are among the most exclusive in Avalon; only the cream of the nobility ever attends.

Carleon has flourished into stunning life the last few years – a beautiful rose just coming into her own. The decadence and corruption of other capitals doesn't exist here, and a sense of optimism pervades the very stones in the street. If





Avalon is a fairy-tale kingdom, then Carleon is its enchanted heart – strong, vibrant, and bursting with pride.

Forest Avalon

Forest Avalon is one of the deepest, densest and darkest in The Glamour Isles. It was here that Robin Goodfellow hid during his reign as the King of Robbers, and they say the great weeping willow that he used as a headquarters still stands. It is also said that some of the treasures he stole from King Charles are there as well.

Luthon

Luthon was once the capital of Avalon, but no more. Now she is a city of pomp and circumstance, but no real power. All the buildings are in Luthon, but none of the authority. The true heads of government moved to Carleon, while the more mundane instruments remained in Luthon and remain there to this very day. Tax collection, public works... all of the organizations which implement Avalon's policy are located here – taking their orders from the Queen and Parliament in Carleon. The city itself is industrious, but dull. The buildings have lost their luster and the monuments seem smaller than they once were. Luthon's mayor, Nigel Bester, tries his best to put a positive face on things, but it's clear that something has faded here and may never return.

Percis

Ruler: Neville Cholmondeley-Featheringstonehaugh, Duke of Percis

Population: 625,000

The Duke of Percis is one of the most powerful lords in Avalon. While his lands are not the largest, they are some of the richest. Because of his trade with Montaigne, he has many powerful allies on the continent. He regularly entertains Montaigne nobility and is one of the only lords not to change his name to something a bit more Cymric (it's pronounced "CHUMley-FANshaw").

Despite his Montaigne leanings, the Duke has no illusions about his loyalties. He's seen the vicious pecking order of

continental nobility, and while he's happy to play the game on their terms, he doesn't want to see any of it on Avalon. He views his province as a buffer zone between mainland Théah and the rest of the kingdom – keeping the petty nobles occupied while allowing Queen Elaine to get on with running the country. The population under him are some of the most sophisticated in Avalon. The literacy rate runs higher than almost anywhere in Théah, and the continent's most *avant garde* plays make their Avalon debut in the theaters of Balroux Downs.

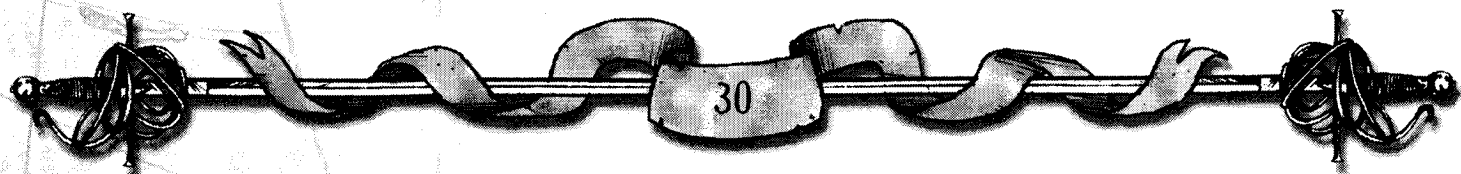
Balroux Downs

Balroux Downs is the cultural headquarters of Avalon. The Downs' "Thespian Row" (a string of theaters running the length of an entire street) fiercely competes for noble patronage. The one which can land the latest dramatic masterpiece can earn five times as much as its closest rival, but tastes are fickle and the balance shifts regularly between at least six different companies.

Two of Avalon's most famous playwrights – Montgomery Peerson and Frances Chandler – were not only fierce competitors, but also close friends. The two were seen regularly in tavernhouses, drinking and singing together. While Peerson preferred romantic comedies and tragedies, Chandler preferred historical and political plays, a fact that did not make him popular with Avalon's nobility. Peerson warned him to stay out of politics, but Chandler showed little concern. "What can they do to me, Monty? I'm no one. A playwright. What real power does a play have?"

A year ago, Chandler was found dead in an alleyway. His throat was cut and his purse was gone, but Peerson knew the true intent behind the murder. His most recent play, *The Tragedy of Tistram Channel*, has brought Peerson much fame, drawing even the Queen's attention. Unfortunately, it's also drawn attention from the wrong quarters... who now want him dead, too.

Peerson is only a poor playwright. What he needs now are allies.



Surluse

A proud fishing and shipping town, Surluse stands atop tall, white cliffs looking down on the frothing waters. The city is filled with seagulls – thousands of them – and employs workers to clean up after them.

A great scaly beast lurks in the waters below Surluse, a beast that occasionally makes its presence known to the people of the town – especially when tourists are in the area. The creature's name is "Towyn" and despite its gruesome appearance, it's actually quite harmless. The people of Surluse feed it fish and cattle to keep it around and encourage it to scare tourists every once in a while. Every once in a while, monster hunters and scholars come for a glimpse of the beast, but Towyn always seems a bit shy on those days.

Isle of the Grey Queen

Just off the shores of Avalon is the Isle of the Grey Queen: the home of a timeless and beautiful woman who sits in a tall tower, looking over Avalon. She spins at an ancient wheel, but has no loom for the thread she makes. Beside her sits a tall, gilded mirror that shows her the past, the present and the future. The Avalons call her "the Grey Queen."

Long, long ago, she looked into her mirror and saw a handsome Sidhe named Lugh. She fell in love with him instantly and set about bringing him to her island. Once there, Lugh explained that although he was honored by her love, he could not give himself to her; he was already devoted to the Queen of the Sidhe.

Her anger was so great, it caused storms over all of Avalon's isles, and she cursed the young knight. She gave him a hand of unworked iron and threw him back to the world. In retaliation for mutilating her knight, the Queen of the Sidhe put a curse on the Queen of the Grey Isle: If she ever falls in love again, she will certainly die.

That was many, many years ago. The Queen has not dared another look into her mirror since then. She sits at her wheel, spinning thread though she has no loom, and averts her eyes from her magic mirror.

But one day, she will look up. She will see Lawrence there in the misty reflection. She will see the pain she caused him and she will fall in love with him once again. Then the mirror will crack and the Queen of the Sidhe's curse will fall upon her. One day.

More information on the Grey Queen can be found in the *Game Masters' Guide*, page 17.

Culture

The Avalons look to the past to rediscover their lost wisdom. All art, songs, and stories depict ancient Avalon heroes who live, breathe, and die for their native land.

Language

Elaine has encouraged her people to relearn Cymric, the ancient language of Avalon. Because it is a difficult tongue, her efforts have only been marginally successful. Many nobles prefer their "native" language of Avalon – the language that emerged from Cymric and Montaigne – and if they do speak a second language, it is usually Montaigne.

The Graal

One of the most popular books in Avalon, *The Graal* tells the story of the rise and fall of an ancient Queen and her noble knights. Printed two hundred years ago in the Montaigne language, an Avalon scholar translated the work into Avalon at Elaine's request. The book has recently been translated into the ancient Cymric language as well.

Religion

There are really *two* religions in Avalon, and both act in accordance with each other. The first is the Church of



Avalon and the second is the *filid*, the men the Old Empire called “druids.”

The Church of Avalon

The Church of Avalon is almost identical to the Vaticine Church with a few minor alterations.

While it does revere the Prophets and their disdain for sorcery, the Avalon Church recognizes the Sidhe and Glamour as part of the Creator’s puzzle. They are, in the literal sense of the word, supernatural: a power that is revealed only after one has achieved a profound understanding of nature’s secrets.

The monarch of Avalon is the head of the Church and all bishops and cardinals are appointed by her hand. At its height of power, the Church included deacons, archdeacons, bishops and archbishops. In order to make things easy to keep track of (and to reduce the power of the Church in Avalon), Elaine simplified the stratification of Church officials. Now there are only priests and deacons.

There are currently 132 churches in Avalon, each maintained by a priest and assigned to a deacon by their respective counties. Each deacon answers directly to the Queen.

The Druids

In the old days, before the arrival of the Vaticine Church, the religion of Avalon revered water, earth, and spirits. The social caste were comprised of warriors, learned men, and peasants, or “churls.”

Learned men, *filid*, would later be called “druids” by the Montaigne. In their writings of this peculiar class of people, the Montaigne managed to misinterpret completely their role and significance in Cymric culture. They assumed that *all* learned men were druids, when in fact the word *filid* simply means “man who has learning.” Druids were *filid*, but not all *filid* were druids.

Druid Training

In the old days, druids served as advisors to kings, teachers, and judges. If a dispute arose, the king’s druid settled it. But druids were also keepers of the secret ways. Their lessons

were learned in riddles, a fact that is reflected in the Cymric fascination with knots.

There was (and still is) no “druid school.” Druids take apprentices and attempt to teach them the ways of the world. However, just because a druid *knows* the ways of the world doesn’t mean he can necessarily *understand* them. This is the hardest truth an apprentice can learn.

The apprentice travels with his master, watching and learning. His training includes a great deal of reading, learning stories and histories of days gone by. As he learns the stories, he gets his first look at the world’s riddles. When his master feels he’s ready (usually after seven years), the apprentice goes through the ritual to bring him into the order of druids.

The Bard

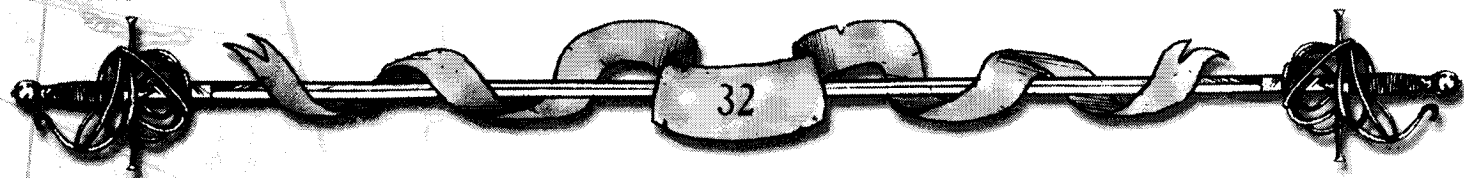
Once an apprentice undergoes the ritual, the order considers him capable of learning the world’s lessons on his own. He is now known as a *bard*, and goes into the world to learn its riddles and strange ways.

As a bard travels, he stops in villages and castles, bringing any news he’s heard while on the road. If there is a local druid in the area, he spends a few days there, learning what he can from the wise man. During this time, the druid tests the young man to see what sort of mettle he’s made of. When he’s ready, the bard goes through another initiation process to move into the next level of the order.

Ollamdh (Oh-lahv)

When a bard becomes an ollamdh, his wandering days are done. An ollamdh usually settles in a community or castle to serve its people.

An ollamdh interprets omens, judges local disputes, and deals with the Sidhe. Each ollamdh has his own speciality. The order sees knowledge as a tree, and each ollamdh is a master of his own branch. That way, more than one ollamdh can serve a single community. One castle may have a ollamdh who is master of the riddles of medicine, while another is master of the riddles of medicine, and a third is master of the riddles of justice.



This is the highest rank any member of the order can realistically expect to gain. Only the wisest in the world may gain the next rank, the holy status of druid.

Druid

No *filid* ever expected to become a druid. No man petitions to gain the rank. In fact, the title cannot be gained; it is bestowed by the order on those who have proved themselves worthy of it.

The rank is a secret one, bestowed to ollamdh in silence. An ollamdh who has reached the rank of druid is expected to keep it secret from the rest of the order. He is taught the greatest secrets in the world, secrets that must be kept in order for them to maintain their power (see *Druid Magic*, below).

There are only seven druids in Avalon today, including Derwyddon himself.

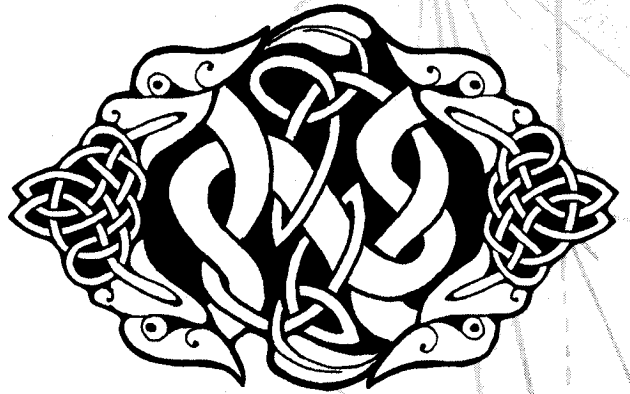
Druid Magic

It is a common misconception that druids are sorcerers. They are not. They are keepers of secret knowledge, unravelers of riddles and masters of enigmas. It is because they have this knowledge that the world makes its riddles plain to them and them alone. It is for this reason that druid magic does not include “spells”, but “secrets.”

The secrets of the druids are not so much spells as a way of looking at the world. “The world’s secrets are easy enough to see,” a druid might say, “if one knows how to see them.”

The most important skill for a druid to learn is recognizing omens. Omens such as “If a cat, dog, or red-headed woman is the first thing you meet in the morning, you will have bad luck.” Or, “If a broom falls before you set yourself to bed, company will come the next morning.” Or, “Seeing three ravens in one day means someone you love will die before the year is done.” In Avalon, these are serious matters, and secret knowledge held only by druids.

An important element of these secrets is that they must be learned, they cannot be taught. When an apprentice asks



his master a question, the answer is always a riddle. If the apprentice is able to solve the riddle, he gains one of the world’s secrets.

It is this great respect for secrets that gives them their power. If a druid ever simply told the secret without his student learning it on his own, the secret loses its power for both the master and the student. In other words, if the druid spoils the secret, he loses its power forever.

Omens

Omens are indicators of good and bad luck. Recognizing how to avoid bad luck and bring good luck is one of the first things a bard learns.

A man cannot go out and *look* for omens and expect good luck. In order for the events and actions below to bring good or bad luck, they must occur by happenstance. Likewise, when good fortune falls on you, rejoice openly. Bad things happen to those who do not show proper gratitude for their good fortune.

Gesa

Avalon is filled with men and women under the spell of a gesa. There are knights who cannot leave a bridge until they’ve protected it for one year and a day, women who will never fall in love until they cut their hair, and warriors who cannot be killed until they meet a man in green armor.



Gesa are a kind of magic found only in Avalon. The word gesa is roughly translated as “destiny.” A man or woman is usually born with a gesa, although druids are capable of setting them on a man or woman’s head.

Many gesa sound very much like curses: “You must never eat meat” or “You must never drink wine.” Others sound like blessings: “You can never be harmed by edged weapons” or “You will never find insult in any house you attend.” Still others can be mixed blessings: “You can only be killed on a Redi” or “You can only be killed while in bed with a lover.”

A gesa does not inhibit a Hero’s will; it is merely a supernatural taboo. Avalon Heroes know (from the examples from legend) that anyone who breaks a gesa brings misfortune to himself and any who are close to him.

Some famous gesa include:

- A Hero who must never eat in front of others
- A Hero who may never remove his boots
- A Hero who will never be defeated as long as he doesn’t cut his hair/eat meat/drink mead
- A Hero who will remain undefeated until he fights a battle under the shadow of Avalon Forest
- A Hero who can never refuse a lady’s request

Some people are born with gesa, but most gesa are cast by druids. Rules for casting gesa are found in Chapter Three.

Afternote

For more information on Avalon’s magic, see Chapter Three (for rules) and Chapter Four (for an essay on how to use Glamour, Gesa and Secret Knowledge in your *7th Sea* campaign).

Government

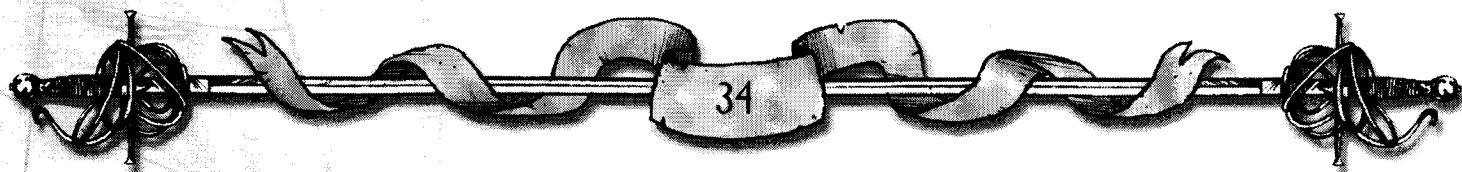
The Avalon of legend was an absolute monarchy, ruled by descendants of King Elilodd. This continued through the Montaigne invasion, when Elilodd’s line was replaced by

Henri du Montaigne’s. In 1215, however, Avalon’s nobles seized power over a defeated Charles, forcing him to give them a say in national matters. He formed a Parliament, whereby the nobility could debate policy, tax the land, and reject unjust laws. (The Statement of Rights also forbade religious persecution and prevented arbitrary arrests, but those propositions were largely ignored.) From then on, Avalon government was a constant tug of war between king and Parliament. Strong kings generally had their way with the nobles, while weak kings were in their thrall. For centuries they went back and forth, and course of the nation followed suit. Like so much else in Avalon, that changed when Elaine took the throne.

Elaine had something that no other ruler had – the Graal. The people loved her unabashedly, and she returned their love with wisdom and grace. Even the Inish seemed willing to embrace her, an act unheard of in the history of both countries. A new Parliament convened almost as a formality, prepared to give her whatever she wanted.

To everyone’s surprise, Elaine refused to press her tremendous advantage. Rather than breaking Parliament once and for all, she forged a new alliance with it, based on mutual benefit rather than conflict. She honored the Statement of Rights and quickly established a working relationship with the party leaders, seeking to create laws that were just and equitable. She allowed them to craft the wording of the laws after she had stipulated her wishes, shaping them with their help rather than dictating by fiat.

She also resurrected other clauses of the Statement of Rights – clauses which had been ignored for centuries. Soon laws had been enacted establishing basic freedoms for all of Avalon’s populace. No citizen of the Enchanted Isles could be arrested for practicing his religion, or thrown in jail without being charged for a crime and subjected to due process. Within two years, Elaine had established a smooth rapport with Parliament and granted unheard-of freedom to the populace below them. She intends such gestures to form the basis of a more formal government, ensuring that her reforms last beyond her own rule.

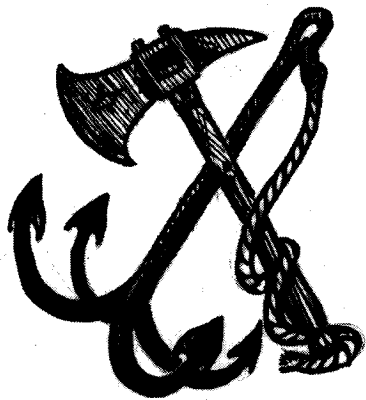


Lest anyone think her weak or overly indulgent, however, she still showed an iron fist beneath the velvet glove. When members of Parliament tried to ramrod legislation past her, she exercised her veto. Those who abused their authority found their seats removed and placed in the hands of more reasonable men; it wasn't hard to invalidate your title if you had Montaigne blood. As a last recourse, any who insisted on challenging her authority was presented the Graal and invited to drink. None ever did. Elaine realized that healthy debate was critical to a strong government, and never silenced her opponents as long as they spoke honestly. But she never tolerated threats to her rule, and ensured that everyone knew who truly lead the Triple Kingdoms.

Parliament and the Queen

Parliament itself is divided into two houses – the upper House of Lords and the lower House of Kingdoms (or “Kings” for short). The House of Lords handles domestic affairs for the isle of Avalon. The House of Kings deals with foreign policy for the entire Triple Kingdoms, making decisions for Inismore and the Marches as well as Avalon. (Representatives of those two nations make their wishes known through Elaine). Foreign policy generally consists of mutual defense and trading treaties, both of which keep Avalon's northern neighbors in mind.

Each house currently holds four hundred members. Seats are granted to those with noble titles, representing every corner of the Avalon isle (usually, a Parliament seat is included in a lord's inheritance, along with the estate, servants, and yearly stipend). Members have the option to



send “official representatives” in their place. It is not uncommon for destitute nobles to auction off their seats, selling an official appointment to the highest bidder. In this way, merchants, recent landowners, and the emerging bourgeois have been given a voice in the government. In fact, they have begun to form their own power bloc – called “Purses” by their fellows.

Sometimes, a new seat will be granted to a hero of the realm, along with a knighthood or other such award. For such a high honor, few actually take advantage of it. Most either sell their seats or appoint some proxy to do it for them. The results are often amusing, as a country sheriff or local bar owner stands amid Avalon's highest class. Jeremiah Berek, for example, wouldn't be caught dead legislating some dull tax bill. Instead, he sends one of his Sea Dogs to do it for him – as good a man as he can find to be sure, but still a Sea Dog. The sight of a salty sailor – with a striped shirt and kerchief beneath his parliamentary robes – sitting and debating policy in a docks accent can be quite jarring. No one has really complained, however; such appointments add welcome color to otherwise tedious proceedings.

All laws require Elaine's blessing before being passed. She can effectively veto any legislation Parliament puts through, and word from her can pass a bill into law or kill it before it is even proposed. She exercises her power sparingly, and generally lets Parliament do as they see fit. In return, she expects them to heed her suggestions and to serve the best interests of the nation. When they don't, she moves quickly and decisively. By stripping noble title, she can strip a Parliament member of his seat. Both houses have learned to respect her wishes.

Other Nations

Avalon bears the scars of many long years of occupation, scars reflected in its attitudes toward other countries. The Montaigne are intensely disliked for their history of aggression. Similarly, Castille has been an enemy ever since King Richard broke from the Church in 1622, an act compounded by the embarrassing defeat of the Armada

only nine years ago. The Vodacce are tolerated somewhat more, although their treacherous ways clash with the Avalon sense of honor. Eisen is regarded with a strange combination of respect and pity; they admire Eisen's discipline but shake their heads at the shattered remnants of their once-proud country. The Ussurans are enigmas, but have an earthy strength that appeals to the Avalon sensibility. Finally, there are the Vendel. Avalons respect both sides of that divided nation, seeking to gain their favor without becoming embroiled in their ongoing civil war.

Within the alliance, Avalons have heavily mixed feelings about both the Inish and Highlanders. They view both nations as "country cousins", admirable in their way but also in need of guidance. They respect the northern islands' need for autonomy, but strongly believe that they cannot be trusted on their own. They need Avalon to represent their interests in the big bad world. Such condescension causes friction in what is otherwise an amiable and mutually beneficial relationship.

Names

Naming has recently become a tricky practice in Avalon. For nearly 600 years, Avalon nobility have followed Montaigne naming conventions, albeit corrupted a bit by distance from their native shores. Nevertheless, for those six centuries, Montaigne was Avalon's noble and educated language while the common "churls" spoke their native Avalon.

Things have changed. When gaining their status as Elaine's personal champions, many knights took more traditional Avalon appellations, dropping their Montaigne-influenced names.

Of course, this practice has made a mess of Avalon naming procedures. Almost every name in Avalon is an exception to the rule, and many nobles change their names simply to be in the fashion of the moment.



History

Inish history is subjective, to say the least. But there are a few important dates that have made their way onto the Inish calendar that we must look at in order to understand the development of this tiny nation.

The O'Bannon

Somewhere in the time before recorded history, the people who would be called the Inish invaded Inismore. Stories tell of the native people who lived on the island and the Inish who defeated them and claimed their land.

The Inish divided the land into kingdoms they called *tuatha* and fought among themselves for control of the island. Finally, a high king – the *árd rí* – came into power. His name was Hugh O'Bannon, and he proved his rightful rule with an act that has become a tradition of each and every subsequent king of Inismore. In the capital of the island is the Fál Stone – called "Old Molly" and "Sweet Molly" in many Inish songs and stories – and if the true king kisses her, she weeps and sings (the song the Fál Stone sings is said to foretell the future of the king and his countrymen).

O'Bannon's reign was a brief one, lasting only fifteen years, but he was not killed by a rival, nor displaced by an usurper. One day, he put his crown on his throne, packed a small bag, and told his wife "I'll be back." Then he walked out the castle doors, never to be seen by his wife again.

O'Bannon's disappearance caused incredible havoc to the countryside. War erupted within months, and Inish blood was spilled. For years the wars raged, until a king finally emerged. Over the centuries, rightful rule over the island changed hands dozens of times, but the family that held it more than any other was the O'Toole family. While there have been beneficent O'Tooles, they have been greatly overshadowed by their malevolent counterparts.

The Prophets' Message

Around 430 AV, while Inismore was under the rule of a particularly undistinguished O'Toole, the message of the Prophets made its way to Inish shores. The Inish listened very carefully to the missionaries, heard the Prophets' message, and kicked them off the island. They were not about to abandon their relationship with the Sidhe, especially on the word of some foreigner.

Vestenmannavnjar Raiders

In the late 700s and early 800s, Vestenmannavnjar raiders began terrorizing the island and would continue to do so for almost three hundred years. The Inish were not prepared for the Vestenmannavnjar; the raiders were too well armed and well trained for the natives. Over those three centuries, the Vestenmannavnjar built permanent structures and cities on the coast and used the sites as trading posts.

In the spring of 1014, a young man appeared in the capital armed and ready for combat. He stepped through the crowds to Old Molly and gently kissed her. The stone wept and began to sing. The young man — who called himself "O'Bannon" — marched through the city streets to the king's audience chamber, where the O'Toole was meeting with a representative of the Vestenmannavnjar.

O'Bannon killed the Vestenmannavnjar, then turned on the O'Toole and put a sword through his belly, sticking him to the throne. He threw the corpse from the throne and declared himself the new *árd rí* of Inismore.

The new O'Bannon raised an army and marched on the Vestenmannavnjar towns. He defeated them all, but did not force them to leave Inish shores. "Take my hand and swear you love my mother," he said to the chief of each town, and as each of them did so, he allowed them to stay. "Now you are Inish," he said to them, smiling crookedly.

As before, the O'Bannon's rule was short-lived. He remained on the throne for only seven years before he put his crown down, picked up a bag and said to his court, "I'll be back." As soon as he was gone, infighting began again. This time the throne was won by a man named O'Connor, but his reign lasted only six months before Ewan O'Toole took it from him with help from Avalon.

Avalon Influence

When Ewan died in 1170, the Avalon lords who had aided him began expanding their Inish claims. An Avalon lord claimed the throne, and the occupation of Inismore had begun. Vaticine churches were built on Inish soil for the first time, and the Inish language was slowly supplanted by Avalon's. By the fourteenth century, Avalon owned nearly all of Inismore, but the lords there had grown less Avalon and more Inish. Finally, in the late 1300's, Inismore declared independence from Avalon. They repelled the Avalon army sent to quell the uprising and managed to retain their independence for almost one hundred and fifty years.

In 1534, Avalon armies landed on Inish shores, storming the walls of the old Vestenmannavnjar fortresses. The invasion lasted for nearly a decade, ending in 1541 when Richard II annexed the entire island.

Things remained relatively peaceful for a time; Avalon rule was fairly benign. But when the Iron Queen came to power in Avalon, all of Inismore was transformed under her rule. She ordered that any Inish who refused to speak the Avalon tongue be hanged and those who refused the faith of the



Vaticine Church be burned at the stake. She renamed many towns and counties and refused to refer to the island by its native name, calling it "Erin" in all official documents.

Her ruthless reign ended in 1650, and the Inish were offered an opportunity. Montaigne spies arrived on the shores with enough resources to begin a bloody coup on the Emerald Isle. The Inish didn't need to be asked twice. Fifteen Avalon lords were assassinated within the first month. Churches were burned to the ground, priests were burned at the stake, and general chaos ensued for a year.

However, in 1651, the Fál Stone wept and sang once again. The O'Bannon had returned. The Inish rallied behind their *ard ri* as O'Bannon made full-scale war on the occupying Avalons. Time after time, the Avalon armies were defeated by the O'Bannon's cunning guerrilla warfare. But in 1656, just as his army prepared an assault on the capital, the O'Bannon called for a ceasefire. Far across the water, Derwyddon introduced Elaine, the rightful ruler of Avalon.

The O'Bannon immediately left Inismore, sailing for Avalon's shores. He appeared in her court, knelt before her, and declared Inismore's allegiance with her throne as the Highlander MacDuff had done only days before.

Modern Inismore

O'Bannon's returned only a few years ago, but his presence has greatly changed the face of Inismore. The initial joy at the return of the O'Bannon has given way to the worry of his inevitable disappearance and subsequent chaos. Already the O'Toole clan has put into motion plans that will ensure their reign once the king is gone. Other clans, faithful to the O'Bannon, hope to stymie the O'Toole's political maneuverings, but the O'Bannon appears completely unconcerned with the O'Tooles, let alone Inish politics.

His unquestioning support of Elaine has caused some to doubt his veracity. Before he arrived, they were well on their way to winning independence, but the high king quit his own revolution and swore Inish fealty to a foreign throne. The O'Tooles have used this perspective to fuel resentment for the king and sympathy for their rebel cause.

The Lands

Inismore is divided into four estates which are further broken down into twenty-two counties. The estates are traditionally governed by four powerful families: Lynch (Donegal County), O'Toole (Carrig County), O'Brien (Dreenan County), and McKenna (Leister County).

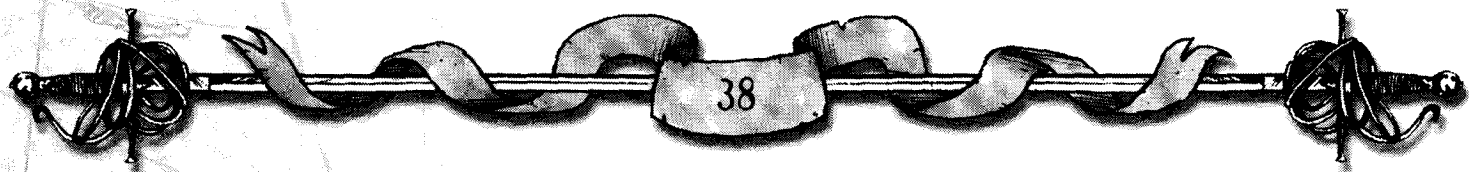
Carrig (O'Toole)

Ruler: Arghyle O'Toole

Population: 650,000

Carrig is the largest estate in Inismore and the historical cradle of Inish civilization. Some of Inismore's most sacred sites can be found scattered throughout its peat bogs. The Inish pillar stones and Sidhe crosses can both be found here: an ancient reminder of the strong Sidhe influence in Inismore. Carved by ancient druids many centuries ago, these sandstone monoliths are decorated on every face with panels depicting the Sidhe and their connection to the land and people of Inismore. Many of these stones supposedly mark the graves of important druids; however, they mostly serve as a reminder of Sidhe presence.

The O'Toole clan has held the Inish throne more often than any other family over the last few centuries. Unfortunately, the Inish people see them as liars, drunks, cheats, womanizers, and thieves who prey on the weaknesses of others. This isn't entirely true. Arghyle O'Toole sees himself as a patriot, attempting to bring back the glory days of Inish independence. He publicly criticizes the O'Bannon while rallying support from the other Tuath's in an attempt to stage a coup. After all, how much of a king can the O'Bannon really be? He pledged himself to Avalon. He cares little for the plight of his subjects, and he rarely stays in court, preferring to roam the countryside for reasons that can only be guessed. Besides, everyone knows that the O'Bannon will leave the country to its own devices within a decade anyway. Why wait for his whim? Why not act now?





The Glamour Isles

For over a century the O'Tooles have been out of favor with the Sidhe. It is very rare to find an O'Toole who has the gift of Glamour. The O'Toole has eight sons and daughters, and dozens of nieces and nephews. His eldest son is Taod, followed by Randel, Roland, Sivney, Rose, Daniel, Meg, and Timithy. Of all of them, only Meg has the gift. She is only the second O'Toole in the last hundred years who has received such a boon.

Dunkeen

The largest port city on the west coast, the market city Dunkeen, sits at the mouth of the river Shanagary. The city is perfectly situated as a gateway between the estates of Leister and Carrig, and a castle overlooks the river to guard the crossing. Although the city is rather somber, the backstreets are rife with atmosphere. The city is dedicated to the pursuit of the arts, serving as a center for traditional music, dances, and prose. One of Inismore's most famous poets, Avery Plunkett, was born into a prominent Dunkeen family. The city sponsors a "fleadh," or music festival, during the first week of the month of Quintus every year. The fleadh sports fiddle competitions, street entertainers, acting, dancing, story-telling, and folk music sessions that last an entire weekend. People travel from all over the Glamour to attend the festival.

Dun Donnel

On a plateau to the west of the Dunkeen sits Dun Donnel. Once the ancient home of the O'Donnels, the castle was abandoned in the 1300's after a terrible storm blew the west wall – and the kitchen along with it – into the sea. Unknown to the rest of Inismore, it now houses soldiers of the O'Toole's army. The ruined parts of the castle were left as they were, but the rest was fortified and restocked.

Lochcuan

One of the largest cities in Inismore, Lochcuan is a wealthy marketplace which trades extensively with the Highland Marches and the Vendel. The port is a good twelve miles from the sea with quays spanning seven miles of the river. The O'Toole's merchant fleet is controlled by two of his sons, Roland and Sivney. Under their guidance, Lochcuan's

trading base has expanded to include Avalon, Montaigne, and Castille. The immense marketplace in the center of the city hosts traders from all over Théah. Aside from the markets and industry, the city supports four large Jenny houses, and more than 40 pubs. The Jenny's Guild is fairly powerful in the city, and under the direct protection of the O'Toole. The O'Toole rules from Dun O'Toole, an immense structure sporting an eight-story tower, as well as enough living space for an entire clan. The entire structure is as ornate and elaborate as possible – easily one of the most expensive buildings in Inismore. A wide road leads straight from the city all the way to Tara.

The Rock of Dunnach

Posed on a hill overlooking the plains east of Tara is a 12th-century castle built upon the ruins of an ancient ring fort. The Rock was once used as a military staging area due to its strategic location, but was virtually destroyed by Avalon forces during the occupation. Rumor has it that the ancient halls are haunted by angry ghosts of the Inish soldiers who died defending its walls.

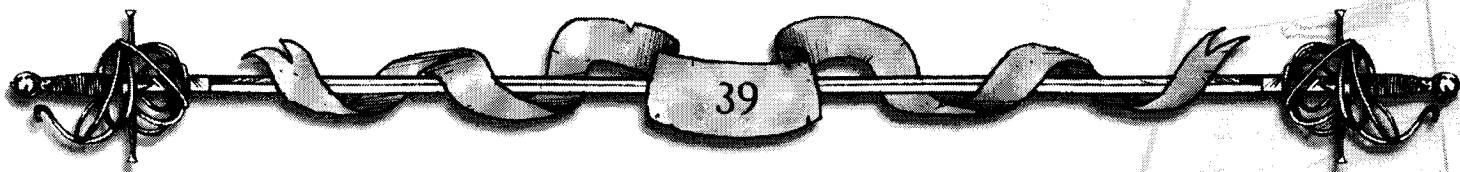
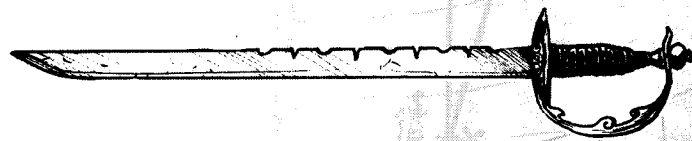
Donegal (Lynch)

Ruler: Cathal Lynch

Population: 1,200,000

Blessed with a (relatively) warm climate and the cities of Carmen and Tara, Donegal is easily the most populated estate in Inismore. The landscape is characterized by rolling hills and lush farmland to the west, the Mantan Mountains to the east, and sandy beaches to the south.

