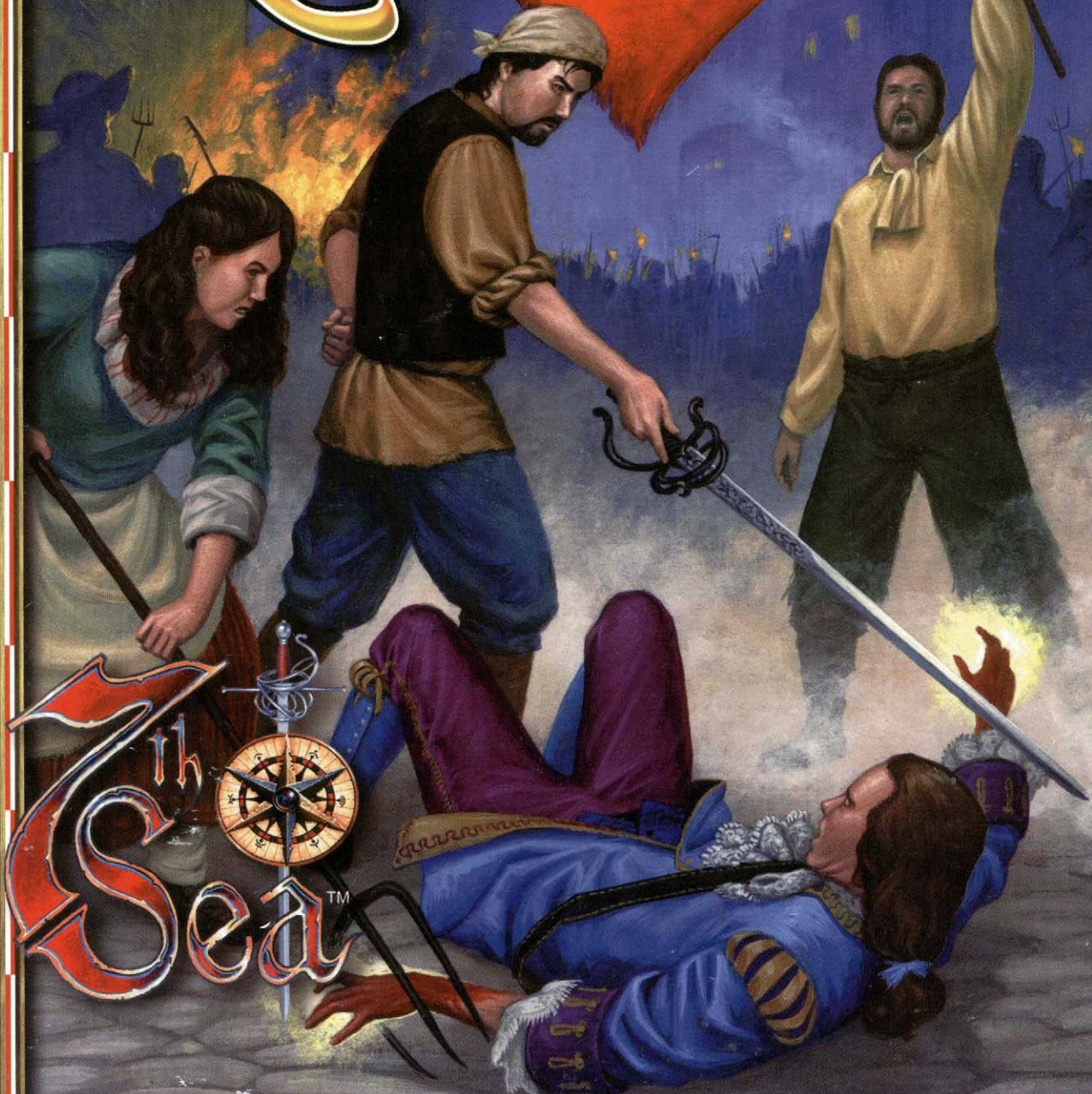


7th Sea Almanac:

# The Montaigne Revolution™



7th Sea™



# The Montaigne Revolution™



*"The darkest evil is that which rises from a desire to do good."*

— Adrian Fletchyr



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*Special Thanks*

This book represents the creative efforts of nearly two dozen people over a period of three years. To them, and to the countless others whose imagination and creativity have touched Théah, our undying thanks.

**Dana:** Thanks to the 7thsea@darkedge.com crew for their enthusiasm, and to Lisa for everything else.

*Dedication*

**Rob:** To the memory of Henry J. Vaux, Sr. (1912–2000). I miss you Grandpa.



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Hubert du Gloyure clenched his fists in frustration as he made his way through the streets of Charouse. He had just spoken with Arnaud. The Empereur had refused to see them, and the *Commoners' Cause* was effectively dead. Hubert told the little lawyer when they first began that their petition would come to naught, but Arnaud could be remarkably stubborn about certain things.

The *Cause* had represented months of work: a careful tabulation of legitimate grievances, as well as reasonable steps to correct them. The entire Society had contributed to it, and Arnaud had pinned an inordinate amount of hope on getting the Empereur to approve it. Even now, Hubert could hear the man's voice. "Léon is a just ruler." "Léon will see the wisdom in our words." "Léon will do what is right."

Léon hadn't even let them past the front gates.

Hubert wandered aimlessly through the streets, trying to get a handle on his growing rage. How could *l'Empereur* be so blind? Bread prices had gone up again, and word came from the outer provinces that villages were starving. The people around him in the streets looked dirty, ragged — corpses that walked and talked. The nation was dying on its feet; in many places, it was already dead.

A vehicle approached, and Hubert suddenly felt the press of bodies around him. Soldiers were clearing the thoroughfare to allow it through. He saw the flash of blue tabard, heard the bark of shouted orders as the troops formed a line between the wagon and the crowd. Hubert jostled among the throng of peasantry in an effort to get a look. A short procession of soldiers preceded what appeared to be a farmer's wagon, holding a man in chains flanked by an imposing pair of guards. The man was dressed in the ragged uniform of a Montaigne private.

"What's going on?" Hubert asked the woman next to him.

"They're taking a prisoner to the Gaol. He's to be executed."

"Executed? Why?"

"Some Marquis was beating a lady and he tried to stop it. Tried too hard, it seems."

"But he is a soldier," Hubert exclaimed.

"He is a peasant." The woman's voice reeked of bitterness. "Peasants have no cause to strike their betters."

Hubert sucked in his breath. "Has justice itself now become a crime?"

The woman looked back at him with empty eyes. "Justice?" I do not know this word, *monsieur*. It doesn't exist."

He turned away from her gaze, just in time to see the wagon roll silently past. The prisoner's face was bruised and beaten, his manacled hands bound tightly to the wagon's frame. The soldiers flanking him scanned the crowd like wolves, waiting for the slightest sign of defiance or threat.

For a moment, Hubert's eyes met the condemned man's. The prisoner gazed at him unblinkingly and du Gloyure gasped. He didn't see death in that face. He didn't see defeat or despair or resignation.

He saw anger.

"No," he whispered. "They can't do this." He raised his arms and tried to call above the noise. "Stop! This isn't right! You have to let him go!"

The wagon moved onward, oblivious to his cries. As he watched it roll away, his hands reached numbly down and closed on a loose cobblestone lying in the street. He felt his rage released in a surging blast, overwhelming all thought as he hefted the stone above his head...

...and threw.

The rock struck one of the flanking soldiers right at the base of his neck. He crumpled like a sack of potatoes. His companion gaped in surprise, then shouted to the squad in front of him. And suddenly, the levy broke. The woman next to Hubert launched herself at the nearest blue tabard, her eyes wild and crazed. A man next to her followed close behind, his lips curled in a feral snarl. The hum of fear surrounding Hubert shifted suddenly to one of pure animal ferocity. The soldiers on the thoroughfare began pushing the crowd back, shoving them towards the nearby buildings. Their leader raised his weapon to his shoulder. Musket shots went off, men screamed as the bullets pierced their bodies, and the soldiers struggled to reload.

But the crowd paid no attention. Peasants surged forward as if pushed by an unseen hand; those in the back shoved madly at those in front of them. They stormed the wagon in a wave,



overwhelming *l'Empereur's* men with sheer numbers. The prisoner stared disbelievingly as his transport toppled over, spilling him — chains and all — onto the filthy streets.

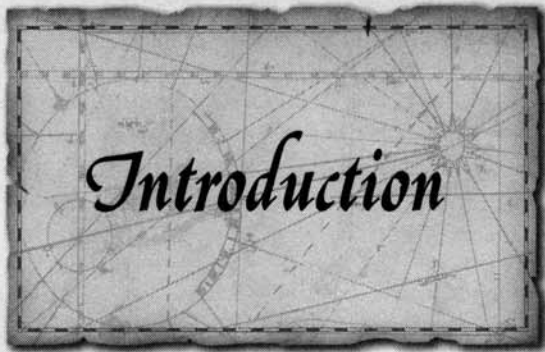
Hubert clawed his way towards the nearest soldier, riding the crest of the crowd's emotions. The man stabbed at him with his bayonet, but Hubert dodged aside and launched a sharp blow at the man's jaw. He felt a crunch of bone as his fist connected.

"Not this time!" he howled as the soldier's body smashed against the pavement. "Justice has come at last!"

The troops in front of the wagon tried to push forward, but they had nowhere to go. Discipline broke down and they turned on the stampeding crowd with a combination of rage and panic. As Hubert watched, one of them stabbed a young woman in the gut with his musket. The peasants around him tore his weapon from his hands and bore him screaming to the ground.

"For Montaigne!" someone shouted above the din. "For the people!"

It had begun.



The last year has brought startling changes to the world of *7th Sea*. All across Théah, old institutions are crumbling and new ideas have moved to the forefront. Some conflicts continue unabated, while others come to sudden, bloody conclusions. From Avalon to Ussura, Théah history moves inexorably forward.

Now more than ever, it is a time for heroes. Opportunities abound for those of courage and daring. Your Heroes have a chance to shape the destiny of nations, to rescue innocent lives from the fires of ambition, and to unlock the secrets of a whole new world.

The *7th Sea Almanacs* are intended to cover the historical changes and developments in Théah. A new *Almanac* will be published each year, covering

important characters, background material, and guidelines for placing your Heroes in the middle of the action.

This particular *Almanac* covers the major events in Théah over a period of eighteen months, from the beginning of 1668 to the middle of 1669. The first chapter covers the long-anticipated Montaigne Revolution: the events leading up to it, the first heady months of the new revolutionary government, and the gradual descent from idealism into paranoia and bloodshed. The second chapter details the events surrounding the rise of Cabora, a Syrneath island in the heart of the Mirror. It focuses mainly on Vodacce, where the island's rise triggers an ambitious coup, and on the Explorer's Society, who have come to some startling conclusions about the nature of the world. The third chapter covers the rest of Théah, detailing minor but significant events taking place across the continent. It includes developments among the Eisen princes, the impact of Montaigne's exiled nobles, and updates on Castille, Ussura, Vendel, and Avalon. Finally, the fourth chapter contains a host of adventure hooks for the GM to put his players in the middle of the action.

The incidents described in this book develop gradually through multiple phases. In order to make the most effective use of this book, GMs should plan out the developments slowly, allowing the changes in Théah to take place at a reasonable pace instead of rushing forward all at once. That way, the players can feel fully immersed in the world around them when the time comes to take action.

While the information contained herein is considered the "official" timeline for *7th Sea*, individual GMs should not feel limited to canonical events. Each campaign has its own unique feel, and if you wish certain things to happen differently in yours (or not happen at all), then by all means make whatever changes you like. *The Montaigne Revolution* is intended as a tool and a guideline, not the final word on your version of Théah. Nothing presented in this book should overrule the GM's wishes.

Théah has entered a bold new era, as bastions of power crumble, and long-held beliefs are challenged by the light of a new day. It takes strong people to make their way through such a period: people of courage, people of daring, people unafraid to fight for what they believe. For your Heroes, the future has arrived. Seize the reins of destiny, and learn what it means to live in interesting times.







Chapter One

# The Fallen Sun



The fall of Empereur Léon is by far the most important event in recent Théan history. Almost overnight, the most powerful nation in the world was turned upside down, and the aftershocks reached the farthest corners of the continent. Many saw the storm clouds brewing long before the end, but few realized how complete *l'Empereur's* downfall would be — and no one believed that the ideals which replaced his could go so dreadfully wrong.

## The Stage is Set

1668 did not start out well for Montaigne. The war with Castille dragged on, neither side gaining the upper hand. The army finally captured the city of San Augustin in early Tertius, and hoped to finally vanquish the last resistance in Rancho Zepeda soon thereafter, but their efforts were hampered by the mysterious El Vago. The Vagabond struck at supply lines, arms shipments, and occasionally the troops themselves, causing no end of mischief among the invading armies. Thanks to his actions, Montaigne could not

capitalize on their victory, and the Castillian armies had time to reinforce their defenses.

The Montaigne suffered a further setback when Castille's Admiral Orduño launched a bold assault against the Montaigne ships blockading the peninsula. The Castillian Armada made short work of their adversaries, and with the blockade smashed, the armies camped behind La Muralla al Ultimo could now be resupplied by sea.

As if this weren't bad enough for Léon, news arrived in late Quartus that General Montegue was abandoning his Ussuran campaign. Apparently, he received a letter stating unequivocally that his ruler wished him dead, which was enough to convince him to return home. An infuriated Empereur ordered the General to remain at the front, but his admonitions had no effect. Montegue pressed towards Odyesse, the conquest of Ussura forgotten. (More on Montegue's efforts can be found on pages 57–58.)

### The Royal Family

The herald's voice cracked as he addressed the assembled multitudes before Château du Soleil.

"His Imperial Majesty wishes to announce that the Princesse Dominique du Montaigne entered confinement shortly after six o'clock yesterday morning. It is my sad duty to report that her newborn son, Prince Léon XV, did not survive entry into this world. His Imperial Majesty has called for a month of mourning in memory of his grandson, and decrees that all subjects wear black during that period, as a gesture of the nation's grief..."

In the midst of Montaigne's military woes, the royal family suffered a seemingly insurmountable series of crises. *L'Empereur's* youngest daughter Dominique went into labor on the morning of Quartus 29, attended only by her servant Anna.



The labor was long and difficult, lasting over thirty-six hours, and in the end the child was stillborn. Dominique survived the experience, but was rendered barren, incapable of carrying any more children. Shaken by the tragedy, she retired to a distant country estate to recover.

When the Empereur heard what happened, his rage knew no bounds. After so many years of trying, the fates had cheated him yet again, destroying his grandson and denying him the possibility of a legitimate heir. With Montegue on the march and his bloodline no longer assured, all of his plans lay in tatters. He almost had Dominique killed for failing him so completely, but he feared the repercussions should Montegue return to find his wife dead. Instead, he vented his anger at an old and reliable target: his subjects.

Within days, new taxes were levied against the populace, ranging from "conscription fees" funding the war to tariffs on beef, eggs and other foodstuffs. *L'Empereur* issued harsh edicts calling for an end to Vaticine presence on his soil, and issued stiff fines to anyone wishing to practice their religion. Montaigne, already overburdened by their ruler's excesses, now felt his oppression as never before.

A new tragedy arose on the heels of the infant prince's death. Beatrice Caligari, sister to Imperatrice Morella, arrived from Vodacce to comfort her kin. Two days later, the palace announced that Caligari had died "suddenly." No other details were given, though guards whispered that the Fate Witch had committed suicide. Her relatives in Vodacce quietly breathed a sigh of relief; Beatrice had always been prone to fits, and her powerful Sorte magic frightened even those close to her. Her body was shipped home and the Imperatrice retreated from the public eye to mourn.

### **The Army in Ussura**

Meanwhile, General Montegue had troubles of his own. He had received word by Porté messenger of his infant son's death and longed to return to his wife. (He briefly considered using a Porté mage to teleport him home instantly, but didn't trust any of them enough to make the attempt.) The Ussuran weather had calmed considerably since he turned west, and he hoped to provide an orderly retreat out of the country. The sooner he got home, the better.

Unfortunately, the Ussurans had ideas of their own. Though Matushka allowed Montegue's army to proceed, her children had not forgotten the

hardships they suffered under the Montaigne. An army camped in the Derevyanniy Forest, initially preparing to defend the capital of Pavtlow, moved towards Montegue's lines — intent on engaging them before they could retreat.

Montegue was ready for them, however. When he turned his troops west, he feinted towards the city of St. Tremult, a vital supply link between Pavtlow and the outside world. The Derevyanniy army shifted north in an attempt to cut them off — giving Montegue the time to slip past them and move west. "The Battle of Derevyanniy," officially dated at Quintus 15, 1668, actually took place without a shot being fired.

The Ussurans were far from helpless, however. Guerrilla soldiers continued to harry the retreating Montaigne, striking supply lines, attacking scouts, and engaging the rear guard in numerous strike-and-fade maneuvers. Their efforts slowed the retreat considerably, adding to the Montaigne's sense of urgency.

Still, Montegue's genius and his soldiers' bravery might yet have carried the day. The good weather allowed them to continue moving, despite the angry Ussurans, and it looked as though they might reach Odyesse safely, where a fleet of ships waited to take them home.

In the end, it was a blow from their own nation which doomed them. Fearing a military coup, *L'Empereur* sent several bands of assassins to kill Montegue; none came close enough to strike. Exasperated, Léon then changed tactics, sending a group of saboteurs to sink the waiting fleet.

The Montaigne army reached Odyesse on Julius 7, 1668, only to find their ships burning into the harbor. Without the vessels, they had no means of sea travel; their escape route had been cut off. Exhausted and bereft of supplies, Montegue had no choice but to continue overland into the barren fields of Eisen. Many of his officers were Eisen mercenaries, who refused to march through their native country. Desertions increased, morale ran low, and they were still a long way from home. Nearly 100,000 men entered Ussura under Montegue's command. Less than 30,000 remained by the time they crossed the Eisen border. The rest fell to weather, plague, desertion and partisan attacks.

### **The Battle of Salzsumpf**

Eisen was in no condition to support Montegue's army. Without supplies, the Montaigne would have to forage off the land, and the barren countryside could not even feed the



people living there now. The first königreich he entered belonged to Fauner Pösen, who had no intention of allowing "Montegue's locusts" to ravage her already overburdened resources. Stung by earlier military defeats (see page 55), Pösen's army was eager to reclaim its honor, and the approaching Montaigne provided an ample target. A force of 70,000 met Montegue's men on the edge of the Salzsumpf swamp, with orders to turn them back at all costs. Caught between the nightmare of Ussura and a horde of hostile Eisen, Montegue had no choice but to fight.

The Battle of Salzsumpf took place on Corantine 15, 1668. Montegue's men fought bravely and the general utilized the marshy landscape with great effectiveness against the Eisen cavalry, but in the end, the Eisen were just too much. The Ussuran Expeditionary force was wiped out; some 7,000 Montaigne were taken prisoner, including their commander. The rest were destroyed. Montegue's aide Karl Steiner vanished into the swamp during the fighting, and never reappeared.

Following the battle, Fauner Pösen placed Montegue in a comfortable but secure estate, and contacted *l'Empereur* to bargain for his release. By ransoming the General off, she hoped to raise enough money to end her kingdom's economic difficulties. To her surprise, *l'Empereur* refused every ransom demand. "A general who cannot fulfill the most basic tasks is worth nothing to me," he wrote. Fauner's sense of honor would not allow her to kill a worthy foe, yet she also would not release him without some sort of restitution. Montegue was left in limbo, comfortably imprisoned and existing solely at the whim of his Eisen captors.

### The Nadir

Word of Montegue's defeat spread quickly throughout Montaigne. *L'Empereur's* spokesmen claimed that Montegue had been killed in the engagement, though many Montaigne refused to believe it. In any case, the loss of the beloved soldier was almost too much for the populace to bear. To make matters worse, early signs showed a bad harvest for the coming fall. Grain prices rose to the point where the average Montaigne could not afford to buy bread. Food shortages began in the outlying provinces. Taxation continued worse than ever, the war in Castille showed no signs of ending, and Montegue was no longer coming to save the people.

One last effort was made to avert disaster. Jacob's Political Society, a progressive social club dedicated to equality and government reform, drafted a manifesto known as the *Commoners' Cause*. It called for an end to excessive taxation, an improvement in relations with the Vaticine Church, and even an elected parliament to advise





Léon on matters of policy. Agents of the Society spread word throughout Charouse that *l'Empereur* would agree to the document's tenets; the principal writer, Arnaud Maximilian du Charouse, believed very strongly in Léon's good will. Their efforts lit a few tiny fires of hope the the people's hearts.

Those fires were snuffed out when *l'Empereur* refused to even look at the document. Arnaud tried social secretaries, nobles in court, even bribed guards in an effort to speak to Léon; he never made it past the gates. During his final attempt, the Lightning Guards on duty warned him that if he approached the palace again, he would be arrested. A dejected Arnaud was forced to abandon the cause.

As word spread of *l'Empereur's* response, hope once more gave away to despair. Truly, nothing could stop Léon from crushing the people beneath his shoe. But beneath the hopelessness, something else had appeared: a deep and abiding anger, the kind that comes from having nothing left to lose. It was a fearless anger, a crazed anger, the anger of the utterly damned. In this atmosphere, it took only a single spark to ignite a firestorm.

That spark's name was Private Jerome.

## The Revolution Begins

Jerome was a simple peasant, conscripted by the military and sent off to fight the Castillians. He performed extraordinarily well in the field, earning several commendations for bravery. One fateful day, he saved his commanding officer from a sniper's bullet, taking an injury in the arm for his trouble. The grateful lieutenant arranged for an honorable discharge, allowing Jerome to return home to the woman he loved.

The only problem was she had already married. In order to stave off her family's starvation, Jerome's true love wedded a nobleman named Yanick Bisset du Verre and took up residence as a country noble. Yanick beat her. Often. She endured the abuse for the sake of her family, and because she had little recourse in the eyes of the law, but her husband's temper turned her life into a nightmare of fear and pain.

(See page 114 and the *Montaigne* sourcebook, pages 68–69 and 113 for more information on Jerome.)

When Jerome returned home to find his sweetheart married, he was devastated.

He traveled to du Verre's estate to speak to her, evading the servants and making his way to her chambers. When she found him there, she explained her circumstances, told him that her family was now well taken care of, and begged him to accept her marriage. Sadly, he agreed to leave her in peace, though his heart was breaking with the pain of it.

As he moved to leave, however, he caught sight of a butterfly bruise on her forearm. Seizing her by the wrist, he pulled off her sleeve, revealing a series of similar injuries up and down her arm. The tearful woman confessed that her husband often lost his temper at her. Without saying another word, Jerome left her chambers, sought out Yanick where he dined in his drawing room, produced a pistol, and shot the man dead.

Yanick's servants quickly subdued the enraged soldier and turned him over to the local authorities for punishment. The trial lasted less than two hours, and Jerome's death sentence came down as a matter of course. Furthermore, the judge ordered him removed to the courthouse in Charouse, "where a proper crowd could witness *l'Empereur's* justice." This last edict would have dire repercussions on the nation.

Jerome was chained to a wagon and paraded through the streets of Charouse. He still wore his soldier's uniform, and bore the marks of captivity on his face (his jailers had beaten him severely). The silent crowds along the route were amazed at his set face, his look of defiance, his chin held high and proud as he rolled towards his fate. His countenance looked nothing like the haggard and beaten souls watching his procession. Perhaps it inspired them to act on their pent-up frustrations. Perhaps it was simply one injustice too many.

It started less than a quarter mile from the *Empereur's* palace. From somewhere in the crowd, a rock struck one of Jerome's guards. Then another. Then another. In a flash, the crowd went from hopeless to enraged. As the guards turned on them, they charged the procession, overpowering the troops and freeing Jerome from his chains. The act was not enough to slake their anger, and they soon marched on the courthouse, the gaols, and the *Empereur's* personal holdings. As word spread, rioting broke out all over the city. The Lightning Guard was able to repulse a crowd attempting to gain access to Château du Soleil, but other locations did not fare so well.

By evening, Charouse was in chaos. Angry mobs ran through the streets at will, smashing windows and attacking any perceived as nobility.

A furious *l'Empereur* called out the Musketeers, ordering them to fire on the crowds. The Musketeers refused, almost to a man; those who didn't were quickly restrained by their colleagues. They would not massacre starving peasants, no matter who gave the order. Incensed to the point of insanity, Léon ordered the Musketeers disbanded and summoned the army to restore order.

By then, however, it was too late. As news spread of the uprising in Charouse, the outlying provinces erupted in revolt. Mobs of peasants congregated around any symbol of authority, demanding an end to *l'Empereur's* oppressive policies. Angry crowds stormed the estates of the nobility, servants turned upon their masters, and soldiers deserted their posts. In many provinces the peasants gained access to firearms, though from where few could say. Rumors of shadowy political societies, of malcontents with stockpiles of guns, circulated throughout the country, but nothing substantial could be proven.

*l'Empereur* attempted to recall the armies from Castille to bolster his position, but they could not retreat without suffering brutal casualties. Within a few days, anarchy descended throughout the entire country. At first, the bloodshed was considerable: nobles and officials were slaughtered by the hundreds: some after impromptu "trials," some with even less legitimacy. Many nobles fled the country using *Porté* magic. Many others weren't so lucky.

The efforts of the disbanded Musketeers were all that kept the bloodshed in check. They would interpose themselves between mobs and their targets, often risking death in the process. They held panicked army units at bay, disarmed the most bloodthirsty revolutionaries, and hunted down bandit gangs now roaming unchecked through the country. Though no longer recognized by their ruler, their heroism — towards peasant and nobility alike — saved countless lives, and probably held the nation together in those violent first days.

In the capital, things were worse. Violent mobs ran unchecked through the streets, and not even the army could restrain them. A second assault on *Château du Soleil* took place early Septimus 27, and this time, the Lightning Guard could not keep the mob at bay. Screaming peasants battered down the gates and stormed into the palace in search of their oppressor. The Lightning Guard, led by Remy du Montaigne, fought back with all their might and slew nearly two hundred



### *l'Empereur's* Daughters

While the Montaigne revolutionaries saved most of their ire for *Empereur Léon*, his family did not escape their wrath either. His daughters lived privileged lifestyles eclipsing even the wealthiest noble's, and their existence held political liabilities as well. Any children they bore could theoretically lay claim to the crown and throw the country into turmoil.

Of *l'Empereur's* eight surviving daughters, three — Evelyne, Miriam, and Nicolette — were slain in the early days of the Revolution. A fourth, Rosamonde, was captured while attempting to rescue her twin sister Evelyne, and would have died were it not for the fortuitous arrival of another close kin.

Isabelle du Montaigne — who had fled the country years earlier and now lived the life of a pirate-adventurer — caught wind of the Revolution and snatched Rosamonde from the clutches of the mob as she was being led to the executioner's block. The two fled to the open sea aboard Isabelle's ship, the *Wayward Swan*, and have remained there ever since. They currently top the new Montaigne government's list of wanted criminals.

The remaining three daughters all escaped Montaigne safely, or else were out of the country when the Revolution began. *l'Empereur's* eldest, Cherié du Montaigne, lives in Castille with her husband, Don Aldana. She has remained on her estate since the Revolution began, and refuses to take a position on the matter. Anne du Montaigne, wife of Musketeer captain Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, was escorted out of Montaigne by her husband's men. She took up residence in the Eisen town of Siegsburg and currently leads the Montaigne government in exile.

*l'Empereur's* youngest daughter, Dominique, disappeared from her country estate during the earliest days of the Revolution. She has not been seen in public since, and all manner of rumors surround her current status. Of all Léon's children, she is the least vulnerable politically, since her miscarriage rendered her incapable of bearing children. Still, many people would dearly love to know where she is — and what plots she may be hatching.





### Remy and Jean-Marie

The duel between Remy du Montaigne and Jean-Marie Rois et Reines has become a legendary part of Revolutionary lore. It took place as peasants stormed the Empereur's palace during those first heady days. Remy took charge of the Lightning Guard and ruthlessly attempted to stem the tide.

Jean-Marie, meanwhile, was on the estate when the battle began. He had seen his wife Anne to safety and returned to the Château to protect some of the fleeing servants. When the bloodshed began, he tried vainly to stop it, calling on his own men in an effort to control the violence. They slowly made their way to the courtyard, where Remy and a cadre of Guardsmen were holding the frenzied crowd at bay. They fired volley after volley into any target which presented itself, dropping peasants by the score.

"Enough!" Jean-Marie shouted. "They are retreating. This bloodshed is pointless."

In response, Remy turned and drew his sword. "Are you a traitor to the crown as well?" The Lightning Guard gasped at their leader's audacity. Jean-Marie simply drew his own sword and assumed the duellist's position.

"I will not stand by and let you slaughter the people I have sworn to protect," he said.

The duel was long and bloody, "as if the nation's right hand warred against its left," Hubert du Gloyure later wrote. They fought back and forth across the courtyard, their hands a flurry of parries and counterthrusts. Both men suffered several deep cuts, but neither would yield. Finally, after nearly fifteen minutes of flashing blades, Jean-Marie stumbled upon a loose stone. In an instant, Remy was upon him.

"*Sic Semper Proditoris!*" he hissed, raising his sword.

A volley of gunfire sent him to the ground before the blow could fall. The Musketeers, watching from the palace doorway, would not stand by while Remy slaughtered their leader. As Jean-Marie staggered to his feet, he saw the Lightning Guard turn their guns on his men — only to be overwhelmed by the peasants who had regrouped behind them. The Guardsmen fell in a flash, and the palace belonged to the mob.

revolutionaries before finally retreating (see speakout text to the left).

Unfortunately, their efforts gave *l'Empereur* time to gather himself. At first he sought out his wife Morella, hoping to convince her to manipulate the Fate strands and somehow get him out of this. He entered her chamber to find her hanging from a noose; she would rather die, it seemed, than aid her husband again. Without Morella, Léon had no choice but to flee. A band of loyal followers helped spirit him out of the palace, across the countryside, and to the coast where an Eisen mercenary ship waited to take him to safety.

However, the ship never arrived at its destination. The harbormaster's logs reported it "lost at sea," even before its royal passenger became known. It simply disappeared. Two weeks after the vessel departed Montaigne, *l'Empereur's* body was discovered hanging from a tree near the shoreline. No sign of his killers ever appeared, although the body was fully clothed and still had all of Léon's personal effects.

The only thing missing was the ring belonging to Cardinal d'Argeneau.

## The New Government

With *l'Empereur* gone and the nobility running for their lives, the question now arose how to effectively rebuild the country. In many areas, government fell into the hands of "councils" consisting of the strongest or most charismatic revolutionaries and their followers. Government coffers had been looted, the domestic military was gutted, and the Musketeers no longer officially existed. The only good news was that the army in Castille remained more or less intact, and indeed had repulsed several Castillian offensives during the crisis.

It fell to Jacob's Political Society and similar social clubs — most dominated by middle-class bourgeois — to take the reins. *The Commoners' Cause* made "Jacob's men" national heroes, and they quickly moved to exploit that newfound fame. Hubert du Gloyure, the Society's unspoken leader, called for the formation of a new government on Octavus 10, 1668. Representatives from every town and province gathered in the old Palace of the King to discuss the specifics. Many were farmers or mob leaders, though more than a few canny politicians found themselves in the mix as well.

From the beginning, the Jacob's Society dominated the proceedings, using several eloquent essays — most penned by Arnaud du Charouse — to sway the attendees towards their agenda. They spoke of high-minded ideals, of equality for all humanity, and of a reborn Montaigne leading the world into a shining new era. Perhaps most shockingly, they drew upon the Brotherhood of the Coast — an entity not recognized by any nation — as a model for their new government. The Brotherhood demonstrated that democratic rule could function effectively, and that nations did not need kings or other rulers to keep them strong. Entranced by these words, the assemblage overwhelmingly approved the Jacobians' designs.

On Nonus 7, 1668, Charouse announced the formation of a new Montaigne government. A Parlement, consisting of elected representatives from all over the country, would pass laws and formulate policy. At their head stood the Council of Eight, an executive committee elected from among the Parlement, and charged with setting the legislative agenda. The army was reorganized, and a new national seal commissioned (the scales of justice replacing *l'Empereur's* sun). With Jean-Marie Rois et Reines in exile, the Parlement called upon Aristide Baveaux, a prominent Knight of the Rose and Cross, to reform and lead the new Musketeers. Baveaux accepted the position without hesitation.

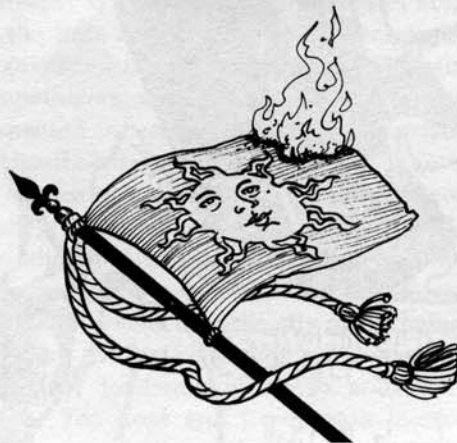
The first few months saw a tremendous relief spread across Montaigne. Taxes were repealed, harsh laws overturned, and all males over the age of twenty-one received the right to vote. The Statement of Equality, one of the first edicts issued by the new government, declared a series of inalienable rights for all Montaigne citizens. No longer could anyone be held in prison without being accused of a crime. No longer could the nobility act as they pleased without facing the repercussions of their actions. The reformed Musketeers continued to uphold honor and justice as they had always done, and the people felt the weight of many long oppressive years finally lift from their shoulders.

The government faced its first real test in making peace with the Castillians. With Léon out of the way, Montaigne no longer felt the need to exact vengeance against the Church. At the same time, it held nearly half of Castille's territory, and its armies miraculously remained intact during Léon's overthrow (despite large numbers of deserters and several Castillian counterattacks).

This gave them a potent chip to play in their negotiations. In the end, Montaigne agreed to withdraw from Castille in exchange for annual reparations and the ability to maintain a garrison in the border town of Barcino. The armies came home to a hero's welcome, the reparations provided desperately needed funds, and the new government still controlled both sides of the mouth of the great River. An auspicious beginning indeed.

A few early clouds marred this otherwise blissful period. The Montaigne archbishops remained missing, and the Council of Eight did not seem particularly concerned about turning them up. Many members secretly feared a new Hierophant coming to power (especially someone like Ésteban Verdugo), and while they made token efforts to locate the missing clergymen, they had no intention of allowing them to be replaced — not until they stood on firmer footing with Vaticine City. The populace, thrilled with the return of their parish priests and the repealing of most church levies, didn't ask too many questions.

The other troubling issue remained secret to all save a few, and they never spoke of it to the public. Soon after the establishment of the new regime, negotiations opened between Montaigne and Fauner Pösen for the return of the Ussuran Expeditionary Force. Though the Montaigne quickly secured the return of the survivors of the Battle of Salzsumpf, they simply did not have the funds to release General Montegue. Fauner refused to relinquish her prize prisoner without "adequate recompense," and Montaigne could not afford to pay her ransom. Arnaud du Charouse, the Council Member in charge of the negotiations, made a fateful decision not to inform the populace of Montegue's status. The general remained in Pösen's hands while Montaigne proceeded with its glorious new regime.





Still, despite these tidings, things looked bright. Stability had come to Montaigne, and with it came the opportunity to correct the evils of the past. Freed of Léon's oppression, the people rejoiced in their newfound freedom and looked forward to the glorious days to follow. For a time, their happiness was justified.

For a time.

## New Troubles

Like Léon before them, the new government suffered its first setbacks in the financial arena. It began almost immediately, but its effects were not seriously felt until the spring of 1669. The frenzy of the Revolution had cost the nation a huge amount of wealth. Government coffers had been looted and never replenished; the bad harvest continued to hit hard, and with the repealing of so many taxes, revenue no longer rolled in with much frequency. The Parlement developed many bold new programs — road improvements, wide-scale irrigation, and the like — which required intensive investments to develop. The money simply wasn't there.

As finances became worse, the government took steps to correct the problem. They borrowed funds from Vodacce Princes, sold off *l'Empereur's* possessions, and even took a page from the Vendel book by issuing paper currency — the *liberté*. None of it had any lasting effect. The *liberté* sparked a precipitous rise in inflation, and the other funds only partially covered the government's spending.

The Parlement also began to suffer from political squabbling. The lawmakers soon divided between two main groups: *La Couronne* ("The Crown"), moderates who disliked rapid change, and *La Vallée* ("The Valley"), idealists who wanted Montaigne to become something greater than she had been. The Parlement was based in Charouse, where revolutionary fervor ran high, and many delegates were affected by the atmosphere in the streets and cafés. Many members of *La Vallée* feared a return of the monarchy, and demanded harsh penalties against those expressing royalist sympathies. As time went on, their voice slowly grew louder and their message changed from hope for the future to fear of the past.

In many cases, they had good cause to be concerned. Noble émigrés had settled in foreign



courts, where they plotted ways to take their nation back. Though the exiles in Siegsburg (see pages 59–60) favored negotiation and talks, more vocal émigrés threatened violence and retaliation. Prominent figures whispered threats of assassination, of economic blockades, even of raising an army and taking their country back by force. Such antagonism only exacerbated the political debate in Charouse, turning otherwise healthy arguments into frenzied shouting matches.

The Council of Eight tried to guide things towards a solution, but they were hampered by their own beliefs. Many of them fell into the Vallée camp themselves, and deeply feared the return of the nobility. While they refrained from outright demagoguery, they also fought hard to protect their high-minded goals, which often involved vilifying those who opposed them. In the process, they lost sight of the practical realities required to govern a nation.

All of this took place slowly, over the course of months. On the surface, everything appeared fine, and most Montaigne didn't realize the looming danger until it was far too late.

### Blood and Politics

The first serious blow came in Quintus, 1669, when a pro-royalist faction of la Couronne attempted a political coup against the Council of Eight. They called for new leadership in the Parlement, as well as the instatement of Jean-Marie Rois et Reines and Anne du Montaigne as "regents" to assist in governing. They thought they had the support to carry their motion through. Unfortunately, Charouse malcontents caught wind of the coup and launched a large protest outside. The sight of angry citizens demonstrating in the streets caused many of the coup's backers to develop cold feet. As they pushed for their agenda, their allies evaporated, and the Vallée idealists turned on them en masse. They were removed from their positions, and the ringleaders were imprisoned for "plots against the nation."

In the wake of the scandal, the Parlement's former tolerance began to vanish. Suddenly, the republic's ideals required harsher measures to survive. New laws were put into effect, prohibiting open support of royalist sympathies. Nobles still in the country found themselves targeted by oppression and abuse. A branch of the Musketeers was assigned to defend the nation from potential insurgents. Arrests increased;

the jails in Charouse began to fill again. This time, however, the populace welcomed such measures. They saw Léon's hand reaching from beyond the grave, and applauded the Council's efforts to cut it off before it could strangle them.

Two months later, a second blow fell, this one much harder. On "Bloody Feast Day," Julius 15, pro-royalists in the pay of a Kirk exile assassinated Eugene Suchet du Crieux, a member of the Council and ardent idealist. He was taking tea with Aristide Baveux when a group of armed men stormed the cafe and shot him. Baveux attempted to intercede and suffered the same fate as well. A third target, Jean-Marc Navarre, was saved in the nick of time from an equally vicious assault nearby (see the adventure hook on pages 93–94).

The country erupted with anger. Calls went out to find the villain responsible. Both the Musketeers and the local Rose and Cross swore they would uncover the conspiracy. The government even threatened war with Wische, believing the government in exile responsible. They only backed off when Fauner Pösen and Stefan Heilgrund swore to defend Wische from any attack (the last thing Montaigne wanted was a reunified Eisen).

As the search for the killers began, Council member Hubert du Gloyure organized a public funeral for the slain leaders. He carefully orchestrated the event to "raise public awareness," which meant whipping the Charouse crowd into a foaming frenzy. The bodies were led along the boulevard in open caskets, wrapped in Revolutionary flags and escorted by legions of honor guards. A womens' choir sang *aves* from the bed of a huge open carriage, while children threw rose petals from open windows along the parade route. The funeral concluded with the burning of an effigy — sporting Léon's face — intended to represent Tyranny and the Enemies of Montaigne. By the time it ended, Charouse was in a state of jingoistic fervor. Homes of supposed sympathizers were attacked, and anyone even suspected of noble ties was imprisoned or publically harassed.

Meanwhile, the Knights and Musketeers made swift progress in their search for the killers (see the adventure on page 93). Using the Rose and Cross's resources, they tracked the assassins to an abandoned estate near the city of Dechainé. In the resulting conflict, the ringleaders were captured and their followers killed or scattered to the winds. The Rose and Cross soon located those



who escaped the attack, and less than three weeks after Bloody Feast Day, the entire conspiracy sat in a Paix jail.

The trial which followed attracted attention from all over Théah. Though the evidence against them was considerable, the assassins never revealed the émigré behind their murderous deeds. Documents spoke only of a "Kirk connection," and the chief suspects refused to speak even under threat of torture. In the end, they were found guilty to a man, and sentenced to hang.

As they were led to the gallows, the assassins snarled defiance at the baying crowd. Two of them sung pro-Léon songs as the ropes fell around their necks and one wore the seal of the Sun King on his collar (his executioner tore it off before he reached the gallows). The last to go looked out over the assembled crowd and promised a hideous vengeance to follow. "You think you've found all of us," he sneered before the noose pulled taut. "You're wrong. Long live the Empereur of Montaigne."

These last words struck the crowd like a knife. The killers' bodies were torn to pieces before they could be buried.

## The Frenzy

In the wake of Bloody Feast Day, Parlement came to the conclusion that the Revolution was in peril. Eugene du Crieux had been the unspoken head of the government, and with him gone, the Council of Eight lost its impetus. In the ensuing vacuum, the Council's quietest member slowly emerged as the new face of Montaigne. Arnaud du Charouse, hero of the Revolution for his role in the *Commoners' Cause*, found himself holding the reins. His bureaucratic nature led to involvement in nearly every aspect of the Council's activities. When Eugene died, Arnaud was running the day-to-day aspects of the government, and had concrete knowledge of every program and subcommittee. The Parlement naturally began deferring to him, and by the time the assassins were caught, the diminutive lawyer was the nation's *de facto* leader.

The killer's final words affected Arnaud quite deeply. Besides threatening the new utopia he sought so earnestly to build, the possibility of more conspirators threatened him personally. He immediately set about drafting new legislation, and delivered a stirring series of speeches to the Parlement in order to pass it. "Unless we guard

ourselves from our enemies," he told the assembly, "our grand republic shall not survive its infancy."

Within days, new laws were passed designed to "ferret out reason's foes." Amnesty for nobles was revoked, even for those without Porté magic. Sorcery was now punishable by death, and those caught harboring sorcerers could be imprisoned indefinitely. In a law dubbed Statement 15, Arnaud created the Committee of National Welfare — a secretive organization given wide powers to "pursue enemies of the state." This new police force answered only to the Council of Eight, and in many cases could flout the very laws it supposedly enforced.

Within the Parlement, moderation soon gave way to fear. The citizens of Charouse took to appearing in the debate halls, begging their representatives to save them from "Léon's thugs." Individuals became crowds, and legislation was often interrupted by hysterical bands of citizens spilling onto the chamber floor. Members of la Vallée sensed a political opportunity, and easily directed the mob towards their more moderate opponents. By mid-Corantine, la Couronne had been purged from the Parlement — some by votes of no-confidence, some by enraged peasants literally dragging them from the floor — and la Vallée reigned supreme. Historians subsequently dubbed this period "the Frenzy."

With the new Committee in place, a feeling of paranoia slowly gripped the countryside. Within a few weeks, numerous arrests were made on suspicion of treason. Some had very real basis in fact — royalists still had a presence in Montaigne — but many others had done nothing more than provide a tempting target. The new laws became an excuse to settle old scores, and neighbors learned to accuse hated rivals solely as a means of getting rid of them. The Committee groomed spies to watch for royalist activity, and soon had agents in every corner of the country.

Arnaud du Charouse himself fed the flames when he made a dramatic accusation. Madeline du Chatelaine, a fellow member of the Council, was suspected of secretly harboring royalist sympathies. Arnaud had her arrested during a heated session on the Parlement floor, at which point he jabbed a finger at her and shouted "There — there is Léon's legacy in our midst!"

In the trial which followed, dark revelations came to light: that Madeline was a sorcerer in the pay of some secret conspiracy; that she took numerous trips to Carleon through some

unknown means (possibly Porté), where royalist émigrés held court; that she stockpiled weapons in preparation for a counterrevolution. She was found guilty and executed the day after her trial, along with sixteen other suspected traitors.

In response to the perceived royalist threats, executions increased dramatically. Officials wished to expedite the trials of convicted traitors, lest their “exiled friends” use Porté to free them from their cells. Most condemned prisoners were executed within twenty-four hours of conviction, many even more quickly. Public executions became a standard sight in most Montaigne towns, and with the advent of *le coiffeur* (see the nearby sidebar), began drawing substantial crowds.

The theatrics Arnaud employed in the Chatelain case were hardly uncommon during the days of the Frenzy. Arnaud’s fellow Jacobian, Hubert du Gloyure, often engineered dramatic spectacles for the edification of the masses, and the Council of Eight quickly learned that propaganda could be a useful tool for swaying the mob. Hubert du Gloyure’s infectious theatricality changed the caliber of executions and other public events, making them more obscene carnivals than displays of justice.

As the Frenzy gained momentum, the rest of Théah slowly pulled away from Montaigne. Avalon withdrew many of its ambassadors, and the Council of Eight suffered heavy criticism from Castille and Eisen as well. The exiled government in Siegsburg (see pages 59–60), originally open to negotiation, became hostile to the point of warfare. In the end, even Jean-Marie Rois et Reines — one of the most ardent supporters of peaceful reconciliation — condemned the Council’s actions. “You have neatly replaced one tyranny with another,” he wrote in his final letter to Charouse, “and I will not aid in the slaughter of more innocents.” The border between Montaigne and Wische *königreich* became an armed camp, and only Reinhard von Wische’s steely resolve prevented all-out war.

By the late summer 1669, Montaigne stood in the throes of tyranny: a different flavor of tyranny than Léon’s, but tyranny just the same. With the Committee of National Welfare in full swing, fear and paranoia lurk beneath the fancy rhetoric of freedom. Montaigne has returned to its cage, only this time it seems unaware of the bars surrounding it. Few see the Council of Eight as hatefully as they saw *l’Empereur*; indeed, to the average Montaigne, they are heroes. Words like



#### *Le Coiffeur*

The infamous guillotine has a different origin (and name) in the world of Théah. Concerned about the rising number of condemned criminals, the Council of Eight offered a prize of 2,000 Guilders to whoever could devise an effective (and humane) method of execution. An Eisen engineer by the name of Renny von Gierhart proposed a new form of execution, one free of human error and offering less pain than hanging or a headsman’s axe. The subject’s head was secured in a wooden stock, while a weighted blade was dropped along a high set of runners. The blade lopped the subject’s head off with a single slice, and could be quickly reset to accommodate the next subject. Gierhart called it *der Tötenklinge*, but Arnaud du Charouse dubbed it *le coiffeur* (“the barber”). The ghoulish title quickly caught on, and *le coiffeur* became a familiar sight in Montaigne town squares.

“liberty” and “freedom” ring in people’s hearts, even as those qualities are stripped from them bit by bit.

In the end, perhaps it was Montaigne’s sheer size and complexity which doomed its dreams of democratic utopia. They hoped to apply the model of the Brotherhood of the Coast, transferring its peculiar notions of equality onto the greatest nation on Théah. But the Brotherhood had no cultural ties; it lacked Montaigne’s lengthy history and proud sense of identity. The Brotherhood numbered less than a thousand people, while Montaigne numbered nearly thirty million. And while the Brotherhood had nothing and no one to answer to, Montaigne represented the center of Théan civilization; what happens to it affects the entire world. In that light, it’s not surprising that Montaigne’s democracy collapsed.

Thus it stands less than a year after the overthrow of the worst despot in Théan history. The only question now is, how long will the bloodshed continue? And what, if anything, will replace it?





## The State of the Nation

On the surface Montaigne appears a supremely pleasant place. The populace is happy, *l'Empereur's* oppressive laws have been lifted, and the nation stands proud once more. On closer examination, however, their newfound freedom is an illusion. The Committee of General Welfare has recruited spies from every level of society, hunting the enemies of the Council of Eight. Nobles live under constant threat, and those suspected of royalist ties can be jailed without warning. Executions are a daily occurrence; an average of twenty Montaigne are put to death each day, mostly for treason. Signs of the Frenzy can be seen in every village and street corner.

Ironically, the Montaigne openly tolerate such oppression, even embracing it in certain provinces. The reason for this lies in the memory of their departed ruler. Though long dead, *l'Empereur's* ghost continues to haunt the nation. The peasants fear a return to his gross excesses, and have vowed never to bend the knee to another tyrant. The threat of a counterrevolution — spurred by the nobles in exile and exemplified by the Bloody Feast Day assassinations — fill them with dread. They will accept any steps necessary to save them from such terror.

The Council of Eight shares their fear, but also understands how to exploit it. Through carefully timed speeches mixed with a little demagoguery, they can bend the populace towards any end they wish. There is very little malice in their efforts — they genuinely believe in their vision of equality and would do anything to see it realized — but the end result is the same. So blinded are they by their noble goal, that they cannot see the tyrannical means they are using to reach it.



## Montaigne Politics: An Overview

The following provides a brief summation of each of the stages of the Revolution, and the political situations at the time.

**During the reign of *l'Empereur*:** Montaigne politics centers on the courtiers. Nobles have administrators to handle all of the mundane work of running Montaigne, and the country is suffering for it. The courtiers are far more interested in fashion, parties, repartee, and *l'Empereur's* whim than they are with feeding their citizens or running their wars. More than in any other nation, the interests of the courtiers are far removed from real life. This does not mean, however, that they are not as vicious or deadly. A loss of prestige can mean lack of support when an enemy comes calling, and a witty remark can cut an opponent's friends out from under him. At this point, politics should almost be like a game. The courtiers make decisions, and move their pawns, but the results are immaterial. While blackmail and bribery are common tools, physical threats are considered gauche. After all, anybody can fire a pistol. It takes a master to humiliate an enemy.

**Between Septimus 24, 1668 and Octavus 17, 1668:** Chaos reigns. Politics in Montaigne during this period are the worst kind of rabble-rousing and "mobocracy." Anybody linked to the nobility is attacked and executed, usually without trial. Anyone with a gift for demagoguery can find followers, as long as they can satisfy bloodlust (which is not very difficult). The Jacob's Society and others begin to establish leadership over the mob, not by curbing the mayhem, but by directing it. Rioting and looting are daily events, and innocents suffer. Because of the riots, there are food shortages, and the deteriorating living conditions spreads disease. Furthermore, the administrators who used to handle such crises are fleeing for their lives, or already dead.

**Between Octavus 17, 1668 and Nonus 5, 1668:** The formation of the National Parlement and the Council of Eight. As people begin to establish stability, the importance of politics becomes increasingly apparent. Calm heads are needed to temper the mob's rage. Those who show good leadership (i.e., Heroes) during the riots are going to be remembered. It is a new political arena for Montaigne, as untried politicians in an untried

system deal with previously unknown issues. Finally, after realizing the shortage of qualified political administrators, the Council decides to offer amnesty to nobles who are willing to work for them. There are many opportunities for Heroes to shine here, calming down fervor, negotiating nobles' returns, making moving speeches for the Parlement and Council. For more information on the new government's organization, see *Government Structure*, below.

**Between Nonus 5, 1668 and Sextus 15, 1669:** The closest approach to stability yet. The Parlement is forced to deal with several important issues, such as recovery from a wartime economy and increasing royalist support (in part due to the political inexperience of the Parlement and Council). As a result, the reins of power tighten in order to prevent a coup. Heroes involved with the Parlement are forced to walk a delicate tightrope between fanaticism and disloyalty, with the line moving steadily towards fanaticism. Again, however, the opportunities exist for political Heroes to make a difference, as assassination attempts become everyday occurrences and heated rhetoric flies with reckless abandon. At several points, Parlement meetings are in danger of breaking into fistfights.

**After Sextus 15:** Following Bloody Feast Day, all bets are off. Arnaud du Charouse becomes increasingly paranoid and fanatical, consolidating ever more power "in the name of the people." He begins witch-hunts over the slightest provocation, and there are lines for the coiffeurs. "Politics" degrades into Arnaud's policies, his toadies' fanaticism, and the increasingly difficult task of avoiding their notice. The persecution of Porté sorcerers establishes a new profession of bounty hunters, dedicated to tracking down expatriate Montaigne nobility. Riots start over reports of people in gloves, and some gloved individuals are inevitably found guilty of Porté in trial, or experience "mob justice" on the spot.

The Montaigne Revolution marks the beginning of a paradigm shift in Théan politics, as the power moves from the hands of courtiers to those of politicians. Until now, politics centered upon the courts, and the nobility. While there was power to be gained in the courts, most of the intrigue existed as merely a pleasant diversion for bored dukes and earls. The Revolution illustrated the necessity for a functional political system, and the consequences of not having one in place. While not necessarily in danger of a revolution, the other Théan nations are keeping a close eye on

Montaigne, as an indicator to the rest of the world. It is a frightening time to be a politician in Théah right now, but it is also an exciting one. The politicians of the Revolution, more than any others, will be immortalized in Théan history as Heroes...and Villains.

## *Government Structure*

With the departure of the nobility, the old Montaigne government lost its foundation. The system of lords, dukes and marquis literally vanished overnight, as did the notion of low, high, and middle courts. In its place, the new regime implemented a top-down model, crafted by Arnaud du Charouse and the rest of the Jacob's Society. Traditional provinces remained unchanged (the map on page 63 of the *GMs' Guide* is still accurate), but the method of running them underwent some fundamental changes.

Each local area has its own prefect — elected once every two years — who oversees government operations. A general council assists the prefect in his duties, which includes enforcing laws, organizing the town watch, and so forth. Each council member serves for one year before coming up for reelection. In urban areas, the prefect is still referred to as a mayor.

In addition, Charouse assigns a local political officer to assist each prefect in performing his or her duties. Originally, these officials were intended to help the local populace understand the new government. In practice, however, they have become instruments of the Committee of National Welfare, enforcing patriotic doctrine and punishing dissenters. Though they have no official authority, many rule their territory as absolutely as any noble.

The prefects all take direction from the provincial governors, who are elected to four-year terms. The governors control the local army units, appoint judges and other officials, and implement large-scale policies from Charouse (such as dams or road improvements).

At the top of the government stands the Montaigne Parlement, consisting of four hundred officials elected from every province in the nation. They are divided into various committees and subcommittees, charged with handling specific duties of the state (the Committee of Public Commerce, for example, is charged with maintaining Montaigne's roads). Each member serves for a period of three years.



The Council of Eight presides over the entire Parlement, and dictates the body's agenda. They decide the order of items to be debated, determine when votes can be called for, and mediate disputes between Committees. The Parlement as a whole elects members of the Council, and though no one says it out loud, they effectively rule Montaigne.

Unfortunately, all of this is raw. It literally didn't exist before the Revolution, and had to be implemented very quickly. Its creators, though intellectually enlightened, had little experience running a government, and the resulting system owed more to ivory tower ideals than any sense of *realpolitik*. Few Montaigne have the education or insight to understand this strange new form of government. The average peasant doesn't understand notions of budgets, trade tariffs, or public works; he wants only to farm his crops in peace. Because of this, the Parlement rapidly filled with demagogues, shysters, and shoeless farmers who couldn't read the laws they voted upon. Local provinces were dominated by local hot-heads and ambitious powermongers, who committed all sorts of political mischief. While some towns

function exactly as intended — with enlightened leadership providing strong moral guidance — most have fallen into paranoid despotism, with only the trappings of legitimacy to justify their actions.

The only part of the government which remains more or less constant is the Musketeers, who continue to defend the helpless as they always have. They avoided the temptations of power during Léon's regime, and their code is strong enough to resist this new siren call as well. Further details on their status can be found on pages 24–25.

### The Committee of National Welfare

In the law dubbed Statement 15, Arnaud du Charouse provided for the creation of a new organization, charged with ferreting out pro-royalists and other traitors. The Committee of National Welfare received wide authority to “protect the nation from its enemies.” It recruited and assigned almost two hundred members, spread throughout the country in an effort to stamp out treacherous activities.

Committee members derive all of their powers from Statement 15, which gives them the right to arrest suspects, command town guards, and even overrule local officials if they feel the situation warrants. Their testimony holds the same weight as a Musketeer's, and they answer only to the Council of Eight (which at this time means Arnaud du Charouse).

The Committee concentrates most of its efforts on observation and surveillance. They employ numerous spies and snitches, combing the countryside for word of pro-royalists. They only take action when they are certain the odds are on their side — serving arrest warrants in the middle of the night, and often preparing trials for victims whom they intend to execute. In some provinces, they wield dictatorial powers, and along with the political officer can hold entire towns in their thrall.

As of Corantine 1669, the Committee is still in its infancy; their numbers are relatively small and they have yet to fully exploit their position. The populace still fears the return of the monarchy, and sees the Committee as a necessary defense against Léon's followers. Only time will tell how much further the Committee will go... and whether Montaigne can do anything to stop it.



## The Army and Navy

With the end of the war, Montaigne military leadership took on a much different caliber than its previous incarnation. Many officers abandoned their posts when the Revolution began, and many others resigned once the invasion of Castille ended (and they no longer had to worry about being overrun by the enemy). The ensuing leadership crisis almost caused a complete military collapse, but the Parlement narrowly averted disaster with a rapid reorganization plan. Noncommissioned officers were quickly promoted to fill in the gaps, and the army's overall structure shifted towards a more localized format. Individual units now garrisoned particular provinces, and advancement came from experience rather than noble blood. The Leveque War College in Charouse was reopened and quickly turned out a new corps of junior officers: fresh-faced newcomers who had to take orders from the grizzled veterans of Castille and Ussura.

This smaller, leaner Montaigne army bore little resemblance to the conquering battalions of Léon's time, but matched the new government's needs remarkably. Defense took on an added priority, as did other domestic concerns such as bandits and pro-royalist guerrillas (though the latter represented public paranoia more than any legitimate threat). Under the watchful eye of Major Gilbertine du Muguet (a member of the Council of Eight), the army quickly settled into its reformed role.

The navy, on the other hand, underwent very little structural change. The only real difference was the new sense of equality, which spread through the navy as quickly as it did on the mainland. Commoners may now hold officer positions, and crewmen receive the same tax-exempt status as their superiors. No Montaigne citizen could be legally conscripted (though the law did not extend to foreigners), and nobles were subject to the same disciplinary measures as their so-called lessers.

Beyond that, the navy continued much as it always had. Nobles could still hold power if they proved themselves, and even Porté messengers were tolerated due to their vital communications abilities. Admiral Alazais Valoix, himself of noble blood, retained command of the Montaigne navy, along with Dominique Leveque d'Aur, who controlled the Muguet naval yards. (More on Admiral Valoix can be found on page 107; further details on the Montaigne navy can be found on pages 36–38 of the *Waves of Blood* sourcebook.)

## Daily Life

For better or for worse, life in Montaigne is drastically different from what it was a year ago. Once-sullen peasants now smile and raise a toast to their benevolent leaders. Noble estates lie abandoned, while the flag of the Sun King has been replaced by the scales of justice flying above Charouse. *Le coiffeur* now decorates most village squares, and “royalism” has become a watchword for treachery.

Before the Revolution, the nation looked much as it always had: the nobles indulged themselves at the expense of the peasantry, while Léon viewed his charges as objects who existed for his amusement. That changed in a heartbeat as the organs of the old system were literally torn out and cut to pieces. The initial frenzy of bloodshed left Léon's regime in ashes, and along with it the established order of how things were supposed to be.

The first days of the new regime were pleasant. Most provinces knew little of the fervor going on in Charouse; they only knew that the crippling taxes had been lifted, and that they were now free to choose their own leaders. The majority of citizens went back to their former lives as best they could: farmers harvested their crops, innkeepers served their wine, and everyone did their best to forget the horrors suffered under Léon.

As the threat of counterrevolution raised its head, people's perceptions changed. Now the danger did not stand at the nation's head; it hid behind friendly faces and trusting smiles. Pro-royalists could be anywhere, and their presence threatened to return Montaigne to the despotism it had just escaped. While things remained pleasant on the surface, suspicion and paranoia began to filter through. People no longer mentioned certain topics; strangers were viewed with suspicion and mistrust. When the Committee of National Welfare began its operations, everyone feared the knock on the door in the middle of the night.

Today, everyone in Montaigne speaks of freedom and liberty, and few claim they have any reason to complain. In some provinces, this impression bears out, and the people live happy and trouble-free lives. In other areas, however — particularly cities like Paix and Charouse — “freedom” and “liberty” are just rhetoric. People no longer speak without glancing over their shoulders. Strangers are shunned and even old friends are held at arms' length. Anyone might be



a pro-royalist; associating with one — even unknowingly — means being branded as a conspirator and sent to *le coiffeur's* for a trim.

Many of the larger cities have been taken over by the mobs. The citizens feel safer in large crowds, and have learned to channel their emotions into frenzied public displays. In places like Paix and Charouse, the politicians openly pander to the mob, drawing on their fear and anger to give them strength. The Parlement in Charouse is periodically interrupted by large bands of citizens who disrupt the proceedings with cries for justice, mercy, or revenge. Otherwise-moderate politicians fear for their lives in such an atmosphere, and often end up acceding to the crowds' demands (no matter how extreme or outrageous). Others, like "Citizen Sausseur," or the Axe in Paix (see pages 108 and 116), know how to ride the crest of anger and transform it into political power.

Charouse and other large cities resemble armed camps. The Council of Eight has set up an elaborate identification system, allowing them to quickly identify potential insurgents. Check points are set up at all exits from the city and at major intersections where heavy traffic occurs. The checkpoints and patrols examine identification paperwork, inspect cargo for contraband and arrest anyone breaking the law. Failure to produce correct identification paperwork is a serious crime, and grounds for immediate arrest.

There is little room for debate in today's Montaigne. Those who do not proclaim their patriotism and love of the Revolution immediately become suspects. Pro-royalism is punishable by death, and the definition of "crimes against the state" varies almost from official to official. In some place, it is treachery merely to steal bread from a good citizen, while in others speaking of departed nobles in anything less than excoriating terms can mean a trip to *le coiffeur*. Everyone must watch what they say — and who they say it to — or face the consequences.

### Crime

Beneath the shadow of political crimes, the more mundane variety has remained in check. Bandits and other outlaws have become uncommon, and while the cities still have their share of street crime, the Musketeers have done an admirable job of curbing society's ne'er-dowells.

One illicit activity which has seen a marked increase since the Revolution is smuggling. Many nobles left priceless works of art behind and would pay dearly to recover them. The black market for jewels, paintings, Syrneth artifacts and the like has exploded since Léon's fall, and those willing to risk the *coiffeur* can expect a considerable profit for their efforts. For the right price, a smuggler could be enticed to transport human cargo as well: spiriting a wanted noble or other "criminal" out of Montaigne.

## Émigrés

During the Revolution, countless nobles fled Montaigne for foreign countries, using their money and Porté magic to save themselves from the mob. Many emigrated to Vendel or Avalon, where the ruling regimes gave them sanctuary, or to Vodacce, where the Great Game always welcomed new fodder.

Initially, most of these émigrés found themselves powerless; though they had money and breeding, they lost their holdings, and their home nation considered them traitors. However, they had other assets which proved enticing to their host nations. Only the Vodacce play the political game better than the Montaigne, and Vodacce has its own problems. Montaigne nobles can spot intrigues that would go unnoticed by other nobles and know how to respond in kind, making them desirable allies for experienced courtiers.

Then there is the Porté factor.

A good part of Montaigne's strength has always been its sorcery; it has better navigational, courier, and espionage systems than any other nation in the world. Every single power in Théah is interested in getting their hands on Porté sorcerers. Expatriate Montaigne nobility can easily find positions within the Vendel Guilds, Vodacce Princes, and Avalon's Sea Dogs, among others.

Not everyone is pleased to see the émigrés, however. As nations scramble to collect the scattered nobles, quite a few secret societies, in addition to the National Parlement, want to stop their sorcerous activities. Both die Kreuzritter and Sophia's Daughters want to see an end to Porté use, and will pull whatever strings they can to quietly neutralize any blatant sorcerers. The Invisible College is desperate for Porté blood, most of which ends up drying on the guillotines.

The émigrés' political stance varies widely. Though most desire to return to Montaigne, they have mixed attitudes towards the new government there. Some advocate open conflict, and speak of raising an army and taking "their" country back. Others desire a more peaceful reconciliation. A few just want to go home without fearing for their lives. Many émigrés sympathize (at least in theory) with the plight of the peasant and quietly breathed a sigh of relief at l'Empereur's death. All of them, however, watch the events of the Frenzy with increasing revulsion, and it is becoming clear that they may not be returning home for a long, long time.

Most exiles reside in Avalon or Vendel, where friendly governments offer them safety and comfort. The more daring settled in Vodacce, where their forward-thinking ideas (like female literacy) have caused quite a few waves. Few émigrés can be found in Castille, though a small number has found shelter with Chérie Montaigne de Aldana. Chérie herself is the only Porté mage among their number (and she refuses to use her magic under any circumstances), and they show no signs of stirring up any trouble in their former country. There are almost no émigrés in Ussura.

The biggest contingent, however, cropped up in a very unlikely place. The Eisen kingdom of Wische, devastated by the War of the Cross, represented a perfect power vacuum for the Montaigne émigrés to occupy. Though Eisenfürst Reinhard von Wische had awakened from his coma (and remained an imposing personal presence: see pages 59–60), the rest of the kingdom was a complete wasteland ruled by bandits and wandering bands of *waisen*. The Montaigne nobles soon found that money could buy them nearly anything, and quickly bought up ruined estates, paid off bandit gangs, and offered desperate peasants jobs as servants. They came to von Wische, offering their assistance in rebuilding his nation in exchange for his support.

One day after Charouse announced the formation of its new government, the "true rulers of Montaigne" announced a government-in-exile, based in Siegsburg and centered around the Empereur's daughter Anne. More information can be found in the "Wische" section of Chapter Two (pages 59–60).



## In-Country Nobility

Needless to say, the Montaigne nobility left in the country have suffered a drastic reversal of fortune. No longer do they rule their country with an iron fist. No longer do claims of heredity place them above their fellow man. Quite the contrary: the blood-red hands of a Porté mage have become the symbol of second-class citizens.

In the first days of the Revolution, noble blood spilled freely on the streets. The lucky ones were merely imprisoned; most were shot on sight or executed by hastily-arranged kangaroo courts. Entire bloodlines vanished overnight, and those who survived found themselves facing a bleak future.

Things improved somewhat once the dust settled. The new government did not wish to condemn out of hand anyone who wielded Porté, neither did they wish sorcerers to move at will through the country. Furthermore, noble émigrés openly plotted against the Parlement, and could use their magic to enter the nation undetected. Such a threat would have to be addressed, even as "safe" Porté mages received protection from unwarranted persecution.

Early on in the new regime, a series of laws were enacted to address "the Porté issue." They offered amnesty to all Porté mages who renounced the use of sorcery. The wearing of gloves was outlawed — preventing sorcerers from hiding their gifts — and offenders caught practicing Porté would suffer the loss of their left hand in punishment. Licenses were issued permitting the bearer to legally practice Porté in certain narrowly defined circumstances, and "reformed" nobles soon found work as message carriers, naval officers, and the like.

Naturally, most nobles refused to stoop to such levels. Raised on the notion of their own inherent superiority, they couldn't conceive of working for a living, of sharing living quarters with some common cloth merchant, or of using their gifts for base "professional" reasons. Though some joined the army or the Musketeers — the only two places where rank was still respected — most preferred to flee the country rather than swallow their pride.

As the halcyon days of the Parlement gave way to oppression and Frenzy, the government's lenient status vanished. Bloody Feast Day confirmed the nation's worst fears, and the nobility once again took the brunt of the blame.



New legislation suspended their rights under the law, and they could be jailed without warning if their heritage became known. A new wave of émigrés filled Théah's courts as the Frenzy began, and those who could not flee adopted new identities to escape *le coiffeur*. Naturally, those without Porté magic had an easier time of it than their sorcerous cousins.

The only haven available to the upper class (at least if they wished to remain in Montaigne) was the Musketeers, and then only if they already belonged. Many noble sons and daughters joined that august band before the Revolution, and they remained above reproach, even as the Frenzy slaughtered their brethren by the score. Not even Arnaud du Charouse wished to openly question their loyalty. Those outside the Musketeers, however, had no recourse, and nobles attempting to join the order solely to escape persecution found their petitions denied. By the end of 1669, the government's list of "acceptable" Porté mages consisted solely of established Musketeers and a few messengers remaining in the military.

## The Musketeers

And what of Montaigne's noble protectors? The Revolution placed them in a supremely awkward position, yet they managed to retain both their honor and their status as the people's chosen defenders. Léon's ill-considered command to dissolve the order helped guide their hands through the early period of the Revolution. Before the Revolution, many Musketeers were torn between their loyalty to *l'Empereur* and their devotion to the people. But with Léon's dismissal, their choice became clear.

Abiding by their credo of "all for one and one for all," the disbanded Musketeers quickly reformed as semi-autonomous units, answering only to their tightly-held code of honor. Stories of Musketeer heroics during those first bloody days continue to reverberate: pulling screaming innocents from angry mobs, halting the bloodthirsty depredations of the cruelest nobles, spiriting prisoners to freedom from beneath their jailers' noses. One particularly famous story involved a Musketeer and his companions saving a young woman trapped in a lighthouse as her crazed neighbors tried to burn it to the ground (see the adventure hook on page 95). As tales spread, they became the catalyst for Montaigne's new-found hope.

When the new government formed, there was never any question that the Musketeers would continue to play a role. Though their former captain, Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, had abdicated for political reasons, they found an admirable replacement in Aristide Baveux. The Knight of the Rose and Cross had a reputation beyond reproach, and the Musketeers eagerly embraced him as their new leader.

A few cosmetic changes were in order. The Sun King tabard which they always wore was exchanged for a new design bearing the Revolutionary scales of justice. The Musketeers' Code was revised slightly to reflect the changes in the new regime, and their Oath now read as follows:

*"On this day, I [state your name] hereby pledge allegiance to the people of Montaigne. May their strength be my guide now and forever. May I resist temptation and be fair and honest in all manners. May my sword and tabard remind me of who I am and of the responsibility I bear. May my soul be brave and my arm strong. Here I am, free of greed and hate. Here I am, standing by my brethren for the people of Montaigne. All for one and one for all!"*

Beyond that, little changed. The new regime knew better than to trifle with the order's inner workings, and the Musketeers retained their structure, training methods, and legal powers. As the only surviving symbol of the old ways, they became an important link to the past, serving as a reminder of all that was good and noble in Montaigne's spirit.

The slow dissolution of the Revolution's ideals took its toll, however. Many Musketeers were outraged by the death of Aristide Baveux, and went to great lengths to avenge it. They thought the matter settled when the murderers were caught and killed; the cryptic threat at the gallows seemed nothing more than empty verbiage to them. But they had little idea of the hold Léon still had on the nation's psyche.

As Bloody Feast Day gave way to the Frenzy, their status changed. Those in power secretly feared the order and their unassailable reputation. Some believed that the Musketeers still harbored pro-royalist sentiments. After all, they had protected Léon for many years, and their ex-commander led the government in exile. Despite that, they could not move openly. A few Musketeers could be accused of treason, but the public would not tolerate active persecution of their perceived champions.



Instead of “purging” them like he would any other institution, Arnaud du Charouse took steps to limit their impact on Montaigne. He slowly maneuvered them into positions better fitting his scheme of things. The Musketeers retained their authority to pursue “traditional” criminals, but they had no authority to arbitrate cases involving enemies of the state. That power belonged to the Committee of National Welfare. They could not pursue traitors, nor could they interfere in cases involving treachery against the nation. By adhering to the letter of their revised code, Arnaud ensured that the Musketeers did not interfere with his political ambitions.

Officially, the Musketeers could do nothing. Arnaud and the Council of Eight were still national heroes; to openly challenge them would invite civil war. But secretly, many took steps to oppose the new regime: shielding victims of the Frenzy, organizing clandestine prison breaks, and otherwise thwarting the plans of the Committee. Such opposition involved great risk, but courage was never scarce among the Musketeers.

They received help from the Knights of the Rose and Cross, who had more experience keeping secrets. The Musketeers’ brief tenure under Baveux drew them closer to the Knights and more than a few members now belonged to both orders. The Knights helped keep their brothers in arms clear of the Council of Eight, and

often destroyed evidence of Musketeer involvement in “treasonous” activities.

Not every Musketeer fought the Frenzy, however. Some viewed the Council of Eight much the way they viewed *l'Empereur*: flawed, but still the heart of their nation. Others never got over Baveux’s assassination, and held pro-royalist exiles responsible for the attack. Their numbers remain small, however, and whatever their beliefs, none would dream of turning on their fellow Musketeers. The Oath runs stronger than politics.

As things currently stand, the Musketeers operate with near-autonomy, pursuing their heroic ends as best they can. Their current captain is Thierry du Lamolle, a quiet, thoughtful man who delivers regular reports to the Council of Eight. Though not as dashing as his predecessors, he knows how to keep the order safe. (More on Thierry can be found on pages 106–107.) If the GM permits, this role may be filled by an experienced Hero instead. Such a character would have to be a lifetime member of the Musketeers, and amassed skills roughly equal to Thierry’s or Jean-Marie’s — including reaching the Master level of at least one recognized Swordsman School. Details are up to the GM, but should be handled with care.) Few Musketeers actively meddle in the government’s affairs, content to serve the people and wait for the political winds to change.





## Secret Societies

Théah's secret societies played a significant role in the Montaigne Revolution. Many of them saw their agendas come to fruition, while others faced set-backs that they could not possibly have anticipated. At least one group now holds significant sway over an entire nation, and the Frenzy may have produced an entirely new organization, heretofore unknown (see pages 74–85). A brief outline of their response to the Revolution, as well as the internal changes wrought by the upheaval follows.

**WARNING:** these passages assume that the reader is familiar with the secret society in question. Players whose Heroes do not belong to a specific society should not read further without approval from the GM.

### Explorer's Society

The Explorers have little interest in politics, and as such did not take an active hand in the Revolution. Their chapterhouses remained largely intact during the first bloody days, and while they lost a few prominent sponsors among the nobility, they had more than enough resources to pick up the slack. Upper-class Montaigne members used the Society to escape to Avalon, and the rest dealt with the new government as they would any other ascendant sovereign.

One sticky issue remains. To the Society's frustration, the Parlement continued Léon's policy of sealing off the ruins beneath Charouse and other Montaigne cities. Whatever lies down there scares the new government as much as it did the old, and the Parlement has roundly rejected all Explorer entreaties to study the ruins further. Luckily, the Society knows how to circumvent the Montaigne authorities. They had plenty of practice when Léon ran things (slipping Explorers into the sewers and caverns, jotting down hasty notes, and so on). Why should they change tactics just because someone new is in charge? Explorer operations in Montaigne use the same clandestine

practices they always have, and achieve much the same results.

### The Invisible College

The College has found a friend in the new Montaigne government and has been willing to turn a blind eye to some of the Council of Eight's more gruesome excesses. Many College members have found refuge in Montaigne universities, and can openly proclaim their scientific endeavors without fear of persecution. Knowledge is a prized commodity in the new regime, and the Council of Eight welcomes anyone who can invest their intelligence in humanitarian pursuits. The Parlement takes a dim view of the Inquisition, and with the populace freed from Léon's wrath, the peasants are less inclined to inform on known scientists.

There is a price for this increased safety, however. One of the College's two safehouses in Montaigne — the Race in Charouse (see *The Invisible College*, page 54) — has been forced to close down. The nearby track no longer hosts races (it has been converted to farmland), and the Race's sponsor, Camilla Prescaut, was forced to flee in the early days of the Revolution. She subsequently set up shop in Kirk, where she now hosts as many of her old companions as she can. She still sponsors racehorses, which provide data for her ongoing research into the mathematics of probability.

### Knights of the Rose and Cross

The Revolution did not threaten any of the Knights' tightly-held secrets, though it did cause a significant dent in their funding. Numerous patrons came from Montaigne's nobility, including *l'Empereur* himself, and their overthrow meant considerably fewer Guilders rolling into the order's coffers. Many patrons cashed in their years of support in exchange for aid in their house of need. The Knights took a great risk by helping certain nobles flee the country safely, and were left significantly poorer for their efforts.

Through fortunate happenstance, the Knights found one of their number — Aristide Baveux — amid Montaigne's inner circle once the dust had settled. At first, they thanked Theus for the good luck. Baveux's efforts brought the Knights and the Musketeers closer together, as well as giving them a formidable voice in affairs of state. They took care, however, not to marry themselves too closely to the new regime; politics never treated the order well.

As the government's woes increased, the Knights distanced themselves from the regime's policies, and Baveux, for his part, concentrated all of his energies on the Musketeers. Then came Baveux's assassination. The Rose and Cross openly protested the "harloting" of their fallen member by Hubert du Gloyure's grotesque funeral display, but the Council of Eight ignored their concerns. Though outraged by the death of their most beloved member, the Knights felt that the matter ended by the time Baveux's killers were caught and hanged. The Montaigne government felt differently, and continued their persecution of royalists and other "enemies." On the surface, the Knights meekly acquiesced to the government's position, but secretly they began preparing to fight the growing Frenzy.

Though they did not wish to act openly, their recent connections with the Musketeers gave them a perfect front to take action. They lent aid to their chivalric allies in the form of safehouses, forged letters, and information on likely enemies. Wherever they could, they took a direct hand in the action, but their leadership warned against being discovered. If the Council of Eight decided that the Knights were an enemy, the repercussions would be devastating. Instead, they moved behind the scenes, careful to avoid any semblance of partiality. The Musketeers provided more than adequate cover.

The Montaigne chapterhouses suffered somewhat during the early days of the Revolution, as rampaging mobs targeted any sign of rank or privilege. The Knights defended their holdings admirably, and quickly repaired any damage. Aristide Baveux relinquished control of the Crieux house in favor of a trusted underling (a Hero if the GM permits), but the other houses retained their established leadership.

With the coming of the Frenzy, most Knights in Montaigne must keep a low profile. The House of the Nine Keys in Paix stays particularly quiet. Despite its advantageous position in the heart of the Frenzy, it contains too many secrets to risk any attention. Some Knights have debated establishing a second chapterhouse in the area, but nothing has yet come from it.

### Die Kreuzritter

The Revolution came as a godsend to the Black Crosses. Their fears about Porté, their concern about the Barrier, their dark suspicions about Léon... all of it ended with the howl of the mob. In the new Montaigne, sorcery decreased

dramatically, the Vaticine regained lost ground, and the new government actively discouraged Porté use. Die Kreuzritter could find few downsides in this turn of events.

Though they had little direct involvement, the Black Crosses used the Revolution to considerable advantage. Several prominent Porté sorcerers were targeted in the first days, and Black Knights took care to finish off those whom the angry peasants missed. Thanks to their intense secrecy, none of





their sanctuaries were discovered during the revolt, and the few Montaigne nobles belonging to the Order (including Vincent Gaulle du Motte; see *die Kreuzritter*, page 65) avoided their countrymen's wrath. Most had adopted new identities before Léon's fall; the rest received help from the other Black Crosses, who skillfully directed attention away from their compatriots.

Since then, *die Kreuzritter* activity in Montaigne has focused mainly on patrolling cities and keeping Vigil for signs of further Porté activity. The one task left incomplete is the return of the Montaigne archbishops. Despite Léon's overthrow, the missing Vaticine officials have yet to turn up, and the Council of Eight shows little interest in pursuing the matter. The Black Knights need to either find the archbishops, or produce proof of their death. Until that happens, the Church will remain without a Hierophant.

Secretly, the Black Crosses' leaders deplore the recent bloodshed of the Frenzy, but they also know that it was probably necessary. *L'Empereur's* excesses threatened the very fabric of Théan reality, and as tragic as the Frenzy may be, it will probably save lives in the long run. If there's one thing *die Kreuzritter* knows, it's the value of sacrifice.

### The Rilasciare

As one of the principal architects of the Revolution, the Rilasciare can claim responsibility both for its successes and failures. Because of its fractured nature, different cells take different

views, though they are largely united in their relief at the reduced use of Porté.

The two most prominent Montaigne cells — Paix's Historical Gentleman's Club and Charouse's now-famous Jacob's Society — took an active hand in the Revolution. The fiery Gentlemen's Club took the forefront during the revolt in Paix, and led an assault on *le Labyrinthe* as the city's nobles tried to escape. Their leader, a man calling himself "The Axe," claims to have personally slain *l'Empereur's* daughter Nicolette (an appalling breach of the society's ethics), and currently serves as the mayor/prefect of Paix. He has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards sorcerers and their ilk.

As for the Jacob's Society, their efforts had an even wider effect. Jacob members were instrumental in forming the new government, and one of their number, Arnaud du Charouse, currently rules Montaigne. Their policies have shaped the outlook of the entire country, and they believe that they now hold the keys to the Rilasciare's highest hopes. To them, a potential Montaigne utopia justifies any steps necessary to preserve it.

Other cabals take a less rosy view. Some voice quiet disapproval, but most believe that the Jacob's Society has gone dreadfully wrong, burying the Rilasciare's dreams beneath an ocean of blood. Unfortunately, no real precedent exists for punishing an entire cell; their position renders the Secret Court irrelevant and no one has the authority to formally revoke their membership.



Furthermore, no Rilasciare branch has ever achieved as much as the Jacob's Society, and even fervent opponents envy the opportunity they now hold in their hands. For better or for worse, the Revolution is the Rilasciare's child — and they must live with its bad side as well as its good.

### Sophia's Daughters

Like die Kreuzritter and the Rose and Cross, the Daughters walk a dangerous line with the Revolution. Though appalled by the bloodshed (and disturbed by Madeline de Chatelaine's execution), they believe that the alternative would be even worse. To the Daughters, the Revolution is a lesser evil; its victims die so that countless thousands might live. They supported the call to arms against *l'Empereur Léon* and ensured that one of their number stood among those who succeeded him.

At the same time, however, they have not blinded themselves to the Revolution's darker side. Some members took steps to contain the bloodshed, even as other members encouraged it. Several Daughters fell to angry mobs, and the increased vigilance against Porté meant that they could not always rely upon their magic to help them. The Montaigne Handmaiden, Ysabelle du Montaigne, is currently the nation's most wanted criminal and actively opposes the new regime — a regime which (until recently) included another Daughter. Such is the bipolar nature of the society: they find themselves simultaneously supporting and defying the Revolution.

Strangely enough, this makes perfect sense to most members. They know that the future often demands conflicting viewpoints, and believe that, in the long-term, such conflict will bear fruit. Thought it may seem schizophrenic now, it falls neatly in line with the vision of future centuries.

Montaigne's three Srying pools (see *Sophia's Daughters*, pages 121–123) remain secure, though the estate of Lady Monique du Four has undergone a change in ownership. It still serves as a haven for runaway women, but is now run by a trio of Vaticine priestesses — all of whom belong to the Daughters.

### Los Vagos

The Vagos have little direct involvement with Montaigne these days. The Revolution brought an end to the war and the withdrawal of the Montaigne armies from Castillian soil took a great weight off their shoulders. They can now concentrate entirely on the Inquisition and other

“local” problems, leaving the Montaignos to their own devices.

The only area which continues to affect them is Barcino, the Castillian border town which remains in Montaigne hands. Good King Sandoval agreed to a foreign garrison of the city, and while Los Vagos cannot simply overwhelm the occupiers (which would most probably start another war), they have no intention of letting the garrison rest easily. Several Vagos bands under the command of Don Christian Acedo de Lopez del Torres (see *Los Vagos*, pages 51–52) have established safehouses in the area, and the Vagabond himself has appeared more than once on Barcino's rooftops (see page 53). El Vago will not abandon the city until it once more lies in Castillian hands.

Despite the focus on their native land, the growing bloodshed of the Frenzy gives some Vagos pause. Their natural sense of chivalry cries out to help those in need, and while no one acts “officially,” a few Vagos have lent clandestine aid to victims of the Revolution. The society maintains several safehouses in Montaigne (in Buche, Echine, and Arisent), and uses them as launching points for the occasional daring rescue. Such incidents never take precedence over Los Vagos' more pressing concerns, however. Castille comes first, as always.

One Vagos has taken direct action in Montaigne. Mlle. Alexis Dubois du Arrent (see *Los Vagos*, pages 55–57) has begun to take a hand in her homeland, using the power of her Obsidian Mask to strike out against the orchestrators of the Frenzy and rescue those in need. Fantastic tales of “*Le Fantôme Noir*” (The Black Phantom) float across the troubled land, and many evil-doers have rightfully become afraid of their own shadows.

Alexis uses her connections to the Los Vagos in Castille to smuggle those she has saved to safety, and is currently seeking allies throughout Montaigne (including, perhaps, the Rye Grin; see pages 74–85). She has also used her ties with the Explorer's Society to drum up further support.

Alexis has used her skills as an artist to capture the horror that has gripped her country, distributing her sketches to various newspapers and periodicals in foreign lands. She also uses her artistic fame to get close to regional leaders of the Frenzy, learning everything she can so she can strike out against them later. It is a dangerous game, but one she is determined to win.





Chapter Two

# *Vodacce and the New Age*

Théans have always known that something lay beyond the western seas. Their scientists calculated the size of Terra centuries ago, and realized that the land mass of Théah covered only a small percentage of the entire globe. What did the rest of it contain? That burning question helped launch the first Age of Discovery 250 years ago, as curious adventurers departed Théah for the western (and in some cases the southern) seas.

None of them ever came back. Whatever lurked beyond the horizon claimed every ship that sailed near it, and after enough expeditions vanished, the curiosity slowly died down. The discovery of the Midnight Archipelago provided some compensation (in resources, Syrneth ruins, and the like), but little else came from the brave men and women who dared chase the setting sun. Théah turned inward, and for over two hundred years contented itself with the mysteries of its own shores.

That time may be drawing to a close.

## *Vodacce*

Ironically, this bold new age began with a very old conflict: Vodacce's Great Game, a seemingly endless struggle that inadvertently touched off a monumental change in the world. To understand that change, one must first understand the situation in Vodacce: how it began and where it stands as of mid-1669. It is there that this new period of Théah's history has its roots.

### **Business As Usual in the Viper's Nest**

AV 1668 literally got off to a shaky start. In late Secundus, an earthquake rumbled off the coast of Vodacce, spilling a portion of the cliffs on Falisci Island into the ocean. While earthquakes are not uncommon, this particular tremor revealed a partially buried keep in the side of the mountain, a stronghold once belonging to Carlo Umberto Falisci. A 14th century nobleman of peculiar interests, Falisci had plundered several Syrneth sites he discovered upon the island and reportedly stashed the artifacts in a vault deep within his estate. The Explorer's Society immediately dispatched a team to recover as many treasures as possible, but they were met with determined opposition in the form of Vito "Angel Eyes" Caligari (the third cousin of Prince Vincenzo Caligari) and his loyal followers.

The two groups fought a pitched battle within the keep as it literally fell down around them, but the Explorers ultimately triumphed, securing Falisci's Diary and a glass globe containing a weighted mechanical gyroscope in the center. The keep and the remainder of its contents (including Angel Eyes) crashed into the foamy waters below in a matter of hours, destroying an incredibly important historical find before all of its secrets could be unearthed.