The Lynch clan are a very proud and noble people who claim to be members of the O'Bannon's bloodline. Of all the clans on Inismore, theirs boasts the most powerful sorcery. Some say it is because they did a favor for the





Sidhe long ago, while others believe that it is their connection to the O'Bannon. Whatever the reason, the Lynch clan produces the most powerful sorcerers on the island. Because of this, the Lynches place themselves above the other clans; they feel they are the rightful rulers of Inismore in the absence of the O'Bannon, and are making preparations for his no-doubt-impending departure.

Carmen

The second most populous city in Inismore, the port city of Carmen has thrived for centuries. MacNamara is growing worried, however, as the harbor is silting, an unfortunate turn of events which may eventually lead to the closing of the quays. Carmen was built by the Vestenmannavnjar centuries ago, and still bears traces of their trademark fishbone street pattern, with narrow alleys jutting off the the wandering Main Street. During the Avalon occupation, walls were built around the city in an effort to fortify it, but they are old and breached in many places.

Tara

The capital of Inismore belongs indisputably to its ruler. Most of the city is taken up by shops, houses, and other mundane buildings, but the O'Bannon's touch can be seen everywhere, and the most prominent landmarks bear his stamp. The ancestral castle slouches in a nondescript corner of town. Here Mad Jack holds court, resting on a throne grown from a living tree which sprang whole through the stones of the floor. The rambling palace looks as if it would fall over at any moment, yet somehow remains standing.

At the heart of the city lies the Fál Stone, the ancient symbol of the true king. The stone lay silent for many centuries until the O'Bannon returned to claim his rightful throne in 1651. The people of Tara consider it a symbol of their heritage, and rarely let foreigners near it. It stands in a small square in the center of the city, seemingly unguarded. Wise men know better than to approach it.

The walls stretch over 60 feet high and surround the city on all sides. Built by the Avalons during their occupation, they give the capital a fortress-like feel – a sense of both security and oppression. They have never been breached, although

the O'Bannon came close when he swore allegiance to Elaine. When he returned from Avalon, he scaled the walls and removed a single stone from the highest rampart. "Just to show you I could do it," he said.

Tara sports one of the only universities on the island. Founded in 1592 by the Avalons, Burke University is slowly gaining a reputation throughout Théah. The school stands amid a grassy park near the northern wall of the city.

Dreenan (O'Brien)

Ruler: Gael O'Brien

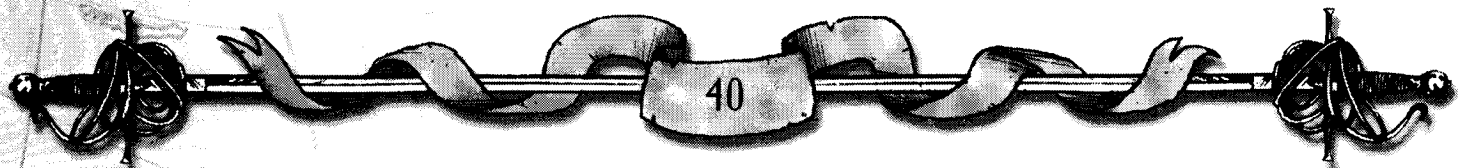
Population: 700,000

The O'Briens can trace their lineage all the way back to Brien Muintir, one of the Kings of Inismore during the 10th century. Since that time no other O'Brien has ever sat on the throne of Inismore. Instead, the family has focused on service to the office of the High King. The O'Brien traditionally sends one or more of his sons away to be educated in one of Théah's many universities. As a result, no Inish king has reigned without an O'Brien at his side as an advisor.

Gael O'Brien himself is a friendly old man who likes to spend his days in quiet leisure. He fought alongside the O'Bannon during the ousting of the Avalons, which left his left leg severely wounded. Since then he has left most of his day-to-day affairs to his eldest son Standish. If given the opportunity, he will begin telling stories of the old days and will ramble on for an eternity. His favorite recounts how he tricked Avalon's High King Piram into making a diplomatic blunder in the Avalon court.

Liumnech

Liumnech is the third-largest city in Inismore. It thrived under Avalon rule, but since the ousting of the Avalon lords by the O'Bannon, the city has fallen into decay. Frequented by mercenaries, sailors, and vagabonds, the city has a reputation for crime, poverty, and general neglect. The city's lord, Stanley O'Malley, spends most of his time drinking with his pals and does very little to improve the



city's condition. The city boasts two landmarks from the Avalon occupation which were left virtually intact: the High Lord's Castle, which sits on an island in the river Shanagary, and St. Rose's Cathedral. Currently the High Lord's Castle is occupied by O'Malley and his entire brood. St. Rose's Cathedral has been purchased by the Jenny's Guild, due to its spacious accommodations.

Leister (MacKenna)

Ruler: Nevan MacKenna

Population: 200,000

Leister is a traditional, very rural, and lightly populated county. Its features encompass windswept mountains and a fertile countryside speckled with ruined stone walls and peat bogs. This region gets an enormous amount of rainfall and is always hidden by a misty drizzle or battered by strong winds and heavy downpours.

The MacKennas are well known for their love of the arts. Many famous poets, bards, actors, and singers have been produced by the MacKennas over the centuries. They are also known for being flighty, tending to roam the world in search of adventure and knowledge. Traditionally, the MacKennas have been staunch supporters of the O'Bannon. Nevan, however, is fed up with the O'Bannon's devil-may-care attitude and has made his support of the O'Toole public. This has caused quite an uproar in the National Assembly, as Nevan may provide the O'Toole with the edge he needs to win back the throne. Nevan's only son and heir to his estate, Andriu, has disavowed his family and left Inismore in disgust.

Darwah

The small fishing village of Darwah overlooks the valley which houses seven of the county's twelve loughs. Darwah is the site of a historical battle which took place during the Avalon invasion. On Shanis Hill, overlooking Darwah, a force of nearly 2,000 Inish faced a vastly superior Avalon army 11,000 strong. After a few moments, the Inish patriots were left scattering downhill, dying by the score as Avalon

cannons struck them down. Only three men stayed to hold the hill: a simple fisherman named Magee and his two brothers. They held out to the last, and when their cannon ran out of ammunition, they broke up their camp equipment to make grapeshot. While Magee's brothers held up the cannon, he fired one last shot. Magee's brothers were killed from the recoil of the gun and he himself was struck down by Avalon cavalry. Some say that on a calm and still day right around dusk, you can still hear muffled cannon fire from the Shanis hill.

Newport

Newport, although the largest city in the county, is quite small by Théan terms. The heart of the city lies on an island just offshore, joined to the mainland by a series of bridges. Traffic has steadily improved and more and more merchants have made it their home. MacKenna has spent his own resources to build quays and warehouses along the waterway to stimulate trade. Unfortunately, with increasing traffic comes an increase in crime. Someone has been breaking into the warehouses and stealing valuable items. The merchants are threatening to relocate unless MacKenna can ferret out the thief.

Culture and Politics

Family

No love is greater in the Inish heart than the love for his family, or *fine*. He can recite his lineage back to his great-grandfather and tell you stories about each generation. When you insult an Inish, you insult his *entire* family.

There is an old saying in Inismore: "Your real family extends from your palm to your fingertips." It's a small memory trick the Inish use to teach children their lineage. Look at the very tip of your middle finger. That's you. All your siblings occupy that space as well. Now drop down to the second segment of your finger; that's your father and all

of his siblings. The third segment of your middle finger is your grandfather and his siblings, and, finally, your palm is your great-grandfather. If you skip over to the tip of your ring finger, that's your cousins. The next segment is your uncle, then your great-uncle and the palm is your great-grandfather again.

The entire hand is called the *derbfine*, or "real family." Of course, there are many *fines* in the *derbfine*, and you are a part of them all. If one family member accrues debt, the entire *derbfine* is accountable for that debt. When a member of the *derbfine* dies, the wealth is distributed to the entire family. However, a father's children are not part of his *derbfine* (he has no place for them on the hand), which means if a son (or daughter) dies the parents inherit nothing, because they are not a part of the *derbfine*. The inheritance goes to his or her children, or to siblings if there are no children. Each generation begins a new *derbfine*.

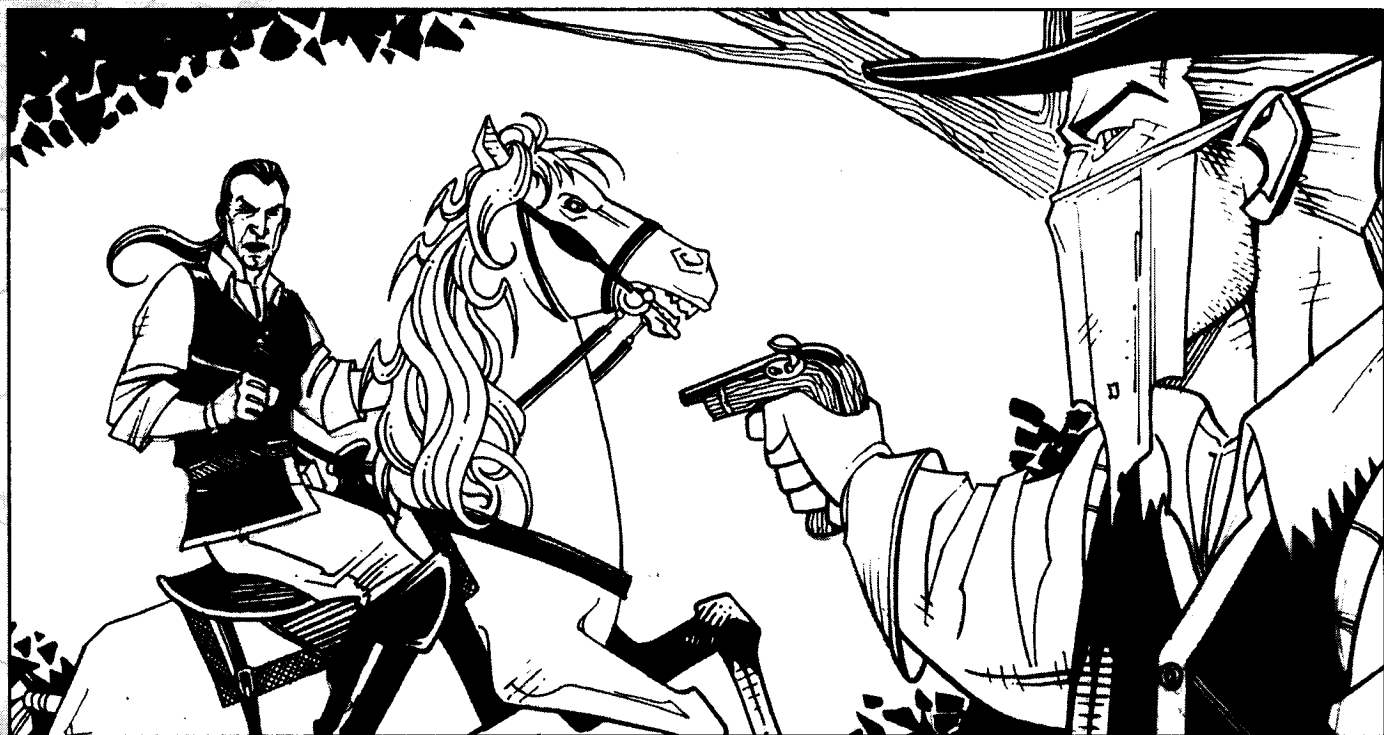
Marriage in Inismore is strictly an economic affair. There are no illusions of love tied into the ritual. Marriage also changes one's *derbfine*, depending on which side of the

family brings more money. The less wealthy partner joins the other's *derbfine* and usually takes a subservient role.

Social Rank

For centuries, Inismore was ruled by Montaigne. The Montaigne changed the social order of Inismore to a more "civilized" structure. When the O'Bannon returned, things shifted again. Now the island's social order is a strange mixture of modern Montaigne thinking and traditional Inish feudalism.

Inismore has a single high king, the *árd ri*: O'Bannon. Under him are a number of lesser kings called *tuaths*, each named after its founder. Under each *tuath* are a number of families who owe fealty to the reigning family of the *tuath*. Each *tuath* has an elite sect of knights that serve as his army. Such a man is called a *bó aire*. A *bó aire* who owns land (a landed knight) is called a *flaith*.



The Fianna

Long ago, when the O'Bannon first ruled Inismore, he established an order of loyal knights to serve as his *flaith*. These knights he called *Fianna* (*fee-nah*).

The Fianna threw away their *tuath* names — taking the family name “Fianna” instead — and turned their backs on their families, answering only to the *árd ri*. Their chief duty was to him, but a select order also guarded the Fál Stone.

The Fianna are always reinstated when the O'Bannon returns, but then destroyed by the period of civil war that follows the *árd ri*'s inevitable disappearance.

In order to join the order, one must pass a number of tests, not all of them tests of physical prowess; anyone who wishes to serve the *árd ri* must also prove his or her wit in tests of poetry. Fianna are not accountable to anyone but the O'Bannon. All *tuath* give them hospitality and honor their position as defenders of the land. The Sidhe show a kind of respect to the Fianna, and many have taken Sidhe lovers.

Songs and Stories

The Inish are a proud people, and you can hear that pride in their songs and stories. In fact, those same songs and stories are maintained in their culture despite foreign efforts to despoil it. During occupation, the Inish hid the secrets of their culture in riddles and rhymes, disguising religion in rhyme and verse.

The most noteworthy of these “hidden truths” is a song of “Mad Jack O'Bannon.” The lyrics change depending on where in Inismore you hear it, but the message is always the same: “Fine Jack” fights off invaders, dies in battle and is brewed up into beer, but is born again in the springtime to fight again. The tale is an allegory for the disappearing and reappearing O'Bannon, who is somehow tied to the livelihood of the land. It is perhaps the best example of an old religious belief transforming into a bawdy (and somewhat grisly) drinking song.

Fighting

“It ain't how many times ye get knocked down that matters. It's how many times ye get back up.”

— Common Inish Proverb

The Inish have a reputation for starting fights at the drop of a hat. That's a little generous. The Inish don't need a hat to start a fight.

Fighting is an important part of the Inish tradition. Men fight because they *like* to fight. It's recreational. The problem arises when some fool — usually an Avalon — pulls a knife. Trust an Avalon to ruin a good fistfight by pulling a knife.

There are two kinds of fighting in Inismore: friendly fighting and professional fighting.

Friendly Fighting

Fighting in a tavern is always friendly. The Inish rarely start a fight with someone they don't know (a friendly fight, that is). Fisticuffs are the method and no one *ever* makes low blows. It's not that they don't know how — they *know* how — but a low blow disrespects your opponent.

When a fight begins, a small circle builds around the fight. A common misconception is that the circle keeps the fighters in so no one can run away, when in fact, they're keeping anyone from *getting in*. The circle is made up of friends to protect the fighters from outside interference. The circle also never picks up a fighter. He's got to pick himself up. The fight continues until one man can no longer rise to his feet. Then the winner buys him a drink. The winner also usually compliments the loser on how many times he got back up to his feet. All these actions are signs of respect. These are friends, after all.

Friendly fighting is a tradition that only a fool violates. Fighting is dangerous. Anyone standing in the circle who pushes a fighter usually gets pummeled by the fighters' friends. Anyone who throws a weapon into the circle is asking for the same treatment.

Professional Fighting

The Inish love fighting so much, they've made a sport of it. Fighting parlors have become quite popular in the larger cities, each boasting its own "Champion of the Isle." Champions meet at different parlors, men put down wages on their favorite fighters, and the parlor keeps a percentage of the bets. The rules for a match are simple: fighters are expected to use only the fists and to strike above the belt. The only other rule is that the last man standing wins.

Language

There are two languages spoken in Inismore. The first is Avalon, brought over by invaders and bred into the children through Church education. However, the native language of the Inish is still alive, although barely spoken. Most children do not speak it at all, but it is passed down by those who still revere the old ways of the Inish.

Names

The Inish are very protective of their culture, and part of that culture is its names. Inish have two names. The first is their given name. The second is their family name. Typically, an Inish will take his family name, preceded with a "Mac" meaning "son of" or "Ni" meaning "daughter of", and "O" meaning "descendant of." The "O" is used only when pointing out the lineage of a legendary figure, or to designate membership in one of Inismore's *tuaths*.

Example: Steve is creating an Inish Hero. He picks the first name Owen. Because Owen's father's name is Galvin, Steve's Hero's name is Owen MacGalvin. However, because he is also the great-grandnephew of Rose Donnely (a famous warrior-woman from Inismore's past), he is also Owen MacGalvin O'Donnely.

Example 2: Susan is creating an Inish Hero as well. She picks the first name Maeve. Because Maeve's father's name is Lughaidh, Susan's Hero's name is Maeve Ni'Lughaidh. However, she is also a part of the Lynch derbfine, so she is called Maeve Ni'Lughaidh O'Lynch.

Example 3: When abroad visiting with her Avalon adventuring friends, Maeve doesn't call herself "Maeve Ni'Lughaidh O'Lynch." Instead, she just calls herself "Maeve Lynch" to keep from confusing the simple-minded Avalons.

Inish Law

The Inish recognize a difference between the laws of men and the Great Gesa that was cast upon Inismore thousands of years ago. The laws of men are designed to deal out recompense when a wrong has been committed. In other words, there is no Inish law against murder, but there is a penalty for it.

The Great Gesa, on the other hand, set laws into motion that, if broken, will cause great misfortune on those who violated them (and their families as well). This is how stories of cursed families crop up in Inish villages: someone commits a horrible crime and the entire family is punished for it.

The Inish do not have "court cases" in the traditional sense. A family brings a complaint to a druid (called a *brehon*) who has knowledge of the mysteries of law, trusting his wisdom to settle the dispute. The *brehon's* judgment is final.

Eineach: A Man's Worth

Eineach is an important concept in Inish law, for it is a man's worth — measured in cows. If an Inish kills a man from a rival family, he owes that family the man's *eineach* and pays it in cows. Each man's *eineach* depends upon his position in Inish society. Killing a *tuath* is worth at least one hundred cows, while killing a *filid* is worth at least fifty (seventy if he is a druid, but that isn't counting the metaphysical consequences of such a dire act). Killing a *bó aire* or another fighting man is worth at least thirty cows. Because peasants do not own any land (cows), they have no *eineach*. Lastly, *how* you kill a man can increase the penalty. Killing a man while his back was turned (a cowardly act) can increase the penalty by at least twenty cows. The final penalty is up to the *brehon* overseeing the dispute.



The Glamour Isles

A tricky part of Inish law is that the court is not responsible for enforcing its decision; that's the responsibility of the winning family. If they cannot enforce the *brehon's* decision, they're out of luck. All they can do is publically declare a *tain* against the other family. A *tain* is a perfectly legal way to gain *eineach*, and it involves stealing the cows that are owed. *Tains* can last for generations, and have caused more than their share of Inish family rivalries.

Tuarastal: The Law of Obligation

As with all Cymric cultures, gift-giving is an important ritual in Inismore. When you receive a gift, you are obliged to present a return gift of equal or greater value. This concept is called *tuarastal*. Once you owe another man *tuarastal*, you are bound to him until you return his favor.

The polite way of getting out of *tuarastal* is to stand on grounds of modesty. "That gift is too great for me. I would never be able to return it." Anyone who wishes to present a gift out of pure and honest generosity can always decline the right of *tuarastal*.

Comhlann: The Law of Combat

The Inish may love fighting, but when it comes to formal duels, the laughter stops. Duels are deadly serious in Inismore.

The rite of the formal duel is called *comhlann*. *Comhlann* does not have to be a duel to the death, nor does it have to involve weapons. *Comhlann* between siblings or relatives is more often than not a race on horseback or on foot, or, in the worst case, a fight to first blood or until one man can no longer stand.

The most typical *comhlann* goes something like this: the challenger calls out the challenged. Both men take up one sword and stand before the other. The challenged man

takes one strike — and only one — against the challenger. Then, if the challenger can return the strike, he does so. After both men have made their strike, the matter is settled, no matter who survived.

Politics

While the language of Inismore has remained largely intact, the political structure of the island is in shambles. Avalon feudal estates replaced the native clan hierarchies, but since the O'Bannon's revolution, those hierarchies are no longer in place. Clan leaders are scrambling for handholds in

Inismore's disintegrating power structure, while the O'Bannon's throne is empty as the true king wanders the countryside, his path known only to himself.

As there are twenty-two counties in Inismore, there are twenty-two representatives to the king's court. The parliament system Avalon implanted in Inismore is still intact (albeit precariously so), and the county representatives act as a kind of advisory council to the king. While they have the official right to object to his decisions and even veto them with a unanimous vote, the council has remained still and quiet when the king is in court. When he is away, however, they argue about county borders,

revenue, taxation, and whether or not to ask the Highlanders if they wish to join a revolt against the crown of Avalon.

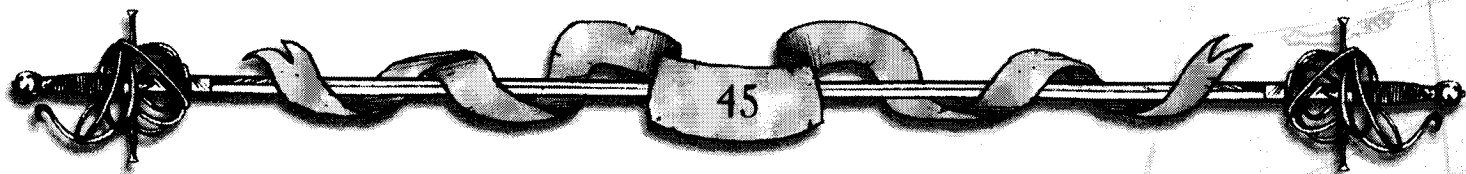
If the O'Bannon knows of their bickering, he does not seem to care. It is almost as if the king has once again grown bored with his throne, and many wonder when he will put down his crown, pick up his pack, and wander away.

Inish Pugilism

What makes Inish pugilists different from the rest of Théah is one small technique: they lift their elbows.

Most pugilists keep their elbows directly in front of them and parallel. The backs of the hands face the opponent and the pugilist twists his hands when he jabs.

The Inish do things a little differently. Their elbows point out, which lifts the fists so they face the opponent. This allows the Inish to use uppercuts, roundhouses, and elbow strikes, all new techniques in Théah.





Other Nations

The Inish are fiercely nationalistic, a trait which comes across as an amused mocking of other countries. They disdain the formality of foreign nobility and delight at seeing those in power taken down a notch. Because of this, they have made few friends in the rest of the world.

The Montaigne and Vodacce take the brunt of Inish scorn. Montaigne is seen as a pompous windbag of a country, arrogant, conceited, and due for a deflating. While some Inish remember their aid during the recent revolution, most realize that they would conquer the country in a heartbeat if they thought they could get away with it. The Vodacce are equally despised, vile and humorless gangsters with no sense of proportion. While they respect the complicated political games at which the Princes excel, they see little point to such maneuverings. "If you can't enjoy your games," they reason, "you shouldn't be playing." Inismore hates hypocrisy and the Vodacce are awash in it.

Other countries fare somewhat better. The Inish are fond of the Vesten, despite their ancient invasions, and recognize the Vendel as useful merchants if nothing else. The Ussurans are mysterious, but what the Inish see they like a lot. Ussura's simplicity resonates with them, and loyalty to Matushka matches their own loyalty to their mad king. Castille is an interesting paradox; while the Inish hate the Church, they know what it's like to be occupied by a foreign power. Castillian passion agrees with them, even if their unbending religious intolerance doesn't.

The alliance with Avalon is shakier here than anywhere else. The Inish remember Avalon invasions of the past, and are slow to forgive. While O'Bannon's words carry weight and Queen Elaine seems trustworthy, the country is used to sudden changes. Allies today could become enemies tomorrow, and the Inish simply do not trust their southern neighbors. For now they watch, gain what they can, and wait to see what happens.

The Highlanders are a different matter entirely. Bound by a common culture and mutual subjugation, the Inish delight in every aspect of clan life. While they find Highlanders a bit stodgy, they admire their honesty and love their fierce,

unbending pride. Their bonds are too close, their pasts too similar to ever truly dislike them. And any country which drinks as much as the Highlanders do is worthy of respect.

Religion

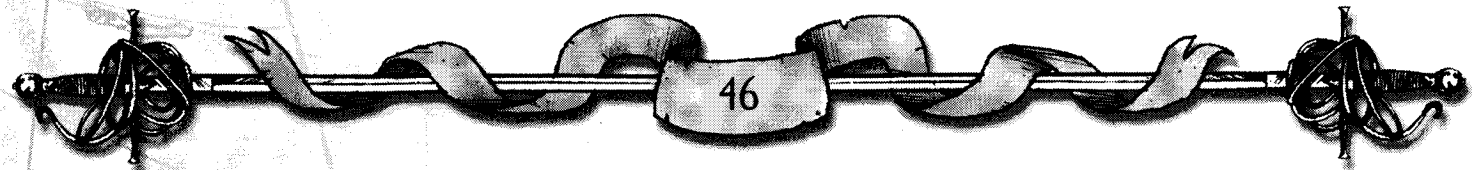
There is no official religion in Inismore; O'Bannon cares little for the matter and is more concerned with protecting Inismore from her enemies. The traditional religion of Inismore is almost identical to Avalon's, and plenty of Vaticines and Objectionists have sprung up in the last few centuries. Surprisingly, all sides get along well; Inish blood binds them more closely than do debates about the nature of the universe. The Inish remember Iron Margaret's intolerance and believe to a man that they can do better than that. So far, they've had no problems.

Relationship with the Sidhe

The Inish call the Sidhe the *Tuatha de Dannan* (too-AH-thah day DA-nun) and credit them with creating Inismore. The oldest Inish tales tell of when they arrived on the island, defeated a race of giants called *firbolgs*, built stone circles and mounds, and finally made their pact with man.

For the Inish, that pact is represented by the Fál Stone, the holy stone that sings and weeps when the true high king of Inismore kisses her. Many Inish come to see "Old Molly" for the opportunity to stand beside the old stone.

The O'Bannon maintains a very close relationship with the Sidhe. Nearly all the Inish Lords do. There is a profound respect for their power and their gifts.





The Highland Marches

History

The Highlanders began their history as a series of disparate Clans, joined by ties of family and ancestral lands. For centuries the Clans warred against each other for land and resources, instigating bloody feuds that have endured in one form or another until the modern era. The Old Empire established a series of outposts along the southern reaches of the island, but mostly let the natives slaughter each other in peace. When the Empire fell, the Highlanders were left isolated again, and continued their primitive ways as they had for millennia.

The era of the Clans ended some six centuries later, when Montaigne invaded the island as part of its conquest of Avalon. No individual Highland leader was strong enough to oppose them, and the Clansmen were too distrustful of each other to put up any organized resistance. The Montaigne swept them aside and imposed their own aristocracy as the rulers. They married the daughters of Clan chieftains, gradually integrating themselves into the fabric of the culture. In so doing, they brought an end to the conflict between Clan and established the first bonds of “real” civilization on the island.

While the benefits of occupation were many, the Highlanders often chafed under their newfound rulers.

They refused to give up their cultural identity, and most maintained their own habits and customs in the face of Montaigne dominance. They did not belong to the Vaticine Church, instead worshipping the nature spirits native to their lands. While integration brought conversion to the faith, and while the new rulers of the kingdom raised their children to believe the Word of the Prophets, the old ways continued in secret. The Montaigne responded by banning elements of Highland culture, such as kilts and bagpipes, as heretical. Friction between the natives and their rulers grew, but still the Clans lacked the unity to resist.

As time went on, the nearby island of Avalon became the focus of the Highlanders’ dissatisfaction. Avalon had Montaigne rulers as well, but had accepted them more openly than the Highlands had. The Highlanders came to see Avalon as their enemies, as bad as the Montaigne themselves. Disgruntled Clans often skirmished with Avalon forces on the islands, although things never progressed to the point of open war. For two hundred more years this continued, as the differences between native and invader slowly began to fade. Tension remained high, but gradually, things settled down into a status quo.

Robert the Dark

Then in 1215 a warlord named Robert the Dark came to power in the northern Highlands. An aristocrat of unknown heritage, he resurrected the concept of Clan identity and used it to bring the clans together. He openly espoused the trappings of “cultural” autonomy, such as the wearing of kilts and the playing of bagpipes. But he did so under the name of national unity, rather than the division between ruler and ruled. He preached conversion to the Church, but in a strangely altered form, emphasizing criticism over obedience. By refusing to acknowledge which Clan he came from, he overcame the traditional rivalries which had divided the country for so long. Before anyone realized it, he had amassed a huge bastion of support and raised a well-disciplined army beneath his flag.

When they realized the threat he presented, the Avalons raised an army of their own to stop him. Robert was a



shrewd tactician, however, and defeated them soundly at the Battle of Dun Val in 1218. As news of his valor spread, the Highland nobility hastily met to decide a course of action. If they opposed him directly, they knew they would be destroyed. So they opted to acknowledge his position and influence him over time. At their urging, he was crowned High King of the Marches in 1219, the first undisputed king the island had ever had. Avalon had little choice but to recognize him; to do otherwise would invite open revolt. As part of the terms of his crown, Robert paid homage to the Avalon kings (and through them, the Empereur) and remained faithful to the Vaticine Church, which assuaged their fears.

Under his rule, the Highlanders first achieved a sense of national unity. While he lacked true independence, his position allowed him to achieve many of his goals, which he felt was preferable to plunging the nation into civil war. He organized the nobility into a legislative body called the High Council, with seats held by the leaders of the major Clans. He openly advocated cooperation with Avalon, increasing Highland self-rule without raising the specter of treason. And he allowed his native culture to flourish within an otherwise repressive social structure, ensuring that the old ways of the Clans did not disappear under Montaigne rule. More than any other leader before or since, Robert gave the Marches a sense of purpose and nationhood. When he died, his son Robert II inherited the throne and established a new Clan – the MacDuffs (meaning “Son of the Dark One”) – who would serve as future High Kings.

Independence and Elaine

The Highlands remained this way until the death of Avalon’s Iron Margaret. Recognizing the opportunity to finally throw off the shackles of foreign oppression, the High Council declared independence from Avalon. The canny High King, James II, openly pronounced his faith in Objectionism, rejecting both the Vaticines and the Church of Avalon. Almost overnight, the Highlands achieved their freedom for the first time in over six hundred years.†

The nation’s independence was short-lived, however. The rise of Queen Elaine in the wake of Avalon’s civil war threw the Highlanders into turmoil. Suddenly, the Avalons weren’t the enemy anymore; they had thrown out the Montaigne. They called upon the Highlanders to join them in a united kingdom, bound by brotherhood and equality rather than the yoke of tyranny. Still, old suspicions lingered, and few were willing to trust this strange woman who had taken power. All eyes looked to James, who, unlike Elaine, belonged to a long and distinguished noble lineage. At his word, the three isles would be united... or plunged into war.

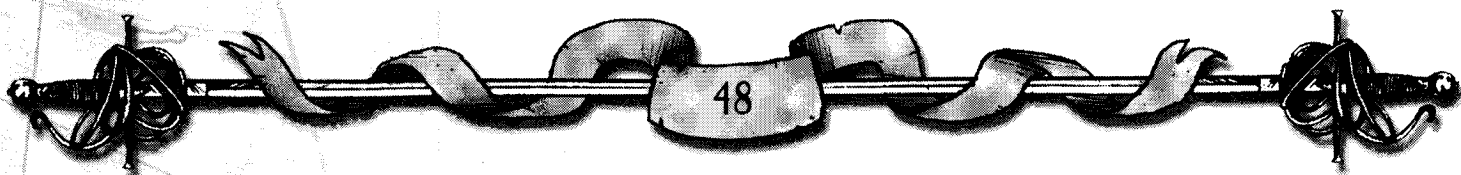
To everyone’s surprise, he supported Elaine’s rule, proclaiming her “the true queen of the golden cup.” With his support, the Marches became a part of the Triple Kingdoms, an autonomous yet cooperative entity under the triple-crowned flag. Today, the Marches enjoy their newfound prestige and look optimistically toward an ever-brightening future.

Prominent Clans

The clans of the Highland Marches number in the hundreds. Every village and hamlet, it seems, has a different tartan, a different sigil, and different traditional beer songs. With the unification of the country, these differences became less prominent but still remained, woven into the fabric of Highland identity. A Highlander defines himself by his nation, but also by the traditions of his individual Clan. Covering every Clan would take up an entire volume, as would delineating the territory each one claims; however, the most prominent ones are listed below.

MacDuffs

The MacDuffs came about through a proclamation of Robert II, son of the first High King, who wished to establish an extended line of royal heirs. By creating a new



Clan to rule, he avoided the enmities and political entanglements of the older families and ensured that the position of High King would stabilize. A MacDuff has sat on the Highland Throne ever since.

The Clan has expanded through marriage and interbreeding to become as large as any in the Marches. The central family's first-born son inherits the throne, followed by the next son and so on. While women are usually excluded from taking the throne, certain cases have necessitated it. Three "High Queens" have ruled since Robert's day. All High Kings come from Clan MacDuff, so as to avoid any bloody conflict over succession.

In exchange for their undisputed hold on the throne, the MacDuffs have agreed to limits on their power elsewhere. MacDuffs may not hold seats on the High Council or rule as lord of any individual Clan save their own. Instead, those MacDuffs not in line for the throne find other ways to serve the country. Many become generals in the army or serve the Triple Kingdoms as ambassadors to other nations. Some travel as merchants and a few have emigrated to Carleon, where they act as advisors to the Queen's court. A substantial number have joined the Knights of the Rose and Cross. While they hold little political power (besides the King's, that is), the MacDuffs remain hugely popular among the common people and have produced some of the Highlands' greatest heroes.

Because they had no history before Robert came to power, the MacDuffs feel they truly represent the Marches. They have no feuds or blood vendetta against any other Clans and always put the nation's interests ahead of their own. They staunchly support the Triple Kingdoms and feel that the nation can grow strong beneath the banner of Queen Elaine. Their ardent Unifist loyalties have swayed most of the populace into embracing united rule and have kept the High Council majority firmly in their corner. As things stand, the MacDuffs' interests and the Highlands' are as one.

MacBrides

Not everyone believes the alliance with Avalon for the best. Some feel they can do better without Queen Elaine, and can make their own way as an independent nation. Some distrust the Queen's ties to the Sidhe. Others can't forget Avalon's oppression in the past. Whatever the reason, they wish to break from united rule and form their own country. In Parliament, they're called the Separatists, the principal opposition party to James MacDuff's Unifists. They're led by one of the High King's staunchest adversaries: Clan MacBride of Connickmoor.