Some accounts indicate that the Explorers may have found more than artifacts in their brisk search of the compound, though. Tales of a wretched creature, possibly of Syrneth origin, have circulated in the months since. For their part, the Society has remained tight-lipped on the matter, neither confirming or denying the rumor (see the adventure hook on page 99).



Prince Donello Falisci quickly came under pressure from his peers for allowing the Explorers and Caligari's minions to slip in and out of his province without repercussions. Not wishing to appear weak, he turned his attentions away from hosting galas and other social events, focusing his energy on making his presence felt within the Great Game. In little more than a year, he would have more influence and power than he ever though possible (or even truly wanted).

Ever an opportunist, Prince Giovanni Villanova took advantage of the situation to steep up his own naval patrols "to defend Villanova interests." His ships sank at least four vessels known to be on the Caligari payroll — which did not go unnoticed by the crafty Vincenzo.

In early Tertius, Villanova learned that Caligari had taken an interest in a rather nasty section of his property, an area on the mainland simply referred to as "the Swamp." The rival prince's men were preparing an expedition into the Swamp, hunting an Explorer named Reginald Coleson. While it was insulting enough for Coleson to be sniffing around, trespassing by Caligari forces could not be tolerated.

Though Villanova failed to find out exactly what the Explorer was searching for, he did arrange for the Caligari expedition to meet its end deep in the Swamp. He also personally (and publicly) killed Vincenzo's grand-nephew Antonio Caligari as a further lesson to his cousin. (See *The Arrow of Heaven* for more information on these events.)

Caligari was not the only notable figure Villanova schemed against. Once matters in the Swamp were sorted out, he turned his attention towards his rivals in the far north: Val Mokka and the Vendel League. One of Villanova's merchant ships carrying a fortune in rare goods (and a few artifacts of note) was scuttled in mid-Tertius by the League for traveling too far north, and the prince was itching for revenge. A perfect opportunity presented itself when his network of spies reported that Val Mokka's adopted nephew, Lome, had secretly docked in Porto Spatia, negotiating trade with envoys from the Crescent Empire. When word reached Villanova that Lome had set sail for home, he set into motion a particularly devious scheme.

One of Villanova's Special Emissaries, Angelina, recruited a group of adventurers under the false pretense of seeking to capture a Vendel pirate known as "Il Macellaio" (The Butcher). Angelina and her hirelings then met up with the

Vestenmannavnjar Captain Yngvild Olafssdottir (who had received Villanova "donations" for weeks) and chartered the *Revensj* and her crew to intercept Lome's ship. The plan went perfectly until the adventurers discovered Angelina's true intention of killing the innocent Lome Mokka. Their quick action during the boarding of his ship saved the young Vendel's life; four nights later, Angelina was fatally poisoned during a dinner at the Villanova estate.

Having failed to murder Lome, Villanova switched tactics. He quietly leaked information to Prince Gespucci Bernoulli that the Vendel League had interest in commerce with the Empire of the Crescent Moon. As Villanova hoped, Bernoulli was furious. He saw the League's overtures as an act of open warfare against his family, and gave strict orders to his fleet to fire upon any League vessel they might encounter. All Bernoulli merchant ships were required to include at least fifteen capable marines among their crew. Smelling blood, Bernoulli's son Giuseppe took a fresh interest in his father's affairs and made a sport of raiding Vendel (and secretly other) ships in the waters all around Théah (see the adventure hook on page 99).

Unfortunately Bernoulli's push against Vendel ships never had any effect past the Montaigne fleet off the coast of Castille. The Montaigne Navy, under orders from Admiral Valoix, fired volleys of warning shots when Bernoulli vessels sailed too close. Much to Bernoulli's chagrin, the Vendel provided needed goods to the Montaigne's war effort, and the Admiral could not afford to leave his benefactors vulnerable. To retaliate, the devout prince sold his own supplies to the Vaticine forces in Castille at a great discount.

### **Vestini**

To no one's surprise, Prince Marco Edorado Vestini was quick to ally himself with Bernoulli's cause. Vestini had advocated war with Vendel since he first came to power, and spent the following months rallying the other princes to his point of view. His own ships fared worse than Bernoulli's, suffering heavy losses to pirates and Vendel Marines. This only served to strengthen the young man's resolve, and he invested more and more money into the unofficial war, spreading his resources dangerously thin.

### **Lucani**

Meanwhile, Prince Alberto Lucani spent the early months of 1668 focused on his family,

specifically his twelve-year-old daughter, Dahna. Lucani began to court suitors for the girl the first day of the new year, and every week brought another potential husband to their doorstep. Dahna despised each one more than the last and could not believe that her loving father would even consider marrying her off to "some old monster" for the sake of politics. Lucani could feel her pain, but was completely unprepared when his little girl at last screamed that she hated him. She threw a horrible tantrum, breaking several family heirlooms and setting fire to a closet full of her father's finest clothing.

Before he knew what he was doing, Lucani struck the girl across the face with the back of his hand. Then he did it again. And again. And again. When her mother tried to intervene, Lucani struck her as well, knocking her to the floor. He raged late into the night, venting all of his pent-up frustrations in a single display of venom. He cried and cursed his family's lot, of how the Lucanis would never be worth anything. At last he drank himself to sleep, but his once-happy household would never be the same.

### **Mondavi**

As usual, Prince Alcide Mondavi spent the first part of the year outside the affairs of his fellow princes. The continuing war in Castille saw an increased demand for his grains in the embattled

country, and many in Eisen would have starved from the harsh winter if he had not made a timely donation of wheat and rye. The other princes scoffed at the quiet man's generosity, but Mondavi would have the last laugh.

### **Caligari's Plan**

Meanwhile, Vincenzo Caligari continued to scheme against his cousins. The deaths of so many relatives in his employment in so short a time did not bother him in the least. He had expected to outlive them anyway, and their failures proved they could not be counted on. He was better off without them. He watched Villanova's moves against him with some amusement: detached as if he were playing Squares. The fool had given him but another reason to keep on living.

On the rare occasion Caligari made a public appearance, his audience always murmured at the old man's increased vitality. When Caligari dined with Cardinal Beppo Mueso in the latter part of Tertius, the corrupt clergyman at first thought he was talking to one of the prince's sons. Caligari brought two bags of gold to the meeting, requesting that the Cardinal approach the Church to grant him permission to trade with the Crescent Empire. At first leery of what Bernoulli might do if he learned of yet another threat to his livelihood, Mueso gave into temptation.





The possibility for great personal gain if his new friend got his wish was too great to refuse. He drafted a letter sent it to his colleagues in Vaticine City the next day.

On the fourth of Quintus, Caligari received word that representatives from the Church wished to be his guests. By noon the next day, they were enjoying a delicious meal and Caligari's finest wines. After the feast, in a secret chamber beneath Caligari Island, the clergymen revealed themselves as agents of the Inquisition. In no uncertain terms they told the Prince that the Church would happily allow him to trade with the Empire of the Crescent Moon, but such a boon had a price. The Inquisition wanted the notorious Captain Allende imprisoned in Vodacce and his spirit broken. Caligari knew better than to ask their motive, and was actually pleased by the task. The Brotherhood of the Coast had plundered Caligari ships for too long, and the thought of torturing their leader into submission brought a smile to the old man's lips.

Tracking down the Pirate King proved difficult, however. Allende had evaded both the Castillian and Montaigne navies, and some reports placed his whereabouts as far away as northern Ussura. The prince first sent a message to Julius Caligari on the *Crimson Roger*, ordering his cousin to notify him immediately of any sightings of the *Hanged Man*. Next, he summoned three of his nieces, potent Fate Witches who could follow the pirate's Sorte strands. Their combined talents took them to the Castillian port town of San Felipe, where they sensed Fate would deliver Allende to them. On Sextus 5, the Pirate King was snared in their trap like a fly in a spider's web.

Allende was delivered into Caligari's clutches on the morning of Sextus 13. It would be the last time he would see the light of day for almost two full months.

The Prince locked the Pirate King away in a tower high above the clutter of Reinascineza, Caligari's capital city. The only time Allende was released from the chains binding him flat against the cold wall of his cell was during his torture sessions. Bound and blindfolded, he was forced down a spiraling staircase to the dungeon far below, where Caligari gleefully tested his Syrneth artifacts on the Castillian's tender flesh. Under the flames of a flickering torch, Caligari wrote down every gruesome detail of his work in a musty journal filled with hundreds of pages from previous "experiments."

To Caligari's surprise (and secret delight), Allende demonstrated incredibly strong will. The more severe his treatment, the more his prisoner's resolve grew. Caligari stayed awake late into the night calculating new ways to break Allende's spirit, but no devices of human or Syrneth origin were fit for the task. The prince became obsessed with his prisoner, desperate to triumph over him, almost forgetting he was working for the Inquisition. Then, after weeks of relentless abuse, he finally uncovered a weakness.

On Corantine 4, a member of the Explorer's Society named Jacob Faust was captured in the mechanical innards of Caligari Island. The luckless sailor was searching for a mysterious "switch," located in the bowels of the isle. The switch turned out to be a potent Syrneth watercraft, one whose power kept the entire island from falling into the sea (see *Vodacce*, page 111 and *Waves of Blood* for more information). Vexed that someone outside the family knew of his island's secret power source, Caligari locked Faust in the tower with Allende and began interrogating him as well. To Caligari's surprise, Allende seemed more disturbed by the actions against his cell mate than the pain visited upon himself.

Elated by his own wickedness, Caligari used Faust to tear away at Allende's resolve. Sometimes he would make his prized prisoner watch the Explorer's torments. At other times, he allowed Allende's imagination to run wild. The sound of Faust's pain echoing through the dungeon drove Allende to the limits of his will. Of course, Caligari made time to physically hurt the Pirate King as well, keeping him weak and powerless.

Still, Allende's spirit proved too strong to be broken. He became fast friends with Faust and between interrogation sessions, the two plotted to escape Caligari's cruelty. Each time they were led down into the dungeon, they forced their weary eyes to memorize the layout of the tower, their ears to interpret the sounds that assaulted them. At no point could they determine a way out of their predicament, and at last they vowed to simply die rather than succumb to Caligari's will.

But Fate had other plans.

### Escape

Allende and Faust's liberation came at the hands of the Pirate King's devoted crew, who had been searching for him the entire time. Led by the wayward Sea Dog Jeremiah Berek (whom Allende had saved from drowning just a short time ago)

they learned the details of Allende's capture and journeyed to Vodacce to liberate him. On the morning of Corantine 30, they made their move.

Always one to take a chance, Berek dressed himself and several other pirates as hooded members of the Inquisition intent on "observing the prisoner's progress." When told that they could not, Berek fumed at Caligari's guards, shouting that they threatened their immortal souls with such impudence. Threatened with damnation, the pious guards allowed him and a single "assistant" access to the tower. It was not to be a quick or easy journey.

Halfway up the tower, the ruse fell apart. One of the guards noticed a tattoo on an "Inquisitor's" hand, and a fierce fight ensued. Thinking fast, Brotherhood pirate Sean McCorley pulled the lever opening all of the cells on their floor, freeing dozens of angry Caligari prisoners who were more than happy to punish their former captors. The distraction gave them enough leverage to fight their way out of the palace and back to their ship.

Upstairs, Berek and the others freed Allende from his chains, but found themselves cut off from escape. The guards had barricaded the tower, leaving them trapped. Not forgetting his obligation to the Explorers, Faust persuaded his rescuers to flee through the sewers buried within the island. The ancient maze twisted and turned until Faust revealed a small opening which led to a hidden cave. Inside awaited the strangest ship any of the seasoned sailors had ever seen, a watercraft constructed by the enigmatic Syrneth untold ages ago.

Needing little prompting, the escapees boarded the watercraft and Faust activated its power source, the Sixth Switch. The extraordinary vessel thundered awake and, immediately, the island above grumbled and began to sink. With shaking legs, Allende took the ship's helm. His expert piloting skills were put to the test as he steered around falling debris, sailing out of the cavern into the open sea at the last possible moment.

Allende had finally made his escape, but he was not convinced it was worth the cost.

### **That Sinking Feeling**

At first the citizens of Reinasceza dismissed the shaking beneath their city as yet another of the region's earthquakes, but in no time at all, it became clear the island was actually sinking beneath the cold ocean waters. Panic gripped the

populace as everyone evacuated as fast as they could.

Such a cataclysmic event brings out the best in some people but the worst in others. While stalwart heroes helped ready boats or make rafts, more selfish individuals took advantage of the chaos to loot and plunder. While selfless men and women made sure their friends, loved ones, and even total strangers would make it to safety, the city's predators fended only for themselves, surviving by any means necessary.

The Caligari family fell into this last category.

The prince ordered his personal yacht filled with as many of his precious artifacts as his minions could carry. While most of his underlings remained loyal, a few broke away with valuable Syrneth treasures, berated by the old man's screams of rage. His own kith and kin proved to be the worst thieves, however; several raided secret caches they had eyed with jealousy for years. Brother fought against brother as their homes were swallowed up by the thirsty waters, and the old prince learned quickly which family members upon which he could truly depend.

In the end, more Syrneth artifacts were lost to the ocean floor than saved from it. Hundreds of Reinasceza's citizens perished, and centuries of Vodacce history were washed away. Thankfully, most citizens escaped the disaster, thanks to the heroic efforts of their neighbors or their own ingenuity. That didn't matter to Vodacce's ruling families, however. The Caligari base of power was gone forever — and the other princes could not have been more pleased.

### **Fugitives**

In the days following the sinking of their island, the majority of the Caligari family attempted to regroup on the mainland. The other princes could sense the precariousness of their situation, like predators catching the scent of a weak or injured prey. Villanova's forces made the first assault — sending assassins to hunt down the remaining Caligaris — but they were rapidly joined by agents of Bernoulli, Lucani, and Vestini. The princes formed a tentative alliance to eradicate the Caligari bloodline once and for all, but none truly trusted the others. Once the Caligari lands were conquered, each prince had plans on how to claim the majority for his own.

Though impaired, the Caligaris proved ready to meet their foes. Vincenzo saw the wisdom of distributing his remaining Syrneth weapons among his loyal relatives, and the arcane devices



allowed them to strike back with a vengeance. But no matter how determined their struggle, it quickly became clear that the surviving Caligaris were heavily outnumbered. Calling upon his years of experience, Vincenzo ordered his family and their Syrneth technology into hiding, making his household the most hunted and dangerous fugitives Vodacce had seen in centuries. Against all odds, they vowed to endure. They would choose their future fights with meticulous care, regaining their former glory as Vincenzo had amassed his Syrneth arsenal: piece by precious piece.

And they would never forget or forgive those who struck them when they were down.

### Mondavi Strikes

*Giovanni Villanova deflected the blade with his wine goblet, averting the assassin's strike an instant before it struck his throat. He slammed his chair backwards as he stood, catching the would-be assassin in the knees. The man buckled slightly before fighting his way free of the implement. Villanova's blade flicked out of its scabbard as he turned to face his attacker.*

*"I commend you on your thoroughness," he said matter-of-factly. "Most would have let the poisoned wine do the job, but you waited. By the way, the Falisci '64 should never be quite that shade of scarlet."*

*He parried a few initial thrusts, pivoting backwards to give himself more room. This one had skill; it wouldn't do to draw it out. The killer was silent as he launched a flurry of attacks. Villanova deftly parried them, quietly maneuvering the man towards the wall.*

*"You managed to infiltrate my palace as well. I'll have to have a word with the guards about that. I don't suppose you want to tell me who sent you?"*

*The man glared at him, then pressed the attack again. A second blade appeared in the Prince's off-hand, distracting his opponent for the briefest instant. In a flash, he plunged the dagger into the man's belly, feeling the satisfying tear of guts and innards. The assassin fell to his knees, dropping his sword as blood flowed out of the wound. Villanova sent him sprawling on his back with a quick kick, then stood over him menacingly.*

*"Who?" He twisted his foot delicately into the wound. "Who?"*

*"Al...Alcide Mondavi," the assassin groaned.*

*Giovanni mused for a moment, then plunged his blade into the assassin's eye.*

*"My word. I never thought the little scarecrow had it in him." His face broke out into a sinister smile. "How marvelous."*

With their attention focused on exploiting the Caligaris' misfortune, the majority of Vodacce's ruling families were completely unprepared for what happened next. On Septimus 19, assassins struck against five of the remaining six princes, attempting to end the Great Game in one fell swoop. Most princes were prepared for such an attack as a matter of course. Bernoulli's guards thwarted the marksman targeting their lord during his weekly hot bath. Falisci broke a bottle of two-hundred year old wine over his attacker's head. Vestini's contacts in the Church warned him of the impending strike, and the prince's dogs tore his assailant limb from limb as the prince looked on. Villanova himself slew his would-be killer in the middle of his evening meal. Only Lucani fell to his assassin's poisoned blade, and that was after he had made sure his wife and beloved daughters made it to safety (see the adventure hook on page 100).

All eyes turned to the one prince who hadn't been targeted: Alcide Mondavi. The quiet bloodless grain merchant never displayed such ambition before, but the assassination attempts made his true intentions clear. On Septimus 20, Mondavi's private army stormed into territories belonging to the Villanovas, Lucanis, and Caligaris, claiming the lands for their prince. The troops were well trained, and aided by elite bands of Eisen mercenaries under the command of Eisenfürst Erich Sieger. The move came as a complete shock, leaving many Vodacce citizens dumfounded.

The people of the invaded territories proved to be capable guerrilla fighters, slowing Mondavi's advance in the weeks following the initial assault. Instead of uniting to defeat Mondavi, the remaining four princes grew incredibly paranoid and fought one another for supremacy. Freelance swordsmen from all over Théah flocked to Vodacce, selling their talents to the highest bidder. A few amassed a tidy sum in a very short time, but many more were crushed in the impossibly complex schemes of the warring princes. After losing so many of its constituents, the Swordsman's Guild doubled its fee to permit members to operate on Vodacce soil, but this did little (if anything) to stop the influx of eager blades seeking fame and fortune among the feuding families.

By Octavus, Sieger's personal forces were in possession of the majority of what had once been Caligari's territory on the mainland. A few pockets of resistance still held firm, along with stubborn Vestini soldiers who refused to relinquish the land they had fought so hard to claim. On the 17th, Sieger uncovered Vincenzo Caligari's secret fortress, a seemingly ruined castle that hid a vast array of Syrneth defenses. Caligari's traps claimed a quarter of Sieger's men, but Vincenzo was eventually forced to flee his last secure holding. No one has seen the old man since, and many assume he fell victim to one of the bandit gangs roaming the land.

### **Trouble For Villanova**

Giovanni Villanova was so involved in his conflicts with Mondavi and the other princes that he neglected matters at home, a mistake that nearly cost him his life. On the eve of the Prophets' Mass in late Decimus, his wife, Valentina, murdered her two sons. The pair had secretly poisoned an innocent Falisci merchant (an enemy of their father's), then bragged about it to their mother, hoping to earn her acclaim. They could not have been more wrong.

For years Valentina had tried to keep her husband away from the boys; tried to keep his dark hooks from their souls. As she listened to their words — saw their joyful faces as they told her what they had done — she knew she had failed. Tearfully, desperately, she tried to explain the implications of their actions, only to have them turn on her with a furious vengeance. They called her a traitor to their family, hurling insults into her crying face. Then the eldest pulled his hand back and slapped her, as he had seen his father do many times before.

That proved a fatal mistake.

"I gave you life," she hissed through her veil, "if I wish, I can take it from you." She tore into their fate threads with her Sorte magic, cutting them apart like paper dolls. When she finished, her children lay pale and still on the palace floor.

When she recovered from her rage, she fled the palace in horror, unable to face her husband. She found herself at the door of her only true friend — Villanova's mistress, Juliette. The pair had maintained a façade as bitter enemies for many years, hiding their undying friendship lest Villanova discover it. Together, the two women decided that it was time to escape Vodacce for good.

Meanwhile, the Prince returned home to discover his dead sons, and personally tracked Valentina to Juliette's abode. He confronted the women as they readied their carriage. The sight of them — supposed enemies, who had deceived and manipulated him for years — blossomed into a murderous hate, but he did not expect the same tempest brewing in Juliette. When Villanova drew his sword to strike down his wife, Juliette pounced at him with a ready dagger. Her swipe was fast and brutal, opening the left side of his face from the forehead to the chin, claiming his eye along the way. Blinded and in pain, he could not stop the two friends as they raced into the night.

Though hunted throughout Dionna, the pair's contacts among Sophia's Daughters helped them gain passage onboard a ship called the *Santa Cecilia*. Captain Scogna agreed to take them to safety in Vendel in return for a few Sorte-based favors. They would take a long, indirect route to their destination, but Scogna guaranteed their secure passage.

Juliette and Valentina's performance as bitter rivals had proven successful. They had beaten the devil at his own game, but Villanova swore there would be a re-match. In a strange way, he loved them now more than ever; he had played the Great Game for decades, yet they proved the only enemies capable of truly challenging him. That would make their deaths all the sweeter.

### **The New Year**

While Villanova struggled with this personal betrayal, his rivals continued their unspoken war. The beginning of 1669 saw Prince Mondavi rally his soldiers in a new push to take the entirety of the mainland. His resources spread thin from his earlier crusade against the Vendel League, Prince Bernoulli called upon his Crescent allies to support his troops, and received over two hundred skilled warriors from that forbidden land. He also appealed to the Church for aid but, ever mindful of their own political standing, the Vaticine leaders refused to get involved. "This is a political issue," they said in a letter to the Prince. "It would not do to sully the Vaticine Church by taking a hand."

Bernoulli carefully weighed his remaining options, searching for the best course of action. Finally, he conceded the need to bargain with one of his rivals in order to stop Mondavi for good. He approached Prince Falisci to petition his brother, a prominent Cardinal, to help bring the conflict to



an end. Recognizing a golden opportunity, Falisci agreed to help Bernoulli in exchange for "future considerations."

Cardinal Falisci's impassioned entreaty convinced the Church to at last intervene. On the 30th of Primus, 1669 the Cardinals sent a proclamation to Mondavi, threatening excommunication if he did not halt his depredations. On Secundus 2, the power-hungry prince halted his advance, making the decision not only out of fear of eternal damnation, but out of necessity. Prince Villanova, more ruthless than ever, had paid the Eisen mercenaries to disband and return to their homeland.

The open conflict ended almost as suddenly as it had started, but the Great Game continues on.

## Current Situation

The political climate for Vodacce in 1669 is more tense than it has been in generations. The Princes are justifiably paranoid, each one clawing for supremacy, using any tactics (save full scale warfare) they deem necessary.

The clear winners of the disorder which gripped the nation are Mondavi and Falisci, dividing all of the former Caligari holdings between them. Mondavi also took control of a sizable portion of Lucani lands, though Villanova captured a share as well. Bernoulli and Vestini maintained their territories, both struggling to recover from attacks against the Vendel League and the Eisen mercenaries. A few minor Lucani nobles cling to their homes on the mainland, while Falisci forces have claimed the island formerly belonging to Prince Lucani. Roving gangs and turf wars have become a fact of life for the poor citizens still trapped in the political upheaval.

Donello Falisci remains an enigma, if only because he keeps his ambitions well-hidden. All indications are that he just does not care about power, yet he emerged from the coup with his territory intact, his resources stronger, and a large political chip to play against the other Princes. Were it not for his brother's intervention, Mondavi might now be ruling Vodacce. Still, he does very little active plotting, content to remain in the cat-bird's seat and watch for the next move.

Alcide Mondavi, on the other hand, has suddenly become a major player in the Great Game. His attempted coup showed a cunning plotter beneath his bloodless façade, and none of

his cousins will ever take him for granted again. Even though only one assassination attempt succeeded, he only needed the one. His alliance with Erich Sieger of Eisen was a masterstroke, the finest example of attacking an enemy's weakness. Few anticipated an open military invasion which, coupled with the assassination attempts, netted Mondavi a massive increase in power and influence. He cared nothing for the Cardinals' threat of excommunication, but knew that if the Church renounced him, his people would revolt. That fact was all that stood between him and absolute rule of Vodacce.

The remaining three Princes managed to more or less hold their own during the attack. Though he gained nothing from Mondavi's actions, Gespucci Bernoulli lost no territory, and saw a threat to his trade monopoly — Vincenzo Caligari — vanquished. Bernoulli's politics remain the most honest in Vodacce, (though it would be more accurate to say the least dishonest politics). With Mondavi on the rise, he is willing to pay exorbitant amounts of money to maintain his family's security, which may include heroic missions to stop further plots from his cousins.

Marco Vestini has similarly channeled his political drive into piety and the pursuit of justice. Both men represent the best in their nation, using power justly and wisely. However, while Bernoulli has been somewhat tempered by age, Vestini is still full of energy. His political aspirations mainly revolve around maintaining the status quo. He seized part of Caligari's land only to keep pace with his cousins, and now governs it as carefully as he can.

Finally, there is Giovanni Villanova. On the surface, nothing has changed with the dark prince. He maintained his power base, and chances are, if there is a plot, plan, society, or intrigue going on in Théah, Villanova is involved. Underneath, however, he seethes at the thought of his lost wife and mistress — the harpies who fooled him for so many years. Thought still involved in plotting against his fellow princes, he has now shifted his attention to destroying them — a fact for which the rest of Vodacce should be extremely grateful.

Two princes have now fallen, one never to rise again. The fate of Alberto Lucani is a prime example of the darker side of Vodacce politics. His family has taken refuge with the Falisci and Vestini family, but their political power is all but broken. Four Sorte-talented, unmarried girls who have suddenly become orphans — pawns in the

eternal game. Without their father to protect them, every Prince left alive in Vodacce wants to bring them into their fold. Lucani's grieving widow intends to sell their future in order to guarantee her family's survival... unless someone can help them first.

The Caligaris have fared the worst of all, scattered across Vodacce and Théah itself, forced to keep as low of a profile as possible. A few actively hunt the head of their family, seeking to replace him and return their line to glory. Others turn to Vincenzo for guidance, investing their faith in the wisdom of his considerable years to serve them best. Caligari is most likely to be one of the Heroes' nemeses, both in and out of the political arena. Caligari still has agents across Théah, seeking those Sryneth artifacts lost to looters and rivals. All of the information he has been hiding, the threats he has implied, the artifacts he has secreted, will be used indiscriminately in an effort to regain what was lost. The most dangerous man is one with nothing to lose, and Caligari is becoming that.

Thus it stands in the summer of 1669. The Great Game continues, its victims fall beneath the waves, and its survivors steady themselves for the next inevitable round. The people caught by the shifting borders and political turmoil cross themselves and pray nightly for a better tomorrow. Vodacce is a land in desperate need of heroes.



"Theus," Hal Magnus breathed. "Look at it."

"It's water, husband," Freyalinda sighed. "It isn't even particularly interesting water. It's just sitting there, all around us."

Hal smiled. "My point exactly."

The Vesten skjæren looked at her husband dubiously. Even from the crow's nest of the Iron Heart, there was nothing but water in all directions.

"I'm afraid, my Captain, that your point still eludes me. It's been like this for days."

Hal's smile broadened, and he stroked his beloved's long hair. "Aye, love. More days than anyone's been known to sail in a straight line without sight of land." The light sparked in his wife's eyes, and he continued as she nodded. "We may have seen wonders in our day, exploring Sryneth ruins and digging into Théah's history, but I can feel it in my bones. You can too, I suspect. Everywhere we've been, everything we've done, it's all prologue. That..." He waved his hand west, towards the ship's bow. "...that's the future. Who knows what we'll find out there. Magical beasts? Human civilizations undreamt of by anyone in Théah? Something completely new?"

Fyodor, the Iron Heart's Ship's Master, coughed. "A Firbor army waiting for the chance to crush the human race?"

Hal chuckled. "Your optimism is always refreshing, Fyodor."

Fyodor shrugged. "It is Ussuran, Captain. If Cabora freed an army of monsters, best to know before we are in the cookpot, da?"

"Da," Hal agreed, unable to suppress another chuckle. He strode toward the bow, tossing his hat off as he went. (Freyalinda discreetly summoned a wind that blew it into the sea; she never liked that hat anyway.) He smiled, held out his arms, and let the breeze blow across his body as the ship sailed west. Vendel, Vesten, trade wars, intrigue... they all lay behind them. Ahead was a fresh start, a different world. This was why he'd joined the Explorer's Society. A new age lay ahead, and Captain Hal Magnus didn't want to be late.

For all the political turmoil it caused, the sinking of Caligari's island had far greater ramifications than a few assassinated Princes. The island served as a counterweight to a great Sryneth mystery — an ancient island holding untold secrets within its depths. Cabora, as it was called, lay at the bottom of the Mirror for countless millennium. When Caligari's prisoners escaped in the Sryneth water vessel, they triggered a cataclysmic change. Cabora rose from the depths as Caligari's island sank, opening its secrets to any curious adventurer. It did far more than that, however — it signaled the beginnings of a new age of exploration.

### **The Western Ocean**

While fleeing the Caligari disaster with Allende and the Brotherhood, Jacob Faust discovered something remarkable onboard the





Syrneth ship. Several devices displayed a massive barrier in the middle of the ocean, stretching as far as the eye could see in every direction. Up into the heavens, down into the ocean, and to the horizon both north and south, an unimaginable curtain of energy had been hung in the air. The waves themselves crashed against it, and it did not move. Birds, sirens, and whales alike all avoided the incredible field of shimmering force.

And then, as he watched in pure astonishment, the light faded away. Slowly, it began to descend from the sky. A border of pure white light became visible at its apex, a border that slowly sank towards them. Birds squawked in surprise and fled as the air rushed in. Then the border hit the waves, and it was as if pandemonium had struck underwater. Fish, sirens, dolphins, even the mighty leviathans panicked for a brief moment and rushed away from the glowing force. Eventually, it just vanished beneath the sea.

No fool, Faust, immediately knew that what he'd seen was a development of earth-shaking magnitude. Such a barrier could explain why so many ships had vanished during the first Age of Exploration — why Théans could never venture beyond the borders of their home. That barrier was now gone. The western waterways were clear of obstruction, and an entire globe lay waiting for discovery. He returned to Carleon as soon as he was able and reported to the Explorer's Society.

The Society immediately went to work. Luckily for them, three of their most recent

projects — ships designed to last for months at sea without need to resupply — were nearly ready to sail. Almost as soon as Faust delivered his report, all three were launched and sent west, along with two other prominent Explorer teams. Though the winter storms prevented them from making any real progress, they were safely away from assassins and saboteurs. Several more crews followed in early 1669, as soon as the rainy season passed. Once they knew that too many ships had sailed for anyone to destroy or sabotage, they announced their discoveries to the world. Explorer Headmaster Vincent Bernvadore himself wrote a letter to all the major Théan governments (and several prominent periodicals) revealing that the mystery of the Great Western Ocean's impassibility had been solved. He wrote considerably less about the Explorers' current activities, only noting that "several" ships had been sent some time ago to confirm the report and to "discover what awaits us in the grand new frontier ahead."

Reactions were mixed, to say the least. Some nations embraced the Explorer's revelation and vowed to follow it with expeditions of their own. Others condemned it as sheer folly, convinced that no ship traveling past the known world would ever be seen again. Nevertheless, ships from many nations soon followed the Explorers on their westward course. Sea Dogs, Castillian naval vessels, and lone crews of adventurers found themselves competing with the Explorers

to see who could first uncover the mysteries beyond the Horizon.

Consequently, activity in the Midnight Archipelago rose dramatically as vessels stopped to resupply, trade with locals, and enjoy the last few trappings of civilization before heading off into the great unknown. Less bold explorers made their way there as well, unwilling to brave the western oceans, but still inspired to seek out new discoveries within the Archipelago itself. The increased traffic attracted pirates as well, hoping to profit from this new folly. Always a dangerous place, the Archipelago has become quite deadly in recent months.

By the summer of 1669, over twenty-five ships had sailed to the Midnight Archipelago with the intention of braving the Great Western Ocean. All of Théah waits to hear what wonders they will find, or if they will vanish like their predecessors, never to be seen again.

## *Nations' Reactions*

The responses to the Explorer's amazing announcement varied widely, depending on the nation in question.

### **Avalon**

Avalon quickly became interested in what the Explorers might find. Since the Sidhe don't seem to care one way or the other about the Great Barrier, Queen Elaine has provisionally granted her support for the Explorer's efforts. That many Explorers are themselves Avalons doesn't hurt matters. Indeed, several Sea Dog crews have sailed west in search of treasure and adventure. If this is a New Age, as many claim, the most powerful force on the Seven Seas is going to be a part of it.

### **Castille**

Surprisingly, the government of Castille has expressed a desire to turn westward as well. While it has been some time since Castille sponsored exploration, it believes that the potential wealth was worth the risk. In light of the reparations owed to Montaigne (see page 53), any resources they can find might help their cause.

The deal was sealed when Margareta Orduño, hero of the Montaigne-Castille war, offered to sail west in search of wealth. She asked for no resources beyond her own ship and crew, and hinted that she may have some secret edge over crews in the Explorer's Society. She would

not say more, nor did she need to. Many Castillians feel that exploring the Great Western Ocean (whether as partners or rivals to the Explorer's Society) is their duty and birthright, and additional Castillian vessels sailed west along with Margareta.

Not all Castillians agree, however. The Inquisition is absolutely livid about the Explorers' announcement, the support they receive from "heathen" nations, and the thought of Castillian ships participating in such heresy. Unfortunately, the King enthusiastically supports Castillian exploration, and though the Church tones down his rhetoric, they do not wish to openly oppose him. Inquisitors fighting the Castillian navy would bring the jackals down on both church and nation. Castille cannot afford to appear weak while it recovers from the war with Montaigne.

Then again, Verdugo has never worried too much about appearances. He has privately declared that western exploration must be thwarted for the sake of all the souls in Théah. Inquisition forces, ships, and spies have all been quietly mobilized. Through a carefully planned network of patrols and informants, the Inquisition intends to stop any ship attempting to return from the Great Western Ocean. Verdugo has decreed that no such ship must ever return to Théah (unless under the control of the Inquisition). His men have orders to pay particular attention to news of new human civilizations. Heathen peoples, "naked in the eyes of Theus," must be brought into the Church with all deliberate speed. The Inquisition will not lose any further souls to Legions' foul embrace.

### **Eisen**

Other than Heilgrund, the Eisenfürsten have more pressing things to worry about than a fallen barrier hundreds of miles away. Eisen has never been particularly concerned with exploration, and they lack the resources to become seriously involved. None of this applies to Stefan Heilgrund, however. His private obsession drives him to become as involved as time and duty allow. If at all possible, the young Eisenfürst will find a way to be involved with the Explorers' efforts. If a New Age is coming, Heilgrund intends to be a part of it. After all, it may give him the edge he needs back home.

### **Montaigne**

The Montaigne are a little too busy right now to be worried about the new race west. Their



primary interest in the western seas involves nobles escaping *le coiffeur's* cold embrace. More than one Marquis has fled west, trading valuable *Porté* talents for survival and freedom. Revolutionaries hunt these nobles avidly, lest they find some source of power and return to their nation as conquerors. Otherwise, Montaigne will care about the New Age if and when someone actually survives starting it.

### Ussura

Ussura traditionally stays out of international politics, since Ussurans traditionally have little interest in such absurdities. Therefore, it would seem that the Knias Douma could care less about some barrier on the other side of the world, and indeed, they wouldn't involve themselves in this so-called "New Age," except for one thing.

Matushka wants them to.

Several prominent Ussurans have heard her words on this matter: Grandmother Winter needs a few courageous children to risk everything for her. What she asks of them is simple. Watch the brave and foolish adventurers who travel unfathomable lengths to unknown seas. Guide those who mean well, and hinder those who would use this New Age to further their own ends. Return to Ussura and tell their Grandmother what they learn. The dangers are terrible, and the only reward is knowing that they have served Matushka well. There has been no lack of volunteers. The Gaius isn't happy about it, but there's little he can do. Knias Aleksí v'Novgorov, on the other hand, is quite pleased with this turn of events...

### Vendel

The Vendel were ecstatic at the new discovery, and expressed enthusiastic support for the Society's efforts. Publicly, the League support any forward-looking endeavor, and many Vendel were genuinely fascinated by the possibilities of what lies to the west. Privately, the thought of possible trade routes to Cathay or other locales had the Vendel League all but salivating. Also, if there are dangers awaiting Théah across the ocean, the Vendel alliance with the Explorers ensures that they'll be among the first to know about them.

The Vestenmannavnjar don't really care about explorers or heresy. They *are* heading west, however. Numerous Vesten crews have been spotted sailing towards the setting sun, though their intentions are as yet unclear. Currently,

the two most popular theories (aside from the whole thing being a tall tale) are that they think Ragnarok is coming, and that they are looking for new weapons to fight the Vendel. One thing is certain, however. If the Vendel want something, the Vestenmannavnjar want to keep the Vendel from getting it. If the Explorer's Society is friend to the Vendel, then it is an enemy of the Vesten.\*

### Vodacce

The Vodacce Princes also have an interest in thwarting Vendel interests, though the Great Game has kept them busy. While the New Age favors the Vendel for the moment, Scarovese has taught the Princes well. They know that it isn't the first man to the prize who wins, but the last man standing. Though many Vodacce will happily sabotage specific Explorer and Vendel efforts, they don't wish to stop all efforts. They wish to watch and wait... and to take advantage of every opportunity that arises.

For their part, the Explorers have run afoul of Caligari's thugs far too many times to become complacent, sunken island or no. Anyone who really is spying on the Explorers for one of the Princes is walking a tightrope in a high wind. It's a dangerous game... but then, the Vodacce don't know how to play any other kind.

### Others

The Brotherhood of the Coast was cautiously pleased by news of the voyages west, though they were not officially informed. The possibilities of an entire ocean to hide in, easier ships to raid, and a new, better society somewhere beyond the barrier fills them with excitement. Cooler heads have dominated the discussion, and most of the buccaneers are taking a wait-and-see attitude. A few Brothers, however, have already departed in typical heroic fashion to see what waits them beyond the horizon.

## Secret Societies

While no group equals the Inquisition's fanatic zeal in opposing the Explorer's Society, other political forces in Théah share their concern. The most disturbing questions involve the purpose of the Great Barrier. Most Théans assume that it served to keep them hemmed in. But some have other ideas. What if it didn't keep Théans in? What if it kept something else out?

Afraid of what the Explorers might uncover with their blind meddling, several secret societies are moving to put a stop to this "New Age" before it begins. They have been successful for so long, it is impossible for some of them to imagine that they may already be far too late.

### **The Invisible College**

Of the other secret societies, only the Invisible College intends to embrace this New Age of exploration. They have an enormous advantage over the other societies and governments in their knowledge of what lies beyond the Great Western Ocean (see pages 24-25 of the *Invisible College* sourcebook for details). They have kept that knowledge secret for many years, and with tensions rising between the College and the Explorers, they do not wish to reveal the source of that information at this time. However, the College intends to leak their information as discreetly as possible to the Explorer's Society. There's no further point in trying to hide the knowledge or stop the expeditions, and the better the College's relations with the Society, the more they can benefit from these new expeditions.

While the College continues to disdain knowledge from non-human sources (such as the Syrneath), they believe that discoveries from beyond the ocean may be worthy of their consideration. Besides, they can't affect what the Explorers do with their knowledge if they aren't a part of the exploration.

### **Die Kreuzritter**

Die Kreuzritter, on the other hand, are positively apoplectic. They have long considered the Explorer's Society a danger to Théah, and the Society's current effort has only compounded this belief. Cabora is a far more chilling and immediate threat, but whatever lies beyond the Great Ocean could prove even deadlier than that lone, isolated island. While the Order can prevent most travel to Cabora (see below), stopping the mad race across the seas is all but impossible. Currently, the Knights find themselves in the unenviable position of (quietly) working with the Inquisition's network of informants, waiting for news that will force them into action.

### **Knights of the Rose and Cross**

While the Knights of the Rose and Cross share some attitudes with their Black Cross cousins, they are neither as dogmatic nor as murderous.

They intend to keep a close eye on the various factions sending ships to the west. Many Knights publicly disapprove of the Explorers' latest "absurd adventure," but the Order as a whole intends to stay out of the entire affair. If there were a secret branch of the order, one more willing to use expedient methods, that invisible arm might act in ways similar to die Kreuzritter. With their smaller numbers, however, they would have to wait until expeditions returned to Théah to act.

If such a branch existed, of course.

Of course, if the Explorers get in over their heads (which the Order believes they will) the Knights fully intend to come to the rescue. No man or woman deserves to die in the pursuit of knowledge, even a misguided pursuit like this one. The Explorers in question will then receive a rather long and tedious lecture about acting responsibly, and get sent back to Théah to reconsider about what they've done.

### **Sophia's Daughters**

The Sophia's Daughters have also sabotaged the Explorer's Society from time to time. However, they are far less concerned with the current expeditions than they are with Cabora. The Syrneath island is a terrible danger, with the potential to engulf Théah in an eyeblink. The New Age, on the other hand, is merely a possibility — one which carries as much hope as despair. While they monitor the Explorers (as do so many others), the Daughters intend to do little else for now. If the expeditions never return, the rush will slow quickly. If they do, the Daughters will learn everything the Explorers know before anyone else has the chance to.

### **Los Vagos and the Free Thinkers**

The Rilasciare and Los Vagos have little time to worry about explorations hundreds (if not thousands) of miles away. The Free Thinkers are thoroughly embroiled in the Montaigne revolution, and the Vagos still have the Inquisition to deal with. Also, neither group thinks anyone is coming back from this mad rush. However, both feel at least a slight need to monitor the beginnings of the New Age. The Rilasciare fear that the Explorers' efforts may somehow foster new forms of sorcery. Los Vagos are slightly protective of the Explorers, fully aware of the Inquisition's insidious plans against them. All the same, these are merely the basic instincts of each society. Unless some individual



member or small group wishes to become involved, they aren't likely to do much until an expedition returns to Théah with something solid.

## The Explorers

What few realize is that the Explorers are ready for all comers. Explorer ships have taken on extra contingents of Shield Men, all ship captains heading west keep a small selection of artifacts for use in the crew's defense, and the Society as a whole has quietly doubled efforts to understand Synchron technology. The Shield Men, Artifact Researchers, and Scholars have worked closely together on the last project; their efforts may result in an entirely new branch of the Society.

Despite their preparations, the Explorers face an enormous challenge. Even without such dangerous opposition and the difficulties of preparing lengthy expeditions in secret, their voyages all contain extreme peril. Explorer teams have been recruited to counter all sorts of sabotage efforts, from rogue scientists to shadowy warriors with infernal powers to small armies of

Inquisitors. A few Explorer vessels now serve as escort ships, armed with heavy cannon, filled with resourceful marines, and led by Heroes armed with genius and Synchron artifacts. Explorer Heroes who volunteer for these missions will face deadly enemies and soul-chilling powers, but those who survive could help found new groups within the Society.

Meanwhile, other factions are sending all manners of agents to investigate the Explorers. Invisible College members may well find themselves protesting their innocence at gunpoint. Considering what the Synchron used for "guns," College members had better talk fast if Explorers have reason to doubt them. Die Kreuzritter teams have their work cut out for them as well. They wish to sabotage Explorer teams while avoiding the attention of the Inquisition forces doing the same thing while *also* minimizing loss of life — a daunting task for even most efficient Black Cross.



While the Explorers turn hopefully, to the west, other eyes turn towards the instigator of this New Age with entirely different emotions. Cabora has become a source of both wonder and terror for the nations of Théah. Even the Explorer's Society has mixed feelings about Cabora. Their concerns pale, however, compared to the sheer panic that the island has caused. Nations and secret societies alike all agreed that the island was too dangerous to allow the curious and power-hungry to tamper with it.

The Explorers know (and have privately shared with certain national rulers) that Cabora's rise was no accident. One of their captains, Guy McCormick, conspired to raise it in the hopes of finding his missing wife. He had help from the fearsome Corsairs, whose leader Kheired-Din, believed that the island held the key to reshaping the world. Together, they sought out and activated six mighty switches, which brought

Cabora to the surface from the bottom of the Mirror (see *Waves of Blood* for more information; the last switch, located beneath Caligari's island, is detailed in the "Vodacce" section above). The event triggered a series of frightening visions from Fate Witches, skjæren, and other mystics, who believed that they were witnessing the end of the world.

Other crews soon caught wind of the mysterious island and proceeded to it for reasons of their own. Reliable reports had ships belonging to the Sea Dogs and Brotherhood of the Coast in the vicinity, pursuing some unknown goal. The Vesten ship *Revensj* held a pitched battle with Vendel Marines within site of the isle, and even the terrible *Crimson Roger* was spotted off-shore within a few days of Cabora's rise. (A few wild stories held that Captain Reis was killed in a duel on the island, but he has since been spotted in Dionna and elsewhere, so they do not receive much credence.)

Several fierce ship's battles took place between these rival factions, and at least three vessels successfully deposited boarding parties on the island. What transpired onshore, no one knew for sure. Stories arose of dark bargains, of monstrous Syrneth creatures walking the halls, and of deadly traps swallowing crews alive. Few concrete details were available, and almost no survivors have yet been reported. The Explorers reported only that McCormick "perished" in the bowels of Cabora, and that his erstwhile ally Kheired-Din failed in his efforts to tap into Cabora's power source. Of the other interlopers, only a tiny handful survived the experience, and they aren't talking. (More details can be found in the "GM's Secrets" section in Chapter Four.)

Soon after these initial forays, greater forces took a hand. A series of mighty storms rocked the seas around Cabora, forcing nearby ships to withdraw. Urged by influential mystics such as Derwyddon and Koshchei (as well as more pious advisors like Cardinal Verdugo), the nations of Théah uniformly forbade their citizens from approaching the isle. Spies and naval vessels were dispatched to discourage the curious and — in an unprecedented display of unity — a treaty was signed preventing any ship from approaching within fifty miles of Cabora. The Treaty of Cabora was signed on Octavus 18, 1668 (the new Montaigne government added their signature later) and has remained in effect ever since.

Unfortunately, despite the Treaty, there's still a great deal of scheming about who will actually



### The Iron Fist

As if they weren't hazardous enough, journeys to Cabora have recently been plagued by the *Iron Fist*, a former Vodacce mercenary ship led to outright piracy by Captain Arturo Caligari. Like many of his family, he primarily served the whims of the Caligari Prince. Some rumors say that the destruction of the island has left the man unhinged, while others claim that he was always a monster, and that the sinking of Caligari's Island merely set him free. All agree, however, that while the Arturo was ruthless before, he has now become a terror of the Seven Seas. Somehow, Arturo drove his crew to brave the island's dangers, and gained some monstrous powers through his boldness. Survivors of his attacks (he's already destroyed five ships and attacked four others, all but one carrying Syrneth artifacts) claim that he has a whip of Syrneth origin, and that nothing — not swords, bullets, or shrapnel — can hurt him. Four of the ships were Explorer vessels (two of which were sunk), which has the Society worried.

The survivors' accounts have them even more worried, however. In the most recent attack on an Explorer ship, while he was fighting a duel with the captain, he called himself the "Iron Pirate." She retorted that he was nothing but an iron butcher. Arturo stepped back, considered this, and replied, "I like it. Thank you." Though she was able to knock him back onto his own ship and escape, Arturo seems to be more pleased with the name than upset with the loss. The "Iron Butcher" now has a 10,000 Guilder price on his head. Thus far, no one seems inclined to collect it.

control the island. Stories of a gateway to the 7th Sea, of engines capable of destroying entire fleets, and the like are too alluring to completely ignore. However, most of the forces involved (even the Inquisition) are intelligent enough to avoid the island proper. Most of the political maneuvering remains in the castles and manors of the powerful... far away from the shores of Cabora.



### Threats

The Inquisition has since redoubled its efforts to keep the curious and power-hungry away from the island. For once, they aren't getting any arguments from the nations of Théah, and even the Explorer's Society expresses only half-hearted outrage. Verdugo's men are joined (in spirit if not in conscious allegiance) by Black Crosses, Sophia's Daughters, and others who do not wish the island to be disturbed. Anyone with the courage to brave Cabora faces several challenges before he even sets foot on the island.

The first line of defense is an extensive network of spies and informants — representing die Kreuzritter, the Inquisition, or any one of a dozen other factions — in most major ports. While they try to keep the Inquisition informed about Explorer expeditions, attempts to reach Cabora are unquestionably the top priority. Anyone planning to try to reach the Syrnych island must do so with the utmost discretion. These spies are usually busy folks, so they start with small “warning accidents,” like damaged sails, ruined supplies and small holes in the hull, usually accompanied by a small Cross of the Prophets. If that doesn't deter an expedition to Cabora, they take no further chances and move straight to fires and arson. Whether or not this ends the intended expedition, it will certainly delay matters for months until the ship can be repaired or replaced.

Next come the privateers, in cases where an expedition is learned of but not stopped before setting sail. A modest bounty on the ship is enough to bring all manner of scurvy cutthroats down on them. This is an unpleasant method, since it encourages privateers to engage in ugly boarding actions, but thus far it has been effective. The Inquisition continues to provide gold and “indulgences” to privateers who serve their needs, and other groups offer rewards as well.

Should they avoid the privateers, they face a host of other threats. The Bernoulli family has long protected its interests in the Crescent Empire, and catching ships on their way to Cabora has produced a small but welcome side line to their profits. The Church maintains fortresses in the Forbidden Sea as well, and there are a number of Corsair ships sailing the Forbidden Sea looking for any ships to raid. Vessels carrying Syrnych artifacts seem to attract Corsairs, which makes them a useful (if unintended) level of security in the area.

But the most dangerous deterrent of all comes not from nations or saboteurs, but from the very elements itself. The Mirror has long been thought of as an “Ussuran lake,” and Ussura's protector has no interest in letting anyone toy with Cabora. Matushka does not need spies or blockades — the ocean itself will do her bidding. Should any ships manage to approach Cabora, they will find themselves beset by storms, shifting coral reefs, or even attacks by the dreaded Vodanken.

Despite all of this, a few daring crews have reached the island and returned safely. They return with Syrnych artifacts beyond imagining and stories to freeze the soul. Rumors have spread like wildfire about the epic confrontations that occurred on the Syrnych island. Everything from armies of clockwork men to a gateway to Paradise itself have been bandied about by drunken sailors, and while most dismiss the wildest tales, it is unquestionable that something incredible lurks on Cabora. See *Waves of Blood* for more information on the dangers of attempting to penetrate Cabora's secrets.

A possible launching point that would avoid most of these problems is Dionna, home to Prince Villanova. The Vodacce isle has more than enough intrigue to mask a clandestine voyage, and the Prince is even rumored to have begun negotiating with the Explorer's Society to allow use of his island for just that purpose. Reactions from most Explorers, however, have been dubious. It would be all too easy for Théah's most notorious villain to destroy an Explorer ship, steal its Syrnych prizes, and claim that the Inquisition had infiltrated the docks.

## The 7th Sea

Meanwhile, Cabora's very existence is challenging what scholars think they know about Terra's history, particularly regarding what some consider the greatest enigma in the world — the 7th Sea.

With religious questioning at its peak in human history, the tales of spirits and undead taking part in the battle have set off a new debate about the soul and humanity's true destiny. In places where the philosophical can discuss the matter safely, speculation about the 7th Sea (and its place in Théan cosmology) has become a very popular topic. The events at Cabora clearly involved the 7th Sea somehow, and some believe that the island taps into it, and perhaps even controls it to some extent!

Current debate about the 7th Sea among the open-minded revolves around three primary theories. The most popular to date is that it is something like a Porté hole, except instead of opening to another place on Théah it opens into another world. Whether that world is Paradise, the Abyss, Valhalla, or “merely” an alien land depends strongly on the religious persuasion and optimism of the philosopher involved.

The next theory states that the 7th Sea is not another world, but merely a shadowy reflection of Théah. This theory is challenged by those who claim that even the Synrath could not control such a land, even with a machine the size of an island.

The final theory discussed seriously is that the 7th Sea is not nearly as important as is claimed by some at present, and is nothing more than a powerful Synrath energy field projected by Cabora. Anyone who has ever been in the 7th Sea is extremely dubious of the third theory, given what most survivors report of what they see.

Another curiosity stirring the pot is that sightings of the 7th Sea — particularly in the Mirror — are at an all-time high. While some are easy enough to dismiss as particularly dramatic fog clouds, drunken sailors, or malicious Sidhe, enough reports of Théah’s greatest mystery are floating around that it can’t simply be dismissed as coincidence. On the other hand, the more people talk about a mystery, the more likely it is to be talked about. It then follows that more people are likely to imagine (or fabricate) events related to the subject. It becomes harder to argue that point, however, when a ship returns to port with sections of the hull gleaming like silver, or sailors aged twenty years in one direction or the other, or the like.

Not surprisingly, the Inquisition is truly outraged about the speculation revolving around the 7th Sea. To Verdugo and those who follow him, that it is a thing of sorcery is explanation

enough. The Vaticine Church largely agrees with the Inquisition on this matter. They aren’t nearly as violent about the issue (and tend to be more forgiving of those who support the third theory), but most Vaticine frown on those who discuss the 7th Sea as if it has a legitimate place in theological discussion. At the very least, they will state quite clearly that it is not a proper thing to discuss and attempt to change the subject.

Ostensibly, the Objectionist movement exists to allow “true” investigation of the world and worship of Theus, unfettered by the whims and folly of the Vaticine Church. Despite the superficial differences, however, the beliefs all come from a core system of faith. Many Objectionists, including most without a scientific or philosophical bent, become extremely uncomfortable if the 7th Sea is discussed for too long in conjunction with the afterlife. The Vendel, in particular, can become especially virulent if “7th Sea” and “Valhalla” are mentioned in the same sentence, unless the idea of a relation between the two is being refuted.

The Ussuran Orthodoxy and the “pagan” religions are somewhat more relaxed on the subject. The Orthodoxy as a whole has no official position, and many who assumed that Ussuran priests are backwards have been astonished when they joined the debate in a lively and honest manner. The Vestenmannavnjar, it should be stressed, do not all believe that the 7th Sea leads to Valhalla. The idea appeals to some, but appalls others. In general, only skjæren worry about it, and most don’t worry about it too much—what the gods will, will be. The Traditionalists don’t care, so long as the 7th Sea doesn’t swallow them. In general, it is believed with a fair amount of certainty that it isn’t a part of the Sidhe world, which means that unless the 7th Sea is barreling down on them, it isn’t their problem.





## Chapter Three

# Elsewhere

Montaigne and Vodacce are not the only nations in Théah undergoing changes; they are simply suffering from the most extreme turmoil. Everywhere in Théah, time marches on, and other nations go through less visible — though perhaps no less significant changes.

## Avalon

While the Triple Kingdoms are somewhat removed from the troubles of the Théan mainland, Elaine's alliance has troubles of its own. The Sidhe, as always, play by their own rules, and seem to have little concern for Avalon's stability. Meanwhile, very old — and very human — grudges play themselves out every day, slowly eating away at the foundation of the alliance. For now, the scheming and maneuvering is confined to back rooms and dark alleys, but it is only a matter of time before the minor conflicts and vendettas come home to roost in Carleon.

### Piram's Daughter

King Piram of Breg has long been a bitter opponent of Queen Elaine, though neither Elaine nor her knights realize the danger he represents. When Elaine sought the throne of Avalon, King Piram was a powerful rival, one of many who claimed the title "High King." His army was large and well-trained, and he believes to this day he could have conquered all of Avalon.

But Elaine — and the blessing of the Three Queens — shattered his ambitions. After a hard-fought campaign, Elaine and her knights defeated Piram. He was forced to yield the throne to her, but in his heart, he has yet to give up hope. Since that day, he has been one of Elaine's most

vocal opponents, arguing long and loud against virtually every one of her policies.

Of late, however, Piram's tirades have become more and more infrequent. Clearly, his heart hasn't changed — he is still the bitter, ambitious man he's always been. However, something has changed, and the nature of that change troubles those close to the Queen. Piram is clearly planning something, but thus far, no one has been able to discover what.

### The Play's The Thing

Montgomery Peerson has developed a bad habit of making enemies. Last year, his play, *The Tragedy of Tristram Channel*, drew the attention of some very shady sorts, and it took a cadre of Heroes to save his life. With a new lease on life, Peerson decided it might be wise to take his show on the road.

For the last year, he and his company have toured the countryside, playing to whatever audience they could gather. On a cold winter's night in early Primus, 1669, Peerson finished work on a new play, entitled *The Dreamer's Kingdom*. That evening, the traveling company arrived at an inn, and promised the patrons a new play.

When the troupe finished preparations, the inn was virtually empty — not even the barkeep remained. Only a lone traveler, obviously destitute, sat at a table in the corner. Mindful of his promise, Peerson insisted the troupe perform their play, despite his players' objections. And perform they did.

As the play began, dusk settled early in the countryside, and the audience began to grow. At first, only travelers and vagabonds filtered in. Soon, however, Peerson noticed a change in the patrons: ladies in spectacular finery, men in the



height of fashion, coachmen, butlers, huntsmen. Some were bored, but a few watched with rapt attention, taking particular note of specific characters on stage.

Specific Sidhe characters.

By the end of the play, the inn had emptied once again, leaving only the destitute traveler. He shook his head, as if waking from a pleasant sleep, and then wandered blissfully out the door.

For most of the Sidhe, the evening was a pleasant diversion, and a lesson in how humanity — or at least Peerson — perceived them. For one Sidhe, however — a bad-tempered hobgoblin named Pudge — the play was a travesty. He felt the Sidhe were portrayed as vain and shallow, and took particular umbrage with the comic relief, whom he felt bore a suspicious resemblance to himself. The Queen told him to forgive the playwright — she was entertained, and that was enough — but Pudge wasn't as quick to forgive.

For the past six months, Peerson's company has been plagued by all manner of misfortune and pranks, and Peerson is a hair's breadth from giving up and retiring. Once again, Peerson is in need of allies, but this time, his enemy isn't earthly in origin.

And a Sidhe can be a terrible enemy.

### The Last MacEachern

In her lifetime, Connie MacDonald has forged three weapons capable of killing a Sidhe. The first, she made for her father: a rite of passage before she earned the MacEachern tattoo. The second and third she forged at the request of others, who disappeared shortly after they visited her. In all three cases, she was careful to hide her identity, so that the Sidhe would never know her true name. Nonetheless, stories have sprung up about the old woman, and men and women whisper the words "Iron Witch" and "Sidhe Killer" when they speak of Connie MacDonald.

Connie likes her privacy, so none of this would ordinarily worry her. But she knows that such stories can rapidly become legends of their own. And legends are the domain of the Sidhe.

She has already received two visits by strangers this year — strangers unable to pass the boundaries of her faerie wards. It is only a matter of time before the Sidhe recruit human agents to put an end to her. Connie has lived a long life, but she is not ready to die yet: not until she has the chance to pass on the teachings of the lost MacEachern clan.

### The MacLeod Flag

Clan MacDonald has spent many years learning all they can of Sidhe magic, hoping to somehow find an advantage against their ancient enemies, the MacLeods. After all this time, Sarah MacDonald may have finally found the key to the MacLeod's victory at the Battle of the Green Field (see *Avalon*, pages 52-53). Sarah learned enough of the battle to know why the Sidhe came to the MacLeod's aid. She also knows that aid from the Sidhe never comes without a price.

After examining account after account of the battle, she gradually realized that only one element remained consistent about the Sidhe's appearance through every telling: the flag. The flag was the key. Sarah decided in short order that it had to be destroyed.

However, the MacLeod's green banner was Sidhe in origin; Sarah knew it she couldn't simply tear it up. Until she figured out how to destroy the flag permanently, she would have to remove it from the MacLeod's possession. She quickly formulated a crafty plan to steal the flag, and paid a network of thieves to execute it. They brought it off without a hitch.

Since then, the MacLeods have suffered a reversal of fortunes. The Sidhe feel that they entrusted the MacLeods with the flag not as a gift, but as a sacred charge. If the MacLeods allowed it to be stolen, they clearly don't hold it in high regard. Sidhe sightings in MacLeod lands have dropped off precipitously, and stories of dark Unseelie are on the rise...

A general pall of doom hangs over the MacLeod lands, its effects felt throughout the area. The first frost of 1669 fell in late Julius, killing many of the crops in MacLeod lands. If the flag isn't recovered soon, things are only going to get worse.

While Sarah's initial plan was to destroy the flag, she could easily reconsider. After all, ruin will come to the MacLeods if the flag is waved three times, won't it? Of course, Sarah isn't sure if ruin will come to the MacLeods, or ruin will come to whoever waves it. Either way, if she find herself backed against a wall, she may be just desperate enough to find out...

### The O'Bannon

Most Inish do not concern themselves with the comings and goings of the O'Bannon. He is here when he is here, and when he is gone... he is gone. It is both as simple and as complicated as that.

However, Arghyle O'Toole and his supporters believe that the O'Bannon's inevitable disappearance (and death, if O'Toole has his way — see below) will throw Inismore into chaos. Every Inish knows civil war invariably follows the O'Bannon's disappearance, and O'Toole hopes to avert such bloodshed. A war will only weaken the Inish position when O'Toole moves against Elaine.

And sooner or later, he will move against Elaine.

In order to prevent the inevitable chaos, O'Toole leads a secret movement in the king's court to remove the O'Bannon from his throne, now and forever. He finds support slow in coming, but has convinced a few of the rightness of his cause. As the O'Bannon appears in court less and less, O'Toole's support only grows.

### The Iron Guard

Arghyle O'Toole's personal guard have never had a name before. When Roland O'Toole returned from the Highlands, that changed. Now, armed with MacEachern forged weapons, they are known (in private) as the Iron Guard.

They do not carry their iron weapons in public, nor anywhere outside of O'Toole's private estate. O'Toole knows all too well what happens to

those who carelessly wave MacEachern weapons about. However, he also knows that the O'Bannon takes strong measures to unseat, and readies his guards for a decisive strike. O'Toole's guard know exactly what they train for, and almost all of them eagerly await the chance to fight a legend.

Almost.

A few are afraid.

And one believes O'Toole has gone too far. He only hopes he has the chance to tell someone in time (see the adventure hook on page 86 for more information).

### The MacIntyres

For hundreds of years, Clan MacIntyre has been left to its own devices. They maintained their nomadic lifestyle, and had little care for the politics and principals of the outside world. However, Fergus MacBride views them as a potentially powerful symbol, and if the Separatist movement is to succeed, he will need such symbols. Of course, MacBride knows better than to simply send an emissary to the MacIntyres: he will simply be sent home again — or worse. Instead, he has introduced legislature designed to preserve the MacIntyres' nomadic lifestyle, by guaranteeing no one — not the High Council, and not the Queen — will ever be able to interfere with them.

MacBride has little interest in the affairs of the MacIntyre's, and, in truth, cares not at all whether his legislation passes. His true hope is that by attempting to deny the Queen influence over the MacIntyres, he will cause the Unifists to rally against the legislation. Perhaps they will even go so far as to introduce counterlegislation guaranteeing the Queen's interference with the MacIntyres — or at least interference by representatives of the Queen. He believes the MacIntyres will not take that well, and it could be the spark that sets them on the warpath.

In fact, he's counting on it.





## Castille

"It's intolerable!" Verdugo's normally calm voice rang through the throne room with naked vehemence. "Only the Montaigne could demand such outrageous peace terms!" Even Aldana had to stifle a flinch at the Cardinal's rage.

"Considering the leverage they have," Andrés said carefully, "I find them very fair and reasonable terms."

Verdugo would not be assuaged. "They demand reparations! They actually expect us to pay them for leaving us in peace!"

"They control almost half the country," Aldana's voice was calm and reasonable. "Should they wish, they could make us take it back yard by yard. Gold is infinitely less precious than blood."

Verdugo turned to where King Sandoval sat quietly on his throne.

"Your Majesty, I beg you to stand fast. These reparations will drain our coffers dry. We'll have to raise taxes. The economy will suffer gravely. Think of the Castillian people."

Sandoval chewed on his lip, his brow furrowed in thought. "I am thinking of the Castillian people," he said at last, "and I share your anger, Verdugo. However, in this case, I think we must accept their terms. The reparations are less that it would cost to continue the war and will not involve the death of so many fine Castillian sons."

"But your Majesty—"

Sandoval held up his hand, his eyes suddenly sharp. "Let us count our blessings, Verdugo. L'Empereur is gone, and his sorcerous minions are on the run. Montaigne has ceased its incursions against us and offers to return nearly all of its captured territory. The people are weary of war, and I am weary of sending my subjects to fight and die on our beautiful fields. We should accept this peace and give the country a chance to heal."

A stony silence reigned.

Aldana reached out and gingerly grasped the Cardinal's shoulder. "The Prophets teach us that patience is a virtue. Let us wait and bide our time. Soon enough, we shall be the ones dictating to them."

"And what of Barcino?" Verdugo asked. "Can your pride allow you to accept a Montaigne garrison in Barcino?"

"It will have to, won't it?" Aldana mused. "Besides, I suspect that Barcino's new governor is going to have his hands full."

Besides Montaigne itself, no nation has felt the impact of the Revolution as much as Castille.

Almost overnight, the armies occupying their soil vanished, the bloodshed ended, and the greatest enemy they ever knew turned up hanging from a tree. The roving Dons clogging King Sandoval's court could return home, where they faced the task of rebuilding after the Montaigne occupation. Though their neighbors to the north like to speak of a new day, Castille is truly living it. For the first time in two years, the nation isn't on the verge of utter defeat.

### The War

Several stirring Castillian victories marked the final days of the war. On the western peninsula, General Montoya repulsed a large Montaigne attack, despite no longer holding San Augustin as an anchor for his defenses. Castille's Admiral Orduño shattered the Montaigne naval blockade shortly thereafter, and followed it up with a stirring victory at the Battle of San Felipe on Quintus 23. An attempted crossing of El Rio de Delia less than a month later ended with the Montaigne boats being smashed to flinters, and an aborted effort to infiltrate La Selva de Fendes resulted in the deaths of nearly thirty Porté mages.

The most important Castillian victory, however, took place less than a month before l'Empereur's overthrow. In a move which shocked Castille, the Inquisition accused Admiral Orduño of heresy, and his arrest left their navy without an effective leader. Orduño's counterpart, Alazais Valoix, took the opportunity to launch what he hoped was a fatal blow against the Castillian nation — the destruction of San Cristobal. His vessels easily knocked aside the port's defenders and he came quite close to flattening the city... only to be thwarted at the last moment by a Castillian counterattack. Orduño's estranged wife Margaretta, who had publicly condemned her husband, rallied the scattered defenders around her vessel and struck back at Valoix's ships. The assault ended when Margaretta herself boarded and sunk a Montaigne frigate, forcing the Montaigne to retreat. Her bold daring earned her a hero's welcome — despite Inquisition suspicions about her loyalty — and kept Castille's former capital intact. A few weeks later, the Montaigne attacks ceased; the Revolution marked an effective end to the war.

### The Peace

At the same time, old wounds lingered beyond the initial cease fire. Castille entered peace

negotiations eagerly, but found its hands tied by the realities of the situation. As unstable as it was, Montaigne's new government still held almost all of the western peninsula, and did not intend to simply hand it over without a word. If Castille wished to be reunified, they would have to give Montaigne something in return.

The treaty which followed was inevitable. In exchange for a full withdrawal and a return to prewar boards, Castille agreed to pay reparations to Montaigne over a period of ten years. The payments stuck in the proud nation's throat, as well as slowing efforts at reconstruction. Montaigne also stipulated the right to keep an "expeditionary force" in the town of Barcino, allowing them to retain control of the mouth of the great River. Most Castellians considered the war a victory — they survived intact, didn't they? — but the peace terms did little to assuage their injuries.

Nor has the Inquisition halted its activities. The persecution of scholarly learning continued unabated, and the sudden departure of the occupying army created a power vacuum which they rapidly filled. Disenfranchised Dons returned home only to find Bands of Inquisitors waiting to "assist" them in governing. The rise of Cabora (see pages 39–40 and 45–46) triggered a newfound sense of unease in Cardinal Verdugo, and his minions have subsequently increased their efforts to purify Castille before the coming of the End Times.

In order to overcome these lingering problems, Castille has turned to an old solution: exploration. The recent rise in Explorer activity has prompted the King to finance new expeditions west in hopes of discovering a source of wealth out beyond the western oceans (more on this trend can be found on pages 41–42).

Good King Sandoval himself has demonstrated the first signs of real maturity in recent months. Though the peace treaty with Montaigne galled him (he secretly would have preferred a crushing military victory) he ultimately set his pride aside and did what was best for his people. He also finally realized that the Church will never grant him his due title of *Rex Castellium*. If he wished to truly rule Castille, then he would have to take it from them, and has privately set about the best course of action to do so. Some part of him has finally accepted that his elder brother will never return, and that he must therefore stand on his own.

### Barcino

While most of Castille sets out to recover from the occupation, Barcino continues to writhe under the weight of the foreign oppressor. A Montaigne garrison of two thousand soldiers holds uncontested sway over the city, laying edicts with supreme authority. The citizens have few rights, and the Montaigne may act more or less as they please; they regard Barcino as a spoil of war. Vodacce merchants have a large presence in the town, and their traders have served as mediators between the garrison and their charges (as well as earning a tidy profit in the bargain), but their efforts can only do so much. Until the Montaigne agree to leave Barcino, Castille can never be truly free.

But there is hope. Recently, a mysterious figure has been spotted on the Barcino rooftops, dressed in a velvet cloak and bearing a grinning white mask. The Montaigne have orders to shoot on sight anyone matching the interloper's description, but his very appearance has brought new light to the occupied town. El Vago has come to Barcino; let the Montaigne beware.

### Eisen

The fragmented nation of Eisen has seen no improvement over the last year, and if anything, 1669 is shaping up to be worse. Isolated border skirmishes are beginning to crop up, and in all likelihood, it's going to get worse before it gets better. A few Eisenfürsten have a tenuous grip on reality — at best — and none of the others are in any position to bring peace to the shattered nation.

On top of the internal problems suffered by the *königreichen*, expatriates from Montaigne are beginning to flood into Eisen, notably in Wische and other border kingdoms. While the money the Montaigne have brought to the table is beneficial in the short term, it is only a matter of time before Eisen's new guests cause trouble with their hosts.

### Fischler

In the neighboring province of Hainzl, Georg Hainzl went quite, quite mad. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Hainzl has *been* mad for some time, but his madness is only now beginning to affect his neighbors. Hainzl's latest delusion motivated him to assemble a small army and attack the province of Fischler, an attack for which Faulk Fischler was ill-prepared.



Though Faulk's advisor Franziska Kohl attempted to convince him that his armies are more than sufficient to stand against Hainzl's ill-planned invasion, the sudden attack — and Fischler's lack of military background — shook to the core his confidence. Fortunately for Faulk, he had other advisors.

Over the previous year, Faulk had many encounters with the bats that escorted him home after a night of drinking. As tipsy men often do, he began to confide in the bats. While they did not respond (in fact, they didn't even seem to understand), this mattered very little to the drunken Eisenfürst. He simply rambled on.

At first, he merely lamented his day to day concerns: worry over the harvest, his coffers, his relations with his neighbors, and occasionally his relations (or lack thereof) with Franziska. Shortly before Hainzl's attack however, his worries got the attention of the bats' master... who approached Faulk Fischler with a deal.

He and his associates would take care of Hainzl, for a price. Such a small price, really. All he required was the lives of the invading soldiers. Fischler thought long and hard, but eventually, his rationalizations won out. After all, weren't the invading soldiers going to war against his königreich? People die in war, and better the invading forces of Hainzl than his own people — or himself. His decision made, Fischler struck the bargain.

Five days later, Hainzl's expeditionary force invaded. That very same day, they disappeared.

Amazed at the effectiveness of his new ally, Fischler has become convinced that a continuing arrangement is the best way to secure his province against invading armies in general, and Hainzl's army specifically.

Unfortunately, in order to maintain an ongoing bargain with his ally, Fischler needed to find a new way to entice him (or it). Without an invading army on the horizon, he began turning over convicted criminals to his ally. Once every new moon, he quietly arranges for a convicted murderer or other criminal

to be set free — after being generously covered in Blackwood sap. They don't last long.

For his part, Fischler has realized the connection between the Blackwood sap the criminals are slathered in and the Blackwood out of which he has built his new home. He tries to put such concerns in the back of his mind, along with the worry of what he's going to do when he runs out of criminals.

### Freiburg

Freiburg suffered a brief incursion in late Sextus 1668, when a new vein of dracheneisen — the largest ever recorded — was found beneath a Freiburg townhouse (see the *Freiburg* boxed set for more information). Efforts were made to keep the discovery a secret, but Trägue's neighbor soon got word of it, and decided to pay him a visit. Two armies, one from Fauner Pösen and one from Stefan Heilgrund, arrived to take control of the new vein. They lay siege to the city, counting on its fractious nature to carry them to easy victory.

Ironically, their saber-rattling had the exact opposite effect. Freiburg's citizens rallied around their leaders, along with the stalwart adventurers who had discovered the mine. They stood side-by-side to defend their city, driving the invading Eisenfürsten away from the gates. The Siege of Freiburg ended in victory for Trägue, and gave the city a newfound sense of hope.

It didn't last more than a few months however. Soon, Freiburg returned to the swirling chaos and its ruler returned to his alcoholic stupor. Trägue's death was inevitable, but didn't end at the bottom of a bottle as he had originally intended. On the very last night of 1668, he hurled himself



from the tallest bastion of the Wachturm, crashing to his death on the cobbled streets below. Rumor holds he was visited shortly before his death by a small group of strangers.

Within minutes of his death, the foundation of the Wachturm collapsed, and the heart of Freiburg tumbled down around its Eisenfürst. Despite Trägue's hands-off philosophy of ruling Freiburg, a vacuum of leadership quickly formed. Oddly, the people of Freiburg needed a leader to tell them to do what they wished.

Despite her position as Trägue's second, Wilma Probst knew the people of Freiburg would not accept her as leader. She was a symbol of order and government in a virtually lawless city. Within a few short days, she turned to Logan Sieger, Trägue's former scribe, for help.

Sieger accepted her offer of the Eisenfürst position, with the understanding that he would continue to support Trägue's philosophies. By now, Sieger was so inured with Trägue's way of thinking he probably would have continued to follow them, regardless of Probst's stance on the matter.

In large part, he continued the "hands off" style of rulership pioneered by Trägue, but in a few areas, he tempered his policy with idealistic notions of human betterment. The dracheneisen mine gave him some small amount of wealth, which he channels into basic services (such as road repair and the city guards). Most importantly, he made it quite clear that Freiburg welcomed the pursuit of science within its borders. Trägue believed — and Sieger believes — that man will not advance as long as he is obsessed with the artifacts of the past. Sieger has taken this one step further, and actively supports the pursuit of new discoveries in Freiburg. He gives money to Breuzmann's School for young nobles, and the Invisible College has flooded into Freiburg in greater and greater numbers.

It is only a matter of time before the Vaticine church makes its presence known.

### **Hainzl**

In the past year, Hainzl's stability deteriorated to a degree that without outside stimulus, he rapidly shifted personas, moving from wise beggar to villainous lecher to heroic peasant within the course of a few days. Philip Knef took this fall as his cue to act, a cue which he has been awaiting a long time.

Knef approached the Nibelungen under the auspices of service to his liege, and asked them to

forge Knef's extensive — and very secret — dracheneisen horde into weapons and armor sufficient to equip his forces. Unfortunately for him, they balked. Knef was not an Eisenfürst — not yet, at any rate — so he had to offer the Nibelungen a bargain in exchange for their work. Knef, ever the pragmatist, offered them their lives. They would produce his armaments, or his men would find every Nibelungen in the königreich and kill them.

He should have known better.

The Nibelungen agreed to his terms, though they had a plan of their own. They provided Knef with substandard weaponry, not fortified by the secret practices of the Nibelungen, but still composed of raw, soft dracheneisen. The would-be Eisenfürst would not discover this until it was too late.

Knowing that it was only a matter of time before the Nibelungen alerted Hainzl, he acted quickly, mounting an armed coup to wrest Atemlos from its mad ruler. Despite his army's flawed equipment, the coup proceeded well at first. Knef's men seized control of Hainzl's estate, and no one appeared able to oppose him.

Until a great hero rallied the estate staff, and provided them arms — arms truly and faithfully forged by the Nibelungen. The hero called himself Carleman, after the man who united northern Théah in the seventh century.

Others, including the household staff he led, called him Georg Hainzl.

Hainzl's deranged personality responded to the threat by taking the persona of Carleman, though a highly romanticized Carleman. He regained control of his household as the first step towards uniting a fractured Eisen and "pushing back the savagery of the Dark Ages." With the help of the household (and Knef's flawed equipment) he halted the coup, and regained control of his house. Hainzl confronted Knef himself and defeated the treacherous miner in a duel. Knef, despite his defeat, was able to escape with a small contingent of his men, and has since gone underground in one of his mines.

That accomplished, everyone expected Hainzl's mercurial mental state to shift once more, but it didn't. For the next week, Hainzl marshaled his forces, preparing to "draw a line against the darkness, and stamp out the fractious tribes and Vesten raiders." Quickly, Hainzl developed plans to invade the neighboring königreich of Fischler, and just as quickly assembled an expeditionary force.



Though Hainzl's family worked feverishly to divert his plans, Hainzl's success in retaining control of his estate and his province has galvanized the soldiers of his army. They looked to him for leadership, dismissing his insistence that they call him Carleman as an idiosyncrasy.

Within a week, the expeditionary force sallied forth into the province of Fischler.

They disappeared.

Hainzl *cum* Carleman took the loss of his men personally, and plans to launch a full invasion as soon as he can organize an attack force. He saw Fischler as the savage leader of a barbarian tribe, who murdered every last soldier of the expeditionary force. Not only has this enraged Hainzl, but any doubts his soldiers had in his leadership have been replaced by a desire to avenge their fallen comrades.

Hainzl's family despaired more than ever for his mental state, and feared that his latest delusion would send Eisen tumbling across the brink of yet another war. They have delayed another invasion for months — using any excuse they could think of — but the time grows short before “Carleman” can launch another attack. Hainzl's madness must be cured and soon, or it will be far too late.

### Heilgrund

Stefan Gregor Heilgund III has sold his soul. For years, he labored under a sense of inadequacy. The Emperor died while he slept in the next room (he is still convinced of foul play), and his parents later committed suicide, found dead in each other's arms. He feels responsible for all three deaths.

To atone, he swore to reunite Eisen under a new Emperor — himself. He has since searched for any and all means that may help him attain this goal, even occult means. For a time, he toyed with the idea of contacting certain powerful beings of Eisen lore, and bargaining for sorcery. He knew the price would be tremendously high; still, the only thing that stopped him from proceeding were his relations with Niklaus Trägue and Fauner Pösen.

All of that has changed. Once, Trägue seemed to value Heilgrund's input. Now, Trägue is dead. Once, Heilgrund was enamored of Fauner Pösen. Now, the virtual army of her suitors has thinned to one man, and that man is not Stefan Heilgrund. The fact that she has yet to show any sign of favoring Hendryk Brandt doesn't matter to Heilgrund in the slightest. He felt cut off from the

rest of the world, his only “allies” gone and his kingdom sinking further into the malaise of the past. Now, he had nothing left to lose.

With the assistance of Odel Herrickson, Heilgrund mounted an expedition deep into the Schwartzen Walden. He took with him only a small contingent of men, intent on maintaining the secrecy of his purpose. He, Odel, and their retinue endured many terrifying nights in the forest, and each morning the entourage was missing one more man.

Time after time, Herrickson attempted to convince Heilgrund to turn back, certain that no power was worth their lives. Heilgrund responded simply: “Yes, Odel. This power is.”

Finally, when only Odel and Heilgrund remained, Odel prepared to abandon his lord in the forest. He would find another patron, one not so reckless. He had done it before. The same night, however, Heilgrund finally achieved his goal: contact with the Schattenmann. The being visited Stefan in his dreams, and the two held council. Heilgrund, for his part, was terrified, but also determined to gain the power his sought. The Schattenmann told him that such power did not come easily, and he would have to make a sacrifice. It was then that Heilgrund realized he did have one thing left to lose: his soul.

But it would be worth it.

When Heilgrund emerged from the Schwartzen Walden, he emerged alone. When he arrived back at Heilgrundstadt, he found nothing changed. Well, almost nothing. A new regiment of guards occupied the barracks formerly reserved for the Emperor's guards. The never speak, nor do they ever remove their elaborate, black lacquered armor, including helms which disguise their faces, but they follow Heilgrund's orders.

He also found Odel Herrickson waiting in his chambers.

Herrickson is not the same man he once was. His old wounds have healed: his scalp is whole again, and his right arm has been restored. Odel no longer speaks to anyone except Heilgrund, not even to correct them. One might expect the servants to be happy at this turn of events, but now they whisper quiet prayers as Odel passes them in the halls. His voice is hollow, and the life is gone from his eyes. He seems to command Heilgrund's new regiment of guards, though no one has ever seen him give any orders. They simply seem to know his wishes.

Privately, the Schattenmann — in the guise of Odel — schools Heilgrund in the use of his new

powers, and what Heilgrund must do to maintain those powers. Heilgrund now holds dominion over not only his königreich, but the shadows within it. His powers are similar to Nacht sorcery, but are unique to Heilgrund. No one on Théah can do what he does, and he revels in his newfound power.

But there is always a price. In order to maintain these powers, Heilgrund must keep his citizens afraid. Afraid of him, afraid of the dark, afraid of the unknown, but most importantly, afraid of his new guards, which he has named the *Schattensoldat*.

With only the slightest hesitation, Heilgrund acceded to these requirements, rapidly drafting new laws designed to give the *Schattensoldat* free reign. They quickly became objects of terror for the people of Heilgrund, enforcing laws which only they seemed to know. People quickly learned, however, that those who broke them disappeared. Apathy is no longer the watchword of Heilgrund. Now, fear rules.

Heilgrund quickly discovered that the more he empowered his guard, the more their numbers grew. Their ranks simply seemed to expand of their own accord. The province of Heilgrund has become a wonderland of fear, rapidly sliding back into the dark days before the rise of Carleman.

### Pösen

Fauner Pösen's kingdom stands stronger than ever, united behind the iron will of their leader. After suffering a stinging defeat during the Siege of Freiburg (see above), her armies retreated to lick their wounds. The failure to claim Freiburg hung heavily on Pösen's heart and she briefly considered launching a full-blown attempt to unify the nation. She didn't like the idea — she had enough problems running her own kingdom — but she needed an excuse to maintain her enormous army. Without a suitable enemy to fight, the army would simply drain her resources until there were none left.

Luckily for her, a suitable enemy landed right on her doorstep.

General Montegue, retreating from Ussura and cut off from escape by sea, crossed the border into Pösen königreich with his army in tow. He wished only to make his way home, but Pösen had no intention of letting him. The Montaigne soldiers threatened to strip her kingdom bare in order to stay fed, and were led by the most famous commander in all of Théah. It was too much for Fauner to resist. Her forces met Montegue's at the

Battle of Salzumpf (see pages 8-9), and thoroughly defeated them.

The victory was just what her königreich needed. Though outnumbered, Montegue proved a stalwart opponent, making her victory all the sweeter (as well as shrinking her army by over 30,000 men). The people were heartened by her defense of the kingdom, and she had over seven thousand prisoners of war to ransom back to Montaigne — including Montegue himself — which would solve much of her monetary woes. Or so she thought.

As it turned out *l'Empereur* was unwilling to pay for his soldiers' return. Pösen was dumfounded, but refused to slaughter prisoners of war simply to free up more resources. She compensated by putting them to work, rebuilding roads and other public works.

The Revolution strengthened her hand somewhat, and the new Montaigne government paid the ransom for the return of their soldiers — but not Montegue. He remained under her care, a comfortable prisoner whom she doesn't quite know what to do with (see page 13). Without any recompense for the general, the rest of the money was just a temporary balm. Though her people stayed fed throughout the winter of 1668-1669, she could not say whether the same will be true next winter.

She has begun considering a reunification campaign — not so she can rule, but so that she can put a competent man on the throne and go back to soldiering full time. If she felt that another Eisenfürst were up to it, she'd offer to support him, but none have yet met her exacting standards. (The rejuvenated Reinhard von Wische provides some hope, but she distrusts the Montaigne exiles who have recently dominated his court.) Luckily, she has a little time before fate calls her hand. Until then, she trains her troops, basks in the glow of her victory, and continues to ignore the repeated romantic overtures of Hendryk Brandt.

### Sieger

Erich Sieger spent months in negotiation with his neighbor to the south, Alcide Mondavi. In exchange for grain and farming soil, Sieger agreed to provide military support for Mondavi's planned coup. In the fall of 1668, he led his Iron Guard south, and spent the next few months campaigning for Mondavi in Vodacce (see Chapter Two for more details). When the campaign ended, he and his men stayed on for a





### The Waisen

The waisen have long been a mystery of Eisen. No one knows why they roam the country side in their mindless journeys, and no one knows what makes them the mindless retches they are. But Reinhard Dieter von Wische knows. He knows, because for too long, he was one of them.

Vodacce Fate Witches can manipulate destiny by pulling and tugging at the strands of fate that bind one person to another. When an individual at the other end of a fate strand is killed, that fate strand is destroyed. The waisen are those unfortunate souls who have had all of their fate strands destroyed in such a manner, rendering them completely alone in the world.

With the death of von Wische's wife and children, he joined the Waisen. Thanks to his surroundings, he was fortunate not to have encountered other Waisen, else he would be on the road with them to this day. As it was, he simply fell into a catatonic state, alone and disconnected from the world.

With the "return" of Cornelia, one of his fate strands has been repaired, which was enough to cure him from the Waisen curse. Of course, if he discovers Gisela's deception, the strand linking von Wische to his dead wife may be destroyed again. It remains to be seen if Gisela can forge her own strand of fate with von Wische before Cornelia's is severed again... for the last time.

time, hunting bandits and hiring themselves out as mercenaries for the princes' endless deadly games. They amassed quite a bit of money in the process, as well as plenty of grain and wagons full of soil to replenish their withered fields. Enticed by such rewards, Sieger decided to remain in Vodacce until midsummer, then return to his königreich with enough food to see his people through the winter.

When he returns, he's going to find several pressing problems waiting for him.

### The Mörderbande

While Sieger was present, the *Mörderbande* were carefully controlled, held on a tight leash by the Eisenfürst. Now that Sieger is out of the

country, they have virtually free reign over his province. Klaus Metzger, captain of the *Mörderbande*, has seized as much power as he can in Sieger's absence.

As soon as Sieger left, Metzger immediately set his men on the Eisenfürst's advisory council, citing "acts against the best interest of the province" as his justification. In Metzger's mind, it is a comfortably vague indictment, though he has yet to be seriously questioned on it. No one is quite foolish enough.

Immediately, Metzger stepped in and began to oversee the tasks of running the königreich, though he is by no means a fair, just, or even particularly sane ruler. His regime is brutal, and occasionally murderous. He goes to any lengths to maintain his grip on the province, and prepares for the day when Sieger returns. Metzger plans to welcome his ruler with a mailed fist.

Despite his fearsome reputation, Metzger is not without opponents. Shortly after seizing control of the Königreich, he had Hans Jost hanged for his subversive activities as the Wachter (see the *Eisen* sourcebook, page 39). Until that moment, Jost's father, Manfred, did not truly believe his son would be executed. Sieger is not a forgiving man, but he is a pragmatist. Jost believed the Eisenfürst would spare his son in order for Sieger to maintain good relations with the mayor of Stutzung. Perhaps Manfred was right. But with Sieger gone, Metzger was free to act as he saw fit.