The MacBrides trace their lineage back over a thousand years, longer than any other Clan in the Marches. During the Montaigne invasion, they admonished their countrymen to fight the occupation; many were hanged for treason in the early days of the war. Thereafter, they were branded "troublemakers" and watched closely by the rulers. Their tartan was banned from public display. When Robert rose to power, they were the first to rally to his banner, and led the vanguard at the Battle of Dun Val.

Then things changed. Rather than press the advantage, Robert sued for peace, advocating cooperation with the enemy. In the MacBrides' minds, he sold out their hard-won victory for personal power. In their minds, he had become the enemy. Their views softened somewhat when his reforms went into action, but they remained opposed to coexistence with any foreign power.

With the coming of independence under James II, the MacBrides felt their time had come again. Then – like Robert before him – James once again aligned their nation under the banner of a foreign power. Four centuries under the benevolence of the MacDuffs had quelled the MacBrides' extremist fervor, but they still believed – quite fiercely – that the Marches should be fully independent. From their beliefs, the Separatist movement formed.

Today, they try to cut the country's ties to Avalon, using scathing speeches and Machiavellian legislature to press their points home. The Unifists maintain an overwhelming majority, but the MacBrides have begun slowly to gain ground. They make shrewd political opponents, and James

often comments on them with a mixture of frustration and respect. "Compared to Fergus MacBride," he's fond of saying, "Legion himself is just a promising amateur."

MacCodrums

A fairly minor Clan, the MacCodrums make their living as sailors and fishermen. Many attribute their nautical success to their relationship with the selkies — a type of Sidhe found only in the waters off the northern Highlands.

According to legend the selkies may only come ashore once a year, when they cast off their sealskins and dance on the sand in human shape. One day, a simple fisherman named Codrum chanced across them while they played. He stole a seal-skin from the pile where they had been cast and returned to his hut. That evening, a beautiful golden-eyed woman appeared at his door and begged him to return her skin to her. He agreed, but only if she would consent to stay with him, for he was lonely. She agreed, and over the next year grew to love him very much. For ten more years she remained as his wife and raising many fine children. Then one day, while her husband was at sea, she heard the call of her selkie brethren, a call which reawakened her longing for the sea. Kissing her children goodbye, she gathered up her sealskin and ran into the ocean. The fishermen and his children never saw her again, but from time to time she would sing to them from the depths, reminding them that she was always near.

Ever since then, Codrum's descendants have maintained a kinship with the selkies and protected them from danger. The beach where they come to play is forbidden to outsiders, and foreign ships may not pass through MacCodrum waters. In exchange, the selkies have shown them the best fishing spots and taught them how to catch fish with their bare hands. While all selkie are shy and flighty around humans, MacCodrums may approach them safely. For more on the selkies, see the Sidhe section (page 62).

MacDonalds

One of the most powerful Clans on the island, the MacDonalds suffered less under occupation than most. Their ancestral home became a marshalling ground for the Montaigne armies. They benefited from improved roads, access to education, and general improvement of living conditions. Robert's rise in the 13th century fueled a renewed interest in their "native roots", but they kept what they had learned, incorporating them into traditional Highland designs. By the time the nation achieved independence, the MacDonalds had become a center of culture and political power.

Whether the MacDonalds have always hated the MacLeods, or only began to do so following the Battle of the Green Field (see the MacLeods, below) is unknown. At this point, it no longer matters. The MacDonalds have sworn to destroy the upstart MacLeods if it takes an eternity, and even unification has not dimmed their vendetta. They have sown distrust for the MacLeods among other Clans, countered their growing power in Parliament, and publicly denounced them as puppets of the Goodly Folke. In private, they have gathered copious information on Sidhe magic, hoping to find some means of destroying their rivals' Glamour powers. They have absorbed more members of the lost MacEachern Clan than any others.

Today they remain bitter enemies of the MacLeods. While outright war is forbidden (the MacDuffs would crush any side which broke the peace), brawls, back-alley murders, and even small skirmishes are not uncommon. Their arguments in the High Council are legendary, and those looking for political support against one side can always find it with the other. Ironically, they balance each other nicely, ensuring that their rivalry never spills over into the nation's more important business.

MacEacherns

The Highlanders may dislike the Sidhe, but they know better than to cross them openly. They remember the fate of the MacEachern Clan, destroyed by Seelie power a millennium ago. The Goodly Folke wiped the entire Clan

The Glamour Isles

from the face of Théah in a single day, razing its castle to the ground and dragging its warriors screaming to Bryn Bresail. For MacEacherns had learned the secrets of destroying faeries... and were prepared to use them.

The Clan had a reputation as blacksmiths and metalworkers, the best in the Highland Marches. Perhaps their constant use of iron earned the Sidhe's ire. Perhaps they stumbled upon some secrets they shouldn't have. Whatever the reason, the Goodly Folke soon targeted them for all manner of mischief. Children were stolen and replaced with changelings. Crops were spoiled or rendered inedible. In several cases, prominent family members were enchanted, living their entire lives in a comatose dream. After several years of this treatment, the Clan leaders vowed to rid themselves of the Sidhe menace. They searched through



ancient manuscripts and studied all the old legends until they found what they needed: the Fae's vulnerabilities.

Using a secret method, MacEachern blacksmiths began forging a new type of weapon: cold iron blades capable of slaying the Sidhe. Within a few weeks, every warrior in the Clan had one. At first the Sidhe laughed at them. Then several members of the Seelie court failed to return from MacEachern lands. The Queen herself ventured out to see what had detained them – only to find their heads placed on pikes. The MacEacherns were using their terrible blades to teach the Goodly Folke what mortality meant.

The Queen's response was swift and merciless. As one, the Fae rose up and smote the upstart humans. The MacEacherns barely had time to register the attack before they were finished. Their castle fell in an eye-blink, and their forges and smithies quickly followed. Warriors were dragged from their homes by screaming banshees, while those who tried to fight were transformed into toadstools. Their banner was torn from the ramparts, and all their blades thrown into the sea. At sunrise, they had been a prosperous Clan; by sunset, no trace of them existed.

But in their fury to destroy the threat, the Sidhe were careless. A few survivors managed to slip out of MacEachern lands: tiny bands of twos and threes who escaped to recount the tale. Some of them kept the family's hard-won knowledge with them, and passed it on to their children and their children's children. The fatal secrets the Sidhe had tried so hard to destroy remained intact, carried from one generation to the next.

Today, their legacy lives on, scattered among the other Clans. They take care to hide themselves, lest the Seelie Court learn of them and finish what they started. Those who learn the secrets are charged with passing them along before they die; ensuring that the Fae's weakness remains known. They identify each other by the unique horseshoe tattoos concealed upon their persons. Slaying a Sidhe contains untold dangers, but if you have dire need of it, then a MacEachern may be the only hope you have.

MacIntyres

Of all the Clans, the MacIntyres alone remained free of the invading Montaigne. Hidden deep within the moors, protected by natural barriers and relative unimportance, the family successfully repelled every incursion. When the Montaigne arrived, they were beset on all sides by woad-dabbed demons, charging naked from the hillsides with flashing blades in their hands. They advanced slowly, but were constantly besieged with a mixture of hit-and-run raids and berserk suicide attacks. Eventually, they abandoned the MacIntyre valleys to their original inhabitants; the cost of occupying them was just too high.

The Clan has remained isolated to this day, spurning civilization in favor of the primitive ways of its ancestors. In MacIntyre lands, it is as if the last thousand years never happened. They travel in nomadic bands, herding sheep for mutton and wool which they occasionally trade with other Clans. They still paint their faces with woad, eschew gunpowder in favor of claymores, and worship

primitive nature spirits as gods. A central warlord usually speaks for the Clan, determined by a savage series of blood sports that outsiders are not permitted to view.

Other Highlanders see them as symbols of their nation's fighting spirit. MacIntyre warriors are considered the fiercest on the island, and their grasp of small-unit tactics is extraordinary. The MacIntyres hold a seat on the High Council, but have never claimed it. They have no interest in political power and desire only to be left alone. The rest of the Highlands respects their wishes.

The Secret of the Faery Flag

The MacLeods' enchanted flag can be used to invoke the power of the Sidhe in times of great need. The flag contains a terrible secret, however – its power can be invoked only three times. Following the third invocation, a terrible curse will befall the MacLeods; their lands will fall to the enemy, their castle will be rent asunder, and their family will dwindle to almost nothing. Because of this, the MacLeods only use the flag in times of desperate need. In the meantime, they do everything they can to befriend the Sidhe, hoping that perhaps they will undo the promised curse. The flag has been waved once; Lord MacLeod prays that no one need wave it again.

MacLeods

Most Highlanders aren't fond of the Goodly Folke, but the MacLeods are different. For hundreds of years they have welcomed Fae to their ancestral lands, treating them as honored guests. It's earned them the scorn of their countrymen and given their enemies good reason to hate them. The MacLeods feel it's worth such hostility. Early in their history, they struck a bargain with the Seelie court which made them one of the most powerful Clans on the island.

Hundreds of years ago, the MacLeods were weak and divided. They huddled in their castle at Dunvegan, paying tithes to the nearby MacDonalds. This continued for generations, until one day, lord Malcolm MacLeod chanced across a Sidhe Lady on the shores of a nearby loch. The Lady was struck by his fair face, and immediately fell in love with him. When he refused to accompany her to Bryn Bresail, she begged him to take her as his wife. "Marry me," she promised, "and I will make your kin the most powerful in the land." He did

not love the lady, but recognized the power in her words, and knew that she could help his family. He agreed to take her as his wife.

Nine months later she gave birth to a son named Sean. Soon after, she departed for Bryn Bresail, leaving the newborn child to be raised by his father. But she left a powerful gift: a green flag, woven of the finest silk and embroidered with eldritch symbols. "The child will know what to do with it," she said. The flag remained hidden until the boy grew to manhood.

Soon after taking the mantle of leadership, the clan faced a terrible threat from its enemies, the MacDonalds. A mighty



The Glamour Isles

army rose up, threatening to crush the MacLeods beneath its heel. They rode out to meet the attackers with a pitifully small band of warriors... and the flag. As the MacDonalds approached, Sean waved the green silk in the air. Suddenly, it seemed as if the tiny MacLeod band increased its numbers tenfold. The new warriors were beautiful and terrible, with antlers growing from their foreheads and hideous weapons in their hands. Faced with such opposition, the MacDonald army broke in fear.

Since then, the MacLeods have held unquestioned respect, and welcomed the Sidhe as friends to their land. Glamour abounds in MacLeod blood, and they have used the magic to increase their prestige immeasurably. They've also acquired more enemies than an embezzling Vendel. Other Clans distrust their ties to the Sidhe and the MacDonalds have never forgiven them for the defeat at Green Field. The MacLeods have persevered, however, and while few admit it, many Clans seek them out for political support. As disliked as they are, their power is unquestioned and they intend to keep it that way.

Culture and Politics

Highland culture is a curious combination of rural tradition and genteel sophistication. Highlanders wear kilts and bonnet badges to signal their heritage, Clan life plays a large role in the national culture, and bagpipes, dances, and traditional folk songs dominate the social life. Recently, gentrification has begun to affect Highland life, as Clan leaders build elaborate estates to replace the ancient castles. Tartan patterns evolve into new fashions, while the primitive legends of tribal life are bound and placed in elaborate libraries. The constant pull between tradition and innovation defines the Highlands in the 17th century.

Historically, each Clan held a parcel of territory which it could settle upon and use as it saw fit. Stewardship over this territory belonged to the Clan chief or lord, who would

govern it as a trustee for the Clan as a whole. Robert the Dark established firm boundaries for each Clan, setting their territories in stone to prevent disputes. These boundaries eventually became "counties" dividing up the nation.

Today, things remain much the same. Clan lords serve as leaders of their respective counties, governing the land at the behest of the populace. Land may be purchased by those wealthy enough, but they must attain permission of the lord. Most set limits on the amount of land one person may buy. The lords themselves live in the ancient Clan fortresses, or else on elaborate estates patterned after Montaigne's or Avalon's. It is understood that the lords themselves own these estates, and that you can't poach Lord Ian MacDowell's woods just because you're a MacDowell.

The Highlands are very rural, with only a few roads connecting the towns and villages. Towns are usually built around a castle fortress, where the Clan gathered in times of crisis. These serve as de facto town halls, housing local government, police forces, and even standing army units. Smaller villages have an inn or other such building serving much the same purpose (constables often have a table in the local tavern serving as their "office"). The countryside is wild and dangerous, with vast tracts of undeveloped highlands housing all number of threats. Despite that, the nation's few urban centers are well developed, with paved roads, sophisticated architecture, and such amenities as playhouses and gentlemen's clubs.

The capital of Kirkwall stands in the midst of a hilly heath, overlooking miles of open country. The ancestral castle houses the Parliament and national government, while fine inns and merchant houses spread out from its wall. Exactly one mile away, down the city's main thoroughfare, stands the local chapterhouse of the Knights of the Rose and Cross. Locals refer to the strip of road as Noble's Mile. The rest of Kirkwall spreads out in ramshackle fashion from the castle, with houses and other buildings occasionally giving way to steep hills. A stone wall marks the city limits, patrolled by the Highland guards. During the week when the High Council is in session, a colorful tent city springs up



around the walls. Kirkwall natives refer to the period as “Faire Week,” and welcome visitors into their town with open arms.

Culturally, the Highlands are struggling to integrate their national heritage with the advances of recent civilization. Occupation brought them great oppression but also great opportunities. The Highlanders have embraced their newfound sophistication, but do not wish to abandon their past. Slowly, they have begun to synthesize the two halves of their identity, creating a new culture from the old. Many Highlanders feel that this burgeoning renaissance will finally bring their country into its own. It’s an exciting time to be alive in the Marches.

Government

The Highland Council of Advisors, or High Council, consists of five hundred seats, each held by a Clan lord or

member of the gentry. Each seat is hereditary and cannot be held by any not designated to fill it. The Highlanders’ penchant for honesty and respect pervades the Council; while passions run high during debates, they remain focused on the issues at hand and rarely descend into personal attacks. Respect between legislators – with the exception of the MacLeods and MacDonalds – remains high at all times.

The High King oversees each session, serving as a moderator. He may introduce legislation if he wishes, and advise the members on matters of national importance. Technically, the Council cannot legislate anything; they merely advise the High King, who produces the law himself. In practical terms, however, the King listens to whatever the Council has to say. He may override them if he wishes, but he must be prepared to face the consequences; if he alienates too many assemblymen, he may not be able to implement any of his policies.





The “Unifist” movement, led by King James, currently holds uncontested sway with almost four hundred seats. The Unifists believe in close cooperation with Queen Elaine and ardently support the Triple Kingdoms. They defer to Avalon in dealings with other countries and allow their southern neighbors to speak on behalf of the Kingdoms. In exchange, they may govern their own affairs and receive Avalon’s support in the event of attack.

The remainder of the Council represents the “Separatist” movement, which believes the alliance with Avalon is wrong. Some are fierce nationalists while others mistrust Elaine’s motives. Whatever the reason, they believe the Highlands should be fully independent, and work hard to distance themselves from the Triple Kingdoms. They’re lead by the cunning Fergus MacBride, who marshals his arguments like a general at war. Many Separatists focus their energies on domestic affairs, guarding against any Avalon inroads to their sovereignty. Beyond that, they give ground grudgingly and wait for the political tide to turn. Fergus MacBride is very patient.

Other Nations

Highlander opinions of foreign countries tend to reflect those of their Avalon neighbors. They hate the Montaigne, and their wide-scale embrace of Objectivism has alienated the Vaticine Castillians. The Vodacce are respected but not entirely understood, and the Eisen are regarded with sad-eyed empathy. Highlanders get along famously with the Ussurans, who have much in common with them. Finally, both halves of the Vendel islands foster good feelings in the Marches. They respect the beliefs of the Vestenmannavnjar, but also appreciate the Vendels’ efforts to strengthen their country. Highlanders trade surreptitiously with both sides and try not to get entangled in the feud.

When it comes to their fellow Kingdoms, loyal feelings abound, although a few misgivings continue to linger. The Highlanders have much in common with Inismore. Their cultures and backgrounds are similar, and both suffered countless indignities under the Montaigne and Avalons. On the other hand, O’ Bannon worries the Highlanders and the

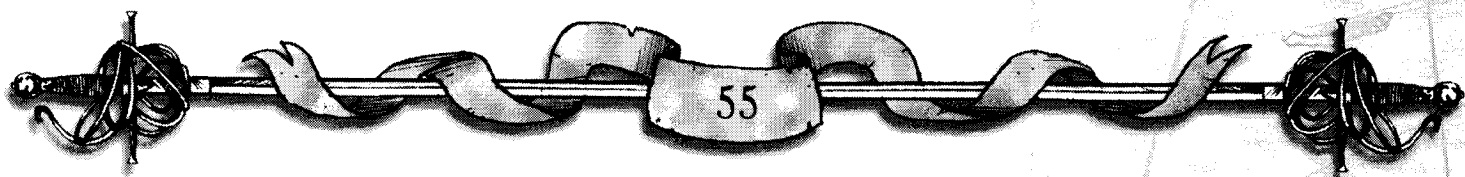
general Inish tendency toward cheerful chaos troubles their pragmatic nature. Avalons are something of a mixed bag; the Highlanders remember Avalon complicity in the occupation, but cheered the rise of Queen Elaine and the defeat of the Castillian armada. In practical terms, they support the Avalon nation, but steer clear of individual Avalons. As allies the two may be inseparable; as friends, they have a lot of work to do.

Religion

The Highlanders are Objectivists almost to a man, having had their fill of the Vaticine Church even before the Montaigne. Like Avalon, they espouse tolerance of other faiths, and allow Vaticines and Traditionalists to practice as they see fit. A few pagans still exist in the lonely corners of the isle, and the MacIntyres never converted to the Church in the first place. Vaticines are grouped in some parts of Kirkwall and coastal towns which trade with other nations. The remainder is almost entirely Objectivist.

Highlanders and the Sidhe

Unlike the Avalons and Inish, Highlanders dislike the Goodly Folke, considering them inhuman monsters. They’ve seen the way the Seelie look at human beings, seen that glare that says “You could be my pet or my prey, depending on how I feel,” and they want none of it. (The only exceptions are the MacLeod Clan and the selkie-loving MacCodrums.) That doesn’t mean that the Highlanders are stupid enough to treat them with disrespect. They just know better than to ask for favors. For their money, they can do without such friends. Instead, they try to make things as unpleasant for the Goodly Folke as they can without raising their active ire. They pay close attention to the folk remedies and apply them whenever possible; there isn’t a home in the Highlands that doesn’t have a horseshoe above its door or salt along its windowsill. When they meet a Sidhe on the road, they behave with all decorum and politeness, but never accompany it or take anything it offers. Act polite, give them the deference they expect, then run like the wind – that’s how the Highlanders deal with the Fae.





The Sidhe

*Elves are wonderful. They provoke wonder.
Elves are marvelous. They cause marvels.
Elves are fantastic. They create fantasies.
Elves are glamorous. They project glamour.
Elves are enchanting. They weave enchantment.
Elves are terrific. They beget terror.*

– Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*

History and Culture

The Sidhe as a race lack history the way we understand it. For them, every day exists simultaneously: one is essentially identical to another. They understand that time passes on Théah, and can see the effects in the humans they meet, but have no concrete experience of it.

They lived on the islands that would one day become Avalon for many untold centuries, existing in a land of eternally frozen spring. One day, for reasons known only to themselves, they retreated from Théah to their native land of Bryn Bresail. Bards say that this exodus accompanied the rise of humanity, when Théah history truly began. The

Sidhe wanted no part of such a strange process, so they left. Barriers arose between Bryn Bresail and Théah, cutting them off from their old haunts. They never went far though; humanity called to them like a shiny bauble, fascinating and inexplicable. Gates between the two worlds remained in Faerie circles, enchanted woods, and other locales. From those gates, they could return to their old haunts and watch this new world develop before their eyes.

In Avalon, the barriers were thinner than anywhere else. Legendary figures like Robin Goodfellow drew strength from Sidhe magic, and interbreeding with changeling children produced humans capable of practicing the same arts. Time moved forward, but it maintained a sense of timelessness. The Seelie Court found it to their liking. They gave mankind four gifts: a Cup, a Sword, a Banner, and a Stone (the Graal, Firinbrand, the MacLeod Faery Flag and the Fál Stone) to reward those who had won their favor.

Then the Montaigne invaded – red-faced interlopers shattering the Glamour with their dull “progress.” The Sidhe cut their ties with Théah completely, taking the Graal to Bryn Bresail with them. The Faerie circles closed, the Glamour left those with Sidhe blood, and the sight of Bryn Bresail disappeared from Avalon for six centuries. A few remained behind – the odd boogey man haunting some lonely wayward place – but as a whole their presence was nonexistent.

That changed when the Avalons finally threw off their Montaigne shackles. Elaine’s rise signaled a return of the Sidhe and a restoration of the old Glamour. Once again, the Seelie and Unseelie walked the green fields of Avalon. But this time there was something different. The modern age had affected the Sidhe’s old haunts, bringing a sense of mortality with it. Fae Glamour was now tempered with human history, which increased the Sidhe’s fascination with humanity but also gave them a strange sense of violation: Avalon was no longer entirely theirs.

Today the Sidhe move freely back and forth between their ancestral home and the Enchanted Isles. But the changes of time and history have affected their demeanor; an ancient Avalon who had lived in the days of legend would see them

as a little colder, a little crueler. Time will tell whether this has any permanent effect on Avalon, but immortal beings rarely take such transformations well. Change, when it comes to them, is never good.

Sidhe and the Mundane World

Sidhe aren't limited to the Glamour Isles by any means. Boggies appear in Montaigne corn fields, and the Vesten speak of gnomes and trolls who inhabit their lands. But Avalon is the only place where they gather in any numbers – where Sidhe appearances are more the rule than the exception. While a few may pop up in the rest of Théah, Avalon is unquestionably their home.

On Théah, the Sidhe take care to lurk just under the surface of things, a tendency that has a profound effect on the Avalon landscape. When a traveler first gazes on a field or woodland in the Triple Kingdoms, nothing appears amiss; it could be a landscape in Montaigne or Castille, or anywhere else in the world. But behind the initial impression, just out of sight of the naked eye, lurk all the wonders and terrors of the Goodly Folke. Turn over a stone and you'll see a Fae's tea party. Glance quickly behind a tree and you'll spot the dryad who lives there. Goblins may appear as large toadstools to the naked eye, while hillside caves open into vaults of unimaginable beauty. The Sidhe live between the blinks of the eye, hiding themselves behind the mundane and the ordinary. While they don't saturate every corner of the countryside (it's not as if you see them every day), Avalon is still their home... and they make sure that the unwary remember that.

Much of the Sidhe's strength centers around water. Lakes and streams are a Fae's lifeblood, serving as mirrors to their own realm and linking their power to that of the land. Avalon is surrounded by the sea, giving the Sidhe ample opportunity to strengthen their hold. Avalons respect water in all its forms because of this. They do not hold battles near rivers for fear of polluting them with blood, and fishermen always throw back the best fish from their daily catch to appease the Queen of the Sea. In this way, they maintain the sanctity of the waters and the goodwill of the Sidhe.

Some have suggested that the Fae's aversion to mirrors rises from their connection to the water – that the reflective surface reminds them too much of their true selves. While the reflection in a lake is rippled and distorted, the reflection in a mirror is hard and unbending – rendering their ever-changing nature immutable.

Faerie Hills and Faerie Circles

Water is not the only outlet the Fae have on Avalon. Scholars have identified two principal examples of Sidhe geography: Faerie hills and Faerie circles. Faerie hills are Sidhe "outposts" in the mundane world, where they can carry on their activities unmolested. They hollow out the hills and build great halls, vaults and passageways beneath them (often, such constructions are many times larger than the hill which hides them.) There they throw wild parties, engage in courtly rapture, or hide their gold from human eyes; the exact purpose of the hill depends upon the Fae residing there.

The Sidhe never provide doorways or other entrances to their lairs – not unless they wish to lure a human in for some fell purpose. Passersby often speak of the dancing lights and high-pitched laughter emanating from Faerie hills. The foolish approach to find the source; wiser men move on. Those unfortunate enough to be invited into a Faerie hill usually vanish forever.

Faerie circles are a different matter. While hills are more or less permanent, circles come and go with the whims of their creators. They can show up in farmers' fields, woodland clearings, or at the tops of mountains. They can last for decades or vanish between the ticks of the clock. The only constant is the immense danger they represent to humans. They appear when the Sidhe dance on Théan soil, marking their passage with toadstools or smooth white stones which instantly appear. The space bound by the circle becomes linked to Bryn Bresail, allowing the Fae easy passage back and forth from their home.

Humans who enter Faerie circles run the risk of being trapped and enslaved forever. The Sidhe try to coax men into their revels with haunting music, dancing, and



intoxicating songs. Once they cross the barrier, they are compelled to join in the festivities, spinning and capering wildly with the Sidhe. If the Goodly Folke take a liking to them, they are taken back to Bryn Bresail, where they remain enchanted forever. Even those who don't suffer a hideous passing of time, emerging from the circle years after they entered it. Though the dance may have seemed only a few minutes, they leave haggard and gray, with decades gone by since their enchantment.

The Sidhe cannot hide Faerie circles; camouflage destroys the link to Bryn Bresail. The circle may appear as stones, toadstools, or dancing goblins, but it must remain visible to mortal eyes in order to have any effect.

Recurring Faerie circles become the site of more permanent stone structures, built by druids and other mystically-oriented humans. By emulating the circles, they hope to tap into the same wellspring of power. The best sites remain intact for centuries. Others, however, are less predictable; certain villages in the Avalon countryside hold the twisted remnants of those who tapped these chaotic circles and paid the price. Thankfully, such instances are relatively rare; most Avalons are far too sensible to tamper with the Sidhe's power source.

Seelie and Unseelie

When one mentions the Sidhe, one usually means the Seelie Court – composed of the Three Queens (discussed below) and their subjects. As terrible as they can be, the Seelie are not actively malevolent; sometimes they can even aid humans, as in the case of the industrious brownies.

There is another group, however, one far more dangerous than even the worst Seelie. When humans first arose and gave Bryn Bresail a form to focus upon, this group refused to adhere to the new doctrine. They did not follow the rules that the High Queen dictated, preferring the chaos of their

primal state. In retaliation, the Queen threw them out of her court, calling them “Unforgiven” and exiling them for eternity. Humans quickly learned to identify these outcasts and gave them a new name – Unseelie.

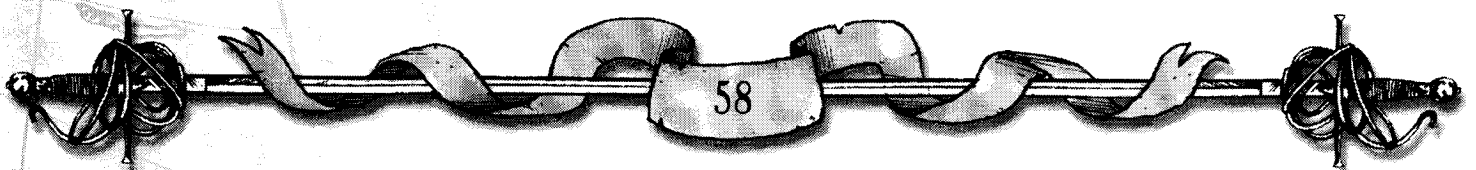
Unlike their cousins, Unseelie refuse to adhere to rules of any sort. While emulating humanity gives the Seelie a strange sort of moral compass, the Unseelie are beholden to nothing. As a result, they are cruel and malicious, and cause harm to anyone they meet. Some have maintained their primal, formless state. Others took forms of their own – gruesome and horrible beyond words. These eventually became the ogres and giants of Avalon mythology. The haunted woods and bedeviled moors which pepper the Triple Kingdoms usually have an Unseelie connected to them, and woe be unto any mortal who crosses their path.

Avalon legend holds that the Unseelie claim the most wicked humans for their own – that those whose deeds are reviled slowly transform into monsters. Such a concept fits in with Vaticine stories of Legion's Abyss and the punishment sinners receive there.

Unseelie do not receive protection from the Queen's court and therefore cannot expect vengeance if slain. Heroes who manage to kill an Unseelie Sidhe suffer no repercussions from the other Fae (although they must still procure the proper weapon to do the job). From a Seelie perspective, the bastard got what was coming.

Types of Sidhe

It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify every type of Sidhe in existence. Lady Mary Katherine made an effort with her seminal *Booke of the Goodly Folke*, but even it hasn't categorized them all. They possess thousands of forms in limitless combinations, and many can change shape on a whim. Nevertheless, scholars have identified numerous “subspecies” of the Goodly Folke: lines whose appearance, demeanor, and methodology are common in numerous individuals. In addition, prominent Sidhe individuals have also been identified, from the icy Queen to the psychotic Redcap. Some of the most important are discussed below.



Seelie

The Seelie are roughly divided among three “courts,” each ruled by a different Queen – the Three Sisters of Earth, Sky and Sea. The Queens are sisters and rivals, engaging in courtly intrigue much the same way Théan nations do. The Queen of the Sky is the most famous, referred to as simply “the Queen” elsewhere in this book. The Queen of the Earth is known as The Lady of the Lake, and rules over the spirits of water and earth. Maab, the Queen of the Sea, is stronger than her sisters, but colder and more distant.

Each Queen has an earthly champion, a mortal or part mortal who represents them on Théah. The duties of these champions are unknown; even they don't entirely understand what purpose they serve. They only know that their actions serve the Sidhe in some way, and that they keep the Queens on good terms with the Avalon people.

The Queen

The Queen of the Sky claims to rule all Seelie, a claim which her sisters routinely ignore. Still, she holds power over most Fae which humans come into contact with, and demands respect accordingly.

The Queen appears as an inhumanly beautiful woman, tall and thin. Her features change with each appearance, sometimes icy and angular, other times warm and laughing. But her eyes always burn with the same emotionless fire. She speaks formally, with a singsong voice that mortals find hypnotic. She expects those in her presence to treat her with the proper courtesy.

As befits her self-appointed station, the Queen follows a courtly life based around parties, hunting, and other noble activities. These activities, however, are queerly distorted and often inhumanly cruel. The Queen herself stands at the center of the court, surrounded by guards. The other high



Sidhe hang on her every word and obey her orders instantly. Courty activities flash between Bryn Bresail and the mortal world; a Sidhe riding party can vanish in an instant, only to reappear several miles away as if nothing had happened.

The Queen's champion is Elaine, holder of the Graal and emblem of Avalon's vitality. As long as she pays proper respect to the Sidhe, her nation will prosper. Elaine is aware of this and ensures that the Goodly Folke receive every possible consideration.

The Lady of the Lake

Water holds a special significance for the Avalons. To them, waters are the fount of all life, the wellspring from which existence springs. Birth and death are bound by them, and they flow in the veins of every living creature on Théah. Because of this, the Avalons deeply revere the Lady of the Lake, second of the Three Sisters.

The Lady of the Lake is rarely seen by mortal eyes, for she never appears except in times of great change. She lives in all the lakes and ponds of Avalon, and can manifest in any she chooses. She almost always appears as a pale woman clad in flowing white robes, floating serenely beneath the surface of the water. For the most part, however, she is fairly benign — like a rarely seen mother watching over her children — but her wrath can be terrible if roused.

Her followers are nereids and water sprites populating Avalon. Each body of water, as small as a well and as big as the largest lake, has an attendant Sidhe, who observes its charge and reveals what it learns to the Lady. She thus has extensive knowledge of almost every being in Avalon — secrets which she keeps well hidden.

Her earthly champion is Lawrence Lugh, the former Sidhe now cursed to life as a mortal.

Maab

Avalon sailors call Maab the Queen of the Sea, although she is not the only entity to claim that title. The terrible siren ruler — a monstrous goddess worshiped by all members of her race — is also referred to as Queen of the Sea. Maab



hates the sirens and has battled this terrifying creature for countless eons. The sea, it seems, will have to manage with two Queens.

As ruler of the ocean waves, Maab watches over all Avalon sailors, bringing the drowned to her underwater kingdom and granting them whatever fate they deserve. The righteous earn a blissful final sleep, while the wicked are punished to eternal drowning — struggling vainly while water fills their lungs again... and again... and again. Those neither wholly good nor entirely evil live on for a time as ghosts, serving as foot soldiers in her war against the sirens. When she feels they have paid their penance, she releases them. There are always more to fill her ranks.

In her younger days, according to legend, she was kinder and gave birth to many beautiful children. These children became the selkies and loved their mother with all their hearts. Later, she grew cold and aged; her bountiful life



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withered, and she left her family to pursue her own selfish ends. But they still loved her and fought the sirens because they believed she wished it. Whether she does or not, they do not know; she hasn't spoken to them since she left.

Maab appears in countless forms, from a wrinkled old crone to a mass of living liquid. Mercurial and chaotic, she is the least predictable of the Three Sisters – her hurricane fury can come amid the most pleasant seaside breezes. Avalon sailors and fisherman pay homage to her in hopes of receiving her favor.

Maab's champion is rarely seen, though her laughter rings throughout Avalon's shores. They call her Meryth, the abandoned daughter of Queen Elaine. Unlike the other two champions, she knows what her duties are – and waits patiently for her chance to fulfill them.

The King

Legends abound of a Seelie King, but no mortal has ever laid eyes on him. According to legend, he is a great earthy man with the legs of an elk, and horns sprouting from his forehead. These same legends speak of a son, the Holly Prince, who hunts him vainly through the Avalon woods every equinox. The Queen never speaks of either being, and those who ask receive a withering stare in reply. Anyone pursuing the issue will learn first-hand what her anger is all about.

Other Seelie

Aughisky

The fabled water horses the Inish call *aughisky* (*agh-is-kî*) are some of the most sought-after steeds in Avalon. They are clever and quick, which makes them hard to capture. It is said they can run across water as easily as land and that they never tire or need food. They do need to drink almost constantly, however.

If the rider ever allows a captured *aughisky* near the sea shore, he is doomed. Legends tell of riders who do so, and how they lose control of their water steed. The *aughisky* returns home, drowning the man who captured it.

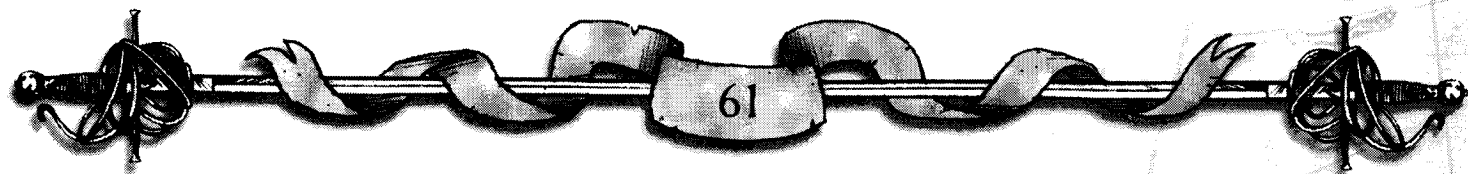
Lords and Ladies

The highest members of the Queen's court appear as tall, angular representations of human beings. Their eyes are almond-shaped and their faces reflect a painful beauty. They are stronger than most mortals and move with the speed of the wind. Speaking to them, one gets the impression of absolute elitism. They consider themselves superior to all forms of life (including lower Sidhe) and ensure that everyone knows it. They may allow humans to participate in their revels, but mortals always leave feeling crude and inferior.