Now, the mayor of Stutzung is beginning to foment dissension in his city, outraged by the death of his child. With the current conditions in Sieger, Manfred has an easy job ahead of him. In fact, within a few short months, the dissension may spin out of control into outright rebellion.

When Sieger returns, he may have to fight his way back to Stahlfort, through both revolutionaries and his own *Mörderbande*.

### Wische

As the kingdom hit hardest by the War of the Cross, Wische started 1668 in dire straits. Klaus Inselhoffer's plan to unseat Eisenfürst Reinhard von Wische moved forward, with disastrous results — for Inselhoffer. Klaus had spent months quietly stealing money from the kingdom's coffers, while simultaneously threatening his sister Gisela (Reinhard's *de facto* regent) with armed insurrection if she couldn't pay the bills. With his deadline rapidly approaching, Gisela searched frantically for any clue to the whereabouts of the missing money, until finally,

one of Wische's Roaring Drachen guards discovered the tunnel Klaus had built beneath the treasury.

Rather than take immediate action, he reported Klaus' thievery to Gisela. Unfortunately, Gisela had no power to act directly, but resolved to move forward with plans of her own. Desperate to awaken von Wische in time to save his *königreich*, she disguised herself as his late wife, Cornelia. She dyed her hair blonde, and donned one of Cornelia's dresses, untouched since the day the woman died.

Her disguise complete, she presented herself in Reinhard's throne room and began speaking to him in a voice she hoped approximated Cornelia's. In the midst of her efforts, Klaus marched in to depose the catatonic ruler and immediately saw through her ruse. Furious, he marched ahead of his men and struck Gisela. As she tumbled to the marble floor, Klaus drew his sword, saying, "If you wish to be like Cornelia, I can happily accommodate you!"

The sight of his wife being threatened with death — again — finally roused Reinhard to action. He virtually sprang from his throne, seized Klaus' sword from his hand, and ran the villain through. After disposing of Klaus, von Wische turned to Gisela *cum* Cornelia with tears in his eyes, and proclaimed only, "I knew he was a liar." Gisela, speechless at the loss of her brother, despite his villainous tendencies, could barely hold back her tears. Von Wische mistook them for tears of joy at their reunion, and has been convinced since that day that his wife has returned to him.

He was half right. Gisela's tears were fueled by both grief for her brother, and joy at von Wische's revival. Her plan worked, but now she has the Drachen by the tail. As long as "Cornelia" lived, von Wische was fully the man he used to be: decisive, kind, and above all aware. Though thrilled to see the man she loves himself again, she was afraid of what will happen if she reveals her true identity, fearful that von Wische will slip once more into his catatonic state. She worked desperately to help him rebuild his *königreich*, imitating Cornelia's speech and mannerisms as best she could and hoping against hope that when she revealed her true identity, he will come to love her for who she is, rather than who she pretended to be.

It has been that way for almost a year.

Lately von Wische has begun to wonder where his wife disappears to for such long periods of

time. Gisela assures him she is fine, simply taking a walk, or knitting in private, but von Wische worries. He certainly does not want to lose Cornelia again, and it is only a matter of time before his curiosity (and perhaps paranoia) overcomes her assurances.

### The Montaigne Émigrés

With the coming of the Montaigne Revolution, Gisela received a boon in her effort to help von Wische stabilize his kingdom, in the form of the Montaigne exiles. Lying just across the border from Montaigne, Wische *königreich* has proven a popular place for Montaigne émigrés to gather. With the people starving and the coffers empty, the Montaigne were confident they could buy their way into the good graces of both von Wische and his *königreich*.

Led by the *l'Empereur's* daughter Anne du Montaigne and her husband Jean-Marie Rois et Reines du Rogné, the Montaigne contingent consisted primarily of those at least somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the Montaigne peasantry, and who sought reconciliation with the revolutionaries rather than revenge.

Upon the couple's arrival in Siegsburg, they immediately requested an audience with von Wische, which he granted. After many hours in closed session with von Wische and Gisela Inselhoffer (in her disguise as Cornelia von Wische), they reached an arrangement. In return for sanctuary in von Wische, the Montaigne émigrés would provide financial support to the Eisenfürst's coffers, and help to rebuild the province's shattered infrastructure. In addition, the Montaigne would be left to govern their own people, as long as they respected the laws of their host.

The agreement has benefited both parties tremendously. The Montaigne are safe from the Council of Eight, and their money helped von Wische take great strides toward rebuilding his *Königreich*. Not only that, but many of the Montaigne have taken it upon themselves to aid von Wische in other ways. For example, Rois et Reines formed a "civilian watch" to supplement the shrinking Roaring Drachen, and several Porté mages offered their services as messengers and spies for von Wische.

While a few voices complain of the growing foreign influence, the vast majority of Wische's citizenry couldn't be happier with their Montaigne visitors. Bandit activity has shrunk tremendously and the influx of noble money has



revitalized the economy. Though large areas of the königreich remain devastated, the people look to the future with hope: something Wische königreich has not had for quite some time.

With the influx of Montaigne ex-patriates, von Wische has also become a hotbed of anti-revolutionary sentiment, and a haven for displaced Montaigne nobles. Any such figures would be more than welcome to stay in von Wische, particularly if they contribute to the province's smooth operation.

### Ussura

While Montegue marched on Pavtlow, the nation of Ussura presented a united front — the threat from without took precedence over any internal squabbles. Now that Montegue has left the country with his army in tow, both Matushka and the Gaius can turn their attentions inward. Montegue's retreat from Ussura began in Quartus, 1668 (when he ordered the army to turn around) and ended in late Julius (when the last of his rearguard finally crossed the border into Eisen). The details of his retreat can be found in the Montaigne history section above.

Since the end of the conflict, Gaius Ilya and his Knias have returned to the business of governing as best they can, but the steppes are not what they once were. Montegue came closer than anyone to conquering the country, and the impact of his invasion continues to reverberate throughout the country.

In the western provinces, Ussurans tried to rebuild from the devastation of the war. The land, thankfully, no longer actively rebelled against the invades, but reconstruction has been slower than anticipated. Unfortunately, the division of Matushka's attention between the hardest-hit areas and the recent rise of Cabora (see pages 39–40) left much of Ussura at the mercy of the elements. No longer are the farmers blessed with pleasant weather and fertile conditions. No longer can Matushka's presence be felt throughout the land. The Ussurans have endured well (their Grandmother taught them as much), but the abnormally harsh weather can be felt across the land. It seems even Matushka's power has its limits.



Further east, new political troubles have arisen. Two areas in particular continue to cause concern for the Gaius: the haunted province of Veche, and the increasingly militant Kosars.

### Veche

As Montegue's army drew closer and closer to the capital of Ussura, many of Pavtlow's citizens decided discretion was the better part of valor. Best to let the army stand with the creed of "Not one step backwards." While The Gaius' men prepared to defend their leader at all costs, the common folk emigrated wherever they could. Most of them have yet to return to their homes, finding new opportunities in lands to the south and east.

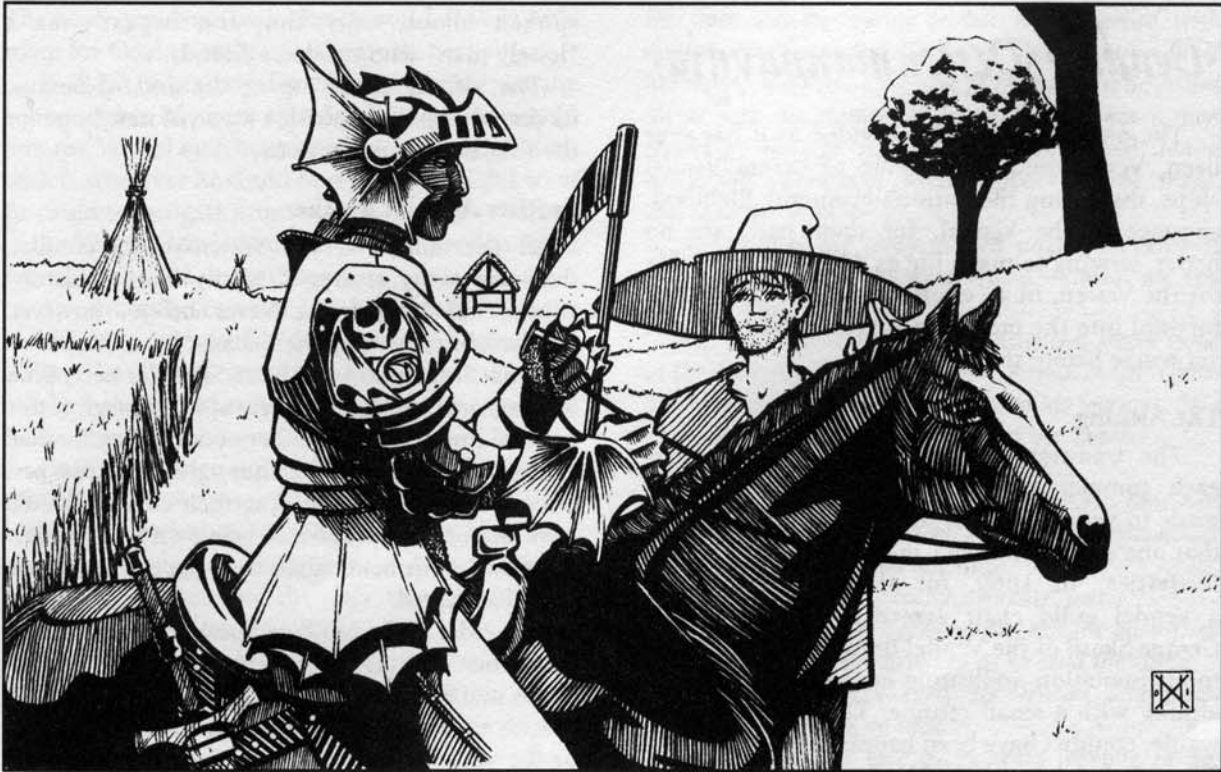
In many cases, the people of Pavtlow escaped to the southeast, into Veche. Strangely, the province's fearsome reputation has not hindered the refugees — indeed, Matushka, contrary to precedent, has made the Veche wilderness almost friendly to the displaced Ussurans (the effort of doing so has doubtless further stretched her resources, however; see above).

The influx of new citizens placed strains on Veche's already shaky political situation. Staver Siev Aryaov v'Vladimirovich's, the Knias of Veche, is growing old and weak, and his heir apparent Fveryot is a source of dread for the people. Woefully lacking in proper guidance from his mad father, Fveryot has cultivated a fascination with Veche's old ways and traditions, including the decidedly ore brutal ones. Many hope Fveryot's older sister Apraksia will return from wherever it is she has gone, and claim the throne when her father dies, but few expect it to happen. At least, not without a little help.

As of yet, nothing has happened. Aryaov continues to rule (more or less) and Fveryot's ambition must wait for another day. But Veche can see that day coming. And they tremble in fear of it.

### Timurbek's Folly

While Veche slowly simmers, the burgeoning Kosar movement approaches a boil. For many years, the Kosar leader Jyrgal Timurbek has done the best he can by his people. Their well-being is his first, foremost, and often only concern. A little over a year ago, Timurbek declared a small region of Ussura near Lake Vigil a haven for the Kosar people, claiming it as their ancestral lands.



Unfortunately, the land — called Kosara by Timurbek — falls within the territory of Molhyna and Gallenia. (Let it never be said that Jyrgal Timurbek is afraid of a fight.) Not only has he declared what amounts to a revolution against two different Douma, but both of them — and a third, Veche — have long suffered raids at the hands of his Kosars. The enmity between his people and the Ussuran Douma runs deep.

Despite this, Timurbek was confident none of the Knias could mount a force sufficient to destroy his tribe, and was secure in their safety. The war with Montegue kept the Gaius from paying close attention to “a petty squabble,” allowing Timurbek time to establish his fledgling Douma. In early 1669, the Kosar leader sent an emissary to the Gaius, asking for recognition or at least opening a diplomatic dialogue. The emissary was killed before he could even offer salutations.

As soon as word reached Timurbek, his decision was made. If his Kosars were treated in such a fashion by Ussura, they would no longer be a part of Ussura. He has declared Kosara an independent state, and will fight tooth and nail to see that it remains so. With Montegue’s army gone and Ussura on its way to recovery, the Gaius’ eye has finally turned toward Kosara.

Jyrgal Timurbek means to pluck it out.

### The Tibesti

Despite their very different cultural bents, the Tibesti and the Kosars have one thing in common: they are both considered “outsiders” by the rest of Ussura. Despite Matushka’s support, the Tibesti have yet to overcome this stigma. Timurbek plans to bring this fact home to the Tibesti. While the Kosars have no direct association with the Tibesti, if they begin to make a nuisance of themselves, eyes will turn to the Tibesti as well. Timurbek intends to offer them assistance and sanctuary, if only they will aid him in resisting Gaius Ilya

The Tibesti are not oblivious to this problem, they are simply unsure how to divert the attention of the Gaius, should his wrath fall on them. Until it does, they go on as they always have, and pray that Matushka will warn them if they have serious reason for concern. Unfortunately, Matushka’s attention is currently turned elsewhere (see above), and she cannot focus on her Tibesti children all of the time. If she is occupied elsewhere at the critical moment, the Tibesti will be forced to fend for themselves.

The Tibesti may be in dire need of aid very soon. They are ill prepared to defend themselves against whatever forces the rest of Ussura sees fit to send against them, and Matushka may well be otherwise occupied when the time comes. While the Tibesti are loathe to seek the aid of Gadjo, they will do so if it is the only way they can survive.



## Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar

The nation of Vendel is divided as it has ever been. Vesten raiders continue to harass Vendel ships, disrupting the nation's economic lifeblood: commerce. The Vendel, for their part, are no better, striving to make life as difficult as possible for the Vesten, in an effort to force them to move forward into the modern age. Things are going to get worse before they get better.

### The Althing

The traditional Vesten *althing* is held early each summer, and invitations are traditionally made to various Vendel leaders, in the vain hope that one of their number might see fit to join the festivities. In 1669, for the first time ever, a Vendel guild chair agreed to attend. Master George Skard of the Vendel Brewer's Guild replied to his invitation, indicating he would come to the althing with a small retinue. The Vesten, on the whole, couldn't have been happier at the prospect. To not only have a Vendel leader, but a guild chair acknowledge the significance of the althing was a great stride for peace between the two cultures. Not the last stride, by any means, but a great one.

Of course, this wasn't the first time Master Skard journeyed to Vesten lands in the interest of peace. Periodically, he traveled with a cadre of hand-picked brewers, touring Vendel villages, giving away liquor and arranging feasts wherever and whenever he could. He felt the key to bridging the gap between Vendel and Vesten is in exploring their mutual traditions. In this case, brewing and drinking!

Naturally, some people didn't wish Master Skard to attend the althing. His journey from Kirk held many perils and it took a stalwart band of Heroes to see him through (see the adventure hook on pages 96–97), but the results were worth it. The High King did not appear (nobody expected that he would) and little practical was accomplished, but everyone present felt that Skard had taken an important first step towards resolving their nation's divisions. He distributed some of his best brew, and held fruitful talks with several prominent jarls in attendance. But he saved most of his attention for a strange one-eyed beggar, who did not approach the proceedings but hovered around the edges of the althing. Skard engaged in numerous conversations with the man, most of which lasted late into the night. He did not say what they had

spoken about, only that the beggar was a "lonely man" who needed a friend.

The althing broke up at the end of Sextus, its participants filled with a sense of new hope for the first time in many years.

### Brother Against Brother

In the annals of the Vesten/Vendel conflict, there are many stories of family fighting family: cousins, uncles, nieces. Never before, however, has such bitter enmity been shared by siblings.

Erick Skaarsgaard and Brian Skar (formerly Bron Skaarsgaard) are the children of a marriage across cultural lines: a Vendel father and a Vesten mother. When the couple married, they agreed to live a part of their lives in each world, so their children would have the option to choose their own ways in life. It worked both better than they hoped, and worse than they feared.

The elder of the brothers, Erick, came of age and chose his path as his parents expected. He left home, and found a Vesten village in which to reside, quickly making himself at home. He was embraced by the Vesten as a prodigal son returned to the old ways; within a year, it was as if he had lived his entire life with the Vesten.

Bron, however, had a few years left before he could make his choice. He was ten years his brother's junior. Nonetheless, he was eager to follow in Erick's footsteps.

All of that changed on a stormy winter's night.

Erick and his parents were passengers aboard a commercial ship bound for Eisen. His father, a member of the miner's guild, had interests in the country, and he was traveling there to oversee the opening of a new mine. Then the Vesten struck. They sank the ship beneath the waves, and nearly all hands aboard were lost. Only a single launch escaped the destruction, carrying a few crew members, the executive officer, and Bron.

But not his parents.

Three days later, a passing merchant ship rescued them. During those three days, the executive officer, Hans Odel, and Bron formed a close bond. When Odel discovered Bron had no surviving relatives — at least, none that could be found — he volunteered to become the boy's guardian, rather than see him grow up in an orphanage.

Odel did not teach Bron to hate the Vesten, but he was not shy about answering the boy's questions. The Vesten attacked the ship. The Vesten sank the ship. The Vesten killed Bron's parents.

The boy's questions were direct, and left very little room for Odel to embellish the truth.

It didn't take long for Bron to decide on the course of his life from this day forward: he would join the Vendel merchant marines, and hunt Vesten raiders wherever he could find them. Odel did what he could to mitigate Bron's — now Brian's — hatred of the Vesten, but only one truth mattered to Brian now: blood cried out for blood.

As soon as he came of age, Brian enlisted in the Vendel navy, and quickly distinguished himself as a sailor. His Vesten heritage saw to that. He has climbed the ranks rapidly, and smart money says he'll command his own ship soon.

Until then, Brian nurses his hatred of the Vesten. He will find those responsible for his parent's death someday. Until then, his brother has become a symbol of his hatred. Erick is the only Vesten Brian knows. He is therefore the only Vesten Brian can hate. And Brian does hate him.

The story of the brothers is rapidly making its way around the both Vendel and Vesten circles. This conflict is being watched more closely by the people than any other. If it could be resolved peacefully, it would be a big step toward peace between the Vendel and the Vesten.

### First Steps

Sela Cole shut the door to the study and sank down near the fireplace, restraining the urge once again to rip the formal dress from her shoulders. She had tripped over her petticoats again, right in front of those two new émigrés. They hid their laughter well, but she could feel the mocking tones follow her across the crowded ballroom. It sabotaged her every effort to be sociable.

This was stupid. She didn't even want to be here, but Val Mokka had insisted that every member of the Council attend his party. After her disastrous entrance, she couldn't even ask for another hors d'oeuvre without stumbling over her words. After an hour of fruitless effort, she gave up and retreated to this quiet room. The party would just have to go on without her.

The light from the study's small fireplace cast a comforting glow, and the leather chair beside it was soft and relaxing. After watching the doorway for a few minutes, she allowed her muscles to unknot. Her hands moved tentatively beneath her skirts, producing a small, dog-eared book from a well-hidden pocket between two layers of fabric. She shouldn't read it, not here, but she was dying to find out what happened next.

In a few minutes, the text engulfed her. Chevalier had just escaped from the pirates, and now he rode like the wind to the tower where the Contessa was held.

Her face lost its tension as her heart swelled with elation. She could feel Chevalier's silky hair against her hand, could sense the love in his heart as he risked all to save the woman he loved. Would that a man would go through such hell for her. Would that a handsome swordsman would appear in the night, and save her from —

The door to the study opened suddenly. "Mistress Cole, it seems the Montaigne would — what are you doing in here?"

The tall, imposing form of Master Val Mokka stood in the doorway. He wore a severe formal outfit, which aptly matched the imperious edge to his features. Sela stumbled to her feet as heat flushed her cheeks.

"I... You didn't think... It was just..."

"You're hiding in here like a mouse." His tone was stern, disapproving. "That no way for a League Chair to behave. What are you reading?"

"No! It's nothing... really... please, just..."

He walked calmly over and plucked the book from her fingers. His eyes narrowed as he read the cover.

"The Musketeer's Lady by Tristan San Juste. Mistress Cole, I had no idea."

Sela turned her face away, tears forming in her eyes. She was ruined. Val Mokka would spread the gossip to the rest of the party, and her enemies in the Guild would have all the excuse they needed. A sentimental cow like her had no business running the blacksmiths. Why she even reads tawdry romantic novels!

"I... you... you don't have the right..." she stammered.

"In my own study, I'd say I do," he returned sharply. She tried to look fierce, to summon the iron will that served her so well at the forge, but it came out as a childish pout. Stupid, vain, foolish little girl!

Setting the book down on the desk, Mokka turned to the large shelves behind him.

"Here," he said, tossing a bound text into her lap. "You might find this more engaging."

She looked down at the unadorned cover. A Rose For Jacquelyn by Tristan San Juste. Her eyes widened with disbelief.

"You read San Juste?!"

"Every volume," his voice remained sharp and unyielding.

"But he's... it's just..."

"Romantic twaddle? Yes it is. It's silly and shallow and unconscionably naïve." Mokka moved closer to her, blocking the firelight with his shadow. For an instant, she thought she saw his face soften.

"But it's nice to pretend sometimes, isn't it?" he said quietly. "It's nice to think that heroes always win, that true love can triumph, that a lonely person can



find someone special and live happily ever after. It's nice to imagine that such things are true, if only for a little while."

He set the book down on the desk, then walked past her towards the sounds of the revelry outside.

"You're welcome to borrow any of my books you'd like," he said as he passed through the door. "Just return them in good condition."

"I... yes, of course Master Mokka."

"Enjoy your evening, Mistress Cole. I'll see to it that no one else bothers you."

The door closed behind him. She gazed at it for some time afterwards before returning to her seat by the fire.

Sela Cole and Val Mokka are two people well-entrenched in their own ways of doing things. They've each built up a wall around themselves that any suitor would have to work very hard to get past. Oddly, the two have gravitated toward each other.

Despite their condescension, the two have begun to feel the first stirrings of mutual attraction, and neither of them is particularly comfortable with their own feelings — much less each other's. Inevitably, their relationship is going to travel a very rocky road. While the pair frequently have difficulty admitting their feelings, even to themselves, others in the league are not blind. Their relationship has rapidly become a favorite topic of gossip amongst Vendel society.

While a great many gossips predict only doom and recrimination for Cole and Mokka, at least one man intends to do everything he can to support their fledgling relationship. Joris Brak feels the league can ill-afford the tension that will be caused if the two part ways, and does his best to support them.

Of course, both would-be lovers are defensive on the subject, and whenever Brak mentions one to the other, the topic is invariably greeted by a withering stare or a dismissive gesture. Nonetheless, both Cole and Mokka respect Joris a great deal, and heed his council — when can get a word in edgewise.

For his part, Brak advises caution to both, mindful that despite his best efforts, the relationship might fail. If that happens, he wants to be sure that it won't be a source of bad blood between the two, and thus their guilds. He simply doesn't want to see either party grow too attached, and be hurt if the other party loses interest.

What Brak doesn't realize — at least not consciously — is that by advising a slow, careful

approach, he is only buttressing the insecurities the two carry. This only serves to renew tensions between the two, leading them to shift with regularity between growing closer, and erupting in vocal and violent arguments.

In their hearts, however, they both want the same thing: each other.

### The Gray Lady

For some time now, a beautiful ship bearing the name *The Gray Lady* has been sighted in the waters surrounding the Vesten Islands. No one seems to know what cargo she carries, her destination, or her home port. Whatever she holds, however, is certain to be important.

Of course, as with all secrets, someone must know the truth. In this case, that someone — or rather those someones — are the guild chairs. *The Gray Lady* is an Avalon ship, and calls Carleon her home. Her cargo?

Ambassador Hugh Fitzcain and his entourage.

For some time now, Avalon has courted the Vendel league, pursuing closer relations with both the Vendel and the Vesten. However, these are the first formal meetings Avalon diplomats could to arrange. Prevailing wisdom in Avalon holds that to attempt to negotiate with both the Vendel and the Vesten simultaneously is folly, so the negotiations are handled discreetly.

Security on the negotiations have been airtight, and the prospect of information being leaked to the Vesten is laughable at best. Even Joris Brak, who has made the security of the negotiations his personal concern, considers it only a distant possibility.

### Fornuft

In early 1668, a new city called Fornuft was founded on the coast of Viddenheim. It began as a noble experiment, with the stated purpose of allowing Vendel and Vesten to live side by side in peace. The city appealed to idealists on both sides, and it has rapidly grown.

Despite the idealism that runs rampant, things are not as peaceful as they appear at first glance. Even in the first stages of city planning, conflict was evident. While the Vesten believed the city should be allowed to grow as it would, the Vendel wished to plot its growth, carefully organizing districts, roads, and structures. Fortunately, the city planners accommodated both visions by dividing the city into districts, and allowing it to grow organically within those districts.

More recent points of contention, however, are not so easily resolved. Political power is carefully divided between the Vendel and the Vesten, in order to ensure neither group feels slighted. For example, the city has two lawfully elected mayors: one Vendel, one Vesten. While this arrangement guarantees even representation for both sides, it is not the most efficient government. To wit, the city council (a ten member body divided evenly between Vendel and Vesten) rarely accomplishes anything. Votes split along cultural lines, leading to deadlock and indecision. Recent debates include whether or not to establish a mint, regulate trade (though with an allowance for a barter system — carefully regulated of course), unlicensed fishing expeditions, and the like.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, the people of Fornuft get along quite a bit better than their governing body. While some self-imposed segregation exists between the Vesten and the Vendel, both business and convenience have mitigated the problem. It helps that those who choose to live in Fornuft have dedicated themselves to coexisting peacefully with their “backward” cousins.

Of course, many outside of the city of Fornuft don't like what they see: the future. Villains on both sides of the Vendel/Vesten split are working hard to sabotage the young city's chances for survival. Every day, new problems crop up — many manufactured by saboteurs and villains. Without men and women of will to help thwart these plots, the experiment will likely fail.

### Yngvild Olafssdottir

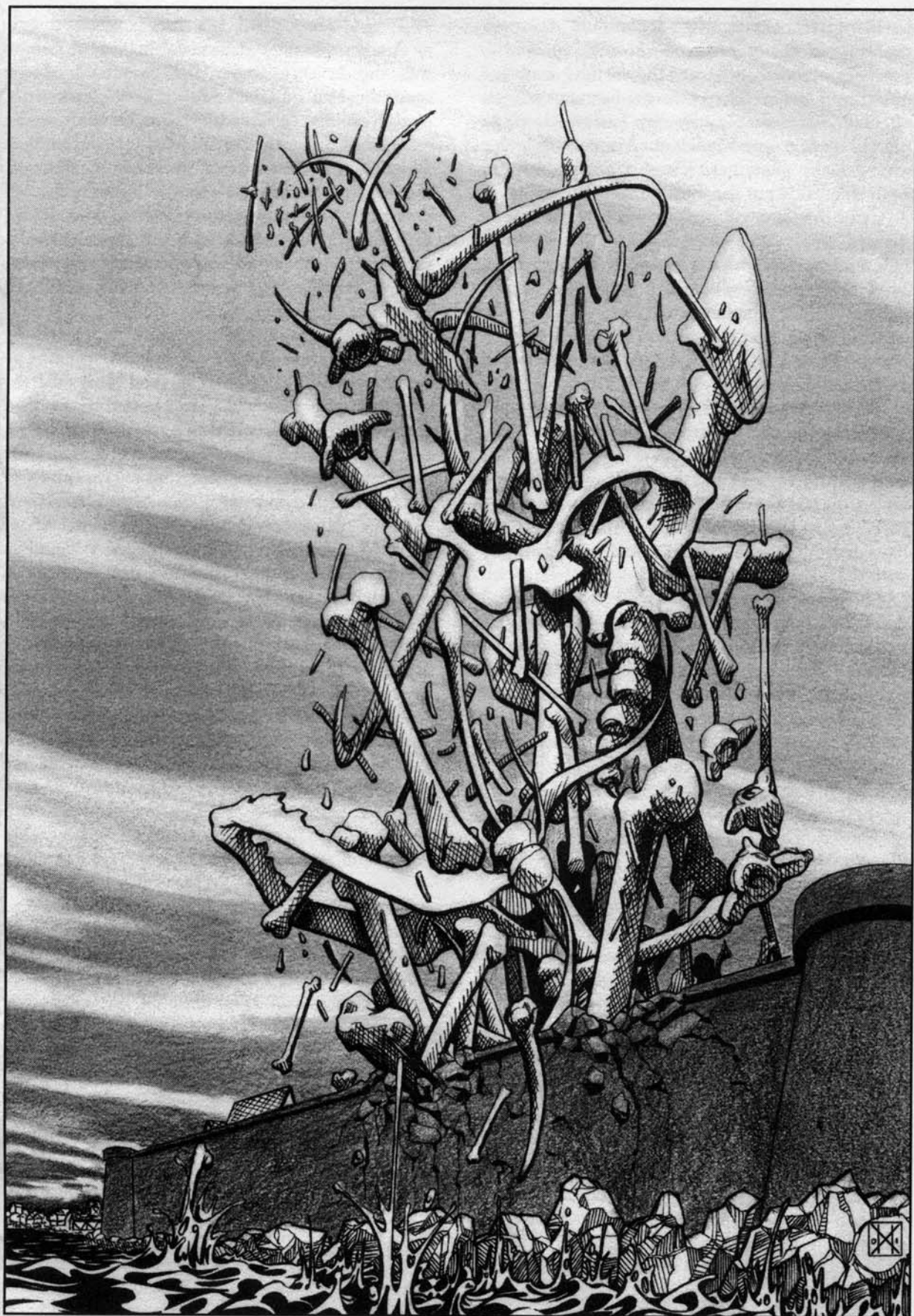
Among the ships present at the rise of Cabora was the *Revensj*, under the command of the notorious Yngvild Olafssdottir. The Vesten warrior conceived of a ruthless plan to open the gates of Valhalla, which she believed lay on the sunken island. Once her vessel reached the Mirror, she began an ancient ceremony intended to call down the Vesten ancestors on those who defiled their memory. An attack from the Vendel Marines interrupted the ritual, but Yngvild persevered, despite the Vendel boarders who almost seized control of her ship.

To her surprise, the ceremony did not bring about Ragnarok. Rather, it opened a pathway between her consciousness and that of the countless thousands of departed Vestenmannavjnar. She could hear their voices as no skjären before her, and if she allowed them, they could enter her body and control her actions. What they told her changed her outlook tremendously.

Since returning from Cabora, Yngvild halted her depredations against Vendel ships with such frequency, calling them “pin-pricks on the body of our enemy.” Instead, she launched an ambitious quest to find several mysterious Vesten individuals, scattered across the far corners of Théah: a schoolteacher in Inismore, a Kirk painter, a shipwrecked sailor in the Mirror. The *Revensj* has faced numerous dangers in the process, and it is not yet clear what Yngvild wants them for. But she claims that the Vesten ancestors guide her path, and that she will die before letting them down.

She could use a little help.





## Chapter Four

# *Adventures and Campaigns*

This chapter contains hints and ideas on developing new *7th Sea* campaigns, as well as GM's secrets and a number of adventure hooks to help you place your Heroes in the middle of Théah's recent events. Players wishing to keep the surprises intact should refrain from reading further.



This section contains the “historical secrets,” not widely known amongst the Théan populace, which reveal certain hidden facets to the events described in the first three chapters. How much your Heroes know is, of course, up to you.

### *Beatrice Caligari*

Beatrice Caligari came to Montaigne to die. She succeeded in her quest... and may have helped spark the Revolution in the process. Beatrice knew for years that her younger sister Morella would cause one of the worst bloodbaths in Montaigne history. What no one besides Beatrice knew was that if she didn't, the alternative would be far, far worse.

In her first night at Château du Soleil, Beatrice was overcome by the vast number of black Fate strands wrapping and spiraling across the Montaigne countryside. She could see the coming death and destruction, but amid them, she could see a shining golden thread as well — one which led through the darkness towards a bright beyond. By pulling on it, she knew those black strands would engulf the nation, but she also knew that Montaigne would ultimately emerge intact. Otherwise, the strands would only expand until they buried the entire world beneath them.

Beatrice stayed up all night, working her Sorte magic. When she had finished, Montaigne's fate was all but sealed. It needed but one more component to complete.

Later that morning, she sought out her sister and tried to urge her to flee back to Vodacce with her. Initially, Morella refused, fearful that her husband would catch them and punish them. With a strange, knowing look, Beatrice then offered to kill her husband for her, manipulating the strands to cause his death. Morella leapt at the chance, eagerly agreeing to help her sister with the deed.

Unfortunately, Remy du Montaigne was passing by when he overheard the two sisters talking. He came upon them as they began twisting the strands and instantly struck Beatrice down. Morella screamed in horror as her sister crumpled to the floor, but Beatrice only smiled. “I'll see you soon, lapdog,” was all she said.

Later, Remy could not remember why he had been in that section of the palace, nor what allowed him to overhear the two fate witches at that precise moment.

Beatrice's death was attributed to suicide and her body returned home. Her grieving maidservant, Alegra, stole into her lady's



chambers and recovered her secret journal. She then fled into the night for Eisen and has not surfaced since (see the adventure hook on page 100). Léon threatened the most horrible torture should Morella ever try to escape again. The terrified Imperatrice tearfully agreed never to cross him again, and remained hidden in her chambers for some months during the aftermath.

When the mob stormed the palace, Morella hanged herself before her husband could get to her. She knew that Léon would ask her to escape, and she knew that she did not have the strength to refuse him. Had she helped her husband, she might have undone her sister's bloody sacrifice — and possibly prevented the Revolution. Instead she killed herself and left Léon to his fate: her destiny fulfilled and an apocalypse avoided.

## L'Empereur's Death

Despite the mysterious circumstances surrounding *l'Empereur's* death, few people seem interested in investigating it. Léon had more enemies than could be readily counted, and most Théans were glad to see him gone. Even the Montaigne émigrés, pro-royalists and defenders of the crown, believed they could find better rulers

than Léon. In that light, it really didn't matter who killed him; it only mattered that he was dead.

The men responsible were counting on that.

*L'Empereur's* killers planned his death for almost two years. They were present when he murdered the Hierophant, and they watched when he launched the invasion of Castille. They tried many times to rid the world of his presence, but every time their efforts fell short. Léon had enemies other than die Kreuzritter, but none were so patient and methodical.

When *l'Empereur* fled his palace ahead of the rioting mobs, he charged one of his most trusted servants with securing a ship away from Montaigne. The man found an Eisen mercenary calling himself the Kire: a wanted criminal and recent prison escapee. Not only did the Kire have his own vessel, but his reputation suggested that money could buy his loyalty. Unfortunately for Léon, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Kire had several connections with die Kreuzritter — including the man who watched the Hierophant die, Jacques Renault. Though *l'Empereur's* servants tried to keep their master's identity a secret, the Kire saw through their ruse. He informed Renault of his passenger's identity a few days before *l'Empereur* reached the coast. By the time Léon boarded the vessel, the pair had already made a plan.



As soon as the Empereur fell asleep, the Kire's crew overpowered his guards and tied the renegade ruler to a bunk. A short while later, they rendezvoused with a ship containing Renault and a dozen other Black Knights, including Hochmeister Schmidl. A trial was held in the depths of the hold. Renault presented evidence against Léon — ranging from tyranny against his people to the murder of the Hierophant — while the other Knights listened solemnly. When asked to defend himself, *L'Empereur* merely sneered. "What authority can you possibly claim over me?"

The Knights found him guilty and sentenced him to hang. When he heard their decision, *l'Empereur's* lunacy overwhelmed him. "Hang me if you will," he cackled madly. "You'll only be sealing your own doom. Once I die, I will awaken from this dream, and you will all fade away like morning dew."

They hanged him from the ship's yardarm. The world did not fade away after his neck snapped. Hochmeister Schmidl took Cardinal d'Argeneau's ring — proof, perhaps, of the man's death — and returned it to Erika Durkheim. She has not yet reported it to the other Cardinals, but die Kreuzritter trust her judgement. Léon was left hanging from a tree near the Montaigne shore, his body a sign that Théah could rest easier.

Heroes belonging to die Kreuzritter can easily play a part in the Empereur's abduction — directing his servants towards the Kire's ship, ensuring that he reaches the shore safely, etc. Prominent members may also participate in his trial, pronouncing judgment on him along with their fellow Black Crosses.

### Dominique's Baby

The circumstances surrounding Dominique du Montaigne's stillborn child are still shrouded in secrecy. Even *l'Empereur* himself didn't know what transpired that night. If he did, he would have killed his youngest daughter on the spot.

During her pregnancy, Dominique learned that her unborn child would grow up to become the most powerful sorcerer in Théan history. The knowledge filled her with rage. Her parents had ignored her because she lacked sorcery, and now her son would gain all of the powers that she lacked? She fumed at the injustice of it, and refused to simply lie down and accept it. She and her Fate Witch Anna spent many long

weeks seeking a means to undo her son's destiny. One dark night, they found it.

An ancient text in the depths of *l'Empereur's* library spoke of a means to transfer sorcerous power from one individual to another. It required a long and dangerous ritual, but if it succeeded, Dominique would gain her baby's powers. The child would be born an ordinary boy, cursed neither with sorcery nor the dark destiny which accompanied it. After consulting the fate threads, the two girls agreed to enact the ritual.

When Dominique went into labor, she ordered everyone out of her chambers save Anna. Alone and with no one to help them, they began the rite which would empower the princess and spare her son a horrible fate. It lasted well over a day, and they still are not entirely certain whether it succeeded as intended. In the end, the infant did not survive the process. Deprived of the magic in his blood, he did not have the strength to enter the world.

When she recovered from the ordeal, Dominique was horrified at what she had done. Her selfishness cost her son his life — something she hadn't considered under the worst conditions. Devastated and wracked with guilt, she retreated to the countryside to mourn. It took several weeks for her to realize that at least part of the ritual had succeeded: she now held her son's sorcerous power.

And what power it was, far more than even the strongest Porté mage. Indeed, it exhibited none of the weaknesses of Porté — the stained hands, the screaming holes, the coarse earthy messiness of it. This magic came from something else, something stronger, purer, less tainted. She could mark objects just by touching them, and transport herself to them over any distance. There was no need to close her eyes when she teleported — she simply slipped between reality and instantly arrived at her destination.

These wondrous revelations, however, did little to assuage her guilt. She felt the price was too high for such power, and her melancholy temperament lingered for months afterwards.

She had not yet returned to Charouse when the Revolution broke out; her isolated locale coupled with her newfound sorcery allowed her to escape the country with ease. She is currently on the move, hiding in a variety of locations while attempting to come to grips with what she's done. She knows that her husband is alive, but will not seek him out until she knows what she's become. She has considered asking the Rose and Cross for



help, but does not know how they will react if she does. They don't like sorcerers.

In game terms, Dominique is now considered a Master Porté mage, with Rank 5 in every Knack. She has none of the drawbacks of Porté magic, and her efforts are accompanied by a burst of golden light rather than the bleeding, screaming mess of most Porté Knacks. She cannot impart these abilities onto others and since she is now barren, the chances of her passing it to another generation are negligible.

### *Cabora's Secrets*

As recounted in Chapter Two, several boarding parties set foot on Cabora the first few days after its rise. They learned many dark secrets about that risen island, and most never lived to pass on what they knew. Of those who set foot upon Cabora, three bear mentioning: the Corsair Kheired-Din, the renegade Explorer Guy McCormick, and the notorious Captain Reis. Each learned a vital secret hidden in Cabora's depths... and paid a steep price for their knowledge.

#### **Kheired-Din**

Kheired-Din believed that Cabora held the gateway to paradise — and that by opening it, he could remake the world in a more perfect vision. His path led him to the heart of the island; though it cost the lives of his crewmen, the mystic tattoo he bore allowed him to arrive there without harm.

He found himself standing in front of a huge metallic arch — a doorway between the world of Théah and the 7th Sea. The creators of Cabora used the gateway to power the island: drawing upon the mystic energy of the Sea to run their colossal machinery. If Kheired-Din could activate the proper control, he could open the gateway wide — flooding the 7th Sea into this world and perhaps instigating an apocalypse.

Luckily, he never had the chance. A mad fate witch named Lucrezia — who wanted the gate for reasons of her own — thwarted him even as he began preparations to activate the great machines. A fierce fight ensued, which left Kheired-Din unconscious and the gateway sealed beyond his capacity to repair. Despondent, he retreated from the island back to the Crescent Empire, where he tried to piece together the shards of his lost destiny.

Those who can find Kheired-Din may be able to convince him to reveal what he knows about Cabora and the 7th Sea. The latest rumors place him somewhere in the Crescent Empire, but he could feasibly be anywhere if the GM wishes.

#### **Guy McCormick**

As recounted in *Waves of Blood*, Guy McCormick believed that his missing wife Amanda could be found on the Island of the Sunken Eye. He made a bargain with Kheired-Din, conspiring with the Corsairs to raise Cabora from the waves. The alliance ultimately prompted a mutiny among his crew, forcing him to break with the Explorers and hide among the Corsairs.

He and Kheired-Din ultimately reached Cabora, where he abandoned his ally in search of his lost love. He finally found her — or what was left of her — in a hidden chamber deep within the island's bowels.

Cabora was inhabited by a handful of intelligent clockwork machines called automatons, who remained active despite millennia spent beneath the sea. They had the ability to take human form by killing men and women and wearing their skin. Most of them wished to see more of the world, and needed a disguise to conceal themselves. Only two had found such a disguise — one bearing the form of a sailor named Mumblety-Peg, the other bearing the form of Amanda McCormick. Guy made a third. His death was messy, but mercifully quick, and no one knew of his unpleasant demise. The Explorers, already hunting him, decided that he had perished on the island and left it at that.

Since then, the automatons have conspired to lure more sailors onto Cabora, intent on harvesting their bodies. Once disguised, they can travel undetected to Théah, see what a wondrous world has sprung up in their absences, and perhaps begin to form schemes of their own...

Rules for automatons can be found on pages 86–88 of *Waves of Blood*.

#### **Reis**

Captain Reis learned about Cabora from a late crewman, and resolved to seize its power for reasons of his own. A new foe — the Sea Dog Bonnie McGee — was dogging his heels, armed with Sidhe magic and an implacable desire for revenge. He journeyed to Cabora in the hopes of countering her Sidhe allies with Synchron technology, technology that he believed would render him immortal.

McGee confronted him on the Isle of the Sunken Eye, engaging the notorious pirate in a ferocious duel. In the end, Reis' own ambition undid him. By abandoning the Sidhe in favor of the Syrneath, he lost the very invulnerability he sought to achieve. He could not abandon the Glamour which made him a legend without also abandoning the "unkillable" reputation which it encompassed. McGee slew him beneath the shadow of a great Syrneath tower, forever ending his reign of terror.

Or so it seemed. Though Reis himself was gone, his legend remained powerful. The Glamour surrounding him became infused into his scythe and red coat, allowing anyone who picked them up to tap into his strength.

As it turned out, that "anyone" was Riant Gaucher, the Rogers' bosun, who had come ashore searching for his captain. He found Reis' cooling corpse and stole his coat, wig, and scythe. When he returned to the *Crimson Roger*, he found that the clothing granted him the air and visage of his former captain — the perfect disguise. Gaucher has since played the role of Reis to the hilt, and only a tiny handful of Rogers know the truth.

The only other soul who may know the truth is Bonnie McGee, who has not been seen since that fateful duel (the Sea Dogs say that the Sidhe took her to Bryn Bresail, though no one can say for sure). However, should any Heroes discover Reis' corpse, they will know that an imposter has taken his identity — and may have a substantial advantage in any future encounters with the Rogers.

## *Margaretta Orduño*

Margaretta Orduño, hero of the Castillian war, has taken the forefront in her nation's new spirit of exploration (see pages 41–42). But she has ulterior motives for her journey west... and a unique guide to show her the way.

Margaretta loved her husband Enrique beyond anything. When he was arrested (see pages 52–53 and *Waves of Blood*) she prepared herself to die with him, but he convinced her to take another course. He said he could not bear the thought of her death, and begged her to publicly condemn him in order to save herself. After a lengthy argument, she eventually relented, and tearfully signed a document declaring him a heretic. The act removed her from suspicion (at least

overtly) and allowed her to later save San Cristobal from the Montaigne navy.

Enrique disappeared on the day of his execution: Corantine 22, 1668. The *Grenouille du Grâce*, a Montaigne vessel commanded by the Eisen mercenary the General. Using a combination of brilliant daring and Porté magic, he and his crew breached the formidable defense of El Morro, and freed Orduño just as his execution pyre burst into flames. They teleported back to the ship, evading several Castillian galleons before disappearing into a colossal Porté hole — the largest ever created. The General believed that the ship would emerge in La Boca, far away from Castillian guns.

Since then, neither he nor his crew have been seen.

Margaretta served as the fulcrum for this audacious rescue. She begged the General to save her husband and sent a loyal friend — her fencing instructor Felipe Jose de Granjero — to help him. Granjero was aboard the *Grenouille* when it vanished, and for a time, Margaretta believed that both he and her husband had perished.

Then, shortly after the Montaigne army withdrew from Castille, Margaretta received word that Felipe was alive. She found him in an Ussuran monastery: a hospital of sorts for insane sorcerers and other madmen. Felipe was chained to a cell and raving like a lunatic, but her recognized her immediately and told her what he had seen. He spoke of a wide silvery sea, where a mad fate witch had pulled him from death. He spoke of the souls of a thousand swordsmen, who pounded at his brain and threatened to tear him apart. But most importantly, he told her of a vast, uncharted continent far to the west, where her husband and others waited for her. "Enrique is there," he said simply, "and he needs your help."

Margaretta freed Felipe from his imprisonment and resolved to petition the king to journey west. She never mentioned Enrique (who is still regarded as a sorcerous traitor), and couched her mission terms of new discoveries and glory to the crown. Felipe currently resides onboard her ship, still quite mad but guiding her inexorably west. His presence gives her a considerable edge in the race for the horizon.

She couldn't care less about Castille or exploration. She only wants Enrique back.

As of spring, 1669, Felipe is the only man on board the *Grenouille* who has turned up on Théah. But other crewmen may appear as well,



with knowledge similar to Felipe's. Furthermore, five Porté sorcerers helped the General create the massive hole; two were killed in the effort, but the other three survived and enterprising Heroes may be able to track them down. The secrets they hold — about the western seas and a number of other topics — could provide ample fodder for a series of adventures.

### The 7th Sea

"CAPTAIN!" The topman bellowed to the decks. "STORM!"

Hal blinked and began to walk forward, wondering what sort of storm could only be seen from the crow's nest... and then he saw it. It came barreling down at them with impossible speed.

The 7th Sea.

"HANG ON!" he roared, and then they were engulfed.

The winds and silvery rain seemed to last forever, and the Iron Heart shook like a kite in a hurricane. Then Captain Magnus looked up, trying to see what was happening; just on the edge of his vision, he saw an old man smiling at him.

He could have sworn it was his father.

Then the 7th Sea just... vanished. The Iron Heart shuddered when it hit the water, and everything went still.

"Report!" Hal bellowed.

Several voices soon assured him that few, if any, crew members had been lost. But when he stood on shaky legs, he saw immediately that their mission was over.

"Kirk," he muttered in annoyance.

"Wh-?" his wife began, then looked up as well.

They were within sight of the Vendel capital.

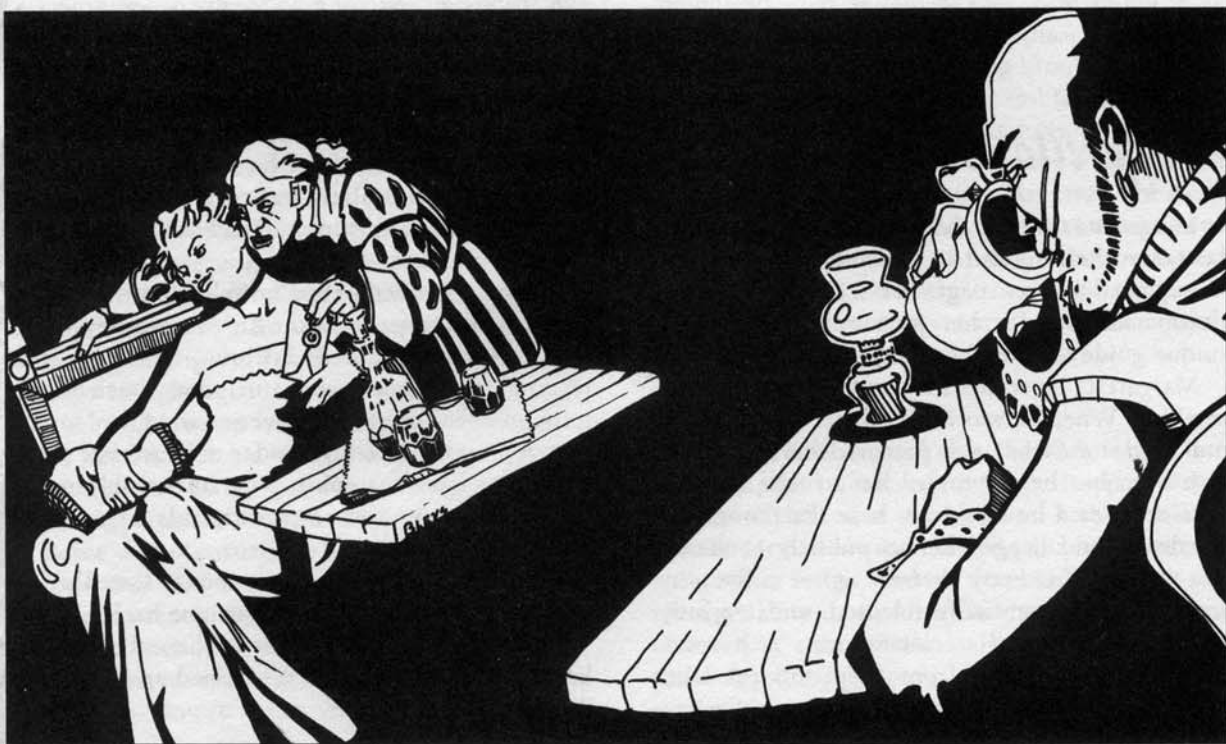
"I suppose the Western Ocean is for other adventurers," he sighed.

Its legend goes back to humanity's earliest attempts to ride the waves. It is more powerful than the Sidhe, more feared than the Black Freighter and more pitiless than the Crimson Rogers.

But how do you use it in an adventure?

First, a few words on what the 7th Sea is not (at least in "canon" Théah). It's not a hurricane to smack the players' ship around with. It's not Porté for skjæren, and any skjæren stupid enough to believe otherwise deserves what he gets. It's not paradise, it's not a link to the Dark Paths, and it certainly isn't a weapon, despite Kheired-Din's foolhardy attempts to use it as one when Cabora rose.

The 7th Sea's true nature remains a mystery, but its real purpose is to help you. Most roleplaying worlds discourage direct manipulation of the characters' fates, but on



Théah destiny sometimes steps in. Every once in a while, it uses the 7th Sea.

That's what Théah's greatest mystery is — your hand on the world. It is almost a literal *deus ex machina* that allows you to give hints or enact rescues when all else has failed. Have your Musketeers gone looking for the kidnapped princess in Vodacce, when the Villain has taken her to Carleon? The 7th Sea can scoop up their ship, send them on a ride they'll never forget, and dump them in Carleon Bay. Is the driven Eisen knight still trying to put her father's ghost to rest, when she succeeded during the last adventure? Have a strange mist surround the group at night, and bring Dad in from the edge of their vision. Did you over-estimate the Heroes' cleverness, and now their ship is surrounded by Vodacce mercenaries? Throw the 7th Sea at the lot of 'em, and when the clouds part, their ship is battered and their crew bruised, but the Vodacce were thrown a league in the opposite direction.

Obviously, the 7th Sea should be used exceedingly sparingly, especially as a way of directing the players. Most will become annoyed if an unstoppable supernatural power throws them in the right direction every time they do something unexpected. In most campaigns, a one-time appearance by the 7th Sea should be more than enough. When a storm engulfs the ship, the crew still has some control of its fate. The 7th Sea is a primal force that should inspire awe and humility every time it appears; it can't do this if you make its presence routine.

On the other hand, it's your game. If you want the 7th Sea to be Terra's answer to Jupiter's Great Red Spot — a never-ending storm of power and devastation — you have every right to do so. If you want to design a Lærdom Knack that can summon and/or control the 7th Sea, you're welcome to do so. And frankly, if someone can drop a god-storm on Charouse or some other important city, then plenty of fanatics are going to try. You, as always, have the power.

## *Piram's Plan*

Maab, the Sidhe Queen of the Sea, has held secret counsel with King Piram of Avalon for over a year now. He is her lover, and she whispers promises of strength and glory into his ears each night. King Piram slowly grew disenchanted with these promises, always told to wait, to be patient, to prepare himself rather than strike immediately.

But recently Maab has given him a weapon. On a cold winter night, she entered Piram's chambers with a small girl named Meryth. Maab claims the girl's lineage is as pure as Elaine's, and her claim on the throne just as strong, but she has had no parents to raise her. Someday, the girl will be Queen, Maab claims, but before that, Piram could be regent — if he were the child's rightful guardian.

All he has to do is keep Meryth a secret, until the time is right.

## *Karl Steiner and the Schattensoldat*

Steiner fled Montegue's army at the Battle of Salzumpf and has not been seen since. In truth, he is not the man he used to be. In fact, he is probably no longer a man at all. After he abandoned Montegue, he fled as far and as fast as he could. Before he realized where he was going, he found himself deep in the Schwartzten Walden, once again in the domain of the Schattenmann. He was not entirely certain how he got there.

When he began to recognize the forest, he simply curled up in a small ball, and hid at the base of a tree. Exhausted from his frantic journey, and shivering with fear, he slipped into sleep, and dreamed. He dreamed of battle and glory, all the things he could not have thanks to his cowardice, and he dreamed that his hand was whole again. He could reach out and crush regiments with it, sending his enemies scattering to the wind. Tears welled in his eyes as he turned his face to the sun and whispered his thanks.

When he awoke, a being of pure shadow stood over him, and whispered, "You are welcome." Karl Steiner gazed silently at his hand, the flesh now as black as shadow. As the shadow-flesh began to spread down his arm, Karl Steiner began to scream. He did not stop until the shadow-flesh consumed his face, and tongue.


Now, he is a servant of the Schattenmann, and of late, a servant of Stefan Heilgrund. Steiner leads Heilgrund's Schattensoldat. Unlike the rest of the Schattensoldat, Steiner is not a creation of pure shadow — he is still, in some small way, a man.

The Schattensoldat are fear incarnate. They can rarely be killed, and when they are, they simply rise again at sunset. They are created



and sustained by fear, specifically the fear created by Stefan Heilgrund, through them. Ironically, Steiner's cowardice is central to their power. As long as he leads them, someone will always be afraid. Discovering Steiner's humanity may be the key to defeating the Schattensoldat.

More on can be found in Heilgrund's NPC entry (pages 102–103) and in the "Eisen" section of Chapter Three.



## Conspiracies and Revolution: The Rye Grin

With the Montaigne Revolution in full swing, Heroes will be needed to rescue its victims and thwart its growing tyranny. This section contains details on creating a new secret society, the Rye Grin, which can be used for just such a purpose. It also contains a short essay on creating new secret societies in general, should your players wish to form their own conspiracy.

### Creating A Secret Society

"While the nation stands divided and the rulers fight each other, *Stiletto Segundos* slip through the shadows, strike unannounced, and then fade away." Thus begins Scarovese's last book, never published, about the secret societies of Théah. The name comes from a knife held in the off-hand which strikes once the opponent is occupied parrying the obvious attack. They represent any number of organizations, from religious groups waging clandestine holy war to revolutionaries who plan murder and rebellion over blood oaths. The largest secret societies have been detailed in their own books. However, for the more ambitious players, we present a series of guidelines for creating new, unique secret societies of your own.

The first step is to decide what unique insight your group has. Every secret society has some particular insight — unknown to most Théans —

and a desire to act upon their conviction. This does not need to be abstract or difficult to understand. Ideally, it should be a single sentence summing up their core ideals and beliefs. This compels them to work together and defines the essence of what they hope to achieve. Without a unifying theme, they do not truly exist as a group. They might all be friends, but they will not have a cohesive goal. Without such a basis, a secret society simply cannot exist.

The next step is to develop the group's philosophy around this core belief. This determines the important facts about the group and how they operate. What do they fight for? What tactics do they use? What tactics will they avoid? Who are their true enemies? These kinds of questions are vital during the creation of your secret society. Of course, some questions can be deferred until circumstances demand an answer. For example, perhaps the group is committed to thwarting the Revolution and save nobles from *le coiffeur*. They may discover that while they oppose the Revolution, they do not care to save members of the Inquisition destined for execution. Perhaps they will not use criminals to aid them because they refuse to deal with such miscreants. Perhaps they will focus on acting with misdirection and eschew violence completely. These details can only be determined as they arise. But each changes how the group thinks and acts. Anticipating such questions early on will allow the society to maintain cohesion when their values are put to the test.

A society should pay careful attention to the name it chooses for itself. Names hold a power over the hearts and minds of listeners. Do not choose a meaningless name or one at odds with the group's true nature. The Order of Sewer Rats is not appropriate for a group of scholars and clergymen. On the other hand, obvious names will likely lead to discovery by powerful enemies. A name can be meaningful without telling those not in the know any information. A classic example of this is the Scarlet Pimpernel, a mysterious group acting to save doomed nobles. They took their name from a small flower native to the leader's home. This reminds the members of who they are without giving any information to their foes.

The new group must also decide who they allow to join. A secret society is a collection of people with the same goals. The people they associate with will determine what sort of

organization they become. Those who include murderers and assassins cannot keep their hands clean for long. However, most groups employ spies, smugglers, and other unsavory types to aid them in their cause. Is devotion to duty enough to excuse other moral failings? Some groups oppose specific types of people, such as sorcerers or members of a particular nationality. Will they make exceptions, and if so when? A society's membership goes a long way towards determining their overall character.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, how will the group be structured? Whether a cluster of independent cells with little contact between them or a rigid hierarchy with clear-cut lines of authority, the society's organization dictates how it implements its policies and responds to challenges. Independent cells have a better feel for local circumstances and can quickly change to accommodate new developments. Further, if one cell is discovered, it can be eliminated without endangering the overall organization. However, independent cells generally do not coordinate well, and organizational changes generally take a long time.

On the other hand, a strong central authority can maintain a more global perspective and shift resources to cover weaknesses. It can also make quick decisions in times of crisis. But a single discovery can quickly lead to the destruction of the entire organization. The loss of a leader can take years to recover from.

Most groups find some comfortable middle ground between extremes, depending on their overall goals and methods.

### Taking Action

Once you have a good idea of your society's structure and organization, think about how they go about fulfilling their goals. Insight and a philosophy are not enough to drive a proper secret society. No matter how witty its name, an organization that does nothing but debate can have no real impact on the world. Without movement and action, they are just another social club.

Furthermore, their actions must be set against the current world order. A secret society that goes along with the status quo has no true reason to exist; otherwise, why remain secret? Often, clandestine actions are the only public face that a *Stiletto Segundo* will ever have. Every public act sculpts and changes how the world perceives them. For example, if the Black Wolves never

attack the Montaigne army while civilians are nearby, then the local populace is apt to look upon them very favorably. Another group that fought back just as well, but attacked troops stationed inside villages, would endanger the inhabitants and thus lose potential allies. All actions have consequences, something a newly formed secret society must consider carefully.

### Change

If a group wishes to exist for any extended length of time, it must be prepared to grow and change. Without expanding in numbers or scope, their vision will remain limited and eventually die out. In some cases, this is inevitable (for example, if they oppose a particular lord or other ruler), but most look beyond such immediate problems towards more long-term goals. New members allow new ideas and inspiration to take root, which can make the group more adaptable, and stronger. Expanding the scope of an organization can be almost as important as recruiting new members. By including new countries or areas, helping people previously ignored, or simply working to extend their activities against other groups, a secret society can avoid stagnation.

Those who cannot adapt to new circumstances rarely last more than a few months. A group that hid perfectly well from *l'Empereur's* government may find itself before the Council of Eight. A group that believes the end times are coming may be unable to handle long-term planning when the apocalypse fails to occur on schedule. That is why new members are so vital. Their very presence pushes a group into areas previously unexplored and encourages focus on new areas. Also, new members strengthen the vision of the organization and help bring plans to fruition, which is the purpose of any secret society.

## The Lady's Fate

### A Short Adventure

This adventure is designed to demonstrate how a secret society can be set up and organized. It allows the group to see the beginning of the process and then puts them in charge. They can continue if they like or simply move on to other adventures. The choice is up to them.

It begins at the *Cercle du Chant*, a former bakery in Charouse whose owner died in the first



days of the Revolution. An Avalon bard named Adrian Flechyr purchased the building and transformed it into a theater/restaurant. All of the staff are gifted performers who entertain the guests during the evening meal. Money never changes hands at the Cercle du Chant. Only guests with reservations may attend, and they are billed before each night. Several seats are left open each night in case the city guard or a powerful revolutionary arrives without an invitation. Flechyr knows that their goodwill is as important as Guilders in keeping his operation in place. Some wealthy patrons have paid exorbitant fees to eat here nightly; if they do not attend, they can pass along their seats as payment for services rendered.

The Heroes have come here as part of such a payment, either from an earlier adventure or as a gift. Their benefactor believes them to be opposed to the Revolution, and hopes that a night at the Cercle will spur them to take more action. Flechyr plans to sound them out on the subject following the performance.

When you're ready to begin, read the following passage to your players: *You were all hoping for riches and glory when you were told that you would be rewarded for your services. Such was not to be. However, dinner at this exclusive theater/restaurant has proven a welcome diversion from the grim tension on the streets of Charouse. The building was an old bakery; though remodeled, the smells of baking bread still fill the room. The food is excellent, the best you've eaten in many days. A double ring of tables surrounding the stage fills the large main room. Each table bears a single candle and chairs for four. In the center of the room stands a polished wooden stage.*

*As dinner ends, the play begins. The room becomes hushed and shadowed, silent save for the lone man standing on the stage. He tilts his head up and throws a single note into the air with all the despair of a starving peasant. The note lingers and penetrates the room, crawling underneath the patrons' skin. Tears threaten to spill from until the man flourishes and the note rises into a full-blown song. Now it stirs the blood and speaks of triumph. The triumph of the Revolution. The triumph of democracy. The triumph of freedom. Around the room, tears spring forth. When the man falls silent, the applause thunders inside the small theater. Several wenches silently stride across the room bearing plates of fine food and mugs of good Avalon ale.*

*The man smiles at his audience. "Good friends. Welcome to the Cercle du Chant. I am Adrian Flechyr, the owner. I am glad so many of you could make it here tonight. It's a pleasure to see so many new faces. And so many old friends." He nods at a well-dressed woman sitting at a table directly in front of the stage. Her face, transfixed during the song, now droops with bitter irony, though she beams a quick smile at the host.*

*"I'm sure many of you noticed the lovely women serving you tonight. Everyone who works here is a talented performer of some sort. They shall now treat you to a small taste of their abilities." The four serving women smile at the room and advance to the stage where they launch into song — The Bride of Patrick Maguire. The language is Avalon and the song is obviously meant for drinking, but their sultry voices far surpass that of any drunk or sailor.*

*You almost miss the fact that a group of armed men have entered the building and are standing at the back of the room. They wear the uniform of the Charouse city guards, but their leader has no markings on his clothes. He is tall, thin and bears a strange elaborate sword. As you notice him, he draws a pistol out and fires it at the ceiling. The room falls silent and still as the man points at the woman in the center of the room. "Lady Jamais Sices du Sices, you are under arrest for crimes against the state."*

*The woman turns, shocked at the allegation. "You have confused me for someone else, monsieur. My name is Manet."*

*The guard strides over with a sneer on his face and grasps her wrists. With a smooth motion, he scrapes his thumb along the back of her hand — dislodging a thick layer of make-up to reveal the tell-tale red flesh of a Porté mage.*

*"Did you think you could hide from us, royalist scum?"*

If anyone attempts to interfere, the man (Jean Claude) produces an official warrant signed by the Council of Eight. "She is a wanted traitor, but she will receive a fair trial by her peers," he says matter-of-factly. If the Heroes need further convincing, Flechyr steps up beside them and whisper, "Not now. There are more of them outside." He tries to keep everyone calm as the bitter-faced woman is escorted out of the room by the armed guard. Do whatever you think is necessary to prevent the Heroes from acting prematurely; there six guards and Jean Claude in the room, and another 12 outside.

After the guardsmen march out with Lady Sices du Sices, the room begins to clear. Few are

willing to be seen in a place frequented by those who oppose the Revolution. Fletchyr tries to keep the crowd by singing more songs, but soon only a handful of the customers remain. If the party tries to leave, a busboy informs them that Flechyr has a special message.

When the room has almost completely cleared, Fletchyr approaches the Heroes' table. "Friends, I saw your desire to help the poor woman led out of here tonight. I knew her as Solange Manet, and regardless of her crime, she is a good woman. Her backing allowed my wife and me to open this restaurant, but rather than allow us to repay her, she insists that we feed the poor beggars and homeless of the city with our excess funds. She comes here every night and always leaves money for distribution to the needy.

"I despair of a Revolution that would kill one such as her. I fear she is being singled out for the crimes of the entire class. No one should pay for the crimes of another. I have a plan, but it will require your help. Can I count on your support?"

Flechyr is quite serious. He dismissed the servants/performers so they cannot be implicated in the scheme. Only the player characters, a smuggler named Guillaume, and a clerk named Beaumont remain in the room. The two silently nod their heads in agreement, then turn to look at the party.

If the group does not agree to help, Flechyr escorts them out and begs them to keep silent

about the night's activities. If you wish to keep them on track, you might have them arrested by a guardsman and taken to the Chateau du Roulement Noble because of a error in his paperwork. Otherwise, the Heroes have left the adventure, and may pursue whatever other agendas they see fit.

Once everyone has agreed or left, Flechyr will reveal his plan. He fully believes that Lady Sices du Sices' trial will be a formality, and that the council will have her executed within the next few days. He intends to use forged paperwork and disguises to get into the Chateau du Roulement Noble as guards just before the execution. They will take control of the wagon used to transport prisoners to the coiffeur, and simply ride off. They will need to throw off their pursuers and then smuggle *Jamais* (and any other prisoners in the wagon) out of the city.

In order to pull this plan off, the group requires several important components. First, they will need uniforms and forged papers. Beaumont and Flechyr can handle that aspect of things. Second, they must learn exactly when the execution is planned (a detail which will surely come out during her trial). Third they must inform Lady Sices du Sices of the rescue and convince her to wear particular piece of clothing — a large red shawl which Fletchyer provides — at the execution. Finally, they must find a way to smuggle her out of the city. Guillaume claims he





has a fool-proof method, but accepts any help which is offered. Finding the uniforms and a way out of Charouse will be difficult, but if the players wish to undertake these tasks as well, by all means let them. The GM will need to handle these scenes on his or her own.

At this point, allow the group to decide their own course of action. Flechyr can give advise and warn them of potential threats. He suggests they go at night, when the shifts are smaller and they cannot be easily identified. He knows that the back gate guard keeps a lost of cells and that prisoners can receive guests with a little monetary persuasion to the guards. He also warns them about the warden Chateau du Roulement Noble, a man said to be able to smell sorcerers like a bloodhound.

Flechyr also has a large amount of equipment here at the restaurant: anything reasonable for someone planning to start a counterrevolution. Ropes, lanterns, weapons, uniforms, clothing, disguises, and a grappling gun can all be found here. He suggests that everyone meet back here at dawn to plan the next move. If asked about a name for their endeavor, he will suggest calling it the Rye Grin, because rye was the name of Lady Sices du Sices favorite bread.

### **The Chateau of Roulement Noble**

The Chateau of Roulement Noble is a small monastery near the heart of Charouse, converted by the government for use as a prison. The plaza square it faces has been designated for public executions. A raised platform dominates the square, with the coiffeur rising from the center of the platform. Crowds gather close during the executions to see the decapitated heads better.

Inside the Chateau, all of the windows have been barred and the stout doors locked and barred from the inside. Only the door at the back of the monastery remains open, to allow traffic through. Two guards stand on duty here at all times. The monastery's bottom floor contains the kitchen and serving areas, now used as a guard station. They also hold several large rooms which have been converted into mass cells. Each cell usually holds some thirty men awaiting trial or execution.

The second floor holds former monks' cells converted into holding pens. Each is small (seven feet by seven feet) and contains only a cot, a chamberpot and a copy of the Book of the Prophets to give the prisoners a chance to repent. Most of the cells are completely squalid and stinking, but the guards manage to clean a few

a regular basis. The private cells, both filthy and clean, can be accessed by bribing the Warden of the Chateau.

A single tower stands in one corner of the building. The first floor consists of the Warden's office and private rooms. The upper stories contain three larger, more elaborate cells, which contains such things as mirrors facing each other (to counter the use of Porté magic) and cold iron bars (proof against the power of glamour). Lady Sices du Sices is being held in the tower until her inevitable execution.

As the Heroes arrive at the Chateau du Roulement Noble, the darkness is almost complete. A pair of lanterns light a small street which passes directly beneath the building. Two guards are stationed here and look upon the Heroes suspiciously when they arrive.

"Bonjour. What business have ya? Let me see yar paperwork." The guards will insist on seeing the paperwork of everyone in the vicinity. If someone refuses, they summon more guards and pursue the person. There are thirty guards on duty who begin arriving in groups of six the round after they are summoned. If the paperwork is presented, one guard will examine it. If the paperwork is forged or altered, he may make a Wits check (TN 20) to detect it. Anyone who says they are there to visit a prisoner will be admitted. If part of the group wants to remain here, the guards will allow it.

One of the guards, a friendly and talkative man named Felix, has a full schedule for the executions for the next few days and is willing to tell anyone who asks who is due for executions. Felix is not the brightest men, but any obvious ploys will arouse his suspicion. Rather than confronting them, reports their questions to the warden.

Inside the Chateau, the group finds a wide corridor where six guards are stationed. Anyone who enters the room must sign their name in a ledger book kept here. One of them will escort each group of people who wish to visit a prisoner or Committee official. Two doors from this room lead to the barracks where 24 guards are posted. If the guards are attacked, reinforcements will arrive at the rate of 6 guards per round. If the guards need to escort the party anywhere, they will immediately summon replacements from the barracks.

If the party wishes to visit a common prisoner other than Lady Sices du Sices, they must fill out a visitation request. Any questionable or incorrect

information will be immediate grounds for arrest. If the guards receive a "gratuity" totalling at least four Guilders (or equivalent) the Heroes will not need to fill out the request. If they wish to see a high level prisoner, such as the lady, then they need identification papers in addition to the request. The document will be subject to intense scrutiny which will take at least a day. The examination can be reduced to a cursory glance for 10 Guilders.

Those who visit Lady Sices du Sices will be escorted up a spiral staircase to her cell. If someone wishes to see Edward Boucher, they can do so in two days' time. However, this time can be reduced to only a few minutes for a bribe of 10 Guilders.

It should be noted that Boucher knows all about bribery; in fact, he instituted it and receives one third of all bribes collected. Marie Malvoire and Chadaleros Entour know about it as well, but look the other way for now. (Prisoners can receive better treatment for money as well, but the guards will not free a prisoner for bribes.) Further, any sorcerers who enter the prison will be detected by Boucher. He will immediately descend through a trap door to the barracks and bring at least ten guards with him to arrest the sorcerer. Those arrested will be put on trial within a day and be scheduled for execution on the following day. Boucher's word is enough proof for the court.

Assuming the Heroes can get in to see the prisoner, read the following passage to them: *As you are escorted into a small chamber, your first impression is filthy, stinking squalor. The lowest peasant would not stay here willingly. Amid this stench, sits the regal form of Lady Sices du Sices. She perches upon a bench coated with grime and mold without making any attempt to save her beautiful silk dress. From the disgusting slime upon her elaborately coifed hair, you can see that she has been lying down. She raises an inquisitive eyebrow as you enter. The guards close the door behind you and remain outside.*

Lady Sices du Sices is curious why anyone would visit her on the day of her arrest. She assumed agents of the Committee were coming to speak to her. She will wait for them to address her. She acts as if her position amid this squalor is perfectly normal and continue using the impeccable manners of the Montaigne court. However, once her curiosity has been satisfied, she loses interest. The look of bitter irony returns to her eye and she will ask them to leave. She does not wish to be rescued.

She has seen too much cruelty in her life. She now believes that all men are created flawed and evil. Everyone is guilty. While she may not be guilty of the crimes the Committee has arrested her for, she is guilty for the death at least one man who committed suicide after she humiliated him in court. She believes that she deserves to die for that and death at the hands of howling Revolutionaries will do the job nicely. If the party wishes, they may attempt to change her mind. This will not be an easy task; she is a strong willed woman who desires to die, of this she makes no secret. Should the party decide not to rescue an obviously suicidal woman, that is their choice. But, how much more noble is rescuing this woman from overwhelming despair, as well as the coiffeur?

As for the shawl, she will take it if the Heroes mention Adrian's name, and proudly wear his gift on the day of her execution. Otherwise, she will accept it for use as a pillow, but not wear it tomorrow.

### **The Rescue**

With her execution imminent, the conspirators gather at dawn to finalize plans. Adrian and Beaumont have uniforms for each of the conspirator (obtained from a warehouse) and passes which will allow them to impersonate agents of the Committee for a few days (if the Committee has not yet been established, the passes are for representatives of the Council of Eight and hold an equal amount of authority). Guillaume is not present, he has devised a method of getting Lady Sices du Sices and up to three other people out of the city today. He sent a message to meet him at Renoire's Pickle Shop on the Avenue of Canners as soon as they are safe from pursuit. Adrian will accompany the party unless they makes a strong case against it. Beaumont will not; he returns to his normal job.

Adrian's plans to ambush and subdue a group of Committee agents before they reach the Chateau, then approach the back gate themselves and pick up the prisoner. The wagon can then take the roadway to the front courtyard of the Chateau; instead of delivering the Lady for execution, they can ride through and escape into the city. Adrian is open to other ideas if a player suggests them, though he will point out any obvious flaws (and perhaps suggest solutions). Lady Sices du Sices is scheduled for trial at nine o'clock and execution at noon so any plan will need to move quickly.



Several other possibilities exist, such as breaking her out by force. However the Committee's agents are at the Chateau, Court and front courtyard in great numbers. A stand-up fight will be extremely difficult at best. If the party attempts to fight, they will face at least two villains, thirty brutes and six henchmen. More troops will be summoned if things get sticky.

Attempts to rescue Lady Sices du Sices at the Court where she stands trial can proceed as described below, but there will be eight other defendants with her, two henchmen and twenty-four brutes. Anyone arrested at the trial will immediately become one of the other defendants.

Attempts to infiltrate the Chateau are extremely difficult. All paperwork will be thoroughly checked and any falsification will probably not pass (i.e., immediate grounds for arrest). Boucher will instantly detect any sorcerers attempting to enter the Chateau.

If anyone attempts to swoop down from rooftops to snatch the Lady, they will discover that in addition to the other guards, several sharpshooters are posted on top of the Chateau. They cannot easily shoot into the surrounding streets, but they can hit anyone on top of the roofs. Also several henchmen are skilled at rooftop chases, and will give vigorous pursuit if necessary.

If the party agrees to Adrian's plan, the agents they need to impersonate are at a checkpoint from six in the morning until just before noon. Anyone who tries to distract them from their post can easily entice half the troops to chase after them. They will only pursue if they have superior numbers, summoning a nearby patrol if necessary. Any distraction near the execution time will easily delay them long enough for the party to take their place at the Chateau. If both wagons arrive at the same time, they will storm into the Chateau to question what is going on. Otherwise, they return with Boucher just as the party leaves.

Of course, subduing them and tying them up will ensure that they remain out of the way for the duration of the adventure.

When the party reaches the Chateau, read the following:

*The high starched collar of the uniform is harsh against your neck as the wagon rolls into the tunnel that leads beneath the Chateau du Roulement Noble. Adrian sits on the bench and nods in satisfaction at having made it this far. As you pull up, one of the guards (a different one from last night) looks suspiciously at you. "Where's Pierre?"*

*[Assuming the party has some kind of reply] He begins checking your identification paperwork carefully along with the warrant for execution. After peering closely at the writing for several minutes, he nods and passes one of you inside. Slow minutes pass until Lady Sices du Sices is escorted down. She looks at you with narrowed eyes as she steps into the wagon. Her disheveled gown is stained black with filth, but her pose is that of a noblewoman. The harsh ropes binding her hands together seem like bracelets upon her regal wrists. Her voice is perfectly flat as she commands, "Lead on, driver. My stage awaits."*

*As you pull away from the back gate, the door opens and a short stout man steps out and shouts in accented tones "Stop them! Those aren't guards, they're escaping!"*

That is, of course, Edward Boucher who immediately spots Adrian Flechyr's Glamour magic. If the party immediately spurs the horses, they will clear the gate and emerge into a crowded courtyard. If they do not move immediately, the gate at the end of the passage will close and they will be trapped. Guards will swarm out and attack. Boucher, five henchmen and fifty agents are present. However after two rounds of fighting if the party has not come up with a solution, Flechyr will use his Jack Knack to change part of the gate's bars to cheese, allowing the group to escape. He cannot open up a large enough opening to allow the wagon through, so they will be on foot.

If the party can reach the courtyard, the chase will be on. There are four squads of brutes present. Consider the mob of spectators two rank one brute squads of 6 members apiece. There are more people present, but only twelve of them will actively try to stop the party. There are also two squads of rank 3 agents led by a henchman in the courtyard, one at the gateway the party just passed through and another at the coiffeur set up in the center of the courtyard. All four squads will attempt to pursue using the rules for chases on pages 169-172 of the *Game Masters' Guide*. If the group is in the wagon, they have a definite advantage over the mob and can outrace them in two rounds without difficulty. They have only a slight advantage over the running agents due to the crowded conditions of the streets, however and only gain a single free raise each round. Use whatever events you feel are dramatically appropriate, although a few suggestions follow:

- Early in the chase, Adrian will reach back and use his Jack Knack to change Lady Sices du

Sices rope into rye bread. At first, she is resigned to her fate and dully remarks that everyone in the wagon has signed their death warrants. But as the chase progresses, the adrenaline rush will begin to get to the noblewoman and she will begin to take interest. She will lift the rye ropes to her mouth and take a nibble before declaring that "I had really hoped for a croissant, but what should I expect from an Avalon?" then begin making snide comments about the party's progress out of habit.

- If the agents are left behind too quickly, the party will come across a roving patrol mounted on horses. This patrol consists of one of the Committee's henchmen and a brute squad of 5 men. All of them have Riding at rank 2. They will watch passively as the wagon leaves until one of the pursuing agents shouts at them to "stop the prisoner!" The patrol then gives chase, although they will start 4 raises behind.
- If Lady Sices du Sices is wearing her shawl, Adrian directs the driver of the wagon to head east. As they approach a major intersection, (five roads intersecting, with no checkpoint) he fires a grappling gun into the air. The gun is loaded with red streamers instead of a hook. Adrian points to the northernmost road, urging the driver to take it. As the wagon passes the intersection, four more wagons will enter the intersection simultaneously: each containing a group of people and a woman wearing a red shawl that matches the one that Lady Sices du Sices is wearing. She turns to him indignantly "You mean to tell me that your gift was a cheap imitation? I am insulted!"

There are enough roving patrols and checkpoints to continue throwing obstacles their way until the chase has lost interest. Once that happens and the party escapes, Adrian directs the group to the Pickle Shop where they are to meet Guillaume.

At this point, the group can easily make its way across town to the rendezvous point. Guillaume is there as promised and has a wagon loaded with twenty pickle barrels. The four in the center are empty and hold a single person. Each of the empty ones has a false section on top, filled with water and pickles. Full barrels surround each of the empty ones so a person will be unable to get out of the barrels quickly. Anyone who wishes to

leave the city this way may do so. Lady Sices du Sices will take one; once outside the city, she and Guillaume can make their way out of the country. She would gladly take a few bodyguards if they are offered however. In any case, Lady Sices du Sices offers the Heroes her undying gratitude. "Thank you, dear friends. For once I have no words. You have shown me that courage and nobility still exist in this world. If you can perform such heroism, perhaps a worthless wretch like myself can find something to live for as well."

The gates leading from Charouse are all heavily guarded for the next three days. Any wagon will be thoroughly searched. As they pass through the gates, each pickle barrel will convince the guards that there is nothing inside of it. Anything less convincing will cause the two brute squads of guards to attack. Once they clear the city, they make their way east, towards Eisen and Vodacce. If the Heroes are along for the journey, you may make it as exciting or uneventful as you wish. Lady Sices du Sices eventually turns up in the city of Medico, under the protection of Prince Donello Falisci.

### **Epilogue**

Several weeks later, the Heroes receive a message from Adrian Flechyr's wife, Antoinette. Adrian was killed while attempting to liberate another imprisoned Montaigne noble. He left a message with her, which was to be given to the Heroes in the event of his death:

*"My Friends:*

*"I know you share my sense of outrage at the injustices perpetrated by the Revolutionary government. Every day, innocent people are slaughtered by le coiffeur. Every day, new fear grips the people of Montaigne. Unless we free them from that fear, then it will be as if Léon never died.*

*"If you are reading this, then it means I have failed. I beg you upon bended knee to continue the work I have begun. Even now, the jails are full of innocents awaiting execution, and the Council of Eight find new ways to destroy Montaigne's soul. You can help stop it. My wife can make the Cercle du Chant available to you as a headquarters, and Guillaume and Beaumont are steadfast allies. Help save this nation from itself. Help return justice to Montaigne, and keep it from sliding deeper into the Abyss. No one should pay for the crimes of another.*

*"I remain your humble servant,  
Adrian Fletchyr"*



There is a strange symbol at the bottom of the page: two sheafs of rye which form an arc. Will they continue Adrian's work or simply walk away? That is for the players to decide; if they choose to continue, an outline for their new society is outlined below.

## The Rye Grin

The Rye Grin is a secret society created by Adrian Flechyr during the mini adventure "The Lady's Fate," above. Your Heroes are intended as its primary movers and shakers — saving the innocent from the Council of Eight and spirited them out of Montaigne to safety. This quick overview can give players and Gamemasters a better idea of how to organize an ongoing Rye Grin campaign (although the details may vary according to your players' wishes).

### Public Face

The Rye Grin is a shadowy force who appeared on the scene during the bloodiest days of the Montaigne Revolution. They have dedicated themselves to rescuing the victims of the Revolution from their dire fate. While many claim that the Montaigne nobles control this group, no one knows who is in charge, or indeed who belongs to it. Foreigners and people from all walks of life aid them against the forces of the Revolution.

### History

This group only truly began a short time ago with the rescue of Jamais Sices du Sices. She was arrested while at a restaurant known as the Cercle du Chant. The owner of the restaurant, Adrian Flechyr, organized a group of his customers to seize her from the guards moments before her execution and spirit her away. Unfortunately, Flechyr died soon thereafter, and it fell to the Heroes to continue the work he began.

### Philosophy

The rallying cry of the Rye Grin is "No one should pay for the crimes of another."

The members all believe that the Council of Eight is indiscriminately executing innocent people. They have defined treason so broadly that anyone and everyone is guilty by association. This includes sorcerers, condemned only by the accident of birth which gave them their magic. Their tyranny must be stopped, lest more innocent blood be spilled.

However, the Revolution is too powerful to oppose directly. Open warfare will only add to the misery of the Montaigne people who are largely innocent of the crimes of their leaders. So the Rye Grin must use secrecy, discretion and misdirection to rescue those innocents due for execution.

### Structure

The original structure of the group was completely hierarchical. Adrian Flechyr was in complete control of it, although he was extremely open to suggestions from the other members. He knew every member personally, although very few of them knew of even one person other than themselves. Now that he is dead, it will be up to the Heroes and their allies to arrange themselves as they see fit.

### Protocols

(Flechyr's widow Antoinette can suggest these protocols if the players themselves don't think of them.)

Flechyr opposed outright violence or open warfare, since the Montaigne government could easily swat them aside. Instead, the Grin works through secrecy, discretion and misdirection. When they take action, they rely upon audacity and carefully-executed plans to outmaneuver their opponents. They realize that their techniques will only work once before the Committee catches on, so they focus on quick thinking and imagination continually devising new plans.

Adrian Flechyr was also a Glamour mage who understood the power of legend. He began a



tradition of leaving the symbol of the Rye Grin at the site of their rescue to inspire those who oppose the Committee. The symbol is two stalks of rye crossing each other to form a smile. Members also use it to identify each other and to elicit aid in emergencies. Of course, anyone found carrying the symbol is likely to be arrested or worse.

Because of the need to maintain a popular image, the Rye Grin never uses more violence than necessary. In all things, they try to act with flair and panache. This builds up their legend and creates an atmosphere of heroism around the group.

Adrian also wanted to keep in touch with the nobles through performers and entertainers, who could visit patrons and noblemen without arousing suspicion. The same entertainers would be welcome at the parties and balls of the Montaigne Revolution and could investigate any rumors which might lead them to innocents in need of saving.

### Relations with Other Groups

The Rye Grin's greatest foes are the Montaigne government and the Committee of General Welfare: groups dedicated to destroying such counterrevolutionaries. That means they have a vested interest in destroying anyone who opposes that government. The Inquisition and die Kreuzritter also oppose them because the Rye Grin often rescues *Porté mages*, whom these groups wish to eliminate. The Knights of the Rose and Cross also oppose sorcery, and while they take no direct action against the Grin (they admire the spirit of rescuing innocents) neither will they actively aid it.

The Rye Grin's few allies include Los Vagos, the Invisible College, and the nation of Avalon. Los Vagos helps them because of their stand against tyranny and persecution for religious beliefs. The Invisible College has offered to help smuggle sorcerers out of the country and help find them a place to live in peace and seclusion. Avalon simply enjoy the thought of irritating the Montaigne government and helping the once-pretentious nobles who scorned them in the past.

Their most important ally, however, comes from a most unexpected place. Lady Jamais Sices du Sices, the first person ever rescued by the Grin, took up residence with Prince Donello Falisci of Vodacce. She has pledged to aid her rescuers in however she can and the prince put his considerable resources at her disposal. If the Rye

Grin ever requires a timely source of aid, they need only send a letter to Medico.

### Locations and Resources

The Rye Grin has a natural base of operations in Adrian Flechyr's restaurant, the *Cercle du Chant*. His widow, Antoinette, still runs the *Cercle*, and fully supports her late husband's associates. She keeps a small supply of useful equipment for them to use and keeps in contact with a pair of useful allies: Guillaume Marilaque, a smuggler willing to help people out of the city and Beaumont, a clerk at the Committee of General Welfare who can occasionally arrange passes and identification papers for them. She also has a passing acquaintance with other people in the entertainment community of Charouse.

Of course, Heroes belonging to the Grin may have their own base of operations elsewhere — in Freiburg or another city far away from Montaigne. Even so, the *Cercle* makes an ideal staging area for their incursions into Montaigne, and Antoinette will keep it safe for them in their absence.