The Sidhe High Court conducts itself much the way a court would in human society. The lords and ladies go out riding and hunting, dining on fine foods from golden goblets, etc. They greet each other in a polite manner, engage in debate, and generally act as lords and ladies should. They even use floral Sidhe – winged sprites like the classic fairies of legend – as butlers or handmaidens. As with every Sidhe activity, however, there is something unsettling beneath the surface. Mortals who eat their food and drink fall into an enchanted sleep that can last for years. The gold they offer melts like dew once it is collected. And of course, their "sport" involves acts of cruelty that would shock the most jaded mortal.

Pookas

Pookas are also shapeshifters, although a different sort than spriggans. Their "natural form" is that of a jet-black, naked man with a goat's head, but they rarely appear that way. They normally take the form of horses, bulls, or even black dogs, hoping to entice mortals into jumping on their backs. Once someone mounts them, they take off on a wild ride through brambles and briar. Such journeys often last an entire night and end with the pooka dumping its passenger in a muddy puddle. They then vanish with the dawn, leaving the mortal wet, bedraggled, and hopelessly lost. Thieves are a favorite target of theirs, as are travelers too confident for their own good. Despite their prankish nature, they can be strangely benevolent at times. Those lost in the wilderness have often been guided home by a disguised pooka, and children have nothing to fear from them.



The Selkies

Long ago, legends say, the King of the Sea and his wife Maab lived peacefully amid the coral. They had many golden-eyed children, who played and sang haunting songs that their mother taught them. Then one day the Queen vanished, called away for reasons of her own. In his loneliness, the King sought solace in the arms of a witch. The witch hated his beautiful children and one day while the king slept, cast a terrible enchantment upon them. Their fair skin changed to silken coats, their straight limbs transformed into clumsy flippers, and their lovely bodies thickened into the shapes of seals. But their golden eyes remained, and they could still sing the way their mother had taught them to. When the king learned what had happened, he banished the witch to the darkest ocean depths, but the enchantment on his children remained.

Such are the selkies, a race of intelligent seals born from the King and Queen of the Sea. They live off the northern coast of the Highland Marches, where still they play amid the seaweed and sing songs to each other. Unlike other Sidhe, they are not cruel, merely shy around humans. Once a year, they can come ashore, where they take their original shapes and dance among the waves. The MacCodrum clan ensures that these revels are never disturbed.

Selkies draw their strange magics from the ocean depths. Usually, they use it to give their MacCodrum friends good fishing, but can sink ships with it if necessary. They are a gentle species, but unforgiving to those who harm them.

A great enmity exists between the selkies and the sirens. Legend has it that the sirens' leader, the so-called "Sea Queen," was the same witch who cursed the selkies so long ago. She now hungers for their blood, and sends her fearsome daughters to hunt them down. The selkies are clever, though, and know how to fight their long-time enemies. Few sirens have entered selkie waters and lived.

Spriggans

A nasty form of lower Sidhe, spriggans are small fellows with sharp features and spiny growths all over their bodies. While they lack the power to perform any actual harm, they

are masters of illusion and love to take the shape of horrible monsters. Many delight in blocking bridges and other vital locations, frightening humans away or forcing them to pay tolls. They're infamous thieves and enjoy stealing food; particularly malevolent spriggans have destroyed entire crops. It is their official duty to replace human children with changelings, and ensure that the kidnapped babies reach Bryn Bresail without harm. Once revealed in their true forms, they're harmless, although they curse a blue streak at anyone clever enough to spot them.

Unseelie

The Unseelie have far less organization than the Seelie, and do not group into subspecies nearly so well. Many types of goblin belong to the Unseelie – small, ugly beasts who delight in tormenting those in their power. Liars and murderers are their favorite targets, but they are ill-disposed toward everyone. They appear most often in the dead of night, and are said to run rampant every Hallowe'en (the last day of Octavus). The small ones limit themselves to small deeds: destroying food or removing road signs so that travelers get lost. The larger ones are much more direct.

Redcap

Few Unseelie command as much hushed terror as the psychotic goblin known as Redcap. He lurks in ruined towers and castles, favoring those where wicked deeds have occurred. At first glance he appears to be a guard of some sort, with a stout halberd and bow slung across his back. A closer examination, however, reveals a horrible visage with fanged jaws, bulging eyes, and unsettling stains caked across his dirty clothes. He dips his cap in the blood of his victims, refreshing it every time he kills. Redcap doesn't hold with conversation. He only wishes to terrify his victims as much as possible before removing their heads. He plays mind games with them for hours on end, distorting shadows and emitting terrifying noises to set them on edge. He attacks from ambush, striking with terrible speed and sadistic relish.

Redcap cannot be killed in the normal sense; his legend is simply too powerful. Heroes may banish him from a

particular site, but he always pops up somewhere else as bloodthirsty as ever. He has numerous emulators, however — minor goblins who mimic his techniques in hopes of gaining a portion of his power. These Redcap imitators are sometimes mistaken for the original, and can be destroyed with the proper tools.

Inish legend holds that Mad Jack O'Bannon once met Redcap in his travels and challenged the monster to a duel of wits. When the Unseelie lost, Jack stole his cap and bleached it dry while hanging him over a tall cliff with his free hand. Redcap holds a special hatred for the Inish because of this.



The Unseelie Host

The Host appears only on nights of the new moon and on haunted dates such as Hallowe'en. It consists of a swarm of strange and terrifying creatures on leather wings, who sweep in a great cloud across the countryside. They snatch mortals up and carry them high above the ground, tearing and biting at them with their sharp teeth. The hapless victim is forced to participate in the awful activities of his tormentors, including mutilating livestock, raining stones down on villages, and snatching up other hapless victims. When their revels are through, they drop their victims on the hardest ground they can find: preferably one with sharp stones.

A Hero spotted by the Unseelie Host has three turns to find an adequate hiding place. He can also avoid them by standing in a circle of cold iron, or using other such Faerie wards. Otherwise, they snatch him up in a great cloud (TN 30 to dodge) and inflict 1 die of Wounds every round until he receives a number of Dramatic Wounds one less than his Resolve X 2 (the threshold of unconsciousness). He may attempt to fight his way loose with iron, Porté magic, etc., but may have to deal with the fall if they release him. Falling damage should be applied normally; the host usually remains 50–100 feet off the ground.

Others

Firbolgs

Firbolgs (*fir-vul-ags*) were the original inhabitants of Inismore, defeated by the Sidhe when they first arrived on the isle. They are wretched, misshapen giants who live deep in subterranean lairs where they hide from the Sidhe.

They occasionally come up to the surface to do evil, snatching up children and carrying them beneath the earth. They particularly despise Fianna and take great pride in capturing their heads and sticking them on poles.

Firbolgs stand almost twelve feet tall and have black skin and eyes. They use weapons and armor and like to brag of the time they ruled Inismore. Their underground cities go on for miles, and are ruled by cruel chieftains who war with each other constantly.





Hero



Avalon

Elaine, Queen of Avalon

More information on Elaine can be found on pg. 32 of the Game Masters' Guide.

She never knew. Never knew she was the bastard daughter of a king. Never knew she would visit the land of Bryn Bresail and speak with the Queen of the Sidhe. Never knew she would hold the Graal in her tiny hands.

But somehow, she did. She *always* knew.

When she was a little girl, she was told that she was the daughter of a minor nobleman and that she would one day grow up to marry another minor nobleman, bear children, and die a grandmother. What she *wasn't* told was that Derwyddon had delivered her to that minor nobleman and bade him *never* allow her to marry. "I will return for her when she is ready," the wizard said, then disappeared.

After nineteen years of waiting, Elaine's father gave up on the crazy old wizard and granted Elaine's wish: she would marry the man she loved, the man whose child she carried. Together, the married couple would live a couple of years with a distant relative and return with their child.

As she walked toward the altar, she saw the dark figure of Derwyddon waiting for her there. He took her away from her father and her betrothed. Elaine found herself in the lands of the Sidhe and Derwyddon told her of her destiny: to be Queen of Avalon. She asked what would happen to

her child. Derwyddon only shook his head. "It no longer concerns you," he said.

That night, Elaine suffered a painful dream of blood and death. When she awoke, she knew her child was gone. Alive, but no longer with her. She cried for days, but it did not deter her from what she needed to do. Avalon, she told herself, was more important. Eventually, she overcame her grief and focused on the task Derwyddon had set her.

She followed Derwyddon through the lands of the Sidhe for many years. There she learned of the Goodly Folke and their ways, and also of the history of her nation before the



Queen Elaine

Montaigne. She learned of the power in Avalon's Glamour, and of the great destiny it would fulfill. Fascinated by learned and driven to fill the void left by the loss of her baby, she grew to love the Glamour Isles as few before her ever had. She also understood that only her devotion could restore Avalon to its former glory.

When she was ready, Derwyddon brought her before the Three Queens. They set her on many quests and tested her in ways no mortal could conceive. She answered every challenge. Finally, they nodded in assent, and the Lady of the Lake produced the Graal from its long-forgotten hiding place. Elaine had won the right to be Queen of Avalon.

She returned to the world of mortals to discover that ten years had passed. The land was engulfed in a bloody civil war and Derwyddon told her that only she had the power to stop it. But in order to fight a war, she needed warriors. She went into the world and sought knights to champion her claim. When she found one that was worthy, she presented him with the Graal. "Any man who drinks from the Graal, if his heart be pure, you shall gain the strength of Avalon's greatest heroes," she said. "But a man whose heart is false shall die one thousand times." Twelve had the courage to drink from the cup.

With the knights (and their followers), Elaine defeated every army that stood before her. Some surrendered the moment she revealed the Graal. Others fought despite the blessing of the Three Queens. They all failed. After months of battle, Elaine became the High Queen of Avalon. Even MacDuff and the O'Bannon bent their knees before her. When she ascended the throne, everything changed. Glamour returned, as did the Sidhe. The nation's enemies fell into disarray, while her people unified and moved forward. Years later, Elaine's power seems to grow every day and Avalon grows with her. With her at its head, the Glamour Isles have entered a new golden age, one which she hopes will far outlast her reign.

Elaine is a beautiful red-haired woman, with features like sculpted marble. She comports herself as a born ruler, and no one has ever seen her grow flustered or uncomfortable. Her confidence is infectious, her reservoir of knowledge is

immense, and she gives the impression that she knows *exactly* what people are going to say before they say it. Clearly, Avalon is in good hands.

Derwyddon

More information on Derwyddon can be found on pg. 33 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Derwyddon is not a man, nor is he a Sidhe. In fact, he's not quite sure *what* he is. His memory stretches back to the time when men first came to Avalon. He remembers them



Derwyddon

building the stone circles in tribute to the Sidhe and he remembers Elilodd when he gained the Graal. He also remembers when Elaine was betrayed, and when her knights were slaughtered by the Queen's daughter. He remembers a terrible bargain, and he remembers when Inish and Highlander armies marched on Carleon.

He also remembers MacAllister. He knows he will not like him when he meets him. He does not pay tribute to the Old Ways. He teaches Elaine lessons that she must never learn: treachery, deceit, and murder. That isn't the way Glamour

teaches. A Queen must be honest, brave, and true. When he meets MacAllister, he must do something about him.

Derwyddon also remembers that he must sleep when he makes his sorcery. The length of time varies, but he remembers spending years on his most powerful enchantments. Such is the lot of wizards: to serve the wishes of mortal men, even if it brings them to their doom. He cannot choose otherwise, for Derwyddon has no choice. He knows his path, saw it since he first was born (was he ever born?) in the center of the stones. He follows his path for he has no other choice. He has seen the steps he will take, and he must follow them. What other choice does he have once he's seen the choice he's already made?

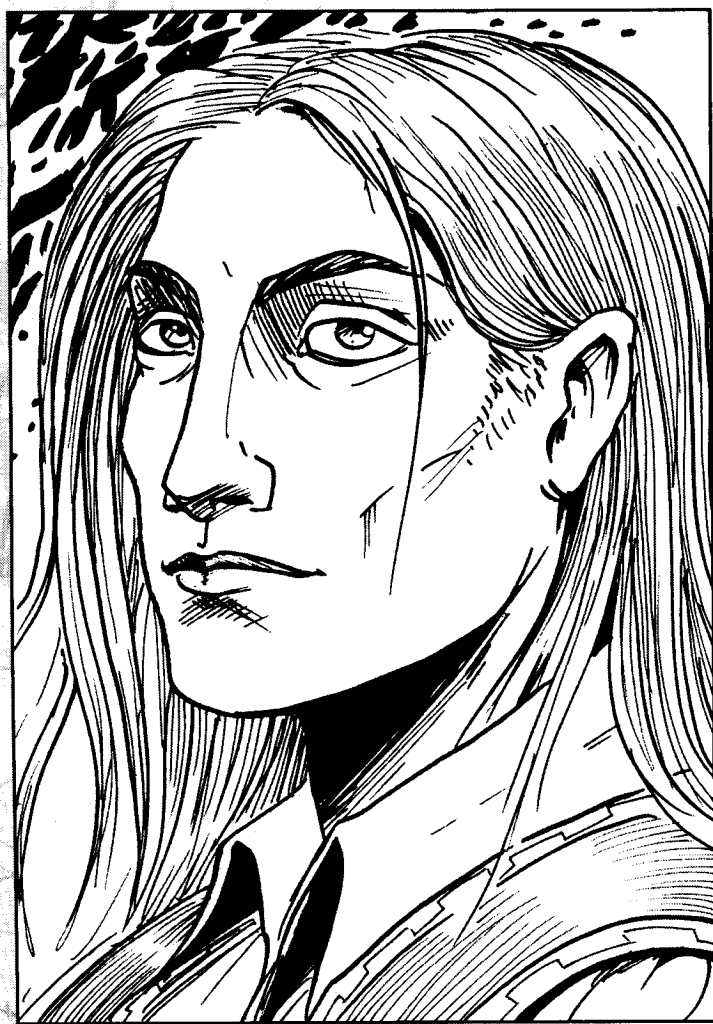
Derwyddon looks more at home in a haunted woods than the Queen's court. His brown robes hang ragged about his frame and his haggard features combine age and strength in a deeply unsettling manner. His left eye is red (including the whites) while his right is a pale blue; he tends to glare at onlookers through one or the other, but not both. He speaks in riddles, and always tell people what they don't want to hear. Avalon's nobles have learned to recognize his hunched, shuffling walk, and avoid him whenever they can.

Sir Lawrence Lugh

More information on Sir Lawrence can be found in the "Elaine's Knights" section of Chapter One, and on pg. 33 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Lawrence remembers his days with the Sidhe — remembers countless eons amid the Lords and Ladies and the endless days of frozen spring in Bryn Bresail. He also remembers the witch who took his hand, the agonizing pain of the cold iron she replaced it with, and the callous eyes of the Queen as she banished him from his native lands. Most of all, he remembers the horror he felt when he realized he would one day die.

Since being banished to human form, Lawrence has struggled with his new existence. For years after his exile he wandered alone, trying vainly to come to grips with the intense new emotions he felt. He alternated from gibbering



Sir Lawrence Lugh



fear to raging anger to aching love, all in the space of seconds. Those he met thought him mad and he wandered from place to place without purpose or direction.

Eventually he regained some measure of coherence and realized what he needed to do. He had to find a code of living, a system to dictate how he could and could not act. With a strong sense of order to guide him, he could master his emotions and perhaps learn how to free himself from his iron hand.

The remnants of his Sidhe pride led him to Queen Elaine, and he begged admission into her order of Knights. She agreed to his request. The Knights gave him a code of ethics to work with – rules to govern how he should act – which he devoured like a starving man. By the time six months had passed, he had already distinguished himself with his valor and bravery.

Now he stands at the head of Elaine's Knights, defending her crown. His exploits have become legend, and his bravery unquestioned. All who meet him say that he personifies chivalry, and he is content to maintain that impression. Without the Knights' code, he fears he will slip back into his near-madness.

As things stand, however, he has progressed quite well. Thanks to his position, he has gained a handle on his emotions, and can restore a measure of his old Sidhe coldness during times of great stress. Even his love for the Queen – powerful enough to drown him at times – hasn't deterred him from his duties. He is confident that his newfound idealism will keep him from the emotional abyss forever.

Lawrence is a staggeringly handsome man – the remnants of his life as a Sidhe. Tall and imposing, he speaks with kindness and honesty, as a good knight should. But a deep sadness hides in the corners of his face, like a shadow across the sun. He wears his blonde hair loose and refuses to grow a beard as other Avalon men do; it makes him look old. He is never seen out of uniform – the colors of Elaine's knights fit him like his own skin. A dueling glove covers his iron hand at all times. He never removes it, even in private.

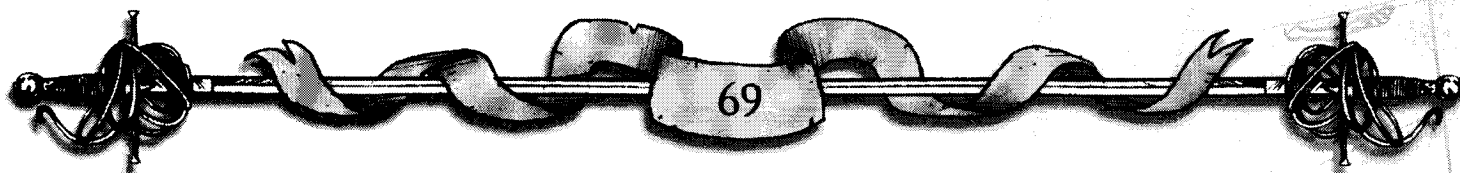
Meryth

Since her first appearance in Elaine's castle, Meryth has made her presence known in the kingdom. Peasants tell tales of a green-skinned child luring other children into the ocean, never to be seen again. Knights make similar reports, telling the Queen that the little girl pretends to be drowning in shallow water, but when men go to rescue her, she drags them under the waves. Some say she's an Unseelie. Others believe she's a siren.

Yet for all these stories, Elaine forbids any of her knights from going near Avalon's shores to deal with the little girl.



Meryth



"She is none of your concern," she tells her knights. "She is *entirely* my concern."

Meryth stays close to the shores of Avalon, luring handsome men into the waters and drowning them. She adds them to her growing collection of "knights", preparing for the time when they will march. Occasionally, she allows one or two of her knights to wander the shoreline to lure naive girls into the water. The girls become Meryth's "ladies in waiting", serving her every need alongside her collection of knights.

She appears as a small, intense-looking girl with pale green skin and seaweed in her hair. Her clothes drip wet at all times; no amount of sun or fire will dry them out. Yet she never seems cold or uncomfortable in them. Her flat eyes are too old for her face, and she speaks with a voice tinged by the sound of ocean waves.

King Piram

King Piram is ruler of Breg and Elaine's most immediate enemy – or at least, he's Elaine's most visible and vocal enemy. When Iron Margaret died, he was among the fiercest and most dedicated pretenders to the throne. His armies bathed Avalon crimson, and he rode at their head with the bearing of a conqueror. He believes he had the power to crush his enemies and unite Avalon under his rule... if Elaine hadn't come along. Instead of the triumphant ascension he imagined, he was forced to accept her as the true Queen of Avalon. That doesn't mean he likes it, however, or that he's forgotten his dreams of glory.

Piram isn't foolish enough to speak openly against Elaine, but whenever an opportunity to disagree with her arises, he takes it. Whenever he can show a flaw in her policies or strategies, he is there, pointing out the error.

He spends an inordinate time drilling his army. When MacAllister asks him why, he replies, "In preparation for the Montaigne. You don't think they'll be concerned with Castille forever, do you?" The Highlander recognizes Piram as the threat he is, as does Elaine, but she has yet to give him order to do anything about the troublesome king.



King Piram

Piram is a tall man, his black hair tinged with silver. His handsome features are flawed by a cruel mouth that always seems fixed in a scowl. He is a powerful man and a skilled warrior, precisely the virtues he believes the King of Avalon should have.

Bors MacAllister

Not all of Elaine's knights have duties that they can speak about. From domestic traitors to incensed foreign powers, Elaine's enemies are many. They cannot all be vanquished on the field, and their treacherous moves cannot be met with mere honor. Every ruler must consider dark deeds to

hold his post, deeds that none speak of in polite company. Bors MacAllister has taken the administration of such deeds upon himself — sparing Elaine the need to sully her hands with them.

MacAllister learned all about politics serving under the High Kings MacDuff, James I and II. When Elaine first arose, James II sent him to join her circle of knights — a gesture of support that helped solidify her rule. The gruff, kilt-clad MacAllister was quickly dismissed by the other courtiers, much as James himself was. That was a big mistake. MacAllister was fluent in ten languages, had a keen understanding of court etiquette, and could read a man's face like a book. But he didn't let on, at least right away. He just sat and watched — and remembered everything he saw.

The test came shortly after the sinking of the Castillian Armada. The Castillian ambassadors, incensed at Elaine's dismissal of their grievances, began discussing a plot to undermine her rule. They spoke Castillian, which they knew she didn't understand, and didn't think twice about MacAllister, the only other person within earshot. He sat dumbly while they spoke in front of him, then waited until they said their good-byes. The instant they left, he turned and repeated their conversation — word for word — in Avalon. The surprised Queen listened while he spoke of a group of malcontents in Breg whom the Castillians would finance to spark civil unrest. When he was done, Elaine archly asked what he would have her do about it. "Give me leave to deal with the situation," he replied. She nodded curtly.

Four days later, a trio of bodies was fished out of the river. They belonged to a group of radical Vaticines with ties to both the Castillians and Montaigne. Her Majesty's government had long suspected them of treachery, but had never moved on them for fear of disrupting Elaine's open policy toward religion. When the Queen heard, she summoned MacAllister to her chambers.

"Were you behind this?" she asked.

"If you ordered me to tell you, I would," he replied. "But then you would know for certain."

Elaine thought for a moment, then dismissed him. The killer was never found, and the victims' group soon disbanded. They just weren't the same without their leadership.

Since then, the gruff Highlander has served as a sort of "black knight," handling covert duties that others wouldn't (or shouldn't) touch. Elaine rarely discusses the problems he solves with him. She merely relates the situation to him and raises an eyebrow; he handles things after that. She never asks what happened and he never tells her. All she knows is that the problem gets solved. Chastised radicals, cowed political enemies, the occasional Montaigne assassin turning



Bors MacAllister

up dead... one way or another, Bors takes care of them. The Queen has granted him wide latitude to act as he sees fit.

At forty-two, Bors has begun to slow down a little. His light brown hair has grayed at the temples and his voice is a little rougher, but sharp wit gleams in his eyes and a wicked intelligence lies behind his passive face. For courtly duties, he continues to wear the traditional Highland kilt; it puts people at ease to think he's a backwoods savage. Other times he dresses in pragmatic Avalon fashion — trousers and a lightweight shirt. MacAllister is a good listener, and can go for hours without speaking. His silence speaks volumes



The Highwayman

about the things he's seen and done. When he opens his mouth, he's direct, honest, and to the point. He advises the Queen openly on mundane matters of state, and everyone knows where he stands. It's the subtler aspect of Elaine's rule that keep him quiet.

More on Bors can be found in the "Elaine's Knights" section of Chapter One.

The Highwayman

Robbers and bandits are hardly uncommon on the Avalon roads, but none perform their duties with such panache as the one known simply as the Highwayman. No one knows his true name, but those he robs never forget their encounters with him. His reputation has made him the foremost bandit in Avalon.

He began about five years ago, a masked man in black on a pale horse. He always appeared alone, in the middle of the road with his pistols drawn. He spoke with courtesy and politeness, and never attacked unless actively resisted; even then he struck only to wound or disable, never kill. When he was done, he vanished into the heath, using Glamour to hide his trail.

Word soon spread of this dashing highwayman who used noble gentility with his sword and pistols. Within a few years he was known all over Avalon. The number of guards on traveling coaches doubled in the areas he was spotted. swooning young women planned lengthy journeys in hopes of being robbed by him. He outsmarted every trap, growing bolder with each new escapade. A host of imitators sprung up across the country and for a while it was very fashionable in court to claim to know him personally. Through it all, he has quietly amassed a sizable fortune, and laughed up his sleeve at all the ruckus he's caused.

Robbing is in his blood now, and he takes as much pride in his escapades as any other artist. He's realized that the flair he shows helps ease the sting of an armed robbery, and takes care to leave his victims enthralled by the experience. While a 2,000 Guilder bounty is on his head, few people



think seriously about claiming it. No one wants to shatter the mystique.

The Highwayman appears as a large man with sharp pale features and a booming voice. He wears black clothes during his raids, with a black mask and tri-corner hat to hide his face.

holding him by the hair. She hoped the bath would make her son a true Sidhe.

As the ice-cold waters swirled around the young boy, his Sidhe blood boiled in his veins, trying to expunge all that was human in young Jack. But his humanity would not let go. It reached out to the hundred thousand million souls that surrounded him and begged them for aid. They answered. Jack's soul was at war with itself. Before the conflict could be settled, Jack's mother lifted him from the lake. Jack emerged with a hundred thousand million souls screaming within his own.



The O'Bannon

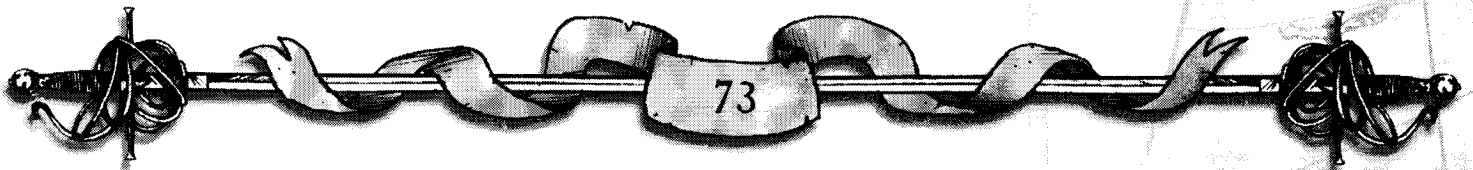
More information on the O'Bannon can be found on pg. 34 of the Game Masters' Guide.

There is a river in Bryn Bresail called "the River of Forgetfulness." Here Sidhe mothers take their young sons and daughters when they reach the proper age. Once they bathe in those waters, all remorse, all regret, all emotion is washed from their hearts and souls, leaving them the cold, immortal, distant beings their parents have come to be. When the child emerges, all that could be considered his "humanity" is left behind, as well as any memories he gathered during his young life. The child is born again as a Sidhe Lord or Lady.

Jack O'Bannon's mother was a Sidhe Lady. His father was a human warrior. When he was twelve years old, his mother took him to that river. Knowing that the child would not be able to survive the swim, she dipped him into the waters,



The O'Bannon



He was immortal, yet he was mortal. He was Sidhe, yet he was human. He was Jack, yet he was others.

With his soul in torment that no other mortal had ever known, young Jack O'Bannon went mad. He fled Bryn Bresail to the world of mortals and never looked back.

He found himself in Inismore, the land of his father. He sought his father out, hoping that mortal kinship would heal his troubled soul. What he found was his father's lands captured by a rival and his father's head on a pike outside the gate. Jack stormed the walls, screaming revenge. He single-handedly killed every warrior in the fort – seventy-seven men – then went after anyone they called allies. In the months that followed, he slaughtered his way through the occupying army's kin until he found the man who killed his father. Jack slew him in his most inventive fashion yet.

When he was done, he discovered he had killed the *ard ri* of Inismore. Jack didn't care. They told him he was to be the new *ard ri*. Jack didn't care. He ran away, screaming at the voices in his head.

Ever since then, Jack has come back to Tara to reclaim his throne. Why he does, he's not quite certain. Then again, Jack isn't quite certain of *anything* he does. Not only do the voices in his head cloud his thinking, there is another voice as well. A soft, patient voice that directs him when he concentrates. He isn't sure what it is, but it tells him to serve the woman who holds the Graal. Jack listens to this voice.

At least, he listens to it for now.

Jack appears as a tall muscular man with silvery white hair and a short goatee. His clothes are often soiled, and he usually goes barefoot – except when he dons his famous Seven League striders. His face appears young and vibrant and he always smiles, even when he's cutting someone in two. Old scars criss-cross his arms and mark his face. Those close to him swear that the marks change with each appearance: a sword-cut decorating his forehead one day will run down his cheek the next... and be two inches shorter in the bargain. The Inish are too smart to ask him about them.

Arghyle O'Toole

For centuries the O'Tooles have ruled the country of Inismore, each one trying to improve Inish life in his own way. But each ruler had a secret fear. Each dreaded the return of the O'Bannon, for it meant death to the ruling family and chaos for the country. Arghyle is determined to change all that.

He grew up under Avalon rule, and although the Avalons allowed his family to retain their status as rulers of Carrig estate, he fostered a great resentment for them. He knew they had no respect for Inish ways and dreamed of the day



Arghyle O'Toole

when Inismore would be free. He saw his chance when the O'Bannon returned.

For once it wasn't an O'Toole being killed to announce his arrival; it was a foreign invader. Using the opportunity, they rallied around the O'Bannon, giving him their full support in his rebellion. The O'Tooles knew that if anyone could make Inismore free, it was the O'Bannon. They were wrong. As quickly as the rebellion started, it was over, with Inismore's champion bowing before a foreign queen. This incensed Arghyle, and he vowed on that day that he would break the cycle once and for all... that he would see the O'Bannon dead by any means necessary.

Since that day he has spent every waking hour putting plans into motion to remove the O'Bannon from his throne. While in Parliament he argues endlessly in favor of splitting from Avalon and ousting the O'Bannon. He is fostering growing support, but the Lynch clan is blocking his progress. Arghyle might arrange for an "accident" to befall the Lynches if they don't wise up soon.

At age 56, Arghyle knows he hasn't much time. For too long he has been drinking the night away with "Lochcuan's Daughters" and sitting idle, waiting for things to change. Not anymore. His fun-loving attitude has been replaced with a grim determination. He is pushing his plans ahead as quickly and efficiently as possible, as he knows that his actions will lead to a better Inismore for his children. Or so he tells himself.

Roland O'Toole

At age 26, Roland is the captain of his father's merchant fleet. Under his guidance, its trading base has more than doubled and the wealth is pouring in. He remembers how he was treated aboard ship when he was young, and makes sure all the vessels have suitable living and working conditions for the crew. He does not tolerate disobedience from his officers, however, and is not above shooting any who cross him.

Roland avoids violent face-to-face confrontations if at all possible, preferring to fight on his terms — with a gun.



Roland O'Toole

When he was young, his father sent him to Montaigne with a healthy purse, to train in the Rois et Reines school of marksmanship. He excelled in his newfound skills and graduated at the top of his class. Now he can pull a pistol lightning fast and is a crack shot. While in Montaigne he was befriended by a priest who taught him the glory of the Church. He prays every night for Theus to forgive him, as he has put down many a man with a bullet to the back or a well-aimed shot at 50 yards, and he sees no reason to do otherwise. After all, if he fights fair he might get hurt.

Roland is a slight man with shaggy shoulder-length brown hair, emerald-green eyes, and a short goatee. He spends his



Roary Finnegan

off time cheating in games of chance, drinking until he falls over, and spending time with the local Jenny's Guild. When he is with his brothers he's a very happy and jovial man. To outsiders, he is a sarcastic bastard who doesn't want to be bothered. Those who have seen him should respect his wishes.

Roary Finnegan

It began as a bet.

Young Roary Finnegan was a little too drunk and a little too cocky and a little too short on cash. He'd already earned himself a bit of a reputation as a fighter in the local parlors and some fellow at the end of the bar made the boast, "I'm the best man in Donegal estate and I can take six men at once!"

Roary looked up from his cider. "Only six? By my troth, I can take eight!" The man lifted his own total to eight. Roary raised the stakes to twelve. The man shut his trap and Roary stood up, ready to leave.

And found twelve men standing in front of the door. Another man, a very rich man, was willing to take Roary to task. Bets were called and covered and Roary had to live up to his word.

As he took off his coat and pulled up his sleeves, Roary looked at those twelve men and knew what he had to do. In order to deal with twenty-four different hands, he had to keep from getting hit and deliver punches from angles that could not be blocked. He kept to the balls of his feet and fought for his life, spinning and twisting, throwing odd-angled punches as he dodged between flying fists. At the end of the night, he had a black eye and a broken hand, had lost three teeth and a bit of his right ear, but he stood over twelve men who could not move. "Fighting Finnegan, the man who can take twelve!" they called him. And a legend was born.

Thirty years later, Roary Finnegan is still a small, slender man with big, hard hands. He's almost sixty years old, his hair is receding in the front and has turned a brilliant silver, but his eyes are still keen as a hawk's. His movements may have slowed a little, but he can still duck and weave better than any man alive.

Roary has retired from professional fighting and established a school in his home province of Donegal. His school has made him a wealthy man, as every professional fighter wants to train with the legendary "Fighting Finnegan."



James MacDuff II, High King

More information on MacDuff can be found on pg. 35 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Those outside of Avalon often see James as a bumpkin: the simple king of a backward land. Nothing could be further from the truth. Clan politics and regular dealings with both the enigmatic Elaine and the mad O'Bannon have taught him much. For all his apparent simplicity, he may be the most cunning politician in Théah.

James was groomed for his position at an early age and learned how the political game was played. He discovered how to manipulate others to serve his ends, but he also learned the concept of honor and how to lead by example. His father taught him that no ruler should hold his people to ideals that he himself cannot meet. By the time he took the throne, he was both noble enough to rule wisely and cunning enough to rule well. In the years since he has become a model of stability, leading his people towards a new golden age.

The High King notices everything that that takes place in his presence. He rarely speaks until he has heard all the facts, then voices his opinions strongly and without hesitation. A master at verbal sparring, he can argue a hen from a fox's jaws and has reduced political opponents to tears on occasion. Despite that, he rarely resorts to

deception, and those who know him respect his uncanny honesty.

James provides a strong balance to the Triple Kingdoms; unlike O'Bannon and Elaine, he has ruled for many years, and comes from a long line of acknowledged kings. His position grants him a legitimacy that the other two lack, a sense of permanence and connection to the past. When he supports them, it lends their actions credibility, and when he opposes them, they seem mercurial and chaotic. His stability gives him the leverage he needs to approach them as an equal.



James MacDuff II

Currently, he splits his time between advising Queen Elaine and engaging the wily MacBrides in the High Council. He relishes both tasks with the savor of a skilled politician. He finds Elaine fascinating, and despite his concerns about her origins has grown closer to her over the past few years. He holds an entirely different sort of respect for Fergus MacBride: the respect of a cobra for a mongoose. "Fergus doesn't know his own strength," he once said, "and might crush the Highlands before he realizes he's squeezing too hard."