## Rye Grin NPCs

### Guillaume Marilaque: Smuggler

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 2, *Panache* 3  
*Reputation*: 5

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: None

*Advantages*: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W)

*Criminal*: Ambush 1, Gambling 3, Quack 1, Shadowing 2, Stealth 2

*Sailor*: Balance 3, Cartography 2, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Leaping 2, Pilot 1, Rigging 2,

Weather 1

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

Guillaume Marilaque hails from the area between Montaigne and Eisen. The Marilaques are all that remains of a tribe of people from Numan times. They maintain their own language and villages far from the areas where outsiders hold sway. For them, smuggling is a way of life. Guillaume left the mountains to ply that trade on the River, but he maintains that way of life. This scoundrel will smuggle anything into or out of Montaigne. For a price. He has a disarming smile and a whipcord thin figure which is quite popular with the ladies. He relies on his clever tongue and agility over straight brawn.



While he does his best to keep it quiet, Guillaume secretly serves one of the Vodacce princes, Donello Falisci. He serves as Falisci's eyes and ears in Montaigne, and in return, he always has a buyer for his ill-got gains.

Since the Revolution, he has combed the countryside for signs of Lady Jamais Sices du Sice. Prince Falisci loved the woman dearly and when the Revolution began, his heart nearly broke. At first, Guillaume feared the woman had died, but through his connections, he managed to track her to the Cercle du Chant. She had adopted a false identity and was using the Cercle as a means to feed the hungry — atoning, it appeared, for her earlier sins. He planned to approach her and offer to smuggle her out of Montaigne, but she was arrested before he had a chance. This is what led to his involvement in the Rye Grin.

The Grin gives Guillaume a chance to serve his lord, ply his trade, and do some genuine good all at once. While he rarely puts himself directly in harm's way, he's always willing to help out other members of the Grin, be it contraband equipment or smuggling a wanted fugitive out of the country. He'll always be a scoundrel at heart, but his loyalty runs far deeper than his shallow smile.

**Beaumont: Forger/Snitch**

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

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: None

*Advantages*: Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W)

*Forger*: Calligrapher 4, Cryptography 3, Forgery 4, Paper Maker 2, Research 2

*Servant*: Accounting 4, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Menial Tasks 2, Unobtrusive 4

*Scholar*: History 2, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 1, Research 2

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

Beaumont is a hero of the Revolution. Just ask him. Only hours before the rioting began in Charouse, he was fired from the accounting office where he had worked for twenty years. After spending several hours in a bar, he rallied a mob which attacked his former place of employment. The gates still opened to his key and all the money was redistributed to the poor and needy. He quickly gained a position in the new government. He is always friendly and cheerful and ever ready with an accusation for his pro-royalist superiors or the witless idiots who served beneath him. He rose steadily through the ranks of revolutionaries and now works as a clerk

at the Committee for General Welfare. He is a stout, stocky man with a smile that never quite reaches his ever moving eyes.

In truth, Beaumont was appalled at the things happening around him. He went back to the accounting house to try to get his job back and met the looters coming out. He shared things in confidence to his superiors only to find his name upon the warrant as witness for the prosecution. He discovered that the only way to maintain his sanity among the bizarre twists of fortune of the Revolution was to pretend that he planned all of it. He felt lost and scared and prayed for a way to strike back against the forces that have swept him along.

The Rye Grin answered his prayers.

Now, he serves as an informant and forger for the society — preparing official documents for them and leaking news of arrests and other plots. He buries these activities behind mounds of legitimate work, and spends so much time at his desk that his superiors never notice the difference. He does nothing to risk his position — he knows how valuable it is to his allies — but his heart, he feels he is finally doing some real good. He will die before betraying the Heroes who gave him that chance.

**Adrian Flechyr, Founder of the Rye Grin (Deceased)**

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 3  
*Reputation*: 20

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Reckless

*Advantages*: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Connections

*Bard*: Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, History 3, Oratory 4, Riddles 2, Singing 4

*Glamour (Apprentice)*: Anne 2, Berek 3, Jack 1, Stone Knight 1

*Merchant*: Cooking 1, Accounting 2, Haggling 3, Appraising 2, Bartending 2

*Performer*: Acting 4, Dancing 2, Oratory 4, Singing 4, Story Telling 3

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

Flechyr's Glamour Knacks have the following effects: Anne allows him to add 10 to his Initiative Total until the end of the Round; Berek allows him to spend a Drama Die to add 6 to any single roll; and the Stone Knight allows him to spend a Drama Die and shout for help — one friend will hear his cry over any distance and know immediately where he is.

Adrian Flechyr was an Avalon bard who married a Montaigne actress. They both lived in Charouse and worked at the unusual restaurant he created, the Cercle du Chant. The entire staff performs during dinner. The waitresses sing, the busboys juggle plates, and the chef sing operas. Flechyr himself performs short skits from well known plays and magic tricks.

His chief patron was Jaimes Sices du Sices. They met soon after the Revolution began; he had come to the restaurant in disguise, and interrupted a play he was performing at court to insult it. His barbed reply amused her and the two bantered on for the rest of the evening. After that, she saw to it that he remained in business and eventually helped him to buy the Cercle du Chant. He was always extravagant with his praise of the woman — even though he never knew her true identity — and he would do anything to repay her kindness.

Adrian was fair haired and well-tailored at all times. His beard and broad gestures remind many of Jeremiah Berek, but his luck has never been as good as the legendary sailor's. In his final days Flechyr sought out those who oppose the bloodthirsty Revolution to band them together to fight. It remains to be seen whether he succeeded or not.



The following pages contain a wide variety of adventure hooks and plot threads. Each can be fleshed out to form a short adventure, or strung together to form a mini-campaign.

### Putting the Heroes First

The events depicted in this book are not intended to be run in a vacuum. As the central characters in your campaign, the Heroes should always take center stage. Why should they sit and watch while the Revolution unfolds around them? They should be knee-deep in it: leading a

rampaging mob, smuggling out a terrified noble, or arguing for their ideals on the floor of the Convention. The Explorers aren't the only ones interested in the western seas. Let the Heroes petition a ruler for sanction to sail and discover new worlds beyond the horizon. From Ussura to Avalon, Théah is changing. The Heroes should be a part of that change.

Nor should they simply be handed tasks by prominent NPCs. Heroes all have their own quirks and motivations, and their own agendas. GMs should use those motivations in conjunction with the information presented here to put the players in the driver's seat.

For example, if the adventure calls for the Heroes to help a prominent Vendel Guildmaster ferry precious cargo from Kirk to Carleon, ask yourself why they would want to do such a thing. Perhaps they need temporary use of a ship to gain revenge on an enemy, or perhaps the cargo they're helping him move is important to one of their secret societies. Once you've come up with a reason that fits the Heroes *raison d'etre*, then couch the adventure in those terms. Let them make contact with the pertinent NPCs, let them determine the goal of the adventure, then tailor the encounter to match those specifics. The Heroes then become the engine driving the adventure, rather than sitting passively and letting things happen to them.

As an illustration look at the following two adventure introductions:

- 1) "You're sitting at an inn in Kirk when you're approached by a man representing Master Val Mokka. Mokka has a ship which needs to reach Carleon, but he's afraid of Vesten pirates and needs some swords to help protect the vessel. He'll pay you well."
- 2) "Those Synchron artifacts you picked up in Kirk will mean a great deal of money if you can get them to the Explorers in Carleon. Unfortunately, Caligari's men bribed the Kirk watch, and now they're searching every vessel in the harbor. You'll never get the artifacts past them! However, cargo stamped by a Guildmaster wouldn't be searched by the guards. If you can get someone on the Council to help you, you just might be able to slip the artifacts out in a sealed crate. One of your contacts has spoken to Val Mokka, and he says you might be able to work out a deal. He's meeting you later to discuss the specifics..."



Both options achieve the same thing — an exciting sea journey from Kirk to Carleon — but the first one robs the Heroes of any real influence. They're simply errand boys, going through the motions because the plot dictates it. The second option, on the other hand, lets the Heroes set the agenda and follow their own goals, yet still follows the same basic framework. The players will feel much more involved and — more importantly — their Heroes will be the center of attention. By encouraging your players to be proactive, and adjusting the events in this book to match their goals, you can keep the spotlight on them at all times.

## Avalon

### The Play's the Thing

As related in Chapter Three, Montgomery Peerson is having substantial difficulties with a Sidhe named Pudge. Most of the Seelie's pranks have been harmless, but supremely irritating. They've driven Peerson to the brink of retirement. This can be a relatively safe introduction to the Sidhe for your Heroes; there is only one Sidhe, and he is more of a prankster than a true threat. Of course, if you're not in the mood for laughs, Pudge could be Unseelie, stalking Peerson's company and murdering them one by one. Initially, Pudge may focus the blame on a human — perhaps one of the Heroes — only to reveal his true intentions with the attempted murder of Peerson himself. It will take keen wits and a strong heart to send the goblin packing.

### Connie MacDonald

Heroes who have dealings with the Sidhe may very well be recruited to find the Iron Witch Connie MacDonald, though it is extremely unlikely that the Sidhe will share their motives with the Heroes, though they'll spread any number of lies about Connie. Connie will be more than happy set them straight when the Heroes come knocking on her door.

If Connie can convince them of the threat the Sidhe represent, perhaps one of the Heroes will be her successor. She can reveal the location of her secret journal, and may even promise to forge them a MacEachern weapon if they will leave her be. If not, she will sacrifice herself rather than let the wards around her cottage drop. The Sidhe are near, regardless of whether they can be seen,

and Connie isn't going to let them near her under any circumstances. The Heroes can only kill her. If the wards are broken, the Sidhe can do much, much worse.

### The O'Bannon and the Iron Guard

While Arghyle O'Toole's machinations (see pages 50–51) are somewhat outside the normal course of a Hero's day, one of the other Inish council members may approach a Hero with a proposition. O'Toole is rapidly gaining support for his initiative, and the Hero's acquaintance feels the only way to divert the tide is a visit from the O'Bannon.

Of course finding the O'Bannon and somehow convincing him to return to the Council chamber is a task left in the Heroes' capable hands.

They can handle it, right?

Even if they can convince the O'Bannon to put his house in order, the Heroes may have to take further steps to protect the crazed ruler. Anyone who knows anything about O'Toole will know he's prepared a back-up plan. The O'Bannon may be powerful, but enough men with MacEachern blades can slay even him. Even mad demigods need bodyguards sometimes... who better than the Heroes placing him in harm's way to begin with?

## Eisen

Eisen's turmoil grows by the day, threatening to keep the country immersed in misery. Yet from conflict comes strength and the shattered country has found new reservoirs of courage that could reverse its fortunes. All it takes are a few brave souls to show them the way.

### Fishler's New Friends

Franziska Kohl, Faulk Fischler's advisor has begun to suspect that something not quite right is occurring under her nose. She knows about Hainzl's soldiers, and she also knows that Fischler has taken to setting convicted criminals free, though she has no idea why. Finally, she knows that Fischler's behavior has changed of late: every now and then, when his eyes are far away, she can see worry in them, and sometimes even dread. She is on the brink of launching an investigation, but knows that any member of Fischler's household would be quickly discovered, including herself. She needs someone with a good heart and a ready wit to find the root of the

Eisenfürst's problem, and that someone must come from outside the household. Someone like the Heroes.

Of course, if Fischler ever believes his deal is in danger, he will remove the obstacle, be it Kohl or anyone else. The key to helping Faulk Fischler is taking the pressure off. He has too much to handle, and too little experience. The best way to take care of the problems in Fischler is to take care of the problems in the neighboring province of Hainzl, or to ensure that his own problems do not



overwhelm them. A few less marauders on the horizon, or a village saved from some unspeakable monster would do a lot to ease his mind. Of course, if they kill the wrong monster, they might upset Fischler's new friend, which could lead in any number of directions...

### **The Fall of the Wachturm**

Over the last months of 1668, Niklaus Trägue's behavior grow progressively worse. He's nearing the end of his book and his outlook grows bleaker with each completed page. He regards his experiment as a failure, humanity as a gang of barbarous apes, and the universe as a cruel joke at his expense.

Then, one cold day in Decimus he sees the Heroes committing some act of selflessness. The exact circumstances can be as important or trivial as you like, they need only involve the Heroes and constitute an act of genuine nobility. The act shakes him from his stupor and throws new light onto the nihilistic search.

That night, he invites the Heroes up to the Wachturm to speak to him. He asks them about their deed, the motivations behind it, the desires that lead them to perform such an act. He challenges them to a philosophical debate, questioning their belief in the rightness of the universe, Theus, etc. Role-play out the scenario, using Trägue to poke holes in whatever the Heroes hold most dear. He's roaring drunk, but surprisingly coherent, and he marshals his

arguments like a master debater. It's up to the Heroes to defend themselves as best they can.

The next evening (at about eight or nine o'clock), the Heroes are greeted by a pounding on their door. It's a messenger from Trägue, bearing a sheaf of papers bound with the Freiburg seal. Atop the seal is a note, written in Trägue's hand

*My friends,*

*Thank you for your words and deeds. You have shown me what needs to be done and you have revealed a last ray of light to comfort me in the coming dark. I don't ask you to understand what I am about to do; I ask only that you behave as you always have, and remember the words you said to me last night.*

*I will destroy the Wachturm on the first minute of the new year. Save as many as you can.*

— NT

Allow the Heroes to proceed in any manner they wish; they have only a few hours. The Wachturm is nearly six hundred feet tall and can cause a great deal of damage when it falls. The Heroes will need to clear a wide area around the Stein of any inhabitants (keep in mind that the players don't know which direction the tower will fall). Wilma Probst may be able to help, but there should be enough impediments to make things exciting.

Nothing they do can prevent the tower from coming down. Trägue has stoutly barricaded himself in the Wachturm; not even a battering ram can force it open. The more time the Heroes



try to prevent it, the less time they will have clearing innocents from the path.

At the dramatically appropriate time, The Heroes spot Trägue hurling himself from the top of the tower. Several minutes later, the tower itself comes toppling to the ground. It seems to just fall apart, like a child's model left out in the sun. The Drachen bones and other supports collapse on themselves and the Wachturm lurches to one side before flying to pieces. The destruction is incredible — everything in its path is flattened in cloud of debris — but with the Heroes help, casualties will be minimal.

Once the dust has settled, give the Party a chance to look through the papers Trägue sent them. It contains the final chapter to his book (Logan Sieger has the rest), and was clearly influence by the talk he had with the party:

*Chapter 59: On the Nature of Existence*

*By now, I'm dead. I am sure this will cause few people grief, and I apologize to those who have shed tears over my worthless carcass. It was time to go at long last.*

*I resolved the last question I wanted an answer to — is Man good or evil? I reached my conclusion a short time ago, after speaking to some visitors who came to my tower. Mind you, I didn't write the answer here. I only wanted it for myself, and ultimately, I have always been a selfish man. I've lived for myself and I've died for myself, and to the Abyss with everyone else. Even — no, especially those who loved me and the things I've stood for. I was never worthy of their adulation, and I always resented their love.*

*Unlike many other men, I have never suffered from the delusion that I am perfect. I am a drunk; a violent man; a man so twisted in his past that he has no present and no future. I know this. I knew this. I never found a way to escape this self-torture.*

*Perhaps this is because I have been dead for years. The Last Battle of the Stein was where I died, or stopped living. It's the same thing, essentially. As any soldier will tell you, battles have tides and eddies, like the sea. There are pockets of both terrifying rage and perfect calm. I had just slain a man by gutting him when one of these pockets of calm moved across me, and I had a moment to breathe. I made the mistake of looking down at the man I'd just killed. He was barely old enough to hold a sword, but his face was twisted in a look of horror and pain, youth's delusions of immortality stripped from him in an instant with my razor-sharp blade.*

*I remember looking down at that boy and thinking, "Theus is a bastard."*

*I look back upon that day and I can now see what a coward I was. I swung that sword myself. I killed the boy with my own two hands, and yet somehow, Theus was supposed to take all that burning guilt onto his shoulders for me. What a stupid thing to think.*

*It was only weeks later that I reached my deeper truth. I hid in the mountains from pursuers, and I stumbled into a cave forged long ago by drachen. I was an ant in a hall of long-dead giants. Even had one of the creatures been there to tread upon me, I would have not been crushed.*

*I was too small even for that.*

*Many have guessed at the significance of my seal — a man standing in the shadow of a tower. Most believe it represents the tower watching over the man; that it is a symbol of hope and ingenuity, of finding uses for all the resources at hand.*

*They are imbeciles.*

*The tower eclipses the man, it doesn't protect him. The Syrnych created wonders that we can scarcely fathom, much less recreate. What are we next to that?*

*Nothing at all. Theus doesn't care if we live or die. He thinks we're aberrations, an afterthought in the universe's grand scheme. Our lives mean nothing to His plan and when we die, He takes no notice of us. He thinks we're nothing. Nothing at all.*

*<Here, the handwriting changes subtly>*

*But He's wrong.*

*We have something within us that yearns to be more than the Syrnych ever became. Something that dreams of a better life while squatting in a sewer, something that contents itself with the thought of someone to hold in our arms and love when we are alone and bleeding on a battlefield. This thing, this quality, it hides itself from us carefully so that we don't become so dazzled at the sight of what we could become that we forget to live our simple lives. But it can't always hide — it shows in some people when they share their bread with a starving man, or pull a child from a burning building.*

*I hope that in time, this spirit will grow stronger within us, that it will lead us away from greed, war, and destruction. If we can let this spirit guide us, then Theus will have to see that we have earned the right to be the greatest of His children, greater even than any of the cold, dead Syrnych.*

*Goodbye.*

### **The Price of Knowledge**

This adventure takes place after Niklaus Trägue's suicide.

The Inquisition has arrived in Freiburg, targeting Invisible College members and other scientists. Now, the College is appealing to Logan Sieger for help; after all, Sieger promised support for their scientific pursuits. Only now does the new Eisenfürst realize the trap he has caught himself in. If he does not aid the College, he will have caused their doom. If he does, he breaks faith with Trägue's philosophies. He needs a way to aid the scientist without endangering his position as King of the Kingless Kingdom.

Sieger is in a precarious position, and he could certainly use some help that came with "plausible deniability." He doesn't want to start relying on Wilma Probst's guards, or the very foundation of the Freiburg government (or lack thereof) would be in doubt. The Heroes could do Sieger a great service by coming to his aid when needed, but operating without official sanction. The Invisible College would also be grateful, and might be able to provide the Heroes with new inventions to help them in their struggles.

### **The Schattenmann**

The Schattenmann is at the root of many of Eisen's problems these days, and at the heart of it all is Heilgrund. A campaign based out of Heilgrund gives the Heroes the opportunity to foil more than just the local plans of the Schattenmann, but perhaps to destroy its influence over Eisen society for a time.

Of course, the Schattenmann is a being of incredible power, and the price the Heroes will have to pay for success is undoubtedly high. That's what legends are made of.

And what Hero doesn't want to be a legend?

If the Heroes do finally succeed in breaking the Schattenmann's power, it will come back to haunt them some day. The Schattenmann cannot be truly killed, it can only be stopped. Even that is only temporary.

### **The Mörderbande**

Heilgrund is not the only place in Eisen where evil dwells. Sieger is on the verge of civil war, with the Mörderbande on one side, and Manfred Jost on the other. If the Heroes can get a message to Sieger to let him know what's going on, Sieger may be able to do something to defuse the situation. Alternately, the Heroes themselves can

move against the Mörderbande, and aid Manfred Jost in a guerrilla war.

Unfortunately, other forces are at work as well.

Eisenfürst Sieger has always used all of the resources available to him in defense of his Königreich, even those other Eisenfürsten are hesitant to use. Specifically, he has been manipulating the denizens of the Schwarzen Walden for some time now, employing them in defense of his home.

Of course, while the inhabitants of the Schwarzen Walden are all monstrous, they are not all foolish. A few of the more intelligent creatures, including the Schattenmann himself, have deduced Sieger's activities. It is only a matter of time before they pay him a visit.

If the Heroes wish to get Sieger back to his kingdom, they'll need to stay one step ahead of both the Schattenmann and the Mörderbande. What's worse, they may not have any idea why the Schattenmann want Sieger dead. But if they can keep the Eisenfürst ahead of his enemies, they may be able to figure out why the Schattenmann is after him... and maybe save his life in the process.

## *Explorers: Adventures in the New Age*

With the opening of the western ocean, all sorts of wonders and perils await the bold. While greatness will come to the lucky and clever, death lurks in a thousand shadows for the foolhardy. The Game Master should keep in mind that encounters should be uncommon in the vast emptiness of the Great Western Ocean, but also adventure often comes to the bold. Here is a taste of what awaits those willing to face the New Age. All of these hooks should take place after the spring of 1669, when voyages west are in full swing.

### **Vesten Explorers**

Montaigne isn't the only country experiencing upheaval. The Vestenmannavnjar are fighting a losing battle, and some of them know it. As a result, many Vesten have begun expeditions west. None of them can say exactly what they're searching for — perhaps a passage to Valhalla, or new weapons to fight their foes — but they aren't particularly friendly with any of the other factions sending ships west.



Vesten Raiders represent a very real threat in the western seas. Not only are the Vesten numerous, they're organized. Add to that their long tradition of raiding as an honorable trade, and it isn't difficult to guess what sort of hazard they make. While sailing to the north is more likely to result in an encounter with Vesten pirates. Their primary interest isn't in gold or jewels, however, but in useful items, such as food, tools and quality steel. Most ships that surrender are left with enough food to return home. Vendel, and those who resist, are cut down.

Those who have paid attention to the fleeing Vesten have noticed that they're far less interested in the glory of battle than they used to be. The primary purposes in their raids are acquiring two things—survival essentials, and respect. As a result, a few groups (the Sea Dogs and Explorers in particular) hope to make peace with the Vesten, trading the essentials they need for peace and information. Many Vesten want nothing to do with the “greedy name-killing allies of the Vendel” (read: anyone not Vesten), and the chances are good that negotiators will have to get past such raiders first. Vendel are not recommended for these missions. A captain and crew who wishes to bargain with the Vestenmannavnjar requires discretion, restraint, and the ability to knock a seven foot tall berserker on his back.

### Here There Be Drachen

Even in modern Théah, there are places where man does not hold sway: ancient lands controlled by wilderness or inhuman things, seas ruled by untamed forces, and otherworldly realms in which reality itself changes at the whim of godlike creatures.

Early mapmakers once labeled such areas on their charts with a simple phrase: “Here there be drachen.” Sometimes, it was even true.

Now, an entirely uncharted region of the world is open to discovery and exploitation. Those who head west with greedy or naive hearts soon learn that the mapmakers knew what they were talking about. A few people have already returned to Théah with tales of monsters unheard of... until now.

The first stories to reach Théah centered around huge sea creatures, like squid, but more cunning and powerful. These creatures attack without any apparent rhyme or reason, sometimes curling their immense tentacles around well-armed galleons while leaving relatively

defenseless merchant ships alone. Worse, attacks have been confirmed in the western Frothing Sea — growing slowly closer to Théah. While the Barrier's fall has allowed explorers and heroes to head west, it has also allowed these *things* to come east.

Though scholars are still arguing taxonomy, sailors have already begun whispering a name. After the first ship to survive an attack by one of these tentacled horrors returned to Carleon, seamen immediately spread stories about its immense strength, its huge, powerful beak, and the malevolence in the one horrible eye they saw. Worst of all was the nightmarish sound that came out of its beak, all the more terrible for how expressive it was. A monstrous cracking sound, like the world being torn in two, echoed around the sailors as it drew itself closer to them. When the beak dug into the ship's hull, its noises sounded... satisfied.

The scholars and scientists can argue all they want. As far as the sailors of Théah are concerned, the Eisen gunner who drove it off named it well.

To sailors, they are the kraken.

### High Seas Treachery

Sometimes, the best way to fight your enemies is to get them to do it for you. More than one Explorer captain found his adventure ending when his crew went too long with nothing but water in every direction. Any number of factions can incite disgruntled sailors, but Inquisitors and other shadowy church organizations excel at it.

First, the Inquisitor (or whoever) must find a likely leader for the insurrection. While a saboteur might take this position on herself, it's a dangerous, high profile role. Most spies prefer to stick to the shadows, and find a particularly dissatisfied sailor to do the dirty work. The ideal candidate is filled with self-importance and jealousy, and is either charismatic or popular enough to pull it off.

Next, the Inquisitor must foster — or if necessary, fabricate — some pretext for the mutiny. A happy and well-treated crew isn't likely to overthrow the captain who ensures their prosperity. A saboteur who tries to sow discord in a loyal crew deserves the fate that befalls him.

Third, the seeds of mutiny must be planted, without alerting the captain or any sailors loyal to her. Organizing something as dangerous and disturbing as a mutiny is fraught with peril: it takes a lot of people to pull it off, but only one to bring it down.

Finally, the mutineers must be armed and stationed in the right places. When the time is right, those officers still loyal to the captain must be captured or killed quickly. Once a mutiny begins, it can only end in victory or death. If the mutineers succeed, they can afford to show mercy, but a captain who allows traitors to live is just asking for another mutiny.

As difficult as starting a mutiny can be, preventing one can be just as taxing. Intelligent captains treat their crews well, knowing that the best defense is to ensure that one's men have no reason to revolt.

Once the grumbling begins, however, the captain must quickly root out the spy, and hopefully prove that the reasons given for mutiny were the spy's fault rather than the officers'. Interestingly, the measures in opposing sabotage are similar to causing it, but in reverse. Loyal crew members posted in strategic locations can make would-be mutineers cautious. Recruiting a few sailors to listen for organized grumbling can pin down who seems to be doing the most rabble-rousing. From there, tracking mishaps and destruction to their source becomes much simpler.

This all assumes the presence of an active agent of discord. For "regular" mutinies, follow the Advanced Sailing Rules found in both *Pirate Nations* and *Waves of Blood*. Add one to the Drama Die cost if the ship has the Good Captain modification, and reduce the cost by one if the ship has the Bad Captain flaw. Naturally, the GM should flesh out such a scenario beyond a few simple die rolls. The battle of wits between a ship's captain and a spy is an adventure, not a simple check of the charts.

### From Cabora With Hate

Very few crews have successfully taken artifacts from the island of Cabora. Of those, most have been sent to the bottom by various ships or secret societies. Of the rest, the majority come primarily from ruthless crews such as the Crimson Rogers or the Iron Fist, who attack first and ask questions later. In all likelihood, their efforts explain where the unpleasant toy known as Legion's Fang came from.

The Fang is a spike about the size of a man's forearm with a round protrusion, something like a large collar button, at the base. When the "button" is pressed, the spike begins to vibrate and grows uncomfortably warm. In approximately ten minutes, everyone in a hundred yard radius



### Kraken: Villains

**Points:** 600 (or a 40 point ship)

**Brawn** 9, **Finesse** 4, **Resolve** 10, **Wits** 5, **Panache** 4

**Attack Roll:** 7k4 ship grapple, 5k4 tentacle slap/grab, swamping (special)

**Damage:** 9k7 bite, 7k7 crush (against ship), 5k4 slap/crush (individual)

**Knacks:** Politics 3, Scheming 4, Shadowing 3, Stealth 5, Fishing 5, Ambush 4, Animal

Training 3, Navigation 6, Sea Lore 6, Swimming 5, Weather 4, Scholar (all) 3 to 5

Monstrous octopoids the size of galleons, kraken are also among the most cunning and vicious creatures in the world. They are a grayish pink, with sixteen small tentacles, which they use to pluck individual humans off of ships, and four larger tentacles capable of engulfing entire ships and snapping masts. Though they are capable of compromise, mercy and even compassion among their own kind, the overwhelming majority of kraken are capricious and cruel. They also have strong tendencies toward scheming and domination. With the fall of the Barrier, they have become curious about these strange new vessels that have shown up above them. They are also curious about the new frontier — except to the kraken, the "new frontier" lies to the east.

**Special Abilities:** Kraken are capable of swamping smaller ships. If a kraken's Brawn is greater than twice a ship's Resolve, it can make a Brawn check to attempt to force the ship completely under water. The TN of this check is ten times the ship's Resolve. If successful, the ship sinks in five turns unless the Kraken is driven off. The kraken can reduce this time by making two Raises for one less turn. If the roll fails, it can't attempt to swamp the ship again during this encounter.

Kraken are extremely tough. Except for the smaller tentacles, treat the creature as a ship for purposes of combat. Hacking at the smaller tentacles does cause the creature pain, and if a kraken because Crippled as a result it flees. Otherwise, use the defending ship's Brawn to attack normally; human-sized weapons do two less Kept dice of damage. The sole exception to this is fire. All forms of fire do damage normally, and a kraken will retreat immediately if it identifies a *Fuego* sorcerer among the crew.



becomes increasingly irritable. All Taunt Actions receive a Free Raise. Five minutes later, everyone in the affected area must make a Resolve check with a TN of 5 or develop the Hot-Headed Hubris for the next hour.

Every five minutes after that, the TN increases by 5 until it reaches 20. After that, the effect begins to fade, and the checks have the TN reduced by 5 until it reaches 0, at which point it ends completely. Those with the Hot-Headed Hubris have their Hubris activated three times, without expending a Drama Dice: once at twenty minutes after activation, once at thirty, and once at forty. The Hero may expend Drama Dice to avoid the effect. Heroes with the Self-Controlled Virtue are unaffected.

As one might imagine, the effect of Legion's Fang in a tense situation would be disastrous. Many unsavory individuals would pay a fortune for this artifact, sending it under *le coiffeur* in Charouse, in the Palace of Wolves, behind a Vodacce Prince's throne, or any of a hundred other places. The Iron Butcher (see page 45) has already sold it for an enormous sum to a merchant in Castille. From there, it will go to the highest bidder.

Unless a Hero can prevent this monstrous thing from falling into the wrong hands, that is.

If the Heroes need motivation, any number of governments and secret societies could catch wind of it, requiring skilled Heroes to go to Castille and either retrieve or destroy Legion's Fang before someone buys it. Théah itself might hang in the balance.

## Montaigne: Vive la Révolution!

For experienced 7th Sea players, the Revolution makes the perfect climax to a lengthy campaign. What better place to face down old enemies in a final confrontation, discover the final piece to that Synchron puzzle, or save a Hero's one true love than during the greatest political upheaval since the fall of Numa? Even if the Revolution isn't the big finale, you should feel free to give your Heroes a starring role in any of the events described in Chapter One. Some guidelines for the more prominent incidents follow:

### Montegue's Retreat

GMs interested in a lengthy military campaign may wish to place them alongside General

Montegue, where they can participate in the long, doomed retreat from Ussura. The Heroes might have already met Montegue (in *The Lady's Favor* or elsewhere) and he would certainly welcome their help. Though destined to end in failure, the Ussuran retreat still provides plenty of opportunities for adventure. A few ideas are outlined below:

- The Montaigne rearguard plays a vital role in the retreat — guarding the flanks from Ussuran attacks, harassing partisans, and ensuring that the enemy doesn't get too close. The Heroes may be called upon to smoke out Ussuran fighters, hold key bridges or other geographical locales, and generally keep the Montaignes' caboose from getting shot off.
- When he heard that Montegue was returning home, *l'Empereur* dispatched several bands of assassins to slay the General. The Heroes could catch wind of them, leading to a tension-filled game of cat and mouse through the Ussuran woods.
- The Ussuran city of Ekaternava, under siege by the Montaigne for months, finds itself holding the upper hand when partisans disrupt the Montaigne forces there. Montegue arrives on Sextus 24, just in time to rescue his men from being wiped out. Heroes with him can help ferry men from the Ekaternava island back to the mainland, negotiate with the city officials for a cease fire, or scale the walls for a daring rescue of Montaigne prisoners of war.
- *L'Empereur's* saboteurs set fire to the boats in Odyesse harbor, cutting off Montegue's retreat by sea. Heroes in the vicinity may be able to contain the damage, either by halting the saboteur prematurely or by providing ships of their own (perhaps "borrowed" from other ports). While they cannot possibly save enough boats to transport the entire army, they may spare enough to get wounded soldiers, support troops, and any women and children back to Montaigne safely. Montegue could charge the Heroes with seeing the rag-tag fleet home while he and his able-bodied men fight their way through Eisen.
- The Battle of Salzumpf. Montegue's Waterloo ends in a bitter defeat, but that doesn't mean that a few able-bodied Heroes couldn't make a difference. If you wish to use the Advanced Combat Rules on page 176–179 of the *Game*

*Masters' Guide*, the following stats apply:

The Montaigne general (Montegue) has Wits 3, Incitation 5, and Strategy 5.

His subcommander (Karl Steiner) has a total Leadership of 5, plus any the Heroes add to it. His quartermaster has a Wits of 2 and no Logistics, to reflect the army's tattered shape (Heroes with appropriate Skills can adjust this number at your discretion).

The Eisen general (Fauner Pösen) has Wits 3, Incitation 2, and Strategy 4. Her subcommanders have a combined Leadership of 30, however, reflecting the larger number of troops at her command. Her quartermaster has a Wits of 3 and a Logistics of 4.

The Heroes cannot prevent the Montaigne loss, or the capture of Montegue, but they can ensure that more Montaigne soldiers live to see the end of it. Depending on how well they perform, you may adjust the number of survivors up or down. They also may have a chance to escape into the swamp following Montegue's defeat, where they can proceed as they see fit. Should the Heroes be captured, they will be held in an Eisen prison with their fellow troops, and set to work on various projects such as digging new mines or repairing roads. They should be provided an ample opportunity to escape from their captors (perhaps leading to an exciting manhunt across Pösen to the relative safety of Wische or Heilgrund).

### The Feast Day Killers

The events of Bloody Feast Day stuck a blow to the heart of every patriotic Montaigne. Suddenly, the Revolution they believed so dearly in was under fire. Two of their most beloved leaders were dead, and unless someone took action, the entire government might destabilize. In order to keep the Revolution alive, justice must be done.

Though both the Musketeers and the Knights of the Rose and Cross searching for the Bloody Feast Day killers, there's nothing to say that the Heroes can't participate as well. The path is long and arduous, but several distinct clues point to the assassins' identity and probable hiding place. A witness to the murders remembers the odd maroon color of the wool cloaks the killers wore. She also remembers that they fled through a nearby sewer grate. Of course, the Heroes will have to find her and ask her these things before she gives them up.

Once the killers entered the Charouse sewers, they engaged in a brief scuffle with the denizens residing there. One of them, a man called the

Mole, stole a cloak in the altercation. He'd be willing to part with it for a fee; it's made of a coarse wool found only in the Doré province (Wits + Spinner or Tailor, TN 25 to determine). Again, the Heroes will have to track down the Mole, then find someone capable of identifying the wool.

Once they reach Doré, they can find several dyers who carry that particular shade of maroon. One of them, near the city of Dechaine, points them to a nearby inn, frequented by several young men whom he made cloaks. Most of them have wisely moved on, but one made the mistake of lingering in the area (he has a crush on one of the barmaids). The Heroes catch him flirting with his *amour*; he might lead them on a merry chase before giving up the ghost. He can point them to an abandoned estate, where he friends have holed up until they can escape Montaigne.

The final encounter can be as easy or as challenging as you wish. The assassins will fight if cornered, but prefer obfuscation and flight to stand-up combat. If the Heroes need help, NPC Musketeers and Rose and Cross Knights can appear to apprehend the villains just as they escape. In any case, at least a small handful of assassin survive to face trial — the Heroes should be discouraged from wholesale slaughter.

### Third Time's the Charm

Bloody feast Day claimed two members of the Council of Eight. A third, Jean-Marc Navarre, was targeted for assassination as well. The Heroes have a chance to stop it.

Father Navarre is slated to deliver a sermon at the newly reopened Château du Theus. In a display of anti-Vaticine royalism, the assassins have planted a bomb beneath his pulpit. When his speech reaches its crescendo, they will set it off — killing the father and hopefully destabilizing the building in the process.

The bomb has been planted in the floorboards (the basement ceiling), and has a 30 foot long length of fuse to light. It takes 1+1 die minutes to explode when lit (if a "0" is rolled, the fuse goes off in ninety seconds). One of the assassins is waiting in the basement, to light the fuse, while his companions have kept a nearby storm-door open for his to escape. The nearby crowds keep their activities hidden, but sharp-eyed heroes may be able to spot their activity and defuse the bomb in time. The culprits will then attempt to flee through the streets; if caught, they could provide some valuable clues to the identity of their cohorts (see "The Feast Day Killers," above).



### *L'Empereur's Last Defenders*

Though base and corrupt, *l'Empereur* has his share of supporters, and the Heroes may find themselves among them. Perhaps they feel he can be reformed, or they swore an oath to defend him no matter what. Perhaps they simply believe that no one deserves to die, not even a tyrant such as he. Whatever the reason, they have an opportunity to prove their loyalty by spirited him out of Charouse before the mobs tear him to bloody little bits.

In order to be in a position to help him, the Heroes must be in Château du Soleil on that fateful day in Septimus. As the crowds surge outside (and Remy du Montaigne departs to deal with them, see the sidebar on page 12). A group of servants will approach the Heroes and plead with them to help save their Master. Assuming they agree, they have several obstacles to overcome.

Firstly, *L'Empereur* has no ready means of Porté escape. He always used the gateways to travel, and it simply never occurred to him that he might have to flee his own palace. Porté mages might get

around this by transporting a blooded object to previously-established location, but they shouldn't be able to leave Montaigne (if you need to, have the blooded object washed clean to ensure no rapid exits).

Secondly, getting *l'Empereur* out of the city proves problematic. A secret passage can get them safely out of the palace, but *l'Empereur* has a very recognizable face: it adorns countless statues in Charouse and every coin in the nation. Someone on the street is bound to recognize him. The Heroes will need to come up with an adequate disguise, then make their way through the chaotic streets to safety.

Finally, once out of Charouse, they must make their way to the coast (or the shore of the River), where the Kire's ship waits to "spirit him to safety." The journey across the countryside could involve any number of adventures, from distracting revolutionaries to meeting with the Kire and arranging for transport (if the Heroes are present, they should be allowed to take the forefront in this effort; the ship will rendezvous with them anywhere they please). Meeting with the Kire is the perfect place for the Heroes to betray Léon should they wish. Simply have the Eisen make quiet overtures to them, and assure them that "his way" will deliver legitimate justice to the brutal tyrant (see the GM's Secret on page 68-69 for further details).

Regardless of their motivations, the escape almost falls apart just as the party approaches the docks. A group of revolutionaries, lead by several swordsmen, spot *l'Empereur* a short way from the ships. The Heroes will have to hold them off while Léon makes a run for it. Unless you wish the Heroes to participate in die Kreuzritter's trial, the ship should disembark before combat ends. Léon was never one to stick his neck out for a pal.

Once *l'Empereur* is safely away, the Heroes should think about leaving Montaigne themselves. Like right now.

### **The Burning Pyre**

(At least one of the Heroes should be a Musketeer for this adventure.)

Though officially disbanded, the Musketeers have plenty of opportunities to protect the innocent during the early days of the revolution. One particular task involves a woman named Lucie Jodard, the daughter of a seaside barmaid. Lucie is the bastard child of a local nobleman with middling Porté magic. Though she never formally trained in its use, she still has red hands,



which targets her for trouble. The peasants in her district burn the nobleman's estate and hang his family from the gates. But the act fails to satiate their bloodlust, and they quickly turn on secondary targets: first the servants, and then the noble's illegitimate daughter.

The terrified Lucie flees into the night, minutes ahead of a torch-wielding mob. Her stepfather leads the way, eager for the chance to erase the stain on his honor. She finds herself at the nearby lighthouse, where she barricades the door and ascends to the top floor. Unable to breach the barricade, the crowd settles for incinerating the structure.

The Heroes could enter this scenario in several ways. They might devote themselves to saving the noble's servants (mostly innocent, hard-working people), or they may simply arrive just as Lucie flees. In any case, they will have to distract or disperse the mob, then find a way to scale the burning building and save the terrified young woman within.

Lucie will be extremely grateful to her rescuers, and stories of the Heroes daring will soon spread throughout Montaigne, helping to cement the Musketeers' post-Revolutionary reputation.

## Ussura

Ussura breathed a collective sigh of relief as Montegue's army departed their soil, giving them a chance to recover and revert to their traditional isolation. But some conflicts are older than the Montaigne invasion, and with Montegue out of the picture, they have a chance to come to the forefront again — causing no end of grief and mischief.

### Goddess

The recent exodus into Veche, coupled with the rise of Cabora, seems to have pushed Matushka's power to the limits. Parts of her vast kingdom have reverted to an uncontrolled state, and Ussurans there can no longer depend on their Grandmother to shield them from the worst.

This has not gone unnoticed by Aleksii Pavtlov Markov v'Novgorov.

After a careful study of the weather of Ussuran weather patterns, Novgorov has realized even Matushka can be pushed too far, and he fully intends to exploit this new knowledge. In his extensive studies of the myths and legends

surrounding Matushka, he has repeatedly encountered references to a race of ancients — perhaps Syrneth — sealed under the waters of Lake Vigil by Matushka herself. He can only conclude that a foe of Matushka's is a friend of his.

He currently prepares to mount an expedition to the legendary sea, intent on releasing Matushka's ancient foe. He believes that if Matushka is occupied battling her ancient enemy, he will be able to move freely, without interference from Grandmother Winter. Once he no longer has to worry about her watchful eye, he is certain he can find a way to destroy her.

Perhaps even replace her.

In all of Ussura, only one man other than Novgorov realizes what is going on: Koshchei. He quietly watches as Novgorov assembles his expedition to the lake. He has not yet decided what to do about it, though he knows he must do *something*. Koshchei may contact your Heroes, and hire them to keep an eye on Novgorov. Of course, if the Heroes realize what Novgorov is up to, something will have to be done...

### Veche and Fveryot

With the possibility of Fveryot becoming Knias of Veche (see page 60–61) a quiet movement has evolved, dedicated to finding his sister Apraksia and convincing her to return home and make amends with her father. Hand in hand with these plans are plots of a somewhat more sinister nature: an assassination plot against Fveryot, Veche's future ruler.

What the people don't know is that Fveryot harbors far more than a simple fascination with history; he truly desires to bring it to life. The evil sorceress Saska Tomiech and her infant son (see *Ussura*, page 48) lie entombed far beneath the Knias's castle, preserved for eternity in a tremendous block of ice.

Fveryot visits her nightly.

Each night, Saska's bone chilling beauty calls out to him, seemingly the calm, quiet voice of reason in the boy's unstable world. At first, he kept his distance from the ice, sensing powerful magic at work. As time rolled on, however, he began to approach Saska's crystalline tomb. He is sure he can hear her calling his name, pleading with him to free her from her prison. He doesn't know how yet, but he's going to find out... soon. He has already made contact with a mysterious trio of sorcerers from Castille — men who Saska claims can free her from her icy tomb. Fveryot has not yet convinced the sorcerers to



journey to Ussura, but he feels that it's only a matter of time.

The situation here forms an interesting dilemma for a group of Heroes. Fveryot has not truly done anything wrong. The people of Veche seem ready to assassinate him based solely on his interest in history. Of course, if he gains control of the province, he will begin to recreate the brutal past that holds such fascination for him, but the fact remains he has not done anything. Yet.

Of course, if the Heroes discovered his nightly visits to Saska's, they might be able to prevent him from awakening her — and possibly prevent Veche's nightmare from growing worse.

### **Borin's Plan**

Borin St. Andresgorod v'Pscov is not himself, and he tires of the masquerade. Of the three Tyomny who kidnapped Borin and forced him to assume the throne of Somojez, only one survives. With the first two of the Tyomny killed in battle with the Montaigne, Valerii prayed every night that Montegue's invaders would finish the job, and slay the third.

It never happened.

Now, with the war over, Valerii sees no hope on the horizon. He is trapped in his palace, and the Drachen beneath it torments him every night. Finally, after being awakened for the third time in one night by the creature's dreams, Valerii decided enough was enough. Determined to end his charade, he quietly launched a search for Heroes of strong arm and sharp wit, to aid in his dilemma. Of course, he won't go into detail until the Heroes are sworn to secrecy — he knows his neck is at risk.

Once he extracts a promise of help and silence from the Heroes, he tells them the truth, and asks them to find his old "friend," the surviving Tyomny, and bring him before Valerii.