The MacDuff is aware of his nation's reputation as barbarians, and tries to dispel that notion with the way he dresses. Thoughtful and distinguished, he wears his kilt as if it were the height of fashion, and takes care that his beard is neatly-trimmed. He never hides his emotions, but can rein them in easily if he has too. He is remarkably well-spoken and can hold a conversation on just about any topic; his political skills rival the canniest Vodacce. Aside from Elaine, he is the only person in the three kingdoms who isn't afraid of mad Jack O'Bannon.

Fergus MacBride

The leader of both Clan MacBride and the Separatist movement, Fergus has learned how to roll with the punches. Before Elaine's rise, he fought tenaciously against the Avalon presence on the island — through both political means and surreptitious civil disobedience. Once in his youth he even had to flee prosecution to the MacIntyre lands, where he lived for two years as a fugitive. But now all of that's behind him; independence made him a national hero, and his Clans' rise to prominence has finally given him a legitimate power base to air his beliefs. The fact that it's a small power base doesn't bother him in the least.

Fergus is a patriot, first and foremost. He loves his country and believes that she is destined for great things. He also believes that she doesn't need foreign interference in her affairs, and would do better as a fully independent nation. He doesn't dislike Avalon, not after Elaine's rise to power; he just thinks both nations would do better without each other. Fighting in Parliament is infinitely preferable to

fighting on the streets, and he appreciates his newfound prestige... which is why he takes advantage of it whenever he can. He pushes "self-sufficiency" legislature, argues against foreign treaties, and does everything he can to undermine the Avalon-Highland alliance. He keeps open opposition to a minimum — everyone knows how he feels and extremism won't help his cause — but keeps a sharp eye out for any opportunity to advance Highland independence. While he currently leads only a tiny minority, he believes that the rest of the country will eventually come around to his way of thinking; he just needs to keep fighting and wait. He has the patience of a rock.



Fergus MacBride

At fifty-nine years old, Fergus has seen it all. He's canny and charming, with a silver tongue to match his rapidly graying hair. He loves to argue and can give speeches that rival the MacDuff's in power.

Connie MacDonald

Deep in MacDonald territory, on the edge of a tiny hamlet in the high moors, stands an ancient hut with a blacksmith's forge. The old woman who lives there almost never comes out; a boy from the village brings her supplies and she has few visitors. No one notices the overgrown stones that form a perfect ring around the place, or the way the old lady quietly tends to them. She's been a recluse all her life, and her neighbors rarely speak of her – not in the daylight, anyway. But when the sun goes down, and drinks begin flowing at the local pub, they whisper things about old Connie MacDonald. Frightening things. "MacEachern." "Iron witch." "Sidhe-killer."

When Connie was young, her father took her aside and told her of her history. They were descendants of the lost MacEachern Clan, he said, and guardians of the secret weaknesses of the Sidhe. He taught her the skills of blacksmithing, as well as the key to cold iron and the ways to make it deadly to the Goodly Folke. He showed her how to protect herself from Faerie magic, and how to render land poisonous to them. And when she had learned everything, he tattooed a horseshoe onto her shoulder – the secret sign of the MacEachern Clan.

For over fifty years, Connie practiced her trade in secret, hiding her real skills behind a simple blacksmith's trade. Sometimes people would come to her, requesting information on the Sidhe. She usually rebuked them, fearing that news of her would get back to the Sidhe court. Occasionally, however, she would deem the questioner worthy, and let drop some secret that could help him or her – usually knowledge on how to build a ward, or protect a child from the Fae. On three occasions in her life she forged weapons capable of slaying a Sidhe. She never explained how she made those weapons, and ensured that those who

used them never learned where she lived. She has no idea what happened to them after they left her forge.

Connie is old and wrinkled, but her sagging flesh hides tough sinewy muscles. Decades of smithing have left their mark, and while not as strong as she once was, she's as tough as old leather. She wears her white hair in a braid down her back, and her black eyes gleam with hidden knowledge. Every once in a while, she looks at the horseshoe on her shoulder and chuckles. Those nasty old Sidhe aren't as tough as they think they are.



Connie MacDonald





Drama



The Destiny Spread

Fate Witches have a particular form of reading they use to give their querent a general idea of what his destiny is like. They use a five-card spread from the Sorte deck in a cross formation to accomplish this (see figure below).

The first card is the querent's Strength. This embodies his most noble quality.

The second card is the querent's Weakness. This shows his greatest flaw.

The third card is the querent's Past. This shows an important event that helped make him who he is.

The fourth card is the querent's Present. This shows his current situation.

The fifth card is the querent's Future. This shows him an important event that is fast approaching in his life.

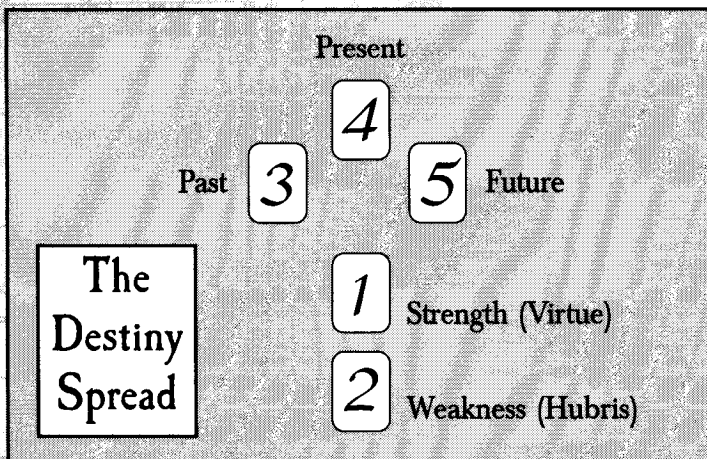
Normally, the first and second cards are selected from the Greater Arcana, while the other three cards are selected from the two suits from the Minor Arcana that are the most significant to the querent. Fate Witches traditionally leave the Court Cards out of these readings, since they signify events that cannot be controlled in any way.

Using the Destiny Spread in Hero Creation

To use this system properly, you'll need a Tarot deck. You should perform this reading right after assigning Traits and Nationality to your Hero, but before assigning anything else. Separate out the Major Arcana, shuffle them, and put them in one pile. Next, pull out the two suits that are most significant to your Hero (in this case, Cups and Staves; see below), leaving out the Page, Knight, Queen, and King cards. Shuffle the two suits together into a pile. Next, lay out the Destiny spread as described above. You must choose to focus on either your Strength or your Weakness. If you choose your Strength, your Hero gains the Virtue corresponding to that card, and you pay 10 HP for performing the Destiny spread. If you choose your Weakness, your Hero gains the Hubris corresponding to that card, and you gain 10 extra HP to build your Hero with. Finally, consult the Past, Present, and Future charts to see what your Hero gained (or lost!) from those draws.

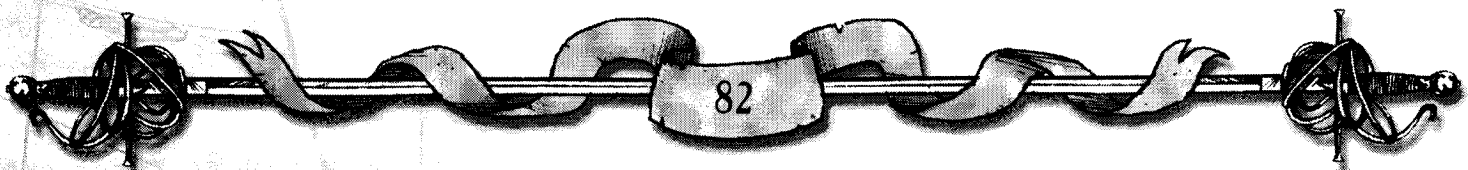
If you don't have a Tarot deck, it's hard to determine your Strength or Weakness at random, so have your GM select them, then roll once on the Past, Present, and Future charts (odd-Cups/even-Staves, then a die for the card number).

Note: In some Tarot decks, Staves are referred to as Wands or Rods.



Avalon Destiny Spread

The people (and Heroes) of Avalon use the suits of Cups and Staves in the Destiny Spread. Avalon is a land of deep and passionate myth, its power represented by the Cup cards. Its people hold fast to the ties between family and liege-lords, seen in the Staves.





Drama

The Past

These cards reveal the events that brought the Hero to his present position in the skein. In Avalon the past very much lives on in the present, and these doings will certainly affect the Hero's future...

Ace of Cups: Once when playing in the woods near your home as a youth, you met a young girl who became your playmate. You never knew her family or where she lived, but she always found you when you left your home. As you grew up the two of you fell in love and became lovers... that's when she told you her secret. She is a Seelie, and every day you remain lovers you risk the wrath of the Queen of the Sidhe. You receive a 3 point Sidhe Lover Background for free.

Two of Cups: Since before you were born, your parents swore that you would be married to the child of their close friends. As you grew to know her, you fell in love. It was to be a memorable event; even the Goodly Folke gave their blessing to this beautiful union. Unfortunately, a beautiful Unseelie swept through your lives, stealing her love away. You receive a 3 point Lost Love Background for free.

Three of Cups: In your veins runs the blood of the Sidhe. Unfortunately, your family fell out of favor with them sometime before you were born. You receive a 2 point Sidhe Blood Advantage, but you may only choose a Curse. You do not receive any extra points for the Curse.

Four of Cups: In your youth, you learned all about the Sidhe, and how to appease them. But your quick mind and sharp wit also attracted the attention of a traveling priest, who tried to teach you all the glories of Theus, and offered you a chance at the priesthood. Your soul has become a battleground between the Church and the old ways. You may choose either the Sidhe Blood or the Ordained Advantage. Once you commit to one side, however, the other will hold you in eternal scorn. You receive a 3 point Nemesis Background for free.

Five of Cups: Once you had a brother and two sisters who helped fill your house with laughter. Then they vanished in the night. Friends and neighbors whispered that

they were stolen away by the Unseelie. Your parents were devastated, but rallied around their only remaining child: you. You receive three 1 point Lost Relative Backgrounds for free.

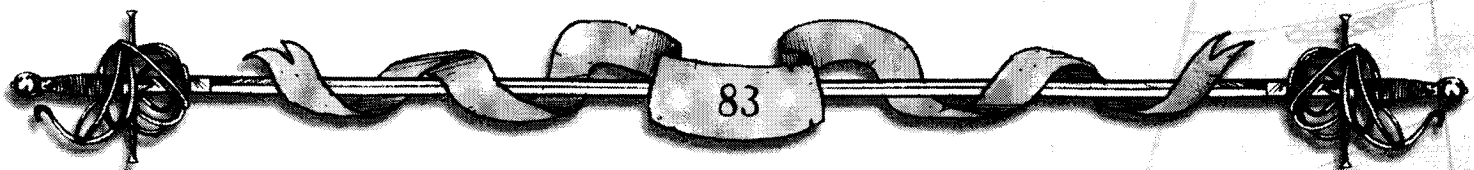
Six of Cups: Where you grew up there was a girl who was just a little bit "off." She had visions and fits, frightening all the other children. The grown-ups said she was "touched by the Sidhe," but you didn't care. To you, she was the best friend in the world. You still see her sometimes... in your dreams. You have a 3 point Connection to a woman who has Sidhe blood. If she ever needs your help, you'll know...

Seven of Cups: You were taken by the Sidhe as a boy. To you it was a timeless moment of whirling colors and flavors. More than eight years passed in the mortal realm before you were discovered. Since then, mortal Glamour has been nothing more than a pale shadow, a weak reflection of the glory your soul hungers for. You are less affected by mortal Glamour; all Nobles roll one fewer unkept die when trying to affect you. You also have a 3 point Moment of Awe Background driving you.

Eight of Cups: While your family was fortunate for people of their station, somehow you were never satisfied. You turned your back on Avalon and left in search of a place where you could find a sense of belonging. You must pick another country that you call home. Though you hail from Avalon, you want nothing to do with it and purchase Advantages and Schools (except magic) as if you were from the country you now call home.

Nine of Cups: A rich uncle's thriving business let him shower his relatives with good fortune. He is responsible for your education and has seen to it that you have a good start in life. Unfortunately, the Vestenmannavnjar have marked him for death for trafficking with the Vendel. Don't be surprised if you wake up in a sack one day, to be ransomed to your uncle. You start with an extra 500 guilders, and a 1 point Hunted Background by association with your uncle.

Ten of Cups: Your youth was a fairy tale of perfect happiness: loving parents, adoring siblings, everything you could possibly want provided for you. You receive a 5 point



Appearance Advantage, but you are shockingly naive about the intentions of others. Anyone trying to trick or misuse you receives two free raises on social rolls against you.

Ace of Staves: When you were a child you became very ill. No conventional medicine would ease your pain, so your parents took you to see a druid. After an obscure ritual, you were cured. The druid took a special liking to you and has kept a watchful eye on you ever since. You receive a 3 point Connection Advantage to the druid.

Two of Staves: You come from a very stubborn and headstrong family. Once you decide on a course of action, nothing short of death can change your mind. You receive the Indomitable Will Advantage for free.

Three of Staves: Your family has traditionally been very religious in nature. When you were young, they sent you away to learn about the church and its importance. As a result, you have recently been ordained by the Avalon Church. You receive the Ordained Advantage for free.

Four of Staves: Your family has been nobility since the beginning of Avalon history. You can trace your lineage back to one of the first kings of Avalon. You may take the Noble Advantage for only 5 points, or for free if you purchase sorcery.

Five of Staves: You were pressed into service aboard a pirate vessel as a youngster. You soon proved yourself and became a trusted member of the crew. Unfortunately, your ship was later sunk, leaving you as the sole survivor. You begin the game with the Pirate Trick Advantage for free (see pp. 96 of *The Pirate Nations* book; if you do not have *The Pirate Nations*, use the Combat Reflexes Advantage on pp. 159 of the *Players' Guide* instead).

Six of Staves: You spent your early adult life as a soldier in Queen Elaine's army. Your aptitude for leadership was noted and you were soon given command of a unit. You receive a 4 point Commission Advantage for free.

Seven of Staves: When you were growing up you cared little for the pomp and circumstance of Avalon life. You preferred just to have fun and do whatever you wanted to

do. You enjoyed the freedom and excitement that the street life had to offer. Unfortunately, your actions earned you a bad reputation. You receive the Scoundrel Advantage for free.

Eight of Staves: You served on a Navy vessel in your youth. Gain the Sailor skill for free with one basic knack at rank 3.

Nine of Staves: When you were very young you were injured badly due to a careless mistake. Since your recovery you have been extremely cautious in everything you do. You begin the game with the Keen Senses Advantage.

Ten of Staves: Your father was an incessant gambler and ran up quite a debt to an influential swordsman who will stop at nothing to collect what is owed him. With the recent death of your father, you have inherited his debts... and the wrath of the swordsman. You receive a 3 point Debt Background for free.

Present

Ace of Cups: The Graal represents the Living Covenant between the people of Avalon and the Sidhe. Your blood carries the burden of those ties. You receive a 2 point Sidhe Blood Advantage for free.

Two of Cups: You recently drew the attentions of a noble lady. She is impressed with your flair and style and seems to be smitten with you. As a token of her affection, she gave you a white silk handkerchief to keep near your heart. The handkerchief is a charm with one Adept Level Glamour Knack (3 points) chosen by the GM.

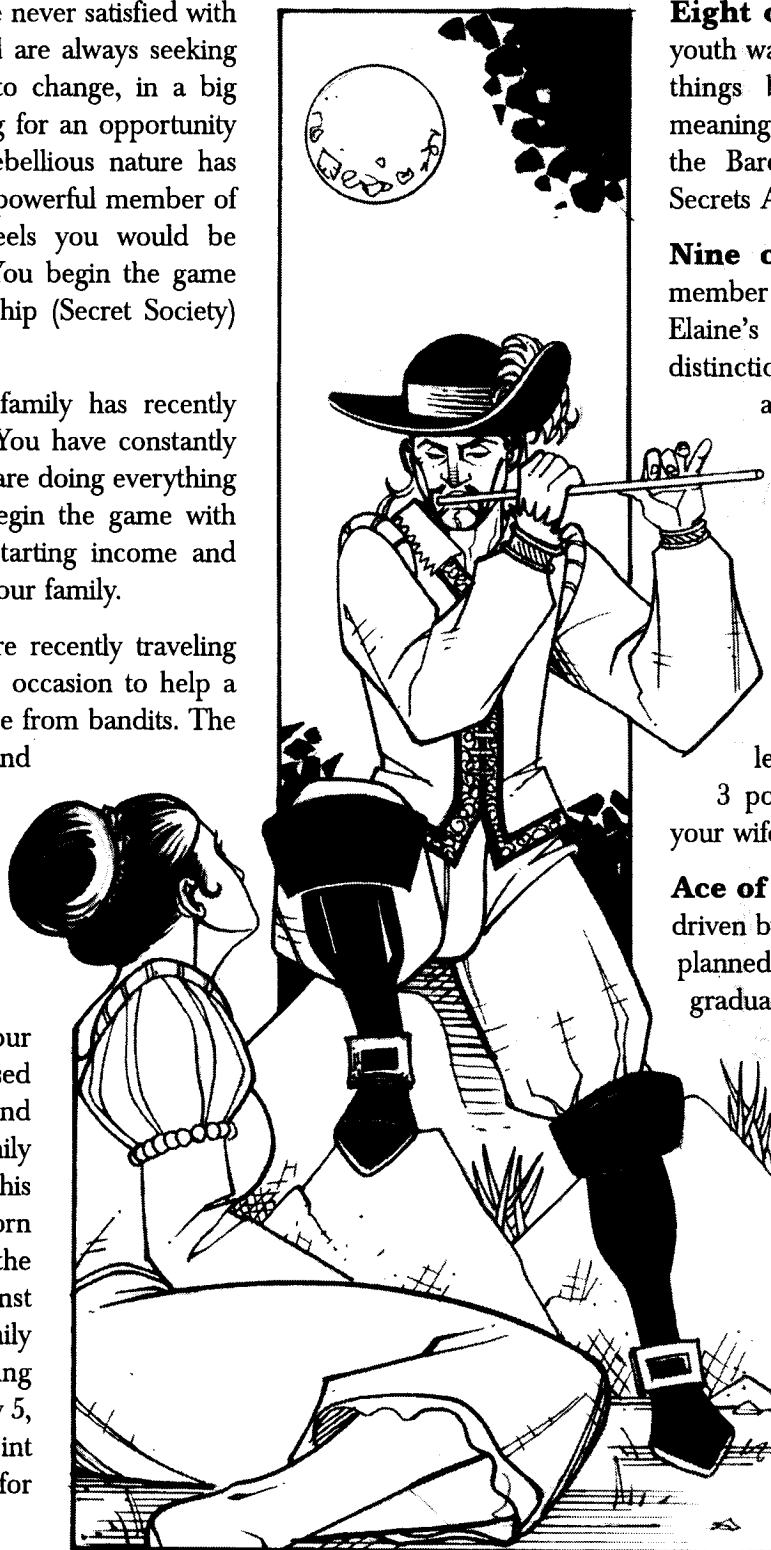
Three of Cups: Your family is very proud of you and your accomplishments. As a result, they have chosen you to be the bearer of the family heirloom. The heirloom is a sword given to your great-great-grandfather by the Sidhe. You begin the game with the 5 point Advantage, Sidhe Sword. If you should ever lose the sword, you will gain the Cursed Background (as determined by the GM) until you retrieve it.

Four of Cups: You are never satisfied with what life has to offer and are always seeking more. You want things to change, in a big way, and you are looking for an opportunity to present itself. Your rebellious nature has drawn the attention of a powerful member of a secret society, who feels you would be perfect for their cause. You begin the game with a 5 point Membership (Secret Society) Advantage for free.

Five of Cups: Your family has recently fallen upon hard times. You have constantly been there for them and are doing everything you can to help. You begin the game with only one-third of your starting income and the eternal gratitude of your family.

Six of Cups: You were recently traveling through Avalon and had occasion to help a druid reclaim a holy place from bandits. The druid was very pleased, and in return for your help he conducted a ritual to give you strength. You begin the game with a Lesser Gesa of the GM's choice.

Seven of Cups: Your father was recently accused of a heinous crime and executed. Now your family name carries the stain of his dishonor. You have sworn that you will disprove the allegations made against him and clear your family name. Your starting reputation is decreased by 5, but you gain a 3 point Hunting Background for free.



Eight of Cups: You have spent your youth wandering, caring not for material things but seeking the secrets and meaning of life. You begin the game with the Bard Skill and a 1 point Druid Secrets Advantage.

Nine of Cups: Your father was a member of Avalon's elite... one of Queen Elaine's Knights. He served with great distinction and earned you a place among their ranks. You begin the game with the Elaine's Knights Advantage and must follow their rules and restrictions.

Ten of Cups: You recently met the love of your life and got married. Although you are very happy, her headstrong nature constantly leads her into trouble. You gain a 3 point Romance Background with your wife.

Ace of Staves: You have always been driven by a quest for knowledge and you planned your life accordingly. You just graduated from Burke University and are ready to begin your career. You receive the University Advantage for free.

Two of Staves: You recently were surprised by an Unseelie Sidhe known as Jimmy Squarefoot. You remained calm, unfortunately for him, and actually tricked him by promising him fortunes untold. News of your triumph has gotten around. Your starting reputation is increased by 5.

Three of Staves: You recently rescued an Avalon nobleman from a runaway coach. In thanks, he gave you a special reward. You receive a 2 point Magical Item for free.

Four of Staves: As a member of a respected and wealthy family, you like to be surrounded with servants. You receive a 3 point Servant Advantage for free.

Five of Staves: Your home country convicted you of something terrible. You were dragged through the streets with people shouting curses and hurling rotten garbage at you, and you were put on display for all to see. Then came the sentence... exile. Whether or not you actually did the things they say is between you and your GM. The Hero receives a 2 point Exiled Background for free.

Six of Staves: You have recently been inundated by odd looks, curses, and the occasional challenge to a duel. It seems that a notorious swordsman-turned-bandit looks just like you, and you are paying for his mistakes. You receive the Mistaken Identity Background for 2 points.

Seven of Staves: You are searching for a famous swordsman who challenged your father to a duel and killed him before your eyes when you were but a boy. The man laughed at you when you cried out and tossed a coin on the ground at your feet. When you find this man you must make him pay. You receive a 3 point Vendetta Background for free.



Eight of Staves: You have just been hired by a very wealthy man to help him with some unspoken agenda. You receive a 2 point Patron advantage for free.

Nine of Staves: The last thing you remember was following a beautiful woman into a circle of trees somewhere in the forest. You woke up on a hill with absolutely no knowledge of who you were. You receive a 2 Point Amnesia background for free.

Ten of Staves: You recently got yourself into a lot of trouble by offending a powerful priest. You went to your cousin for help and he took care of the problem for you. Unfortunately, his help has a price. He is a member of the Rilasciare, and he wants you to join. You receive the Secret Society: Rilasciare Advantage for free.

Future:

Ace of Cups: You will soon be helped by an enigmatic figure. (Sidhe Ally 2)

Two of Cups: A dark figure will soon come into your life. (Rivalry 2)

Three of Cups: With patience comes great rewards. (Inheritance 3)

Four of Cups: Your dissatisfaction with your life will lead you into troubled waters. (Pressed Into Service, *Pirate Nations*, page 98; if you do not have *Pirate Nations*, substitute "Obligation" from page 168 of the *Players' Guide*.)

Five of Cups: A man's word should not be given lightly. (Vow 2)

Six of Cups: Someone from your past will soon knock upon your door. (Sidhe Lover 2)

Seven of Cups: Even the best-laid plans of pure-hearted men will sometimes fail. (Defeated 2)

Eight of Cups: Your search for the truth will ultimately prevail. (Gain the Faith Advantage)

Nine of Cups: Your pride will be your undoing. (Nemesis 3)

Ten of Cups: You will soon find something which will secure your future. (Treasure Map 2)

Ace of Staves: Inner peace is the key to happiness. (Moment of Awe 2)

Two of Staves: Only through direct action can one achieve one's goals. (Citation 4)

Three of Staves: Watch your possessions carefully, as some are more valuable than others. (Syrneth Artifact 2)

Four of Staves: Stay true to yourself and love will soon find you. (Romance 2)

Five of Staves: Your deepest darkest fears will soon come to light. (Fear 2)

Six of Staves: Victory comes only after many hardships. (Defeated 1 and Nemesis 1)

Seven of Staves: You will soon cross paths with a great evil. (Cursed 2)

Eight of Staves: You will soon lose someone you love. (Lost Relative 2)

Nine of Staves: Your prudent nature will soon pay off. (Connections 2)

Ten of Staves: Someone you don't know will do you a favor. (Obligation 2)

Rules for Sidhe

Sidhe have no statistics; they cannot be harmed by normal means and the damage they inflict is based solely on their Glamour magic. The tasks they perform automatically succeed, unless it is dramatically appropriate for them to fail (in which case they consciously allow themselves to fail in order to adhere to the "rules").

Certain types of cold iron weapons can harm or even destroy them, although such an act has terrible ramifications. A Sidhe will flee if struck by a weapon of unforged iron, uttering a fierce keening before vanishing in a flash. Such an act isn't recommended, however. A struck Sidhe treats the Hero as its nemesis thereafter, and constantly vexes him with cruel and malicious pranks. The Sidhe never shows itself — not when there's iron nearby — but its presence becomes a constant threat in the Hero's life. Appeasing the Sidhe — or tricking it into leaving the Hero alone — involves gifts, supplication, or interference from a "higher" Fae such as the Queen. Details are up to the GM and should form the basis of an entire adventure.

Killing a Sidhe is another matter entirely. The Goodly Folke are practically immortal and do not understand death as a concept. Therefore, when one of them is destroyed forever, it causes their community great trauma. Certainly, they can be killed with weapons forged by the secret techniques of the MacEachern Clan, certain types of powerful magic, or possibly specific Syrneth artifacts — but such weapons are rare. Moreover, their use has terrible ramifications; the lesson of the MacEacherns weighs heavily on wise men's minds.

The Sidhe treat death the way they treat everything else — with cold disdain, bound by certain specific rules. Knowing those rules and applying them properly is vital to killing a Sidhe and surviving. The Hero must act in an appropriately dramatic context and do so only as a last resort — killing in self-defense, saving a loved one from the Sidhe's clutches, or repelling an attack against a weak or helpless person. If he has absolutely no choice and acts only out of noble or selfless causes, then the Sidhe may be slain. The others

don't like it, but they are bound by the rules and must obey them. As always, the GM is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a noble or selfless cause. If the Heroes aren't sure, they can seek out the Queen of the Fae (an adventure in itself) and ask for her permission. The Queen has been known to grant leave if one of her subjects has gotten out of hand, and Heroes with a truly righteous cause may find her accommodating. If she says "No," however, nothing can change her mind. Smart Heroes leave the MacEachern steel at home when searching for the Queen.

Things can go very badly for those who ignore the rules. The Seelie do not tolerate serious threats, and those who attack them suffer horrible punishments. Slaying a Fae because you want to prove you're better than them, or because you want to hang a head on the wall as a trophy, results in merciless retaliation. The Seelie court has no shortage of numbers and sends however many it takes to get the job done. The attack comes instantly and with no warning; the miscreant is suddenly and irrevocably struck down. The lucky ones are killed; the rest suffer for decades, writhing in unspeaking agony until the Fae finally tire of them. You can defend yourself as vigilantly as you want; you can take any measures to hide yourself from them. Sooner or later, they find you. One night you go to sleep in your bed, and you wake up a willow tree. Scream all you like, no one's ever going to hear you...

Combat With the Sidhe

"Oh boy, let's deck everybody out with cold iron and go on a faerie hunt!"

This may be the last thing your party ever says. As you may have gathered, the Fae don't like being attacked and have the raw power to turn the Heroes into little wet marks if they wish. That's why people are so afraid of them, and why we've specifically declined to give them stats. Groups of players who insist on killing the Sidhe need to be discouraged as strongly as possible.

In the first place, it's very difficult to find weapons capable of harming them. The MacEacherns are scattered far and wide, and need to maintain a low profile if they wish to



DIDD



Drama

keep on living. Parties who show up and ask how to kill the Fae will likely be turned away at gunpoint. Other methods are equally difficult: Synchronic artifacts are constant puzzles which defy easy control, and sorcerers powerful enough to take on the Seelie are too wise to consider it. Fae notice iron in large amounts; a party with more than one weapon capable of slaying them will be as conspicuous as a six-foot ladybug on the streets of Carleon. The Sidhe tend to land on such parties with both feet, ending the conflict before it even begins. Ask the MacEacherns how well prolific arms work.

In the second place, the Sidhe are ridiculously powerful. Their Glamour powers can warp reality itself and the enchantments they weave are as permanent as they are irresistible. The most powerful Sidhe, such as the Queen or the Lady of the Lake, cannot be killed by anything – even cold iron. Combat with them goes something like this: “Round one: You strike the Queen and draw blood. Round two: She turns you into maggots. The End.”

This isn't to say that the Sidhe can't be defeated. They can be outsmarted or tricked by clever humans. Some charms can shield mortals from their powers or prevent them from entering certain areas; and in the dire circumstances outlined above it may be possible to slay one. They're not invincible, and smart parties will figure out ways to thwart their schemes. But tramping around and slaughtering them is out of the question; they just don't work that way.

For purposes of clarity, striking a Sidhe is as difficult as striking any other creature of its size. Man-sized Sidhe require a TN 15 to strike; smaller and faster creatures need a TN of 20 or even 30 in some cases (GM's discretion). Once contact has been made, the Heroes had better be ready for the consequences. In addition to their Glamour abilities, Fae can wield weapons as well as mortals do. Most Sidhe blades have enchantments on them, causing those struck to fall asleep, age seven years, etc. depending upon the blade in question.

For attack purposes, Sidhe have a 6 in all Traits. They must take 7 Dramatic Wounds with a Sidhe-killing weapon before dying, and suffer no penalties until then. The Three Queens

and certain other powerful Fae can never be killed, although they feel pain from Sidhe-killing weapons as others of their kind do. If any Sidhe is killed, the rest of their kind instantly know it and can identify the murderer on sight. You'd better have a good explanation ready when they come for you.

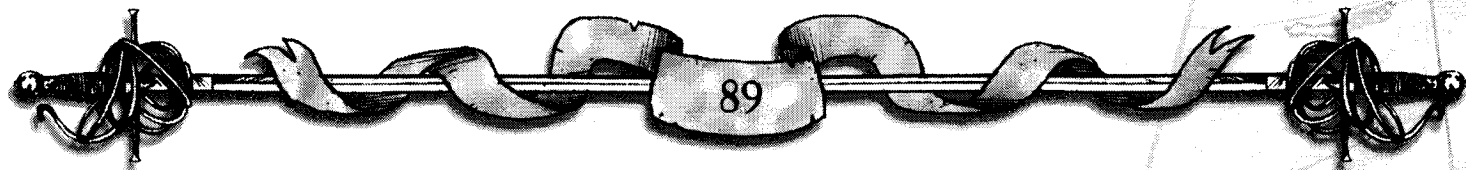
The Goodly Folke are intended as role-playing foils, adversaries to out-think, and interesting color on the Enchanted Isles. They aren't monsters to be hunted down like big game. Players need to understand and respect that before Sidhe are introduced into the campaign.

Sidhe Powers

All Sidhe powers descend from perception: from seeing something and the subsequent belief which that seeing implies. If you see a tree that a Sidhe has created from Glamour – and believe it to be real – then it takes on all the qualities of the real tree. Similarly, if they turn a woman into a mushroom, then her belief in her condition gives it reality. Because of this, Sidhe magic almost never kills; it merely alters.

The Sidhe have absolute control over their own forms. They can take any shape they wish, become invisible, and mimic any creature they see perfectly. Of course most of them have a “natural” shape that they prefer using whenever possible. Others, like the pooka, have only three or four shapes that they use. Certain Unseelie have lost the ability to shapechange altogether, the consequence of their break with the Queen. But for the most part, if a Sidhe needs to take another form, become invisible, or even transform into a cloud or a gust of wind, it can do so on the spot.

They have similar powers over other forms as well, both animate and inanimate. Such powers are more limited, however, and founded on the difference between perception and reality. Minor Sidhe, such as brownies, goblins, and floral faeries, can create powerful illusions designed to trick and mislead. While they cannot reshape matter, they can change what people see, often hiding landmarks and moving roads. Major Sidhe – Lords and Ladies, and other





members of the high court – have a greater mastery of Glamour, and can effect actual transformations. If a Seelie Lord wishes to turn you into a toad, he can do so. If he wishes to set a village on fire, he can do so. If he wishes to create a mountain of gold before your eyes, he can do so. None of it requires any rolls and each change automatically succeeds. They may make as many transformations per Round as they wish.

Luckily, there's a catch. As powerful as the Sidhe are, they do not belong to Théah and their Glamour is almost never permanent. Any change they have made fades with the next rising sun: the toads turn back into men, the mountain of gold melts away, and the charred village returns to normal as if it had never caught fire. Even death becomes merely an enchanted sleep, as temporary as morning dew. The dawning of each new day destroys their work, forcing them to begin again. In game terms, this means that any magic they use reverts with the next sunrise. The effects they wrought end as if they had never been created in the first place.

Furthermore, the use of certain charms and wards can protect individuals from Sidhe magic. A horseshoe placed above the door protects a house from Glamour, for example, while a circle of iron will render anyone within it immune to Faerie transformations. Certain ointments placed on the eyes allow mortals to see the Sidhe in their true forms; druids and alchemists are said to hold the secrets to these potions. See pages 31–32 of the *Game Masters' Guide* for more information of Sidhe wards.

Needless to say, the Sidhe dislike these limitations and do what they can to get around them. The power of Bryn Bresail has given them a few loopholes which they exploit whenever they can. Within their native land, the Fae may do what they like, and their magic is as permanent as the stars themselves. When the veil between there and here grows thin, the Sidhe's Glamour strengthens, allowing them

to work long-term magic on their victims. The following circumstances enable the Fae to place permanent enchantments upon a mortal – including slaying him:

- ✦ Stepping into a Faerie circle.
- ✦ Entering a Faerie hill without protection.
- ✦ Eating Sidhe food or drinking Sidhe liquid.
- ✦ Being struck with a Sidhe-made weapon.
- ✦ Having no Drama Dice to spend.
- ✦ Giving a Sidhe verbal permission.

Sidhe magic is not all-powerful, but it demands respect. Heroes who toy with it are likely to end up asleep for a hundred

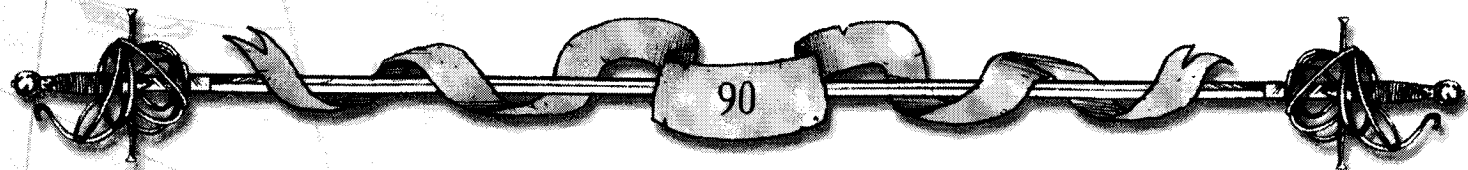
years or forced to dance for the Seelie Court's amusement forever. Understanding the limits of Glamour is the key to surviving the Sidhe; creatures this fearsome should never be underestimated.

Cold Iron

"Cold iron" is actually raw, unworked iron. Throughout history, Théans have added carbon to make it stronger. But unworked iron is still the bane of the Sidhe.

Cold iron does not harm the Sidhe, but it does cause them discomfort, and many Sidhe Lords and Ladies take offense at it being in their company. Avalons know to remove any items of iron before they present themselves to the Sidhe. On the other hand, if they suspect the Lord or Lady wishes them harm, they hold iron tightly in their fist, hoping it will bring them protection.

The MacEachern Clan of the Highland Marches took cold iron one step further: they learned how to forge it into weapons while still retaining its power against the Sidhe. MacEachern weapons harm them, taking the raw power of cold iron and enhancing it to deadly force. The Goodly Folke destroyed the MacEacherns when they learned of the threat – proof that cold iron can do more than just repel them.





New Advantages

Elaine's Knight (4 Points, Avalon only)

You belong to the Order of the High King, a member of the elite cadre assigned to carry out Queen Elaine's wishes. While not as well-known as Montaigne's musketeers, they are beloved throughout Avalon as paragons of courage and honor. Belonging to Elaine's Knights means that the crown provides your clothes, weapons, and lodgings, along with a small stipend of ten Guilders a month. You may also claim sanctuary at any Avalon diplomatic post (although the consequences of doing so may come back to haunt you). Other members of the Order will defend you and come to your aid if need be – but they in turn will depend on you for the same courtesy. Other benefits and drawbacks to belonging to the order are detailed in the "Elaine's Knights" section on page 97.

MacEachern Heritage (10 Points, Avalon only)

Thought to have been destroyed by the Sidhe long ago, the MacEacherns remain, hidden among their fellow Highlanders. Heroes with MacEachern Heritage keep a dark secret: the art of killing the Sidhe.

All MacEacherns know how to form MacEachern weapons, although they cannot forge them without a blacksmithing skills. In addition, all MacEacherns have a slight resistance to Glamour and Sidhe magic. They always roll and Keep an extra die in all tests made when resisting Glamour. MacEacherns are always considered to have one Drama Die (which they cannot spend) when it comes to Sidhe sorcery, meaning that all effects cast on a MacEachern last only until morning. Likewise, if they surround themselves with an unbroken circle of twelve iron knives, no Sidhe magic (either Seelie or Unseelie) can affect them.

By the way, the Sidhe will kill you if they ever learn your true heritage. Don't let on unless you'd enjoy dying a horrible, gruesome death.

MacEachern Weapon (5 points)

You have fallen into possession of a MacEachern blade, although you don't know exactly where it's from. The cold-iron weapon was crafted using the secret techniques of the MacEachern Clan, and can be any type of blade from a knife to a claymore.

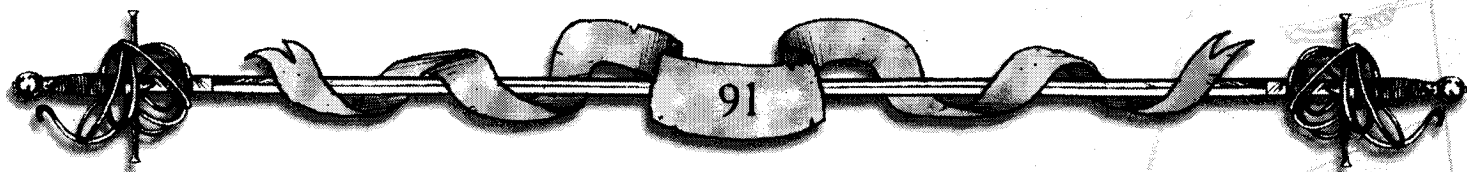
If a MacEachern weapon strikes a Sidhe, roll for Wounds as usual. However, the Sidhe does not make a Wound Check. Instead, divide the total Wounds by 5. The result is the number of Dramatic Wounds the Sidhe suffers. Sidhe suffer no penalties for damage, although they feel the pain more intensely than any mortal can dream. Most have 7 Dramatic Wounds before being slain; see "Combat With the Sidhe" on page 88 for details. There are no limits to the number of MacEachern weapons you may have. However, if there's more than one in your party, the Sidhe can detect you wherever you go... and squash you like a bug at their leisure. One blade per party is the best way to stay healthy.

Sidhe Ally (2 Points, Avalon only)

You've gained an ally in the Sidhe court, a double-edged advantage. Occasionally he's able to help you out, but every once in a while he needs a helping hand himself. While his troubles oftentimes outweigh your own, he's saved your life more times than you can count.

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

Heroes with Sidhe blood are the bearers of both benefits and hindrances. The cost of this Advantage varies, depending on which traits you inherited from your Sidhe side. The Blessings cost Hero Points, while the Curses give you points back. The minimum cost for this Advantage is 1.



Blessings

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

Existing Advantage (Varies)

One, and only one, of the following Advantages may be taken as part of your Sidhe Blood Advantage package for the listed costs: Appearance: Above Average (4 Points) or Stunning (8 Points), Dangerous Beauty (2 Points), Keen Senses (1 Point), Large (4 Points), or Small (1 Point).

Child of the Earth (2 Points)

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

Child of the Sea (2 Points)

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

Child of the Sky (3 Points)

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

Fearful Countenance (1 Point)

There's something about you that's unsettling. Your face reveals something that is both fascinating and repulsive. You gain two bonus unkept dice on all Intimidation rolls.

Good Standing (2 Points)

The Sidhe side of your family is in good standing with the Queen's court. You receive one extra Reputation die

when dealing with the Seelie Court. In addition, those with Good Standing may purchase the Sidhe Weapon Advantage at a 1 HP discount.





Slow Aging and Immunity to Disease (2 Points)

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

Smell Glamour (3 Points)

Because of your Sidhe heritage, you can “smell” Glamour. Pick a distinctive smell, like ripe oranges, wintergreen, or brimstone. This smell fills your nostrils when a Sidhe or Glamour Mage is using his powers within thirty feet of you. Some Heroes with Sidhe blood *hear* Glamour and a very few can even *taste* it.

Curses

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

Cold-Hearted (2 Points)

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

Diurnal (2 Points)

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

Gifts (2 Points)

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

Iron Susceptibility (1 Point)

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

Iron Vulnerability (2 Points)

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

Nocturnal (1 Point)

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

Running Water (1 Point)

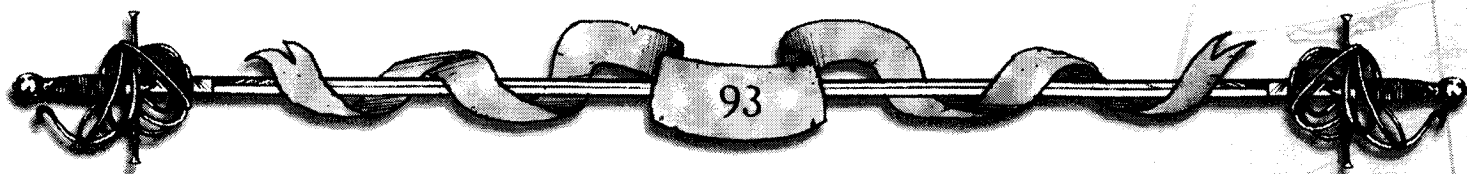
You cannot cross running water without a bridge. You can't explain why. You wish you could; maybe that would help you get over it.

Sea Bound (2 Points)

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

MacCodrum Heritage (5 Points, Avalon only)

The MacCodrums are descended from selkies, and as such, they have a specialized version of the Sidhe Blood Advantage, consisting of Appearance: Stunning, Child of





the Sea, Immunity to Disease and Slow Aging, Sea Bound, Iron Vulnerability, and Cold-Hearted. The GM should feel free to create other specific Sidhe Blood Advantages, giving each a 1 Point discount to adjust for the lack of flexibility.

Gesa (Variable)

Gesa are powerful spells cast on Heroes. Only Heroes and Villains may have Gesa; Henchmen and Brutes are not eligible. The number of points depends on the Gesa cast; Lesser Gesa require 3 points, while Greater Gesa require 5. See the "Druid 'School'" section on page 98 for more information.

Sidhe Weapon (Varies, Avalon only)

Some Heroes have been blessed with a Sidhe weapon. Heroes with the Sidhe Blood Advantage and Good Standing can purchase a Sidhe Weapon for one HP less than the listed cost.

Sidhe Sword (4 Points)

A Sidhe sword is as light as smoke and as deadly as fire. Sidhe swords can be wielded by anyone with the Fencing Weapon or Heavy Weapon Skills. These blades are 4k2 weapons in the Triple Kingdoms and 3k2 weapons elsewhere. When rolling for Initiative, the user may lower one of his Action dice by one at the start of the Round.

Sidhe Bow and Arrows (3 Points)

Sidhe bows and arrows are special gifts. A Sidhe bowstring can never be broken, and the six arrows that come with it can always be retrieved after firing. Those struck a killing blow with a Sidhe arrow do not die but instead fall into an enchanted sleep, which lasts as long as the GM sees fit (a single night is normal, but periods of up to one hundred years are known).

Sidhe Dagger (2 Points)

A Sidhe dagger can be as deadly as its larger counterpart. It is a 2k2 weapon (1k2 when away from Avalon) and shares the same qualities as a Sidhe sword, including Initiative bonuses.

New Background

Sidhe Lover

You've found yourself a lover among the Seelie. At first it was a simple dalliance, but a connection has grown between the two of you and his cold Sidhe heart is beginning to thaw. Now the trouble begins.

The two of you must keep your romance a secret; the Queen doesn't appreciate one of her own slumming with mortals. Worse, many Sidhe set unusual strictures upon their romances, such as never looking at them in the light or never entering a certain room. Contravening their demands is asking for trouble, yet somehow their lovers always do so eventually. And eventually, the consequences of your romance will make themselves known.



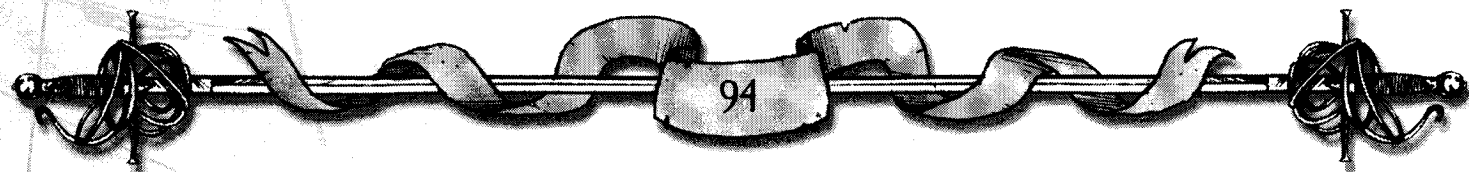
New Equipment

Avalon Longbow

Avalon history is peppered with prominent use of the longbow, from the exploits of Robin Goodfellow to David III's stirring victories over the Montaigne. Avalons use a larger and heavier bow than their continental counterparts. This increased pull gives the Avalon longbow a range of 200 feet. Other stats are as the normal bow, located on page 194 of the *Players' Guide*.

Highland Marches Claymore

Claymores are Heavy Weapons (3k2). They are extremely large and heavy in order to put enormous impetus behind





their blows. A Hero's Attack Roll is at a penalty of one unkept die, while his Damage Roll is at a bonus of one unkept die, when he uses a claymore.

New Skill

Bard (Civil Skill)

Bard Heroes wander the Avalon countryside seeking adventures, stories, and the world's riddles. While they descend from the druids, one does not have to be a druid in order to practice the bard skill. Musicians and storytellers are as plentiful as grain.

Basic Knacks: Etiquette, History, Oratory, Singing

Advanced Knacks: Diplomacy, Herb Lore, Riddles, Sidhe Lore

Herb Lore

You have a strong knowledge of plants, and can tell which ones are edible and which ones have medicinal value. This is not the same as First Aid, since you cannot bind wounds. However, with enough time and in the proper environment, you can find the right plants to keep from starving or to prevent a wound from becoming infected.

Riddles

You understand the nature of riddling and the secret wisdom which riddles impart. This is more than just being able to answer them; it's realizing the message behind the words and applying it to your own life.

Sidhe Lore

You have had experience with the Sidhe; you've learned some of their wisdom and know some of their secrets. You can identify types of Sidhe by the way they look and know how to act to stay on their good side.

New Swordsman Schools

Finnegan School

Country of Origin: Avalon (Inismore)

Description: Roary Finnegan is the undisputed bareknuckle champion of Inismore. Just ask him. Or anyone he's beaten down. That's a lot of askin'. In recent years he's begun teaching his unique style of pugilism to anyone who's interested, and who can afford his high tuition fees.

Finnegan developed a style of fighting that was radically different from conventional fisticuff styles. Instead of putting all his weight on his heels, Finnegan shifted his weight to the balls of his feet. Instead of using a linear movement, Finnegan moved in circles. Instead of relying on quick jabs, Finnegan used side-steps, uppercuts, roundhouses, and body blows.

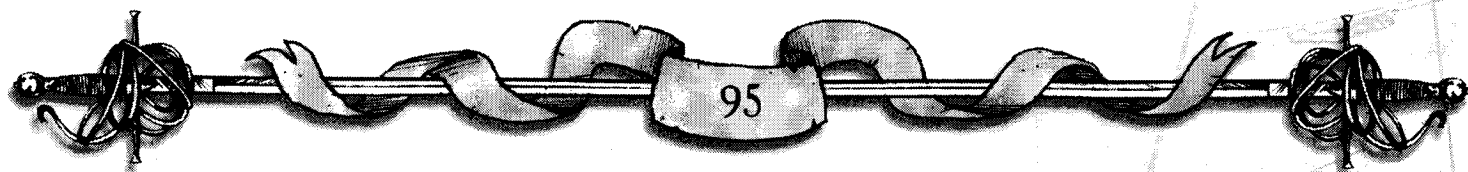
The primary weakness of the Finnegan style is a tendency to hang back and observe the opponent. An aggressive enemy can press the attack and keep the student on the run and off balance.

Unlike the other "Swordsman" Schools, Finnegan students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank 1 in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Pugilism, Wrestling

Swordsman Knacks: Bob 'n' Weave, Corps-à-Corps, Disarm (Barehanded), Exploit Weakness (Finnegan)

New Swordsman Knack: Bob 'n' Weave. The Finnegan style teaches its students to move in circles, always ducking to the opponent's weak side (left for right-handers, right for left-handers). When an opponent misses you (either because of Active or Passive Defense), you may lower your next Action die by 1 for every Rank you have in this Knack. You may not lower an Action die below the current Phase.





Apprentice: Students of the Finnegan style of fighting learn how to punch hard. Real hard. Your barehanded attacks inflict 0k2 rather than 0k1.

Journeyman: Those who study under Finnegan must be prepared to suffer endless bruises and broken bones, which toughens them up considerably, enhancing their ability to shrug off a wound. Whenever you fail a Wound Check, divide the amount you failed by in half (rounding down) before suffering any additional Dramatic Wounds.

Master: Plain and simple: you fight better with a few pints in your belly. Masters of the Finnegan style of fighting reverse the penalties imposed by the Inebriation rules (see the boxed text on pg. 99) for purposes of Attack and Damage Rolls, as well as Wound Checks and Active Defense attempts. Masters *never* pass out from drink; and Able Drinkers may still use these bonuses!

Goodfellow School

Country of Origin: Avalon

Description: Robin Goodfellow first taught his band of robbers how to use the longbow. For years the secret was confined to a few dozen men, but eventually Robin taught all comers. Students learned to build special bows and fire arrows at an amazing rate. Eventually, these students become some of the most nimble archers in the world, arcing their fire over long distances, and even knocking weapons out of the hands of others.

Goodfellow represents the very height of skill with the longbow. Masters of the style pull off feats that would be impossible for lesser archers.

The main weakness of the Goodfellow style is the pause just before the loosing of each shot. An enemy can take advantage of the pause to snap off a shot of his own, or to attempt to get out of the way of the archer's shot.

Unlike the other "Swordsman" Schools, Goodfellow students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank 1 in one of their Swordsman Knacks.



Basic Curriculum: Archer, Hunter

Swordsman Knacks: Arc, Disarm (Bow), Tagging (Bow), Exploit Weakness (Goodfellow)

New Swordsman Knack: Arc. Students of the Goodfellow School spend months learning the fine art of arcing a shot to hit distant targets. For each Rank in this Knack, the archer increases the range of his bow by 5.

Apprentice: One of the first lessons learned by students of the Goodfellow school is how to build their bow. The bow a student builds allows him to add his Brawn to all Damage Rolls made with the bow, as though it were a melee weapon.

Journeyman: Once they've mastered aiming and firing the bow, students pick up their loading speed. At the Journeyman Rank, Goodfellow students can spend one Action to make two Attacks. Both attacks have a -2 unkept dice penalty to their Attack Roll.

Master: When they reach this Rank, the archers gain a +1 bonus to their Finesse for free. This also raises the maximum Rank their Finesse can be raised to by 1. Thus, a Master of Goodfellow can raise his Finesse to 6 (or even 7, with the Legendary Trait Advantage).

MacDonald School

Country of Origin: Avalon (Highland Marches)

Description: The MacDonalds are some of the fiercest warriors in the Highland Marches. Their enormous claymores strike fear into their opponents. A single blow from a skilled MacDonald can cut a man in half.

The MacDonald style is wild and unpredictable. The clansmen have a reputation for ignoring their own defense, preferring to use such a devastating offense that their enemies have no time to even consider an offense of their own.

The main weakness of the MacDonald style is its lack of finesse. Its students prefer to brute-force their way through a fight, and an agile, clever opponent can slowly wear them down – as long as he presents the Highlander with no

openings. A single blow can kill, however, and all a MacDonald swordsman needs is one opening.

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Heavy Weapon

Swordsman Knacks: Beat (Heavy Weapon), Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald)

Apprentice: Students of the MacDonald style may ignore the claymore's one unkept die penalty to their Attack Roll.

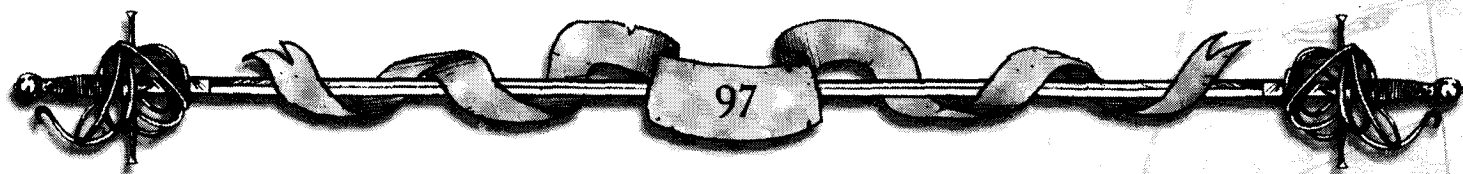
Journeyman: The ferocious sword swings of the Highlanders are as wild as they are deadly. Before you roll to hit, you may set aside any number of your Attack Roll dice instead of rolling them. If your strike is successful, you may add those dice to your Damage Roll as unkept dice.

Master: Masters of the MacDonald style have learned to put their whole body into their swings. Thus, you roll and Keep one extra die when making Damage Rolls with a claymore (making it 5k3 without Brawn modifiers).

Elaine's Knights

The Order of the High King has nearly two hundred members, and while the highest Twelve have been dealt with, there's no reason why a player can't portray another member. The Order trains its members itself, selecting from the best and the brightest Avalon has to offer. Particularly noteworthy Heroes (such as Berek) may be asked to join later in life, after performing some great service to the crown. Each knight takes a vow before Queen Elaine, which he is expected to uphold for the rest of their lives. The following conditions apply to anyone joining the Order:

✦ Only Avalons, Highlanders and Inish may join. Members must swear an oath of allegiance to Queen Elaine, promising to defend the people of Avalon from any threat.





The Vow of the Order of the High King

Before Her Majesty the Queen and all the Triple Kingdoms, I solemnly swear to:

Defend justice wherever I find myself, be it land, sea, or sky;

Uphold the laws of Avalon and protect her from her enemies;

Protect the innocent and those incapable of protecting themselves;

Exemplify the honor and nobility of the Glamour Isles in my thoughts, words, and deeds;

And defend Her Majesty the Queen from all foes, foreign and domestic.

This I vow in the name of the High King, Her Majesty, and the Triple Kingdoms.

Knight they serve under. These Patrons provide no income, but can be sought out for advice and guidance.

✦ All members are expected to adhere to a strict code of honor at all times. If a Knight's Reputation ever drops below 5, he is stripped of his title and expunged from the Order. Those who continue to cause trouble receive a midnight visit from Bors MacAllister soon thereafter.

✦ No member may belong to another knightly order, including the Rose and Cross. Elaine's Knights and the Rose and Cross have developed a friendly rivalry with each other, but both sides wish to keep their membership "pure."

In exchange for these conditions, a knight receives the benefits outlined in the "Elaine's Knight" advantage. He is expected to honor Avalon, fight for justice, and do all the things expected of such a noble order. Those who do are rewarded with glory as only the Glamour Isles can bring.

The Druid "School"

(Avalon Only, 20 Points)

Knacks: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Moon

Apprentice Degree: Auspices

Adept Degree: Lesser Gesa

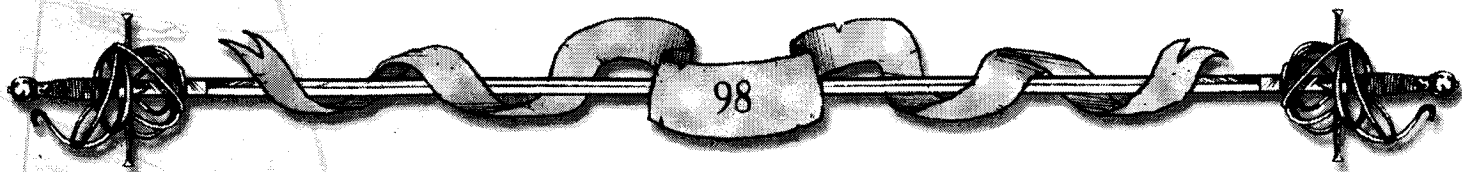
Master Degree: Greater Gesa

Druids do not have a formal school, but still teach their wondrous abilities to worthy individuals. Heroes who join their ranks are indoctrinated into the mysteries taught by the stars and the trees. Druids know secrets whispered on the wind and have studied for years in order to learn the mysteries of the Gesa; their words can carry the power of law. Druids in rural areas can act as *de facto* judges, making decisions in civil disputes and arbitrating legal issues in small villages with no formal courts.

✦ All Members must purchase the "Elaine's Knight" advantage.

✦ All Members must belong to the Donovan, MacDonald, or Goodfellow school, or else practice Glamour magic. Druids and members of other schools may not join the Knights.

✦ All members work under a patron, a specific member of the Twelve who gives them orders and sends them on missions. Although knights generally may not choose who they serve under, the players should be allowed to suggest under which of the twelve they'd like their Heroes to serve. Lawrence Lugh has no knights under him, while Berek's "knights" are actually the Sea Dogs, covered in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook (and no, the Sea Dogs aren't considered members of the Order). Bors MacAllister has a small cadre of knights under him, who perform specific duties as outlined in the Hero chapter. Players who wish their Heroes to work for Bors should discuss the matter with them GM beforehand. The other nine have no conditions attached to them. Members are considered to have the 0-point Advantage "Patron", representing the





Apprentice druids generally spend their time telling stories and singing songs. Their words contain lessons, however, designed to impart wisdom to those who hear. Most druids have the Doctor and Hunter skills, reflecting their knowledge of folk remedies and pragmatic herbalism. By the time they advance to higher ranks, they have learned a great deal about the ways of the world. Almost all druids have the Bard skill, detailed on page 95; those who don't should have a good reason why not.

Druids have definitely tapped into some sort of magic — their abilities use the same template as other forms of sorcery — but it isn't the same magic used by Théah's nobles. In *7th Sea* terms, Druidism is considered to be a form of shaman magic, and ignores effects that cancel or distort sorcery. No Hero with sorcery may learn and use any shamanic magic, but he is affected by it as normal.

Ascendancy

Druids base their magic on the seasons of the year as well as the presence of the moon, which has a 28-day cycle on Théah. Each of their five Knacks is "ascendant" part of the time. The Druids hold ceremonies to mark each "change-over," some of which are never seen by outsiders. Whenever a Druid uses his magic, he rolls Wits + the currently ascendant Knack.

The Spring Knack is ascendant from Quartus 1 to Sextus 30. The Summer Knack is ascendant from Julius 1 to Septimus 30. The Autumn Knack is ascendant from Octavus 1 to Decimus 30. The Winter Knack is ascendant from Primus 1 to Tertius 30. The Moon Knack is ascendant at night, unless it is a new moon: it overrules the other four Knacks.

During the new moon and the Prophet's Mass, none of the Druids' Knacks are ascendant. When they use their magic during these times, they roll only their Wits.

Apprentice Degree: Auspices

Three times per Story, you may use your knowledge of the omens and auspices of the world to determine the proper moment for the success of an action. In *7th Sea* terms, this lets you add your Rank in the ascendant Knack to another Hero's roll after he's already made the roll. For example, if another Hero makes an Attack Roll of 18, but needs a 20 to hit, and you have a 2 in the ascendant Knack, you may use your ability to increase his roll to 20. This ability may be used only once per roll.

Inebriation Rules

Make a Brawn test against a TN of 10 x the number of drinks you've had this Scene. For every failure, consult the chart below. (Failures are cumulative.)

- 1: Slight speech impediment
- 2: -1 unkept die to rolls until end of Scene
- 3: -2 unkept dice to all rolls; drops to -1 next Scene
- 4+: - Knocked out for remainder of scene; If you wake up, you're at -3 unkept dice to all rolls (the number goes down by 1 every Scene until he reaches 0).

Able Drinkers ignore these rules.

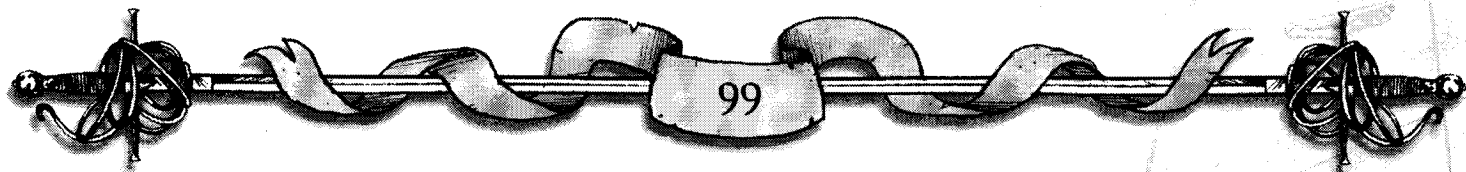
Adept (Bard) Degree: Lesser Gesa

You may use your knowledge of the power of words to place Lesser Gesa on other Heroes. You may have no more than three Lesser Gesa in effect at once, and no single Hero may be affected by more than two Lesser Gesa at the same time. Lesser Gesa are restrictions placed on a Hero's actions in order to strengthen him.

If the Hero ever violates one of these restrictions, the Gesa is broken and ceases giving him its benefit.

Casting Lesser Gesa

In order to cast a Lesser Gesa, you must say it out loud in front of the Hero you wish to affect, make a Wits + ascendant Knack roll against a TN of 20, and spend a certain number of Drama dice, depending on how restricting the Gesa is. The more it restricts your target's





actions, the fewer Drama dice it costs you to cast. Relatively simple Gesa, like “never eat dog”, cost you 3 Drama dice to cast. Harder to avoid Gesa, such as “never bathe”, cost you 2 Drama dice to cast. Very difficult to avoid Gesa, such as “always offer hospitality to strangers”, cost you 1 Drama die to cast. Your GM should determine this cost at his discretion; the Drama dice are spent even if you fail your Wits + ascendant Knack roll.

Benefits of Lesser Gesa

For each Lesser Gesa a Hero still has in effect on him at the end of a Story, he receives 1 XP.

Breaking Lesser Gesa

When a Hero breaks a Lesser Gesa, any XP he might have received from that Gesa at the end of the current Story is lost. In addition, new Gesa may not be placed on the Hero until the beginning of the next Story.

Master (Ollamdh) Degree: Greater Gesa

You may place Greater Gesa on other Heroes. You may have no more than one Greater Gesa in effect at once, and no single Hero may be affected by more than one Greater Gesa at the same time.

Greater Gesa

Greater Gesa are restrictions placed on the manner in which a Hero (or Villain) may die. Only if the conditions of the Gesa are met may the Hero be killed. Otherwise, Fate will conspire to save his life somehow. Of course, he can still be pretty beat up without fulfilling the Gesa, but he won't die.

Casting Greater Gesa

In order to cast a Greater Gesa, you must choose a weakness that your GM approves of (see the following list for examples), tell the Hero you wish to affect that “You may only be killed by <insert weakness here>,” make a Wits + ascendant Knack roll against a TN of 40, and spend three Drama dice. These Drama dice are lost if you fail your Wits + ascendant Knack roll.

Sample Gesa Weaknesses

by fire
by a pistol
by a newborn babe
while standing under the moon
in pitch darkness
by a red-haired man
by a left-handed woman
by his own horse

Sample Lesser Gesa

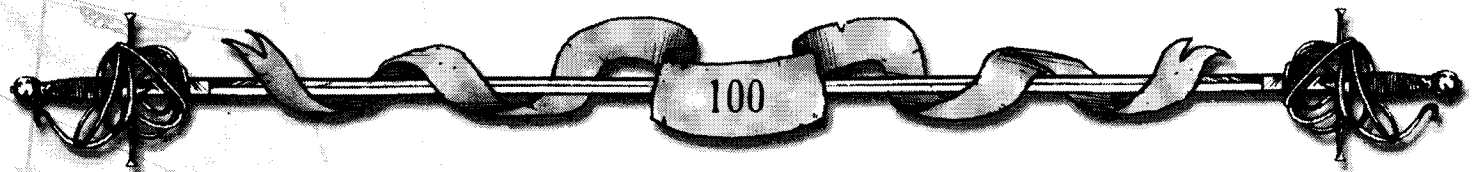
Must never remove boots
Must never remove sword
Must keep his head shaved
Must never wash
Must not give his name to strangers
Must insult anyone when he first meets them
Must not eat (pig/cow/chicken)
Must never (eat/drink) (alone/in public)
Must never ask for reward and/or refuse it if it is offered
Must never use (sword/pistol/knife)
Must never fight a man before noon
Must never refuse the demand of a (lady/lord)

Sample Greater Gesa

Can only be killed by (fire/sword/pistol)
Can only be killed on a (sunny/rainy) day
Can only be killed while standing under the moon
Cannot be killed by (edged/blunt/firearms) weapons
Cannot be killed by (a bearded man/a woman/a bald man)

Gesa Modifiers

If spoken in Queen Elaine's court: +2 kept dice
If spoken in any other court: +1 unkept die
If target's Reputation is greater than 50: +2 unkept dice
If caster's Reputation is greater than 50: +1 kept die
If the caster is a bard: +1 kept die
If the caster is a druid: +2 kept dice





A given weakness can have one — and only one — trait attached to it. “A bearded man” is acceptable. “A one-eyed, bald bearded man who speaks with a lisp and has a bad palsy in his fingers” is not.

Benefits of Greater Gesa

Unless the condition of the Gesa is met, the Hero cannot be killed. He can still be wounded, Crippled, and Knocked Out as usual, just not slain.

Breaking Greater Gesa

Whenever a Hero is attacked by his weakness, he’s in a lot of trouble. Not only does it affect him and can it kill him, he’s nearly helpless against it. He cannot spend any Drama dice while threatened by his weakness, nor may he attempt any Active Defense against attacks involving it. Finally, if he reaches twice his Resolve in Dramatic Wounds due to damage taken from his weakness, he dies immediately, and the damage can never be healed (even through sorcery.)

Keep in mind also that the GM is the final arbiter of the Gesa and its weakness. He can interpret your words to use against you if you aren’t careful. For example, “you can be killed only by a dead man” can be interpreted to mean a man whom everybody *thinks* is dead, but lives on in secret, waiting for a chance to strike...

The Druids themselves — the secret rank above ollamdh — seem to have gesa powers even greater than this. Stories abound of Derwyddon predicting that men’s sons will betray them, and that true lovers will turn to murdering each other when the love goes sour. Only the seven druids have ever displayed such magic; they are universally feared as a result.

New Glamour Knacks

Here are another ten Knacks that Glamour mages can choose in addition to those in the *Players’ Guide*. Remember

that a mage cannot select more than one Knack from each of the five Traits.

Anne o’ the Wind (Finesse)

Anne o’ the Wind was a legendary woman who raced the four winds and won. As her prize, she was given a cup that was always full of wine, a pot that was always full of stew, and a bag that was always full of bread. This was just as well, for she had worked up such an appetite during the race that she sat down to a three-month-long meal just to get her strength back.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to add 5 times your Rank in this Knack to your Initiative Total until the end of the Round.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to add your Rank in this Knack to your Rank in the Sprinting Knack until the end of the Round.

Master: Spend a Drama die and then immediately spend all your Actions for the Round, ignoring the rules for Interrupt Actions. This may be done at the beginning of the Round just after everyone has rolled for Initiative. If more than one Glamour mage wishes to use this ability, the one with the highest Initiative Total goes first.

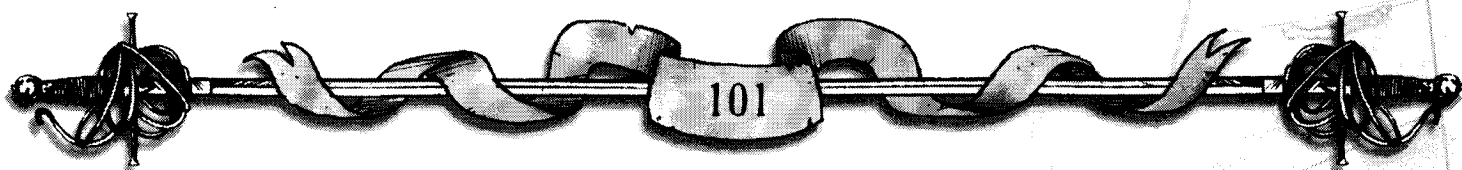
Blackcloak (Finesse)

Blackcloak was the greatest sneak thief in the history of Avalon. It was said that he could climb any wall and pick any lock, and that he never left a trace of his passing.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to hide the traces of your passing for the rest of the Scene. The TNs of all attempts to track you are increased by 5 for every Rank you have in this Knack.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to reduce the TN of a single Climbing check by 10 times your Rank in this Knack.

Master: Spend a Drama die to reduce the TN of a single Lockpicking check by 10 times your Rank in this Knack.



Iron Meg (Brawn)

Iron Meg is believed to be the toughest woman who ever lived. She got her name by eating nails for breakfast and swords for supper. It's said she once caught a cannonball in her hands and took a bite out of it while it was still burning hot to mock the gunners that had fired it.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to instantly heal yourself of 5 Flesh Wounds for every Rank you have in this Knack.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to cancel the effects of one type of poison that is currently affecting you.

Master: Spend a Drama die to automatically succeed at a Wound Check whose TN is no more than 100.

Isaac Snaggs (Wits)

Isaac Snaggs is famous for his lightning-fast hands. He was serving in the Avalon army when his unit ran out of arrows for their longbows. Running out in front of the enemy, Isaac caught every arrow that was fired at him and took them back to his own unit to replenish their stores. Thanks to his efforts, they defeated the Montaigne army.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die after you've attempted an Active Defense in order to add twice your Rank in this Knack to the total. Thus, if you roll a 22, and you have a 3 in this Knack, your new total will be 28.

Adept: Spend a Drama die and one Action to catch a missile weapon that was thrown or shot at you. This can include knives, axes, or even arrows. You must have one free hand to perform this maneuver, and you take no damage – it is considered a successful Active Defense.

Master: Spend a Drama die and one Action to catch a bullet from a pistol or musket that was fired at you. You must have one free hand to perform this maneuver, and you take no damage – it is considered a successful Active Defense.

Jeremiah Berek (Panache)

Jeremiah Berek is a living legend. He has become so famous that Glamour mages have begun to call upon his legend

(and his incredible luck) for power. He is known to slip out of tight spots on a regular basis, and seemingly hopeless causes are his daily bread.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to add twice your Rank in this Knack to that roll. Thus, if you have a 3 in this Knack and you rolled a 22, your new total will be 28.

Adept: Spend a Drama die before making a roll. For every die that explodes during that roll, roll and Keep two additional dice, not one.

Master: Spend a Drama die after failing a roll. You may re-roll and try again. If you fail the second time, however, you're stuck with the result. You may not use this ability more than once per roll, nor may it be used with any other re-roll ability.

King Elilodd (Wits)

In the legends of King Elilodd, he forged a lasting friendship with the Sidhe that was the source of all Glamour. For many years thereafter, he remained a favorite with the Seelie.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to add five times your Rank in this Knack to a single use of the Repartee system against a Sidhe. Only Charm and similarly positive effects may gain this bonus when used against the Seelie, while only Intimidate and similarly negative effects may gain this bonus when used against the Unseelie.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to call out to the nearest Seelie for aid. Roll Resolve + King Elilodd against a TN of 30. If successful, a Seelie answers your call and aids you as best it can (for a price, naturally). If the roll is 10 or less, an Unseelie has answered your call, and the price it demands for its assistance (assuming it doesn't kill you out of hand) will be much, much harsher.

Master: Spend a Drama die to create a 10' wide circle centered around you that Unseelie Sidhe cannot enter. They are hurled away from you if they are inside the circle when you activate this power, and they may not use their magic on you while the effect lasts. You may maintain this effect



as long as you can stay awake (you must make a Resolve test every morning or fall asleep. The TN is 10 for every day you've been awake). If you move from the spot the effect ends, and anyone else who leaves it is instantly vulnerable to the Unseelie.

Mad Jack O'Bannon (Brawn)

The King of Inismore is always a favorite subject of myth and legend. Tales tell of his bag of tricks – disappearing behind small objects, popping out of unexpected places, and even taking his own life, only to rise in the morning once again.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die while standing behind an object that at least partially covers you in order to disappear. You cannot be seen as long as you don't move, but you can be heard, and if you peek around the object to see what's going on, the upper half of your body will be apparent.

Adept: Spend a Drama die in order to step behind one object and step out from behind another object that is within (100 times your Rank in this Knack)' of the first object.

Master: Your Hero may spend three Drama dice when he is killed. At dawn the next morning, he will return to life, all wounds healed and all harmful substances purged from his body. However, his Brawn drops by 2 because of the stress of dying, and if this would drop his Brawn below 0, the power fails and he is dead for good. Of course, even if the power works, he may have been buried in the meantime...

King Robert the Dark (Resolve)

Robert united the clans of the Highland Marches with his powerful personality, earning himself a place in their legends from that day on. Great victories and military coups have become associated with his name over time, so that even today, a particularly skillful leader is said to have "Robert's Blessing."



Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to add your Rank in this Knack to your general's Strategy roll this Round. Up to three Glamour mages may contribute to the army's success in this manner, or five if the general is a MacLeod.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to add your Rank in this Knack to your Personal Results Roll during mass combat.

Master: Spend a Drama die to add twice your Rank in Leadership to the next roll of up to five people you select (you may choose yourself). You may not select the same person more than once. This bonus must be used by the end of the Scene, or it goes away.

St. Rogers (Panache)

Captain Rogers was the very first pirate. It is said that his ship was a part of him – two close friends sailing the waves together. Neither man nor woman ever came between them, and when Rogers vanished, a storm came quickly to claim his ship as well. Presumably they found each other once again in St. Rose's Coffin, but no one may ever know for sure.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to add three times your Rank in this Knack to a single check involving a Knack found in the Sailor Skill. Thus, if your Rank in this Knack is a 4 and you roll an 18, the roll becomes a 30.

Adept: Spend a Drama die to instantly heal a ship whose surface you are touching of one Critical Hit.

Master: Spend a Drama die to become the ship whose wheel you are holding. The two of you are considered a single entity. When making rolls of any sort for either of you, use the Trait (either yours or the ship's) that is the higher of the two. This ability ends as soon as you release the ship's wheel, however. Worse, when you suffer a Dramatic Wound, the ship suffers a Critical Hit, and vice versa.

In addition to the above ability, a St. Roger's Master may (once and only once in his lifetime) choose one of the following three abilities to permanently bestow upon a ship.

✦ The ability for the ship to acquire Reputation and use Reputation dice as Drama dice like any normal Glamour mage. The ship gets a number of Reputation dice equal to the sum of all its crew's Reputation dice divided by 10 (rounding down). For example, if the crew has 23 Reputation dice between them, then the ship gets 2 Reputation dice of its own.

✦ A permanent +2 to any one of the Ship's Traits, ignoring all maximums.

✦ The ability for the ship to sail itself. Unless the Pilot of the ship purposely steers the ship into an obstacle or aground, the ship will, regardless of normal ship movement limitations, steer its way around such things.

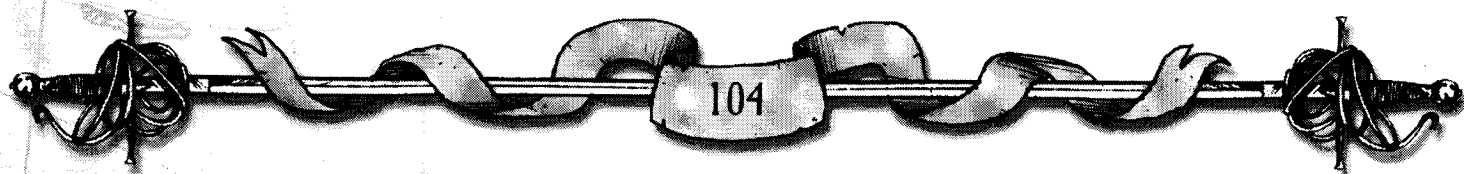
The Stone Knight (Resolve)

The Stone Knight was legendary for his bravery. After yelling for reinforcements across a hundred miles, he held a narrow pass against an invading army all by himself for a night and a day until help could arrive. However, as soon as he saw his fellow knights standing beside him, he dropped dead of exhaustion.

Apprentice: Spend a Drama die to shout for help. You may choose a number of your friends equal to or less than your Rank in this Knack. They will all hear your cry over any distance and know immediately where you are (or at least where you shouted from).

Adept: Spend a Drama die to ignore a Fear rating less than or equal to your Rank in this Knack until the end of the Scene.

Master: Spend a Drama die and choose a patch of ground (or a bridge, etc.) no more than 10' wide and 10' long. Until a sunrise and a sunset have passed, as long as you do not leave your chosen ground, you cannot die or be crippled. You still can suffer Dramatic Wounds, but they do not affect you until the effect ends. Leaving the chosen area ends the effect immediately. When the Glamour expires, if you have taken three or more times your Resolve in Dramatic Wounds, you drop dead on the spot.



Magic Items

Firinbrand

Firinbrand is a weapon of great enchantment wielded by the champion of the Lady of the Lake — currently Lawrence Lugh. The blade is a 4k4 weapon. There is no Unskilled Penalty to use Firinbrand as long as the wielder is the champion.

Also, while on Avalon's shores (or in Inismore or the Highland Marches), as long as he wears the sheath, the wielder takes no Wounds from any bladed attacks. In addition, the weapon can cut through any material, including dracheneisen. This means there is no armor bonus against Firinbrand.

The Graal

The Graal is less of a physical object and more a symbol of the relationship that men and Sidhe share. It is man's promise to keep and protect the land and to respect Avalon's traditions and legends. As long as the monarch of Avalon is true to the land, the Graal protects Avalon. For as long as Avalon has the Graal, it shall never fall before its enemies. It stands in Elaine's throne room, where none save the Queen herself may touch it.

Seven-League Striders

Bards and druids are normally the only owners of these items, although others may use them to lesser effect. They enable anyone wearing them to travel at an incredible rate, speeding across the landscape like an arrow. By "striding" to any location within line of sight, a druid with seven-league striders can cross the island of Inismore in a single day. It takes only a few moments of concentration, but while outdoors the wearer will move quickly and swiftly across the landscape.

Any non-Druid Heroes wearing the boots cannot use them to "stride," but instead receive a +1 Finesse bonus for all non-combat-related actions while wearing them. There are

varieties that allow a sailor to jump 20 feet in the air or leap from one ship to another.

Under no conditions will the boots work in combat or indoors. They lack the finesse necessary for close-quarters fighting or for maneuvering through any buildings smaller than a stadium.

Theus' Cup

This golden goblet has the power to heal those who drink from it. Spending a Drama die and swallowing whatever liquid is placed into it automatically heals the drinker's Wounds. The cup can only work once on any given person, however. Once touched by its blessing, a drinker can never be healed by it again.

Tinder Box

This small box of flint, steel, and tinder contains an unlimited supply of tinder, wax, oil, and almost any other basic adventuring gear. Every time the Hero reaches into the box to fetch an item, anything that could fit into the 3" by 4" by 6" area appears. The Hero needs only to think of what he needs and it appears. The item will disappear after a day's time and no more than 20 of a single item can be "summoned" in a single day from the box. The box does not contain money.

Unseelie Cup

The cup of the Unseelie Court vanished one day from the glen where had laid for centuries. Since then, Unseelie of all varieties have hunted for it in vain. The cup is a twisted reflection of the Graal, a gnarled, blackened goblet of black basalt. Drinking from it causes the drinker's skin to go pale for one day and one night. All night they glow with a soft white-green light. During that time, they gain the Advantages of Keen Senses and Night Vision. However, the Cup marks those who drink from it, and any Unseelie who spies them will thereafter know that they have tasted from their icon. Use with caution.



The background of the page is a complex, hand-drawn map. It features a grid of latitude and longitude lines. There are two prominent compass roses: one in the upper right quadrant and another in the lower left quadrant. The map includes various geographical features such as coastlines, islands, and bodies of water, all rendered in a sketchy, artistic style. The word "Legend" is centered over the map in a large, elegant, black cursive font.

Legend



Player

Sidhe Heroes

Certain players may be intrigued by the idea of portraying a Sidhe as a Hero. While the Fae represent a potentially unbalanced element in any party, if portrayed properly, they can make a fascinating addition to any troupe. But they must be handled carefully, lest they dominate play and/or create too much conflict within the party. Sidhe Heroes won't be immortal and won't have many of the terrifying powers that their brethren do. Playing one just to be an unstoppable god isn't going to work. Similarly, using the Sidhe as some sort of gimmick just to make an interesting character will lose much of its charm after just a short while. But if the player is mature enough to handle an utterly alien Hero and wants to explore a different aspect of Théah, a Sidhe might be the perfect solution.

As stated earlier, the Goodly Folke are not human and never were. They have a particular way of looking at things and can't understand real emotions. They can fake emotion, and obey certain rules that give the impression of human thought patterns, but otherwise have no true connection to the mortals they emulate. The Sidhe section on pp. 56-63.

contains more on Seelie psychology. Players wishing to portray a Fae should study it carefully.

Player-controlled Sidhe are unique beings — trapped between the Seelie home of Bryn Bresail and the mortal world which they now tread. All Sidhe Heroes have lost contact with Bryn Bresail somehow, severed from their fellows. The Queen calls them “Fallen”, a slight differentiation from the “Unforgiven” Unseelie. Some were banished, like the Unseelie, for a real or imagined crime. Others tampered with magic even more powerful than their own and paid the price. A few even experienced something all Sidhe dream of and none ever realize — a true, genuine human emotion. Once the mortal world touched them, they became bound to it and left Bryn Bresail lest they “infect” their brethren.

Whatever the reason, the Hero has been severed from her ancient homeland and must now make her way in the world of mortals. Immortality is now denied her, and while she still ages inhumanly slowly, the cold grip of death will eventually claim her. Gone too is her invulnerability to mortal weapons. Gunpowder and steel now affect her as they would any other mortal. Finally, the psychological trauma at being banished from her homeland takes a considerable toll. She has to deal with a new and frightening land while struggling with intense emotions that are now as real to her as any mortal's. The player and the GM should develop a background for the Hero based on these factors, and come up with reasons for the Sidhe to be where she is now.

Because of its fall from grace, a Sidhe Hero sees things a little differently than others of its kind. The Fae are immortal; aging and death is nonexistent in their kingdom. The Hero has just had that taken away from her and now must deal with the ramifications. Imagine a being who has lived for millions of years with no concept of time, decay, or permanent change. Suddenly she feels her body decaying bit by bit, and must depend on beings with the lifespan of mayflies for her very survival. As these new sensations wash over her, she'll still lack the fundamental emotional

experiences that define human beings, denying her a foundation to deal with her new condition.

The exact result varies from Sidhe to Sidhe. Some see it as a grand adventure — something none of their kin will ever have. Others wallow in the pathos of their condition, or transform it into an epic tragedy with themselves at the center. Whatever the case, they live suspended between two worlds: they are no longer Sidhe, but they can never be truly human. It affects every aspect of their lives.

Players may portray any style of Sidhe they wish, from an inhumanly beautiful Lord or Lady to a sinister but mischievous goblin. If they don't wish to use a template, they can create their own, using any physical form they wish. Creative players may want to come up with habits for their Hero, and maybe even a legend based around who he was before his fall. Perhaps he haunted an orchard in a specific village, or maybe he's known for carrying children off every full moon. A few local stories about the Sidhe and some permanent habits based on his "previous life" can go a long way toward establishing a character.

Rules

Sidhe Heroes gain marvelous abilities unknown to their human counterparts, but there is a price to be paid. The rules below detail the advantages and disadvantages that every fallen Sidhe must deal with.

Whether or not Sidhe Heroes are an option for Hero creation is the sole decision of the Game Master.

Hero Points

Sidhe Heroes get 100 Hero Points the same as mortal Heroes.

Traits

Sidhe Heroes begin the game with their Traits at Rank 2 instead of Rank 1. Also, Sidhe Heroes are considered to have *Legendary Trait* in all Traits.





Skills and Knacks

Sidhe Heroes have access to any Skills save the following: Criminal, Crossbow, Dirty Fighting, Doctor, Firearms, Heavy Weapon, Merchant, Panzerhand, Polearm, Pugilism, Scholar, Servant, Streetwise, Swordsman Schools, Wrestling. Sidhe Heroes also cannot pursue *any* Knack that is represented within these Skills, even if it is in another Skill.

Advantages

Sidhe Heroes may not purchase *any* Advantages. However, they automatically gain these Advantages at Hero creation:

- Appearance (10 Points) and Dangerous Beauty
- Combat Reflexes or Keen Senses (but not both)
- Large or Small (but not both)
- *Slow Aging and Immunity to Disease* and *Smell Glamour Blessings* from the **Sidhe Blood** Advantage

A Sidhe Hero may begin with Sidhe Equipment (found in Chapter 3) at the same discount that Heroes with Sidhe Blood gain: -1 to all costs, minimum 1 HP. However, Sidhe Heroes may have any number of weapons and equipment, up to 10 HP.

Drama Dice

Sidhe Heroes do not have Drama Dice. The only way a Sidhe may have a Drama Die is if he is given one by another Hero via a game effect (such as a Virtue). However, see *Sorcery* below.

Arcana

Sidhe Heroes cannot purchase Arcana, nor can they use Drama Dice to activate a Villain's Arcana.

Sorcery

Sidhe Heroes may not purchase any Sorcery. However, Sidhe Heroes do have Glamour. In fact, they are bound to it even more tightly than mortal Heroes are.

All Sidhe begin the game with 10 Reputation Points. Sidhe begin the game with a number of Glamour Dice equal to their Reputation + their Highest Trait. Sidhe Heroes also

gain Glamour Dice in the same way mortal Heroes gain Drama Dice. However, remember that Glamour Dice *are not* Drama Dice; they cannot be used to activate a Villain's Hubris and do not turn into Experience Points. See the *Players' Guide*, page 201.

Disadvantages

All Sidhe Heroes suffer from the *Iron Vulnerability*, *Iron Susceptibility*, *Salt Vulnerability*, *Running Water* and *Gifts Curses* listed under the **Sidhe Blood** Advantage.

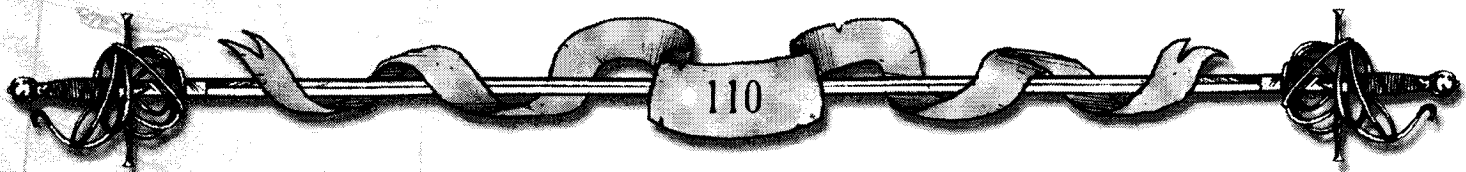
In addition, Sidhe Heroes are especially vulnerable to the Repartee System. Characters who use the Repartee System on Sidhe Heroes gain a bonus of 2 unkept dice.

Conclusion

Only one Sidhe Hero should be allowed in any party at any time. All Sidhe player characters are considered Seelie; no player may begin with an Unseelie Hero, and aspiring to become an Unforgiven is grounds for removing the character from the campaign.



The following section is meant for Game Masters only. Players who read further run the risk of spoiling the campaign's surprises; proceed at your own risk.





NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the **Hero** chapter that are too sensitive for players to see.

Queen Elaine: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 6
Resolve: 3
Panache: 5
Reputation: 123
Background: None
Arcana: Inspirational

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Noble, Legendary Trait, Sidhe Blood (Charming)

Courtier: All Knacks at 5

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 3, Research 3, Law 5, Occult 5, Theology 2

Archer: Attack 4, Fletcher 3, Horse Archery 4, Snapshot 3
Glamour (Master): Iron Meg 5, Robin Goodfellow 5, King Elilodd 5, The Green Man 5, Thomas 5

Riding: Ride 4, Mounting 3

Elaine has two secrets which concern the storyline; the first is that she knows what must be done to keep the Graal. The second is that Meryth is her daughter, lost so many years ago.

The Graal requires her devotion to Avalon in order to remain his possession. She must devote her heart to the kingdom, and place it foremost in her thoughts. As long as she does so, Avalon will prosper. But if were to place someone above the Glamour Isles in her affections — if she were to love someone more than the land she rules — then the Graal will be stripped from her. She doesn't know what will happen then, but she has vowed never to find out.

The recent appearance of Meryth, however, has placed a seed of doubt in her heart. She knows what the child represents. She knows the terrors Meryth inflicts upon her people. But she cannot murder her only child. She cannot destroy the girl she cast aside for Avalon's sake.

Bors MacAllister offered to solve the situation, but she declined. Derwyddon's words "*Your greatest love will bring your darkest day,*" echo through her nightmares and haunt her thoughts through her days. She must do something, but what can she do against her only daughter? What can she do against a child of the Queen of the Sea?

Derwyddon: Hero



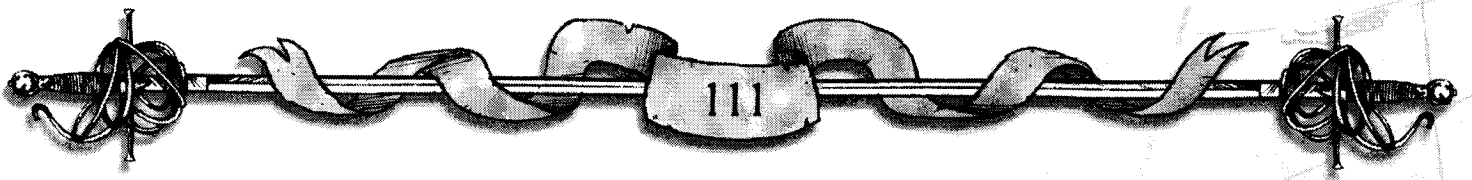
Brawn: —
Finesse: —
Wits: —
Resolve: —
Panache: —
Reputation: -13
Background: —
Arcana: —

Derwyddon has no stats. He succeeds when he is supposed to succeed and fails when he is supposed to fail. He can use all druid powers listed in Chapter 3, and automatically succeeds with any Gesa he places. He cannot be harmed, for he has seen his own death and it happened/is happening/will happen a long time from now.

Derwyddon remembers many things. In fact, he remembers *everything*. He remembers the future and foresees the past. The only problem is he cannot see *himself* in any of his visions. Except for one moment, when he becomes trapped in a teardrop. He sees that clearly.

Because he cannot see himself, he has no idea how to change the events which unfold. He knows that he has some role to play, and that what he does may tip the scales to one side or the other, but he doesn't know how or when. Until then, he advises the Queen as best he can and hopes that when the time is right, he will take the proper steps.

Derwyddon truly detests Bors MacAllister, but can do nothing about it. The Highlander is important somehow. He saved the Queen. Or killed her, he's not sure which. In any case, the black knight has a role to play, and Derwyddon must respect that. He just doesn't like it.



Lawrence Lugh: Hero

Brawn: 5
Finesse: 6
Wits: 4
Resolve: 6
Panache: 5
Reputation: 92
Background: Romance 4
Arcana: Courageous

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Appearance (5), Dangerous Beauty, Combat Reflexes, Large, Major Gesa (Lawrence may only be killed while kissing his True Love)

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 5, Oratory 4, Diplomacy 4, Politics 4

Athlete: All Knacks at 5

Buckler: Parry (Buckler) 5, Attack (Buckler) 5

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

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5

MacDonald (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike 5, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 5

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Wrestling: Grapple 4, Bear Hug 4, Break 4, Escape 4, Head Butt 4

Lugh's iron hand prevents him from using Glamour of any sort. In addition, while the hand is attached, he loses the benefits (and curses) of his Sidhe Blood. This means that he is not affected by MacEachern weapons (beyond their normal damage, of course). Lugh's barehanded damage with the iron hand is 0k2.

Lawrence fears death, but he doesn't entirely understand it, which ironically has made him the bravest man in Avalon. He undertakes dangerous quests partially because of his adherence to chivalry, but mostly because he literally doesn't realize how much danger he's in. He's been

immortal since the dawn of time, and old habits die hard. What does a Sidhe have to fear from a ogre, or an army of bandits?

In addition, the notion of dying young also helps him overcome his fear of aging. If he's slain on some knightly quest, then he won't have to worry about growing old and wrinkled.

Lawrence loves Queen Elaine with all his heart, but he knows he cannot reveal it. He understands the conditions of the Graal, and keeps his love hidden lest she learn of it and return his feelings. Still, it breaks his heart to be near her. He contents himself by serving her as best he can, and hopes one day to forget how he makes her feel. Like his hand and his mortality, his love is a burden he must learn to endure.

Who knew that being human could be so painful?

Meryth: Villain

Brawn: —
Finesse: —
Wits: —
Resolve: —
Panache: —
Reputation: -50
Background: —
Arcana: —

Meryth has no stats. She cannot be harmed by mortal men. As long as she is standing in a foot or more of sea water, she automatically succeeds every action she attempts.

Meryth is indeed Elaine's daughter, raised by the Queen of the Sea. She resents her mother for abandoning her, but Maab has promised her revenge. Each man she drags under the wave becomes a knight in her army: an army that will on day march on Carleon and take Elaine's throne from her. Though knowledgeable beyond her years, Meryth is still a child, with a child's emotions and desires. Mother hurt her when she was born, so now she's going to hurt Mother.

Very badly.

King Piram: Villain

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: -46
Background: Sidhe Lover 3
Arcana: Ambitious

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Castille, Noble, Swordsman's Guild, Servants, Sidhe Ally
Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 4, Politics 4, Scheming 4
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Law 4, Occult 3
Buckler: Parry (Buckler) 5, Attack (Buckler) 3
Commander: Strategy 4, Tactics 3, Ambush 2, Artillery 3, Incitation 3, leadership 4, Logistics 3
Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4
Glamour (Adept): The Horned Hunter 4, Anne o' the Wind 4, Jack 4, The Green Man 4, Thomas 3

Piram doesn't intend to let Elaine remain queen. He is also the current lover of Queen Maab, who visits him in secret and fills his ear with talk of ruling Avalon. She promises him power, but only at the proper moment. She also promises him that moment will be soon in coming. He cannot wait.

Bors MacAllister: Hero

Brawn: 4
Finesse: 4
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 56
Background: None
Arcana: Insightful

Advantages: Linguist, Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Castille (R/W), Crescent, Eisen, High Eisen, Théan, Ussuran, Vendel, Vodacce, Elaine's Knights, Connections (4 pts.), Noble, University, Scoundrel

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Diplomacy 3, Lip Reading 4, Politics 4, Scheming 5, Sincerity 4

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

Spy: Shadowing 5, Stealth 5, Bribery 4, Conceal 4, Forgery 4, Hand Signs 2, Interrogation 5, Poison 4

Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 2, Leaping 4, Lifting 3, Side-step 3

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

MacDonald (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike 5, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 5

Bors really did kill those insurrectionists. He's killed a lot of people in the last ten years. As Elaine's "black knight," he understands the dirty business of ruling; in order to keep Elaine's reign secure, the rules must occasionally get bent. Sometimes that means killing someone. Sometimes it means doing even more. Bors takes care of these things so the Queen doesn't have to. He bloodies his hands in order to keep Elaine's clean.

Luckily, he's a sensible man and hasn't let any of it go to his head. While he moves beyond the laws of the land, he has never abused Elaine's trust or acted in any way he felt was unnecessary. He doesn't desire power, and he prides himself on looking at situations objectively. See what needs to be done and do it. Don't let personal emotions get involved.

Bors has a small cadre of informants, lackeys and assistants, but takes care to limit their numbers. He doesn't want a "secret police" in Avalon and recognizes the Queen's authority in all things. Less than a dozen knights comprise his full-time force. The rest are informants and contacts used on a need-to-know basis. If possible, Bors handles things personally. If you want something done right...

The Highwayman: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 6
Reputation: 35
Background: None
Arcana: Overconfident

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne, Legendary Trait, Noble, Scoundrel
Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 4
Criminal: Gambling 2, Quack 1, Shadowing 4, Stealth 5, Ambush 5
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3, Leaping 4, Swinging 4, Side-step 3
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 4
Glamour (Adept): The Horned Hunter 3, Blackcloak 4, Jack 4, The Stone Knight 4, Jeremiah Berek 4

The Highwayman is actually Phineas Flynn, an unassuming member of the country gentry. He inherited a small estate from his father at the age of eighteen, and spent several years tending it as best he could. Unfortunately, the local province was quite poor and his father had left numerous outstanding debts. After a short while, he found himself nearly destitute. Rather than selling off his family lands, however, or ingratiating himself to another nobleman, he resolved to clear his debts himself. He would become a robber.

Using his Glamour to hide his face and change his chestnut horse to ghostly pale, he began to hold up traveling noblemen. It worked, so he kept at it. Before he knew it, he was the most wanted man in Avalon — and had more money than he knew what to do with. Flynn is takes care steal only from those who can afford it and never kills except in self-defense, he generally keeps everything he steals for himself. He earned it, after all.

When not appearing as the Highwayman, Flynn is an unassuming man with a well-built frame, his sandy-brown hair tied back in a pigtail. He's erudite and well-mannered, although his country upbringing makes him more pragmatic than most noblemen.

Jack O'Bannon: The O'Bannon



Brawn: —
Finesse: —
Wits: —
Resolve: —
Panache: —
Reputation: 150
Background: None
Arcana: —

TN to be hit: 25

Glamour (Master): All Knacks from each Trait at 5.

The O'Bannon can only be injured or wounded by MacEachern weapons. It takes 10 Dramatic Wounds to kill the O'Bannon in this fashion.

If the O'Bannon makes a successful attack (Attack Roll 8k5), the target immediately suffers enough Dramatic Wounds to either slay him or Knock him Out, GM's option.

Besides his formidable abilities, Jack has no hidden secrets. He's just the O'Bannon.

Arghyle O'Toole: Villain



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: -85
Background: Vow 3
Arcana: Beguiling



Legend

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Montaigne, Castille (ACQ), Able Drinker, Noble, Merchant's Guild, Pirate Trick (Quick Draw)

Sailor: Balance 4, Climbing 3, Knotwork 3, Rigging 2, Cartography 3, Navigation 4, Pilot 4, Swimming 2, Sea Lore 3

Spy: Shadowing 3, Stealth 4, Bribery 5, Conceal 3, Forgery 3, Lip Reading 2, Poison 3, Sincerity 4

Commander: Strategy 4, Tactics 4, Ambush 5, Artillery 4, Diplomacy 2, Incitation 5, Leadership 4, Logistics 3

Finnegan (Master): Corps-à-Corps 5, Bob 'n' Weave 5, Disarm (Barehanded) 5, Exploit Weakness (Finnegan) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 5, Footwork 4, Jab 4, Earclap 3, Uppercut 5

Wrestling: Grapple 4, Bear Hug 2, Break 4, Escape 3, Head Butt 4

Like Piram, Arghyle plans on usurping his current ruler. Unlike Piram, he's driven by more than just hubris. He's also a lot further along in his plans.

Arghyle has recently been in contact with Fergus MacBride, leader of the Highland separatists. He has made it clear to MacBride that the O'Toole clan fully supports his position on Avalon and are willing to help in any way they can. The MacBride seemed receptive to this development, but has made it clear that he will brook no interference from the O'Toole in Highland affairs. Still, Arghyle hopes they will be of use to him in the future.

He has also made contact with Highlanders of a different sort – a insignificant trio of blacksmiths in a remote corner of the Marches. His son Roland O'Toole was last seen sailing for the shores of the Highland Marches in a ship laden with gold with a single name – “MacEachern” – on his lips.

Finally, Arghyle has slated a meeting with Esteban Verdugo. Long ago the Sidhe turned their backs on the O'Toole clan for some perceived slight, and denied them the use of Glamour magic. Only twice in the last hundred years has an O'Toole been blessed with the gift of Glamour. As a result, Arghyle has turned to the Vaticine faith and welcomed the

building of a church in his capital. Now he is ready to turn to the Church for help. If he can sell Verdugo on his cause, he will have the power of the Church to back him up.

Roland O'Toole: Henchman



Brawn: 3

Finesse: 5

Wits: 3

Resolve: 3

Panache: 3

Reputation: -46

Background: None

Arcana: Hedonistic

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Montaigne, Eagle Eyes, Faith, Noble

Criminal: Gambling 2, Quack 2, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4, Ambush 5, Cheating 4, Lockpicking 2, Pickpocket 3

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 2, Knotwork 3, Rigging 2, Navigation 4, Pilot 4, Swimming 2, Weather 3

Streetwise: Socializing 4, Street Navigation 3, Scrounging 5, Shopping 3, Underworld Lore 4

Captain: Strategy 3, Tactics 3, Diplomacy 2, Gunnery 5, Incitation 3, Leadership 4

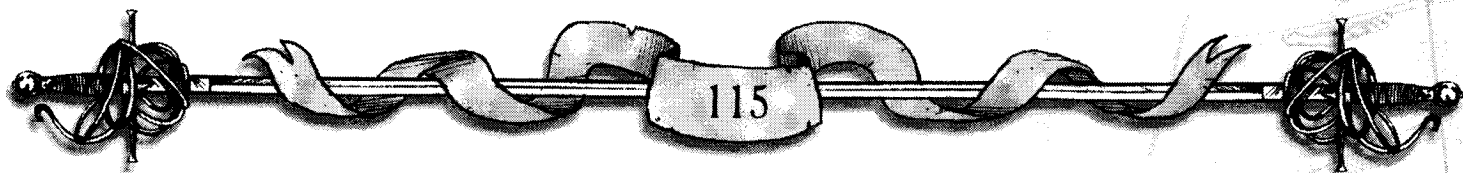
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 5

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

Rois et Reines (Master): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike 5, Exploit Weakness (Rois et Reines) 5

Roland has a +50' modifier to his range while using a pistol or musket and can spend a Drama Die to ignore range and cover penalties. He can draw and fire a pistol in 1 Action.

Roland has thrown himself wholeheartedly into his father's plans. He'd shoot the O'Bannon himself if it will make his father happy. Currently, he has been sent to the Highland Marches with a ship full of gold, and a proposal for the MacEachern blacksmiths it is intended for. The O'Tooles are going to find out how much Sidhe blood O'Bannon has... and how much of it they can spill.



Roary Finnegan: Hero

Brawn: 4
Finesse: 5
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: 85
Background: None
Arcana: Reckless

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Able Drinker, Small, Toughness
Streetwise: Socializing 5, Street Navigation 4, Scrounging 4, Shopping 3, Underworld Lore 3

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2, Lifting 3, Rolling 4, Side-step 3

Finnegan (Master): Corps-à-Corps 5, Bob 'n' Weave 5, Disarm (Barehanded) 5, Exploit Weakness (Finnegan) 5

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 5, Footwork 5, Jab 5, Ear Clap 4, Uppercut 5

Wrestling: Grapple 5, Bear Hug 3, Break 4, Escape 2, Head Butt 2

Roary has no secrets. He really can kick anyone's butt.

High King James MacDuff: Hero

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 5
Panache: 4
Reputation: 115
Background: None
Arcana: Self-Controlled

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne, Keen Senses, Noble, Swordsman's Guild

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

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

Commander: Strategy 5, Tactics 4, Artillery 3, Cartography 3, Incitation 5, Leadership 4

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 4, Throwing 4, Leaping 3, Rolling 3, Swimming 2

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

MacDonald (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike 5, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 5

MacDuff's first duty is to the Marches, and he has never let the trappings of power blind him to the needs of his people. He believes that the alliance with Avalon helps them immeasurably; should that change, however, things may go sour. When push comes to shove, he'll do what's right for the Highlands – no matter what.

He's attracted to Queen Elaine as are so many other men, but hasn't let it blind him to what she represents. She's a political entity first and a woman second; he treats her as such. While a little harmless flirting can be enjoyable (and gives the courtiers something to gossip about), he would never abdicate his responsibility for some... personal desire.

Fergus MacBride: Hero

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 52
Background: None
Arcana: Stubborn

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Diplomacy 3, Politics 5, Scheming 5, Sincerity 4

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

Hunter: Stealth 3, Survival 4

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4

Glamour (Journeyman): The Horned Hunter 4, Blackcloak 4, Jack 4, The Green Man 5, Thomas 4

Unlike King Piram and the O'Tooles, MacBride's political differences have not affected his loyalty to his ruler. He — indeed his entire Clan — has great respect for High King James and takes care never to undermine the MacDuff Clan's authority. As far as the MacBrides are concerned, if you're not a Highlander, you don't get a say in the Unifist-Separatist debate. Fergus will convince the MacDuff to see reason without outside help.

Fergus chooses his political battles carefully, and has learned not to dilute his clout by debating issues he cannot win. As a consequence, he has much more authority when he feels he really needs it.

Connie MacDonald: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 2
Reputation: 15
Background: None
Arcana: Commanding

Advantages: Indomitable Will, MacEachern Heritage, Toughness

Hunter: Fishing 4, Skinning 3, Survival 3, Tracking 3

Merchant: Blacksmith 5, Fletcher 3, Furrier 3, Gardener 4, Seamstress 3, Spinner 4, Weaver 4, Appraising 4, Haggling 5

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Throwing 4, Break Fall 3, Leaping 2, Lifting 4, Rolling 3

Scholar: History 4, Sidhe Lore: 5, Poison 2 (knowledge only)

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

At the end of her life, Connie has begun to worry about her legacy. She has no children to pass her knowledge on to, and doesn't trust anyone else with their burden. Five years ago, she wrote her secrets down in a book, and hid it far away. If she finds someone she can trust, she may reveal its location to them, and thus pass on the MacEachern legacy. Until then, she smokes her pipe, rests her weary bones, and keeps a sharp eye out for goblins.

Using Glamour

Every nation of Théah has a single word that can sum up its character. For Avalon, that word is "Glamour."

Unfortunately, in our modern tongue, glamour has lost much of its meaning. Nowadays, if you use the word, most folks will think "illusion." That's not the case. Avalon's Glamour is not just a sorcery; it is almost a living, sentient force that influences nearly every action on the island. In order to capture Avalon's character, you need to understand Glamour. It boils down to two simple concepts.

A Sense of Epic

Glamour is like a mist that surrounds all three islands of Avalon. It never sleeps. The Avalons are aware of it, and they respect it. Those who do not are either foolish or a foreigner. There is little pity for the foolish, and foreigners... well, they should have known better than to walk where they aren't wanted.

Glamour's power is one of drama. Glamour loves a good story. Because of that, all of Avalon appears to be a great fairy tale. Foreigners have often commented on how the weather seems to change at will. But foreigners cannot see that the weather changes according to which story currently rules Avalon. When her Queen is happy, the sky is blue and clear. When she is sad, the sky weeps with her. When she is angry, storms ravage the countryside.

Avalon feeds on Reputation. For better or worse, as a Hero's Reputation grows, so does his Glamour. We say "for better or for worse" because Heroes serve Avalon's Glamour as certainly as Glamour serves them.

Avalon's Heroes fill specific roles, and oftentimes they aren't even aware they're doing it.

Elaine is the perfect example of this phenomenon. Everyone — including the players — can see what's happening in Avalon, but everyone is so deep in the story, their roles so entwined with their own lives, they can't do anything about it.

Does Glamour take away free will? No. In fact, Glamour *encourages* free will. It gives you exactly what you want.

At a price.

Imagine Glamour as a big djinn that gives everybody what they want. You want to be a tragic lover? Glamour can give it to you. You want to save your sister from an marriage she doesn't want? You got it. You want to save Elaine from herself? Well, you gotta play along with the rules, but if you want it, you've got it.

It's all about consequences. If you're willing to pay them, Glamour is willing to give you *exactly* what you want. Just don't complain when you get it.

A Sense of Mystery

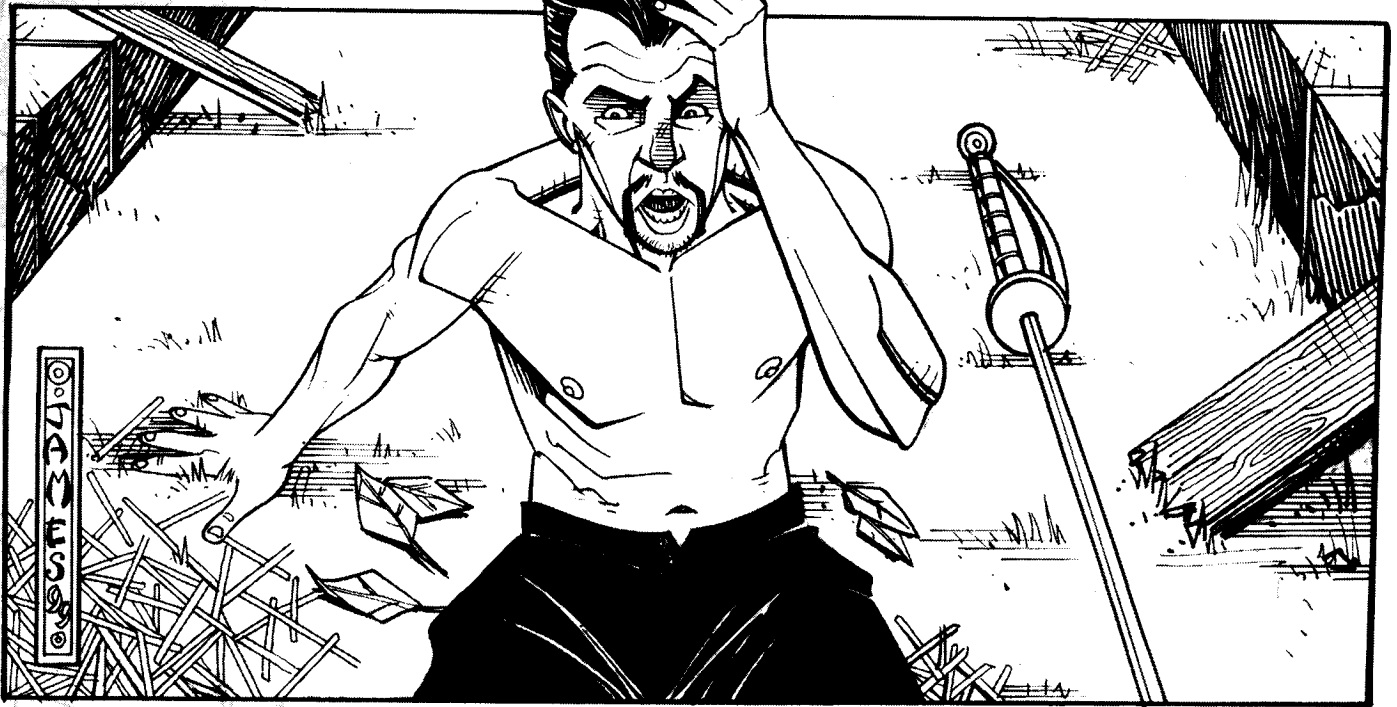
One of the most important aspects of Avalon's old religion is the sense that the world is a great riddle and everything — *everything* — is a part of that riddle. This is one sentiment Avalon's old ways hold in

common with the Vaticine Church. Unfortunately, that's where the similarities end.

The Church believes that research can lead one to further understanding of the world. Druids, on the other hand, believe that one can *never* understand the world. All one can hope to do is know the ways of the world. Understanding the world is simply an impossible task.

"Look at the whole world with a single glance," a druid may say. Of course, it can't be done. All you can do is look at one part of it at a time. Even if you *read* about all the places in the world, you've still never *been there*. Just because you've read about Charouse doesn't mean you know it. You've never felt the cobblestones under your feet, never smelled the pastries baking in the morning, never heard the sounds of Montaigne greeting one another, never tasted the crisp, moist morning air.

You may *know* Charouse from your books and from stories, but you'll never *understand* Charouse until you've been there yourself. This is the focus of druid training. One cannot



know a secret unless one has discovered the secret first-hand. There is no teaching in druid training, only learning.

“So, How Do I Use It?”

As with everything else, it all depends on the tastes of your own group. If your players enjoy playing the parts in a huge story, subject to and in command of a force that shapes epics on Avalon’s shores, then you’re in like Flynn. Glamour rules the land with an iron fist and your players will delight in the idea of playing in stories that parallel Arthurian legends. They’ll see roadmarks along the way that they recognize, and they’ll play ball.

On the other hand, many groups resent the idea that their Heroes don’t have complete free will. They feel trapped and constrained by a story. If you have one of these groups, you don’t want to make the Glamour too obvious. In fact, you may not want to use it at all.

Roleplaying the Sidhe

The Sidhe are remarkably difficult to roleplay correctly; like any non-human character, they have a fundamentally different mindset than we are used to. They may look human, they may imitate human emotions, but at the end of the day, they’re nothing at all like mortals. Understanding their psyche is vital to running a proper Avalon campaign.

The Sidhe make Avalon their home, but no one ever gets used to their presence. Their appearances are shocking and often unsettling, and even the most jaded Avalon can be surprised by an encounter with them. The reasons for this become apparent when one looks closely at their psyche.

The fundamental thing to understand about Sidhe is that they lack true emotions. They can imitate emotions – and can fool observers into thinking they feel things very deeply – but their hearts are cold and dead. Beauty doesn’t inspire them; terror doesn’t thrill them. They live in a constant state

of emotional numbness, unable to care about anything other than their own self-interest. The idea of caring for another being is utterly alien to their nature.

Similarly, Sidhe have no real culture of their own. Their inability to feel emotions leads to a creative vacuum, an inspirational void. Art, politics, society – none of it can exist without a soul, and the Goodly Folke have none. For thousands of years they remained static, fighting chaotically among themselves because they simply had nothing else to do. The strong rose to the top, forming a rough hierarchy of sorts, but it never developed past that.

Then mortals came along.

Human beings held everything the Fae lacked. They had heart, warmth, humor, and imagination. They were consumed by their passions, using them both to create and destroy with equal ferocity. Though their lives were mayfly-brief, they built testaments to their existence that far outlasted their material forms. The Sidhe were instantly enraptured: humans fascinated them in way nothing else in eternity ever had. For beings incapable of real emotion, it was a watershed event – something besides themselves worthy of interest. They began to ape them, to imitate their culture in hopes of achieving the same effects. They took forms designed to provoke emotional reactions – beautiful, horrifying, mischievous – and set about building their own society, parasitically connected to the humans they found so intriguing. The customs and affectations of mortals allowed them to give shape to their immense power and to focus their energies in a way they never had before.

Sidhe culture therefore appears as a mirror image of humanity’s. They engage in distorted variations of mortal activities, such as dancing, feasting, and playing music. They tend to imitate activities that mortals find joyful in hopes of capturing some of that joy themselves. Outrageous contests, bewildering feasts, and wild musical performances highlight their lives, punctuated by all manner of pranks and mischief making. Because humans fell in love, they would do the same, imitating the passionate extremes the lovers often go to. Because humans were divided into upper and lower classes, they did the same, with the boggies and goblins

forming the coarser “working class” and the Queen and her ilk forming the nobler, “higher class.” The Queen appears as inhumanly beautiful because that is what is expected of human nobility, while goblins appear much baser and more coarse. Those who observe the Sidhe for any length of time note that nearly everything they do has some distorted parallel in human life.

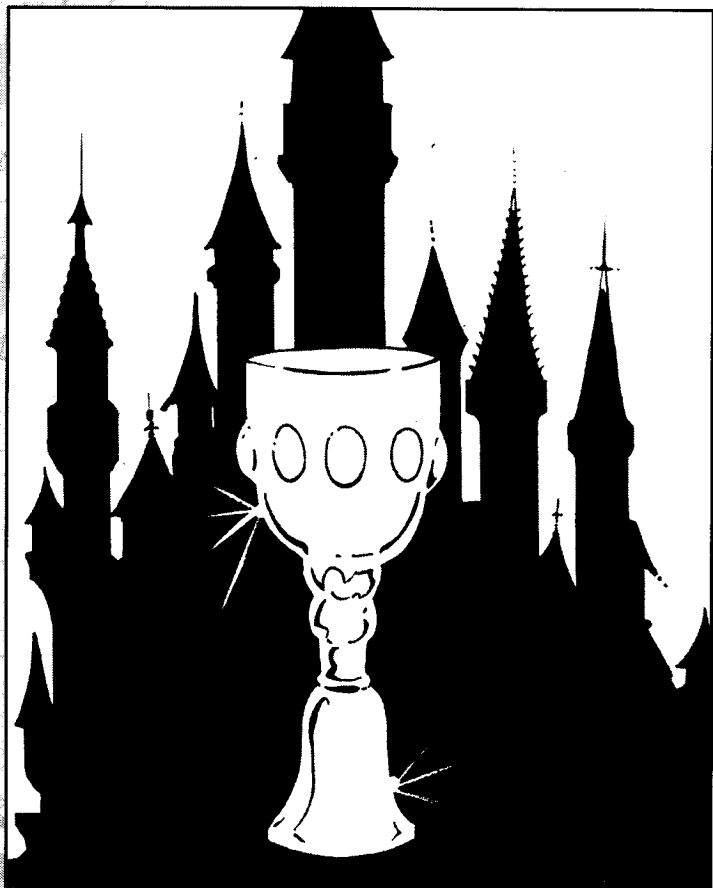
The key word, however, is “distorted.” While they can imitate humans as much as they like, they will never truly be human. They follow certain rules because they feel those rules should be followed, not out of any real understanding or moral imperative. Because of that, their inherently heartless and cruel nature invariably shines through. The pranks they pull often result in injury or worse. The mortals they enchant suffer terribly, tormented by beings who can’t understand the pain they inflict. Hunts held by the Queen often involve human prey – forced to grow horns like a stag

and run naked through the woods. Their Glamour gives them terrible powers in these situations, powers they lack the ethics to control. It transforms their activities into a distorted mockery of human culture, something that, for all its beauty, can terrify the bravest man.

The Fae themselves encourage this distortion, although they may not be aware of it. The smartest among them realize the debt they owe to humanity: the pattern mortals provide with which the Sidhe can structure their existence. Therein lies the terrible secret of the Sidhe – for all their power, they envy mortals. They envy our ability to feel, to have real emotions, to experience life as truth, not just a dramatic approximation. Humans are real, and for all their wondrous abilities and soul-freezing magic, the Sidhe are not.

They may not admit it, but this galls the Goodly Folke. Their seething jealousy becomes clear in their acts of cruelty – the bewitched lovers, the changeling children, the enchanted travelers who never return. They hide faerie gold beneath their hills, then snatch anyone foolish enough to look for it. They tempt musicians to play at their ball, then send them to sleep for a dozen years. They change children into toadstools, then mock the parents who come to save them. All because humanity has some vital spark that they will always lack.

Treating them with respect helps. If humanity acknowledges the Sidhe’s inherent superiority, it salves their wounded pride and they return the politeness as society dictates. Similarly, if mortals obey the rules set forth for dealing with them (don’t enter the Faerie circles, don’t approach them with iron, etc.), so do the Sidhe; to do otherwise is to shatter their mock-culture, which might destroy them. When they treat the Sidhe properly (and when they acknowledge the good deeds Fae sometimes perform) mortals can delude themselves into believing that they’re beneficent. Wise men know better; they see the distortion in Sidhe culture and realize what lurks behind their unfeeling faces.



Avalon Monsters

“Monsters” in Avalon fall into one of two categories. The first are the Sidhe; many members of the Unseelie court take on hideous visages, with which they terrify anyone unfortunate enough to cross their path. They are discussed in the Sidhe section of Chapter 1.

The second type of monsters began life as human beings, but were changed by Avalon’s Glamour – and by the power of reputation. If a person’s Reputation rises high enough, he becomes a great Hero, and his deeds will echo throughout history. The opposite is also true, however. Those whose deeds are steeped in evil, who commit crimes so heinous that their names can never be forgotten, become affected by Glamour’s warping power. Their appearance begins reflecting the ugliness in their souls. They grow fangs or tusks, their limbs warp, their skin becomes covered with scales or fur – in short, they become monsters. Such creatures remain alive indefinitely, lurking in Avalon’s dark shadows for new victims. The Unseelie welcome these creatures into their ranks, but they can never forget who they once were. Some can be felled by brave Heroes. Others can never be killed – the infamy of their deeds is simply too strong.

Avalon Heroes whose Reputation drops below –30 may be affected in this way, twisting to join the ranks of their nation’s dark legends. GMs who wish can use such characters as foils for the party in the future. Their appearance should match their deeds in some way – a cannibal might have a huge gaping maw, for example, or a thief might develop long, spider-like arms.

Below is a list of some of the most prominent monsters in Théah – terrifying souls warped by Glamour into unspeakable beasts. No stats have been provided for them, although GMs wishing to send their players on an epic quest might set forth some conditions under which they might be slain. They can also be used as a blueprint for creating Avalon monsters of your own.

Banesidhe

Some Inish believe there is only one Banesidhe. Others swear there are many. In either case, she is the one Inish legend that foreigners seem to know. Below is a short description of the Banesidhe from an eyewitness account.

It happened when I was only a boy. My grandfather was in the room next to mine, coughing and wheezing. I could hear the dogs howling outside the house and I kept the covers over my head, I was so frightened.

Then I heard it. Over the dogs. Over the wind. A high-pitched wailing that rattled the window came through the house and I clutched the covers and pulled them tighter over my head.

Then I heard it. The sound of footsteps in the hallway outside my room, walking toward my grandfather’s door. The wailing bit the inside of my ears. I knew what it was. I had to look. I pulled the covers from over my face and peered into the dim light.

Then I saw it. Walking through the corridor, passing me by. She was tall and slender like a willow branch with long, streaming hair and a gray cloak over her green dress. Her skin was as pale as the moon and as I looked, she turned and looked at me.

Her eyes were as wide as saucers. Her mouth was like a snake’s mouth, wide wide wide. Those eyes were blood-red as if she had been crying since the birth of the world and there were no teeth in the black crevice that was her mouth. Then she passed me by. And the wailing stopped. And the house was silent. Silent of any sound. Not even my grandfather’s coughing and wheezing.

The next day, my hair was as gray as the shawl she wore and my eyes were as red as those that looked into my soul the night before.

Hounds of Night and Fog

Stories of werewolves and other lycanthropes began in Théah on the steppes of Ussura, where the nobility has the ability to take the forms of animals. The Glamour of the Highlands has give a new twist to the legends, however, one far less benign than Ussura’s.

There is a pack of creatures which roam the abandoned moors on nights of the full moon. Rural Highlanders refer



to them as the Hounds of Night and Fog. Some say they are the loosed pack of the Horned Hunter; others believe they are the wilderness incarnate, sent to reclaim the civilized Highlander. Whatever their origin, every Highlander has learned to fear their call. They hunt travelers bereft of shelter and others unfortunate enough to be caught out of doors when the sun goes down. Then their unearthly howls rise in the air, growing closer and closer as they approach their prey. Those who hear their cry rarely live long enough to reach any kind of help.

The Hounds are great wolves or mastiffs with glowing red eyes and strangely intelligent faces. A closer examination reveals human features scattered amongst their numbers: hands instead of paws, for example, or a human mouth with a wolf's tongue lolling out. A few might even appear full human, naked and running on all fours like a dog. They stalk and kill anyone they find, using group tactics to surround their prey. An unearthly fog accompanies their hunt, giving victims only the barest hints of their true location. By the time they strike, the victim is usually too panic-stricken to do more than run blindly.

Those killed by the Hounds are usually found the next morning, disemboweled and partially eaten. Worse still are those only injured by the pack; the wounds become infected with their essence, and the victim feels a growing urge to run wild into the woods. If not cured, he will turn feral and abandon the trappings of civilization forever. Many believe that these individuals will join the hounds on their eternal hunt, and eventually transform completely into canine form. One survivor of their attack claimed to see his missing brother amid their numbers, running on all fours with his body covered in fur.

Destroying the Hounds is no easy task, but it can be done. They take damage from cold iron, and silver burns their skin like a hot poker. If a victim can fight them off for an entire night, they will leave him be and never trouble him again. (Rural farmers who have survived an attack uninjured sometimes take new careers as guides, promising to lead travelers safely through the Hounds' domain.) Nobody knows how large the pack is, but no matter how many Hounds are killed, more always rise to take their place. They are as eternal as the moors themselves.



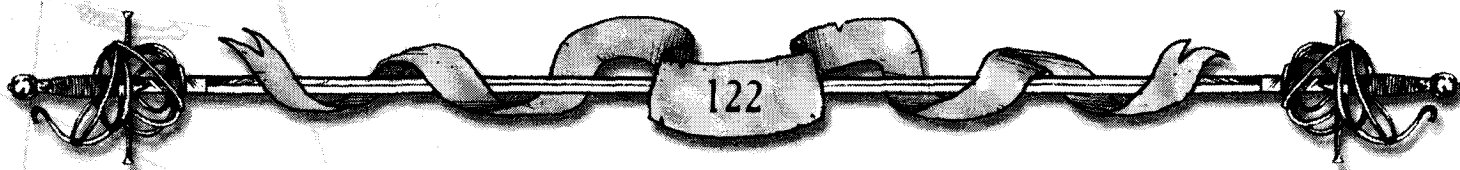
Indiscriminate Use of Power

While the Sidhe can use a staggering variety of Glamour powers, few actually do. Most of them have developed specific identities and are loath to depart from them. When they use Glamour, they do so within the parameters of their identities. A pooka, for example, will take the form of a dog or a horse, but never a leviathan; it simply doesn't fit into the pooka's established form. That doesn't mean that it can't, only that it won't, unless life-threatening conditions demand otherwise. A Sidhe's identity should be kept in mind when portraying their powers.

Jack-in-Irons

Giants are feared throughout Théah, but none hold the terrified awe that Jack-in-Irons does. Once a convicted murderer, he struck a bargain with the Unseelie Court in order to escape his cell the night before his execution. The bailiff arrived in the morning to find Jack gone — along with the chains he was bound in and the bricks they were shackled to. For decades after, he appeared on lonely roads, murdering travelers as they slept. Survivors claim to have heard his chains rattling before he arrived, and each consecutive attack found him larger and more monstrous.

Now he stands almost thirty feet tall, still wrapped in the chains which bound him so long ago. He carries a huge club with him, but often rips his victims' heads off with his bare hands. He claims heads as trophies; his belt is always decorated with his latest kills. Legend has it that he keeps a gruesome collection in his lair — the rotting skulls of every traveler unfortunate enough to cross his path.



Jenny Greenteeth

Jenny's is a name that mothers use to warn their children away from the swamps of Inismore. And well they should. This hideous creature was once a wise woman, well respected in her native village. She helped midwife babies and gave minor charms to young women in love. But she grew jealous of the happiness she had helped bring about, happiness she could never truly share. The poison grew in her heart, and after a time her hate was too strong. She began by smothering the children entrusted to her care. When that wasn't enough, she moved to more hideous acts. By the time the townsfolk discovered her deeds, she had killed and devoured almost a dozen babies. She fled into



the swamps, and as word of her abominations spread, slowly transformed into a monstrosity. Today, she appears in swamps across the Glamour Isles, enticing interlopers into her weedy embrace. Her thin skeletal arms and long talons can reach well over six feet and her famous teeth, besides being green, are barbed and wicked. She lurks beneath the stagnant waters of her lair, watching and waiting for her next victim. While she'll take anyone who approaches, her favorite victims are children, and she often entices them into following her through promises of toys and candy. She never reveals her true form to them – until it's too late.

Will O' Wisps

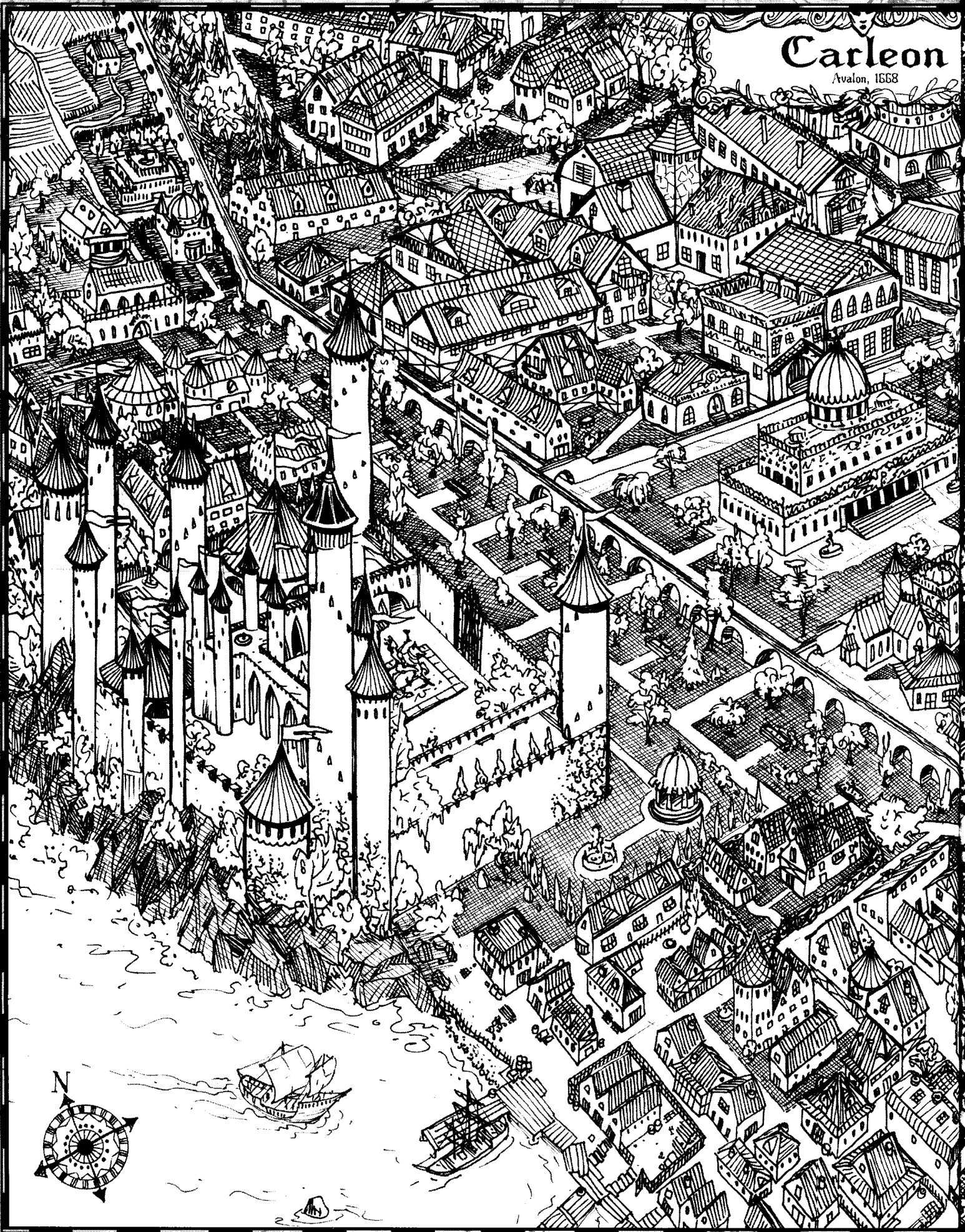
Sometimes, when a traveler dies on the road through misfortune, his spirit lingers on as a ghost. Resentful of his fate, angry at such an unjust death, he tries to lead others to a similar end, hoping to gain some bitter satisfaction from the knowledge that they can be as unlucky as he.

Will O' Wisps appear as glowing balls of eldritch light, floating above the ground. They tend to lurk near the spot where they died – near bogs, at the edges of cliffs, in lonely hollows or forgotten caves – and manifest only at night. They appear to the lost and to those unfamiliar with the local area, floating in the distance like a lantern light. When their victims follow – presumably believing them to be help – they lure the poor souls over the same cliff, into the same bog, or across the same deadfall that did them in. Their efforts can be remarkably effective, and it's not unusual for groups of three or four Will o' Wisps to gather in the same location, all killed by a malevolent original.

Wisps have no material form and so cannot be damaged by normal weapons. Luckily, they cannot inflict damage either, and must content themselves with indirect ways of causing harm. They can be quite cunning, however, and have learned how to lure even the most jaded traveler into their traps. The only way to dispel a wisp is to find the original body and bury it within a mile of any permanent road. Since few bodies killed in such a manner can ever be found, however, most wisps are doomed to their existence for all eternity.

Carleon

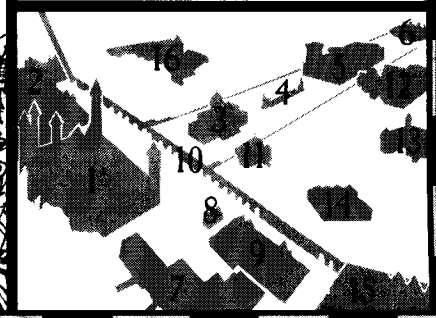
Avalon, 1668





Carleon Sites

1. Glenayre
2. Embassy District
3. Parliament
4. Reflecting Pool
5. National Dock
6. Marking Stones
7. Docks and Wharf District
8. Berek's House
9. Market District
10. Aqueduct
11. Opera House
12. Vendel District
13. Explorer's Society
Headquarters
14. Mercenary Barracks
15. Poor District
16. Rose & Cross Chapter
House





Avalon Druid

Traits

Brawn 2
Finesse 2
Wits 3
Resolve 3
Panache 2

Background: Debt 1, Obligation 1

Skills

The Druid "School"

Spring 1, Winter 1, Moon 3

Bard

History 2, Etiquette 2, Oratory 2, Singing 2, Riddles 2, Herb Lore 1

Doctor

Diagnosis 1, First Aid 1, Quack 1

Performer

Acting 1, Dancing 1, Oratory 2, Singing 2

Archer

Attack (Bow) 2, Fletcher 1

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1, Swimming 1

Hunter

Fishing 1, Survival 2, Trail Signs 1

Highland Sea Dog

Attributes

Brawn 3
 Finesse 2
 Wits 2
 Resolve 3
 Panache 2

Advantages

Able Drinker
 Avalon (R/W)
 Citation
 MacDonald School
 Swordsman's Guild

Arcana: Stubborn

Background: Cursed 2

Skills

Sailor

Balance 1, Climbing 2, Knotwork 2, Rigging 1

Scholar

History 2, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1

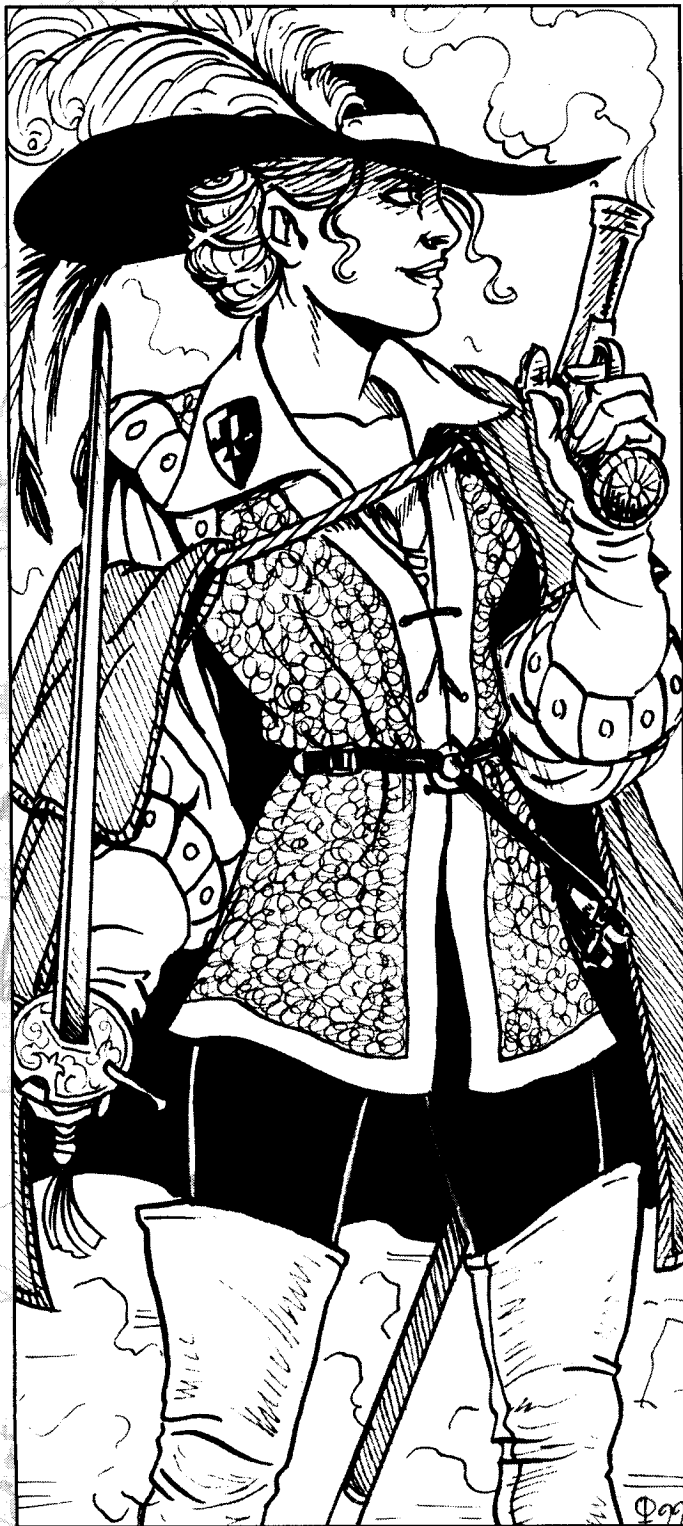
Athlete

Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1, Swimming 2

Heavy Weapon

Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2, Beat (Heavy Weapon) 2, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 1, Pommel Strike 1, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald)





Inish Knight of Elaine

Traits

Brawn 2
 Finesse 2
 Wits 3
 Resolve 2
 Panache 2

Advantages

Avalon
 Montaigne
 Elaine's Knights
 Legendary Traits (Wits)
 Sidhe Blood (Smell Glamour, Running Water)

Arcana: Proud

Background: Vow 2

Skills

Glamour (Half-Blooded)

Iron Meg 1, Green Man 2, Jack 2, The Stone Knight 1

Spy

Shadowing 2, Stealth 2

Athlete

Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 3, Throwing 1, Leaping 2, Swimming 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2

Knife

Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload 1

Hunter

Stealth 2, Survival 1, Tracking 2, Traps 1, Ambush 1

Rider

Ride 2, Mounting 1

7th Sea™

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— Derwyddon

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