Of course, once the Heroes find and capture the surviving Tyomny, they aren't out of the woods yet. When Borin steps down, not only will a power vacuum spring up in the province, but Valerii will probably be wanted for impersonating a Knias. The penalty is death. Incidentally, the Heroes would probably be considered collaborators. The penalty is death for that, too.

### **Letters From Home**

Ketheryna Fischler Dimitritova is concerned for her brother. The two corresponded regularly until a few months ago, when her brother Faulk

stopped writing. A month later, Ketheryna received a letter from Faulk's advisor, Franziska Kohl. Faulk Fischler was changing, and Kohl worried for him. He had become introverted, quiet, and paranoid — even more so than usual — and Kohl hoped a visit from Faulk's sister might help draw him out of his shell.

Unfortunately, Ketheryna cannot leave the country just now. She knows the Knias plot against her husband, and fears that if she leaves either the Knias will depose him or he will discover their schemes and fly into a murderous rage.

Therefore, Ketheryna does the only thing she can: she writes. She hopes her correspondence with Kohl will help the woman get to the root of Faulk's new behavior, and resolve whatever issues are at hand.

While Ketheryna is unconcerned that her correspondence will be discovered by her husband or the Knias, she does not know what might happen if Faulk learned that she and his advisor were speaking about his recent mental state. She is currently considering hiring couriers to deliver her letters, a position which the Heroes might fill admirably.

## *Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar*

### **The Althing**

This adventure involves helping Master George Skard extend his message of goodwill to his Vesten cousins. Skard feels the time had come to take the next big step. When he attends the Althing (see the timeline in Appendix II), he intends to bring his largest entourage yet, and supply the entire Althing with his finest personal brew. Of course, not everyone shares Skard's altruism. Villains on both sides are even now hatching plans to sabotage Skard's journey, the Althing, or both. Opportunities for mischief abound on Skard's journey. Hand in hand with that, of course, comes opportunities for heroics. Besides, what Vesten Hero would turn down the chance to attend an Althing?

Assuming the party gets Skard through the gathering safely, he may have another task which requires their assistance. The brewmaster has agreed to find a man named Peter Vel for his new Vesten friends. Vel is a moneylender and member of the Vendel League with a reputation for nastiness among his peers. Skard has no idea how

to find the man, but he knows that the Vesten want him alive and have no intention of harming him. Unfortunately, Vel has no intention of leaving Kirk, and his money can buy a lot of hiding places...

### **Playing Cupid**

Romance is often a common theme in 7th Sea stories. Dashing heroes, fair maidens, and handsome strangers are all staples of the swashbuckling genre. It is somewhat rarer, however, for the Heroes to encourage the flower of love to blossom between two NPCs. Sela Cole and Val Mokka's relationship could easily lead to some unique adventure hooks:

- Val Mokka sends a gift to Sela Cole, but decides it is inadequate in some way. He hires the Heroes to intercept his first courier, and replace the gift with something more suitable — and doubtless difficult to acquire.
- The Heroes play chaperon for the pair; Joris Brak wants them to be especially mindful that neither party rushes the relationship. Hilarity ensues as the couple try to escape the watchful eyes of their escorts.
- Sela Cole, just beginning to realize Val Mokka's insecurities, hires the Heroes to monitor conversations at a party the pair will attend. They are to make sure Val doesn't hear any of the snide comments or flip remarks directed at him or Sela.

### **The Gray Lady**

The *Gray Lady* is about to be attacked by Vesten raiders. The other side of Joris Brak (see *Vendel/Vesten*, pages 119-120) has plans that don't involve the ship reaching port safely. Secretly, he released the *Gray Lady*'s travel schedule to the Vesten, along with a falsified shipping manifest that indicates the *Gray Lady* is loaded down with Vendel trade goods. It is simply too plump a target for the Vesten to pass up.

Brak's plan is simple: he hopes to foster enmity between the Vesten and the Avalons, while at the same time forming bonds of friendship with Avalon on behalf of the Vendel. If a third party takes sides in the Vesten/Vendel conflict, he is confident the level of animosity between the two cultures will only grow.

The *Gray Lady* and her crew are prepared for a Vesten attack, (the Avalons are very aware of the situation in the Vendel Islands). At the same time,

however, Ambassador Fitzcain is under orders to open a dialogue with the Vesten, which will be pursued by another diplomat assigned by Elaine.

If the Vesten attack the *Gray Lady*, all of Fitzcain's hopes for peaceful relations with both the Vendel and the Vesten will be smashed. The Heroes can become intertwined in the plots of Joris Brak in a number of ways. In fact, Joris Brak himself may hire them to protect the *Gray Lady*, unaware that his darker half has virtually signed her death warrant. Alternately, Elaine has a vested interest in protecting her diplomats. If any of the Heroes are one of Elaine's Knights, she may assign him to protect Fitzcain, and any Avalon diplomats in the party will be asked to accompany Fitzcain as advisors.

### **Kollson's Staff**

Years ago, after the murder of his grandfather, Boli Kollson sold the old man's runic staff to a curious Montaigne youth. He didn't think much on the subject — he had no use for the staff, and no sentimental attachment to it. That was his first mistake. In time, it became clear that his murdered grandfather worked against him from the other side, determined to thwart Kollson's ascension to Master of Lærdom.

He did everything he could to sever his grandfather's links to the living world. He already killed the old man. He converted to the Objectionist faith in an attempt to loosen his grandfather's influence over him. He even went so far as to raze the old man's cottage, and replace it with a Vendel hunting lodge. Nothing worked.

Now, Kollson believes the runic staff he sold so long ago holds the key to the old man's meddling, and has spared no expense in tracking down the Montaigne boy. It took them nearly a year, but Kollson's agents finally located him. The youth's fascination with Vesten culture led him to a small fishing village on the island of Soroya. His initial reception was cold, but his honest curiosity quickly won over a local skald, who began to teach the boy the legends and traditions of the Vesten.

In time, the boy began to have dreams in which an old man told him of his potential for greatness. He need only accept the truth of what he learned from the old skald, and he will take the first steps towards achieving it. The old skald doesn't quite know what to think of the boy's dreams. He couches his confusion in wise proverbs and legends, but ultimately, he knows



the boy from Montaigne couldn't become a Skjæren... could he?

Meanwhile, Kollson is preparing to send his students to attack the village. If he has his way, the boy will never be a Skjæren. In fact, he will never be anything else, either. Except dead.

### Uvitenhet

The Vesten terrorist Uvitenhet (see *Vendel/Vesten*, pages 64-65 and 116-117) has recently put all of Kirk in a spin with her attacks on Vendel merchants. Unfortunately for her, one of her closest allies, a man named Ulf Falgirson, has taken advantage of her for a number of months now. She pays him a generous stipend to work with her, and support her goals, but it isn't enough for Falgirson.

He plans to help Uvitenhet, but not in the way she thinks. He wants to raise the price on her head as high as it will go, then turn her over to the authorities and claim the reward. Unfortunately, when a group of meddlers thwarted Uvitenhet's planned raid on the Kirk mint earlier this year, Falgirson's plans were put on hold. He is currently doing his best to talk her into doing something major, to make up for her failure in Kirk. He almost has the woman convinced that planting a bomb in a guild meeting would be the master stroke needed to bring down the Vendel.

Whether that's true or not, Ulf doesn't care. All he knows is if Uvitenhet bombs a meeting of the Guild chairs, the price on her head will be high enough to let him live in obscene luxury for the rest of his life.

Heroes investigating Uvitenhet's activities may be contacted by Ulf, who offers to turn her over for a cut of the reward. Of course, it will probably occur to the Heroes to wonder exactly who Ulf is, but he isn't worried. If Uvitenhet hasn't figured out his plan by now, a bunch of misfit Heroes shouldn't be able to clue her in...

## Vodacce

The hand of Fate has stirred the thick shadows of Vodacce, changing not only the nation's political landscape, but its actual geography as well. Bold heroes and villains have long played the Great Game to their own advantage, altering the course of destiny — or falling prey to it. Many changes have rocked this volatile region over the past few months but, as the often quoted writer Scarovese once said, "The more things change in Vodacce, the more they stay the same."

Most of these adventures take place during or after the sinking of Caligari's Island. Some of them take place during or after Mondavi's coup. Pay careful attention to the timing, and consult Appendix II for dates if necessary.

### Legion's Own Luck

Despite its colorful name, Legion's Fang has nothing to do with the forces of the Abyss. The sinister force that recently resurfaced in Vodacce is another matter. The following note was found nailed to the Lorenzo palace door in Agitazione:

*"Cabora is only the beginning. The Fourth Prophet cannot save you. Paradise will not help you. The gates to the Abyss have cracked, and soon, they will yawn wide. On that day, Legion will be free, and his favored sons will give Him your souls as tribute."*

The note was signed with only one word: Bianco.

Even today, the name Bianco gives children nightmares. A furious Church investigation into the notice has proved utterly useless. Worse, strange things have lately taken place throughout Agitazione and nearby farmlands. Milk has curdled in minutes. A calf was born with two heads earlier in the year. Men and women fled to monasteries or joined the Inquisition after a single night of evil dreams. A few have even broken, and preached the coming of Legion. The Vaticine Church worked hard to calm down the peasants, claiming that these incidents were simple coincidence and lack of faith. Prince Alcide Mondavi is concerned (or at least as concerned as he ever gets about anything) that one of his rivals planted the note to sow discord. Fate Witches fastidiously avoid the area, something the Church refuses to acknowledge publicly. Quietly, however, both they and Mondavi seek those with the courage to look into these unfortunate events — to find out if they represent a simply political ploy or something far, far worse...

### The Wretched Creature

Members of the Explorer's Society — especially any who took part in the "Unstable Ground" adventure from the first issue of the NOM newsletter — should pay attention to the rumors of a "wretched creature" having survived the destruction of Carlo Umberto Falisci's 14th century stronghold. The rumors are true. The creature survived for centuries from the nourishment of a Golden Chalice, and its mystical properties somehow kept it alive. It has since taken

refuge in the Caligari family mausoleum, where Beatrice was recently laid to rest, and assumed control over a local family of crypt ghouls.

The beast is, in fact, a captured Sidhe, twisted and warped from Falisci's vile experiments. It lost all of its Glamour, but gained a hatred for humans, taking pleasure in terrorizing and murdering innocents throughout the surrounding area. The Explorers sent a team to put an end to the menace they unwittingly released, but no one has heard from them in weeks. The Heroes may be hired to learn their fate, or perhaps even be contacted by another Sidhe, hoping to put his or her cousin out of its misery. In order to kill it, the Heroes will probably need Synchronicity technology... or perhaps a MacEachern blade...

### "Wretched Creature" (Villain)

TN: 20

Brawn 5, Fitness 3, Resolve 4, Wits 2, Panache 2

Attack Roll: 4k3

Damage: 5k2 (Claws)

Skills: Bear Hug 3, Break 3, Grapple 4, Leaping 3, Lifting 5, Sprinting 4

Advantages: Sidhe Blood (Slow Aging, Iron Vulnerability), Toughness

Description: The creature is a mockery of a human, a former Sidhe Lord twisted by unholy experiments. It resembles a vaguely humanoid male, about 7 feet tall and is very thin, with pale wrinkled skin. The creature's head is too large for its body and is covered in large irregular lumps and protrusions. Its arms are twisted and wiry and end in terrible 4 inch claws.

### Beneath the Waves

Almost anyone could have been on Caligari Island when it began its descent beneath the waves, from prisoners freed during Allende's escape to sailors in port after a long voyage. GMs can use the opportunity to run an adventure of heroic survival, where Heroes come to the aid of endangered civilians and foil the actions of those trying to take advantage of a bad situation.

The island begins to sink a short time after dawn. Its progress is slow but inexorable. In game terms, the Heroes have but a single Scene to escape the disaster. Most buildings on the island have between five and ten stories; the tallest have fourteen or fifteen, while the Prince's tower has eighteen and the famous church of Saint Agnesse (see *Vodacce*, pages 37-38) has nineteen. Each story takes fifteen minutes to flood with seawater, giving the Heroes time to perform one substantial action, grab one object, or the like.

Combat on a flooding story must be limited to ten Rounds before the rising water requires Swimming checks (and an expedient exit is required).

Reinascienza teems with watercraft of all sorts: merchant ships, sail boats, gondollas, etc. The Heroes can procure one fairly easily, but they might have to defend it from rogues looking for an escape route, or from panicked citizens looking for a lifeboat. Once they have secured a ship, they can do what they can to aid citizens in trouble, or simply get cleared of the island before it sinks. This last scenario can lead to an exciting race against time, as the Heroes scull furiously towards the open harbor while masonry and stonework crashes into the canals around them. And of course, once they get free, there's the question of returning to the sunken ruins to salvage the countless valuables left behind...

### Bernoulli's Spawn

Characters taking part in any form of sea travel may become involved in the growing legend surrounding Prince Bernoulli's son, Giuseppe, who is determined to take Reis' place as the most feared pirate alive. A sadist of the first order, Giuseppe delights in terrorizing the crews of ships he captures, always blinding one sailor and setting him free to spread his horrible tale. Though he sails all around Théah, he has developed a fondness for the waters where Caligari Island was once located, preying upon the many Explorers and treasure hunters diving to the ruins below. Anyone who comes to those waters looking for treasure may find themselves in deeper trouble than they anticipated.

Unbeknownst to Giuseppe, the Crimson Rogers have caught wind of his tales, and are determined not to be upstaged. Prince Bernoulli knows about the Rogers' intentions, but is unsure how to best respond. Though surely bound for Legion's Pit, Giuseppe is still his son, and the Prince has no desire to see him send to eternal damnation too soon.

### Beatrice's Journal

Beatrice Caligari died in Montaigne, attending her sister Morella (see pages 8 and 67). But she left behind a journal detailing countless visions which her Sorte magic lent her. Sophia's Daughters, the Invisible College, and the Rilasciare all have agents searching for the journal — with little success. Alegra, the handmaid who smuggled the book out of Montaigne, arranged to meet with Sophia's



Daughters in Freiburg but never made her appointment. Her body was found just over the Eisen border, the precious journal missing. Whoever possesses it now has a keen insight into the workings of Sorte magic, Vincenzo's scientific research, and other secrets — including (perhaps) the future of Théah itself. If it falls into the wrong hands, the repercussions could be dire indeed.

### Lucani's Legacy

Prince Alberto Lucani saved his wife and daughters from assassination by calling upon his allies within the Knights of the Rose and Cross. They rescued his family from the killers' blades, even as the Prince himself was slaughtered. Heroes belonging to the Knights (or even just like-minded do-gooders) can help secret Lucani's family away from the palace on the fateful night, dodging poisoned blades and riding through the moonlit night to a prepared safehouse (the Knights will use the chapter house on Lucani's Island; the Heroes may make other arrangements if they wish).

The Knights vowed to protect the Lucani family, even after the prince's death, and they fully intend to do so. However, their task becomes more difficult due to the fact that the widow, Francesca, is determined to avenge her husband's death at all costs. She scours her family for traitors, plots ways to restore them to their former glory and casts hateful eyes at Alcide Mondavi, searching for a weakness. Her Sorte powers are substantial and she has numerous cousins within the other Vodacce families. So determined is she for revenge that she may even ignore the Lucani Curse (see *Vodacce*, pages 30–31) in order to get it. GMs could develop an entire campaign around protecting Francesca from the trouble she causes — or undoing it once it's done.

### The Composer

(*This adventure should take place before the Montaigne Revolution.*) Celebrated opera composer Bartholomeus Corradin is now under the thumb of Giovanni Villanova. After an offer Corradin could not refuse, Villanova became his sole patron and paid all of his expenses for a tour of Montaigne to showcase his most famous work, *Rosetta*. Villanova also gave the composer a six month deadline to complete his current opera, to be immediately followed with an opera celebrating the Villanova family and its present patriarch. Corradin was told he would meet his patron's demands or else, and left within the week for *l'Empereur's* court.

Corradin's wife (the true talent, see *Vodacce*, page 116) works feverishly on the opera in progress, but has no time to begin this new one. Indeed, her current efforts may kill her before all is said and done. Rather than place his fate in her increasingly exhausted hands, Corradin has come up with a different solution. He intends to kidnap the child prodigy Wolffrond von Hazel and make his way back to Vodacce. The boy will create Corradin's new opera or perish.

His efforts may prove his undoing. As long as his wife remains hidden, he can maintain his façade, but Wolffrond is famous throughout the world. If he turns up missing, his parents will go to any lengths to get him back, and Villanova's rivals would dearly love to deflate his new pet artist. The boy's kidnapping could provide a stalwart band of Heroes the opening they need to uncover Corradin's true nature, and perhaps save his wife before she kills herself.

## Appendix I

## NPCs

The following characters play (or played) an important role in Théah's recent history: either as political figures, new Heroes or Villains, or prominent foils for your players. Some were covered in previous sourcebooks; their descriptions here represent their status as of late summer, 1669.

## Avalon

**Hugh Fitzcairn, Avalon Ambassador to Vendel**

*Brawn* 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 5, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 4

*Reputation*: 45

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Insightful

*Advantages*: Avalon (R/W), Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Connections (Allies), Linguist, Servants

*Courtier*: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4,

*Fashion* 2, *Oratory* 3, *Politics* 4, *Sincerity* 4

*Scholar*: History 3, Law 2, Mathematics 1,

*Philosophy* 2, *Research* 1

Hugh Fitzcairn is an idealist, dedicated to the idea of peace in his time. When someone acts against that goal, he takes it very personally, and dedicates himself to discrediting the guilty party in any way he can.

**Sarah MacDonald, Thief of the Faery Flag**

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

*Reputation*: -20

*Background*: Vow (destroy the MacLeods)

*Arcana*: Brilliant

*Advantages*: Avalon (R/W), Scoundrel

*Scholar*: History 4, Mathematics 1, Occult 3,

*Philosophy* 2, *Research* 4

*Streetwise*: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 1

*Athlete*: Break Fall 1, Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2

*Heavy Weapon*: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

*MacDonald (Apprentice)*: Beat (Heavy Weapon) 3, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 2, Pommel Strike 2, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 1

Sarah MacDonald grew up hating the MacLeods. At her father's knee, she heard stories of the many indignities visited upon the MacDonalds by their old enemies, and as an adult, she saw the MacLeods and their allies repeatedly block her clan's interests in the High Council. She has sworn to change all of that, by whatever means necessary.

## Eisen

**Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim**

*Brawn* 2, *Finesse* 1, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 5, *Panache* 3

*Reputation*: 97

*Background*: Mistaken Identity

*Arcana*: Altruistic

*Advantages*: Castillian, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W),

*Appearance* (Stunning), Faith, Noble

*Courtier*: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5,

*Fashion* 2, *Oratory* 5, *Politics* 5, *Sincerity* 4

*Performer*: Acting 4, Cold Read 3, Dancing 2,

*Oratory* 5, *Singing* 3

*Porté (Apprentice)*: Attunement 3, Blood 3, Bring 3, Pocket 3

*Scholar*: History 3, Mathematics 3, Occult 4,

*Philosophy* 5, *Research* 4, *Theology* 5

*Servant*: Accounting 2, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2,

*Menial Tasks* 3, *Unobtrusive* 4





**Cardinal Erika Brigitte Durkheim**

*Streetwise:* Shopping 4, Socializing 4, Street Navigation 3

More on Cardinal Durkheim can be found on pages 58–59 and 108–109 of the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

With the overthrow of Léon, Cardinal Durkheim returned to her native Eisen, content to leave the nation in the hands of Father Jean-Marc Navarre. She still makes appearances from time to time, but seems to have shifted her focus back to her native land. She no longer speaks about the missing Cardinal d'Argeneau, though whether this is due to indifference or some larger scheme has yet to be seen.

### **Stefan Heilgrund, Eisenfürst**

While Heilgrund's actual statistics have not changed, the following abilities reflect the powers granted him by the Schattenmann. They are similar to the Nacht sorcery used by die Kreuzritter, but are unique to Heilgrund. No one else may use this form of sorcery; even if someone could find the Schattenmann and make the same bargain, the infernal creature doesn't want anyone else knowing what Heilgrund does... at least not yet.

*Schattengang:* Heilgrund can now walk between shadows anywhere within the Heilgrund province, as well as the Schwarzen Walden. If he is obscured by shadow, to the point where it might be difficult to see him, the GM may spend a

Drama Die to allow him to attempt a teleport. This is considered equivalent to the Walk Knack (see the *Player's Guide*, pages 214–214), and is limited to shadows in Heilgrund's *königreich*. Heilgrund is considered to have a Walk Knack of 5 for purposes of this power.

*Schattenleben:* Heilgrund's servants, the Schattensoldat, are shadow incarnate, but they aren't the only ones. Heilgrund can grant any shadow in his line of sight a peculiar form of life by spending a Drama Die and suffering 5 Flesh Wounds (which heal at a normal rate). The shadow serves Heilgrund's will to the letter, and has the following statistics:

TN: 15 (see Special Abilities)

Brawn 2, Finesse 3, Resolve 2, Wits 1, Panache 1  
Attack Roll: 4k3

Damage: (see Special Abilities)

Skills: None

*Description:* The Schattenleben can take any form, largely dictated by who or what cast the shadow Heilgrund animates. They can appear as anything from the warped and somehow animate shadow of a chair, to a Hero's own shadow.

*Special Abilities:* The Schattenleben are not governed by normal, natural law, but rather by the laws of light and shadow. Their strength is governed by how well-lit the area is, as is the likelihood of them being hit. While the TN to simply hit the Schattenleben is fixed at a 15, the Schattenleben do not suffer normal damage from a hit. Instead, the Schattenleben suffers damage based on how well lit its surroundings are (see Damage Taken, below).

Similarly, the Schattenleben does not cause damage to a hero by slicing or bludgeoning him; rather, the mere touch of the Schattenleben causes a Hero pain as if the Schattenleben were extremely cold. The amount of damage caused by the Schattenleben is again influenced by surrounding light sources (see Damage Caused, below).

Light Conditions	Damage Taken	Damage Caused
Pitch Dark	0k0	5k5
Twilight	1k1	4k4
Torchlight	3k2	2k3
Well-Lit		
Room	4k3	1k2
Daylight	Death	None

*Schattentod:* Finally, Heilgrund has gained the ability to inflict his Schattengang ability on others. The only difference is, others don't come



**Stefan Heilgrund, Eisenfürst**

out again. If Heilgrund is able to touch another character while that character is standing in a shadow, Heilgrund and his victim must make an opposed Resolve test for each segment Heilgrund continues this attack. If Heilgrund wins, the victim takes the difference in Flesh Wounds. Anyone killed in this manner vanishes into the shadows, only to rise again as a new member of the Schattensoldat.

**Manfred Jost, Mayor of Stützung**

*Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 2*  
*Reputation: 20*  
*Background: Nemesis (Klaus Metzger)*  
*Arcana: Focused*  
*Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Théan (R/W), Connections (Allies), Indomitable Will, Servants*  
*Scholar: History 2, Law 2, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 2, Research 1*  
*Streetwise: Socializing 4, Street Navigation 2*  
*Commander: Cartography 2, Diplomacy 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 1*

Galvanized by the death of his son, the mayor of Stützung is determined to remove the Mörderbande from their position of power, specifically Klaus Metzger. He is gradually building support in his home city, though the going is slow — the people are afraid of the Mörderbande. Gradually, however, he is turning the fear into outrage, and it is only a matter of

time until he has enough support to move his plans forward.

He is uncertain of what he will do when Eisenfürst Sieger returns to the Königreich. In Jost's mind, his actions depend on whether Sieger knew what would happen when he left the country.

**Klaus Metzger, Leader of the Mörderbande**

*Brawn 4, Finesse 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Panache 2*  
*Reputation: -40*  
*Background: Nemesis (Manfred Jost)*  
*Arcana: Cruel*  
*Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Large, Scoundrel*  
*Criminal: Ambush 4, Gambling 3, Quack 1, Shadowing 2, Stealth 2*  
*Streetwise: Socializing 4, Street Navigation 2, Underworld Lore 3*  
*Commander: Ambush 4, Leadership 3, Strategy 1, Tactics 3*  
*Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Eye-Gouge 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 2*  
*Drexel (Journeyman): Disarm (Heavy Weapon) 4, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Drexel) 4*  
*Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3*

Klaus's Drexel abilities apply to the zweihander a huge two-handed broadsword of Eisen design. Zweihanders use the Heavy Weapon Skill and cause 3k3 damage. After every attack with a zweihander, the user must spend one Action to reset it before it can be used again (either to attack or parry), or else drop the zweihander and use another weapon.

Metzger's skill with Drexel gives him the following abilities: he does not need to take an Action to reset his zweihander; he can attack while resetting his zweihander, causing 2k2 damage; his Action dice are considered 2 lower (minimum 1) while Attacking and 1 lower (minimum 1) while making an Active Defense; he receives two Free Raises to any Parry Active Defense; he receives +5 to his Initiative Total when using a zweihander; and he receives a Fear Rating of 1. Further details can be found on pages 85–87 of the Eisen sourcebook.

Klaus Metzger is a sociopath who has seized upon his position as captain of the Mörderbande as an opportunity to gain power. In any other country, he knows this would be an untenable position, but here in Eisen, there is no one to stop him.



## Montaigne: Emigrés

### Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, Leader of the Government in Exile

Brawn 3, Finesse 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 4  
Reputation: 58

Background: Romance

Arcana: Loyal

Advantages: Castillian, Montaigne (R/W),  
Montaigne Accent (West), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 4, Side-  
step 4, Sprinting 4, Swinging 5, Throwing 2

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

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms)  
4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5

Riding: Ride 5, Mounting 3, Trick Riding 3

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5,

Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit  
Weakness (Valroux) 5

Further information on Jean-Marie can be found  
on pages 63–64 and 108 of the *Montaigne*  
sourcebook.

Always torn between his nation and his  
*Empereur* the former captain of the Musketeers  
found his loyalties stretched to the breaking point



Jean-Marie Rois et Reines

during the Revolution. As the angry crowds swelled, he found he could no longer support the man who had heaped such misery upon them. When *l'Empereur* called upon the Musketeers to crush the rebellion, he told his men to ignore the order. It was time for Léon to pay his own debts.

His change in attitude did not extend to *l'Empereur's* progeny, however. Once it became clear that the rioting would not subside, he took a trusted band of men to lead his wife Anne — Léon's daughter — across the Eisen border. He spent several more days in Montaigne, helping whoever he could before retreating to join her in Siegsburg. He resigned his commission before doing so — payment, he claimed, for all the injustice he had committed in the *Empereur's* name.

He currently aids his wife in running the Montaigne government-in-exile: serving as a diplomat and occasional advisor to his wife's council. Though he empathizes with Léon's former victims, he doesn't believe that the current government can heal the wounds the tyrant left behind. He works for the day when the cycle of blame and revenge finally ends, and he can return to Montaigne for good.

He makes his home in a modest townhouse near the palace of Reinhard von Wische. As busy as they are, he and his wife spend at least one night a week together, where they sit quietly, hold hands, and don't say a word.

### Anne du Montaigne, "Queen Regent"

Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Panache 5  
Reputation: 43

Background: Obligation

Arcana: Commanding

Advantages: Avalon, Castillian (R/W), Montaigne  
(R/W), Théan (R/W), Connections (Many)

Montaigne Accent (South), Noble, Servants

Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4,

Fashion 5, Gossip 4, Mooch 5, Oratory 5,

Politics 4, Sincerity 5

Merchant: Accounting 3, Seamstress 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 1

Ride: Mounting 3, Ride 4, Trick 4

*L'Empereur's* spoiled daughter gained a great deal of wisdom from her marriage to Jean-Marie Rois et Reines. Already a skilled politician, she learned to temper her scheming nature with genuine compassion. By the time the Revolution came, she no longer looked at the world as her personal toy, but rather as a troubled place in need of guidance.



Anne du Montaigne

Her escape from Montaigne was a terrifying ordeal. Her husband's men got her out of the Château du Soleil by the skin of their teeth, led her on a desperate flight across the countryside, and had to fight their way past a gang of looters at the border. She watched men die so that she might be saved and silently promised to make the most of their sacrifice.

After reaching Eisen safely, she paid a visit to the local ruler, Reinhard von Wische, where she successfully negotiated a safe haven for the Montaigne government in exile (see pages 59–60). She currently coordinates efforts to relocate émigrés, leads political negotiations with the Council of Eight, and works towards reconciliation between the revolutionaries and the noble exiles. In the wake of the Frenzy, her job has become much more difficult, but she perseveres. Her new role has shown her what it means to rule — and she's up to the task.

**Ysabelle and Rosamonde du Montaigne, Outlaws**

*Ysabelle*

*Brawn 2, Finesse 3, Wits 5, Resolve 3, Panache 4*

*Reputation: 54*

*Background: True Identity, Hunted*

*Arcana: None*

*Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Appearance*

(Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Connections, Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Scoundrel

*Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 3,*

*Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Politics 3, Seduction 3*

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

*Sailor: Balance 3, Cartography 3, Climbing 4,*

*Knotwork 4, Leaping 2, Navigation 4, Pilot 3,*

*Rigging 3, Swimming 2, Weather 2*

*Scrying (Apprentice): Scry 3, False Potion 3,*

*Healing Balm 3, Philter of Invisibility 2*

*Spy: Bribery 2, Forgery 3, Interrogation 3,*

*Shadowing 3, Sincerity 1, Stealth 2*

*Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 4, Footwork 3,*

*Lifting 2, Rolling 3, Sprinting 2, Swinging 3,*

*Throwing 2*

*Commander: Ambush 3, Gunnery 3, Leadership*

*4, Logistics 3, Strategy 3, Tactics 3*

*Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye-*

*Gouge 2, Kick 2, Throat Strike 3*

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

*Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3*

*Rogers (Journeyman): Bind (Fencing) 5, Corps-a-*

*corps 4, Disarm (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness*

*(Rogers) 4*

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

*(Knife) 2*

**Rosamonde**

*Brawn 2, Finesse 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Panache 5*

*Reputation: 43*

*Advantages: Avalon, Castillian (R/W), Montaigne*

*(R/W), Théan (R/W), Connections (Many)*

*Montaigne Accent (South), Noble, Servants*

*Background: Obligation*

*Artist: Drawing 2*

*Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4,*

*Fashion 5, Gossip 4, Mooch 5, Oratory 5,*

*Politics 4, Sincerity 5*

*Merchant: Accounting 4, Weaver 2*

*Sailor: Balance 1, Cartography 3, Climbing 1,*

*Knotwork 1, Navigation 1, Rigging 1*

*Captain: Cartography 3, Diplomacy 5, Leadership*

*2, Logistics 3, Strategy 1, Tactics 1*

*Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1, Reload (Firearms) 1*

More information on Ysabelle can be found on

pages 55–57 and 113 of the *Sophia's Daughters*

sourcebook. More information on Rosamonde

can be found on pages 172–173 of *Waves of Blood*.

The former Inspector General of the Montaigne navy, Rosamonde almost suffered the same fate as many of her sisters. She was captured during an ill-conceived attempt to rescue her twin





Ysabelle and Rosamonde du Montaigne

Evelyne, and would have been beheaded were it not for the fortuitous intervention of the family black sheep. Ysabelle du Montaigne, Handmaiden of Sophia's Daughters and a disowned pirate-adventurer, pulled Rosamonde from the maw just before the axe fell.

Since then, the two women have lived as criminal outlaws, dodging naval vessels and striking back at the new Montaigne regime. Their piracy has made them the Council of Eight's most wanted criminals. Ysabelle uses her Scrying power to stay in touch with the Sophia and other Daughters in Montaigne, which allows her to stay abreast of political developments in her homeland. They have spoken with their sister Anne, but have no interest in joining her exiled government. They much prefer a life of freedom on the waves.

Rosamonde still struggles with proper sailing skills, though she got over her seasickness after the first few months. Her sister chides her on her incompetence, but Rosamonde pulls her weight in other ways. She's an efficient quartermaster and her organizational skills keep the *Wayward Swan* well-supplied. Rosamonde has a blank chalkboard mounted in her cabin with the word "Evelyne" written on it. No one ever speaks to her of it, not even Ysabelle.

## Montaigne: Neutrals

### Thierry du Lamolle, Captain of the Musketeers

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 4, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 4  
*Reputation*: 48

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Self-controlled

*Advantages*: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Commission (Special), Membership (Musketeers)

*Courtier*: Dancing 4, Etiquette 2, Fashion 3, Oratory 2, Politics 2, Seduction 2

*Aldana (Journeyman)*: Feint (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4

*Athlete*: Climbing 4, Footwork 3, Leaping 4, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Swinging 5, Throwing 3

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

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

*Knife*: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 2

*Valroux (Master)*: Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

**Note:** Thierry's entry assumes that no Heroes succeeded Aristide's position.

With the death of Aristide Baveux, leadership of the Musketeers fell to this intense, quiet lieutenant. A longtime member of the Rose and Cross as well as the Musketeers, Thierry knows how to keep his ears open and his mouth shut. In public, he obeys the orders of the Council of Eight (to whom he does not belong), while secretly hiding his underlings' treasonous activities. He takes care never to directly participate in any action against the government. He cannot keep his men safe if he himself is suspect. Thierry maintains semi-regular contact with Jean-Marie Rois et Reines, who advises him on the intricacies of leadership. He has a secret passage in his home, which allows him to come and go without being observed.

### Alzais Valoix Praise du Rachtisse III, High Admiral of the Montaigne Navy

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 5, *Resolve* 3, *Panache* 4  
*Reputation*: -50

*Background*: Deceitful

*Arcana*: Resourceful

*Advantages*: Avalon, Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Commission (Montaigne)

Navy), Keen Senses, Montaigne Accent (South), Noble

*Courtier*: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4, Fashion 5, Gaming 4, Gossip 4, Mooch 5, Oratory 5, Sincerity 5

*Criminal*: Gambling 5, Quack 1, Shadowing 2, Stealth 4

*Performer*: Acting 3, Cold Read 5, Dancing 2, Oratory 5, Singing 2, Storytelling 5

*Sailor*: Balance 4, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Navigation 4, Pilot 4, Rigging 2

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

*Captain*: Ambush 3, Bribery 4, Incitation 4, Logistics 3, Strategy 4, Tactics 4

More on Admiral Valoix can be found on pages 64–65 and 111 of the Montaigne sourcebook and 169–170 of the Waves of Blood sourcebook.

Valoix is one of the only noblemen still holding a position of power in Montaigne, though it owes more to happenstance and his own madness than any political acumen. During the height of the Castillian war, Valoix launched a brilliant assault on the city of San Cristobal — an assault which was thwarted at the last instant by the heroics of Margaretta Orduño (see pages 52–53 for more details).

Incensed by Valoix's failure, *l'Empereur* sent a Porté mage to fetch the Admiral, but Valoix had no intention of facing Léon's displeasure. A lifelong fear of Porté had blossomed into full-blown mania (see *Waves of Blood*) and he murdered the messenger rather than step through the bloody rift. *L'Empereur* then declared him a criminal, he lost his command, and he spent a short time as a full-blown fugitive.

The Revolution saw his fortunes change dramatically. His crime made him a figure of admiration among the new regime, and he cheerfully exploited their goodwill. Valoix applied for recommission to the Council of Eight personally, and was immediately reinstated in his old position. His first duty was to pursue pirates and other criminals, a job originally assigned to him by the Empereur. He does his job exceedingly well, and currently spends as much time at sea as he can — a complete turnaround from his early days behind a desk. Valoix maintains a fierce hatred of Porté mages, and takes great delight in hunting them down as enemies of the state. Among his current targets are Ysabelle and Rosamonde du Montaigne.



Alazais Valoix Praise du Rachtisse III

#### General Montegue

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 4, *Wits* 4, *Resolve* 5, *Panache* 5  
*Reputation*: 120

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Willful

*Advantages*: Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Ussuran, Commission (General), Indomitable Will, Swordsman's Guild, Academy, Montaigne Accent (South)

*Commander*: Ambush 5, Artillery 4, Incitation 5, Leadership 5, Logistics 3, Strategy 5, Tactics 4

*Fencing*: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 3

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3

*Hunter*: Stealth 1, Survival 2, Tracking 2

*Knife*: Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 5

*Rider*: Ride 4

*Streetwise*: Scrounging 4, Shopping 1, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2

*Valroux (Master)*: Double Parry 5, Feint 5, Tagging 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Further information on Montegue can be found on pages 56–57 and 108 of the Montaigne sourcebook.

In the past year, Montegue has endured enough hardships to fill a dozen lifetimes, yet he continues to persevere. No other military commander could battle the odds as he did, and though his army finally fell at the Battle of





General Montegue

Salzumpf, he acquitted himself well enough to earn the respect of no less than Fauner Pösen herself. He currently resides in a country estate somewhere in Pösen's kingdom. He has access to any number of immenities: a fine chef, a library full of books, even writing implements for composing his thoughts. But the exits are all stoutly secured, and he is not allowed to leave the grounds. A contingent of Pösen's fiercest warriors stand constant guard over the estate.

At this point, he wants only to find his wife and secure her safety. He has made two attempts to escape his imprisonment, both of which ended in failure. For now, he composes his thoughts, enjoys the comforts of his gilded cage, and waits for another opportunity.

## Montaigne: Revolutionaries

### "The Axe," Mayor-Prefect of Paix

*Brawn* 2, *Finesse* 3, *Wits* 3, *Resolve* 5, *Panache* 3

*Reputation*: -34

*Background*: Vendetta

*Arcana*: Ruthless

*Advantages*: Montaigne, Connections, Montaigne Accent (Paix)

*Arson*: Architecture 3, Conceal 4, Mathematics 1, Street Navigation 4

*Politician*: Etiquette 1, Incitation 5, Oratory 4, Politics 4, Rabble-rousing 5, Socializing 1

*Criminal*: Ambush 3, Gambling 1, Pickpocket 3, Prestidigitation 4, Quack 1, Scrounging 4, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4

*Spy*: Conceal 3, Poison 2

*Streetwise*: Socializing 1, Street Navigation 4, Underworld Lore 3

*Athlete*: Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3

*Commander*: Incitation 5, Strategy 2, Tactics 2

*Dirty Fighting*: Attack 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Eye-gouge 3, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 4

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 3

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

Edmond Gatién joined the Rilasciare after his brother, accused of stealing silverware from the local Earl's estate, was thrown screaming into a Porté hole while his family looked on. The incident deeply unbalanced young Edmond, and affected his subsequent development tremendously.

The Paix Historical Gentleman's Club offered him an opportunity for revenge. They hated sorcery in all its forms, and actively studied Porté in the hopes of someday destroying it. Edmond became an enthusiastic member and served as a liaison between the Gentlemen and a nearby Guerrilla Rilasciare cell. He participated in the Guerrillas' destruction of the Paix public works, and barely avoided capture in the ensuing investigation (see *The Rilasciare*, page 26, for further details).

When the Revolution came, Edmond — now calling himself "the Axe" in honor of his executed comrades — quickly took charge of the rampaging mobs. Under his direction, they stormed the Paix embassies, butchered dozens of noblemen and sent the town's ruling elite fleeing for their lives. In the election which followed, the Axe easily defeated his opponents and now stands as the mayor-prefect of the city. Under his rule, Porté magic was completely outlawed in Paix, while surviving nobles were forced to work as servants and street cleaners.

The Frenzy took his fanaticism to new levels. He saw pro-royalist spies on every street corner, and actively worked with the Committee of National Welfare to root them out. Oppression in Paix has since reached an all-time high, and although the Parlement takes steps to shield



### The Council of Eight

Top Row, L to R: Hubert du Gloyure, Major Gilbertine du Muguet, Eugene Suchet du Crieux  
 Bottom Row, L to R: Citizen Sausseur, Jean-Marc Navarre, Madeline du Chatelaine,  
 Aristide Baveux, Arnaud du Charouse

foreign diplomats from the bloodshed, the Axe's policies have left an ugly taste in most ambassadors' mouths.

The Axe is a thin-lipped beanpole with sharp, darting eyes and bad teeth. He's learned the Revolution's lessons well, and can extol Paix's masses into a foaming rage should he choose. His jurisdiction doesn't extend to *le Labyrinth* and other diplomatic posts (which the Parlement wisely placed under its own control), but he doesn't care. His own little corner of Montaigne is more than enough.

#### **Aristide Baveux, Knight of the Rose and Cross, Captain of the Musketeers, and Member of the Council of Eight (Deceased)**

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 4, *Wits* 5, *Resolve* 4, *Panache* 4  
*Reputation*: 135

*Arcana*: Insightful

*Advantages*: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Connections (Ally), Commission (Captain), Membership (Musketeers), Membership (Rose and Cross), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Montaigne Accent (North), Noble, Rose and Cross Vow, The Secret

*Courtier*: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Sincerity 5

*Scholar*: History 3, Law 4, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 4, Research 3

*Athlete*: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2,

*Commander*: Incitation 5, Leadership 5, Logistics 4, Strategy 4, Tactics 3

*Desaix (Master)*: Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Desaix) 5

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

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 2

*Knife*: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 4

More on Baveux can be found on pages 50-51 of the *Rose and Cross* sourcebook. The stats above reflect his abilities at the time of his death.

The Grand Master of the Knights of the Rose and Cross initially had no intention of participating in the new Montaigne government, but when they offered to make him Captain of the Musketeers, his honor could not allow him to refuse. He became a member of the Council of Eight, charged with handling judicial matters as well as commanding Montaigne's elite defenders.

During his brief tenure, he forged close ties between the Musketeers and the Rose and Cross, drawing on their common sense of honor and piety to bridge the gaps between them.





Aristide Baveux

He avoided unnecessary politicking and remained a voice of reason on the Council of Eight until his last day.

Baveux died in a manner most Rose and Cross pray for — defending the innocent. He was taking tea in a small café with his friend Eugene du Crieux (see below) when a band of assassins entered and began shooting. He instantly leapt up and drew his sword, dispatching one of the killers before falling to a barrage of bullets. The Rose and Cross hung his sword with honor above the fireplace of Crieux House and even the most ardent foes of the Revolution praised his honor and nobility.

With Baveux's death, the rank of Grand Master fell to Hughes Sices du Sices, who formerly lead the Paix chapter house. Although a noble, Hughes has refused to flee the country, even though his life may be in danger. His defiance has made him numerous enemies in Charouse and enhanced the Order's reputation abroad — an exchange Hughes is happy to make.

#### Edward Boucher, Warden

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

*Reputation*: -21

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Greedy

*Advantages*: Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Keen Senses

*Merchant*: Appraising 3, Accounting 3, Barter 3, Hagglng 4

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

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 2

*Courtier*: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2

*Glamour*: Thomas 5 (Master Level, but only with this Knack; see below)

Edward Boucher was an Avalon merchant who arrived in Montaigne right after the Revolution began, offering bargains on gunpowder and weapons to the rampaging peasants. His short size and round features led most to underestimate him — speaking in his presence when they should have remained silent. His keen hearing enabled him to discover that a Porté mage named Francois du Arrent was sneaking into Charouse to attempt to smuggle his daughters out of the country. Boucher promptly informed the local revolutionaries who invited him to join their ranks. He was well educated, an able speaker, and could easily maneuver within the political tides of Montaigne. He served as a spy and informant, uncovering numerous enemies of the state. When Arnaud du Charouse created the Committee of General Welfare, he immediately offered his services to them.

Chadaleros suggested his current post as the commander of the Committee's Chateau du Roulement Noble. This position entails a moderate amount of public relations ability and the ruthlessness to enforce the brutal conditions. His status as a foreigner reassured some that he would be immune to the class hatred that many Montaigne still nurse. Everyone receives the same treatment from him. Of course, that treatment is brutal and harsh. Rats, poor food only once a day, and filthy cells are the standard. But sacrifices must be made for the good of the Revolution.

Edward doesn't care about the Revolution in the slightest. He only came here to try to cash in on the chaos. As the Committee's gaoler, he has made sure that the conditions are as brutal and vile as possible for everyone. Everyone who cannot pay that is. Those with enough funds to bribe him enjoy three meals a day and a clean private cell. But this only ameliorates their waiting; he will not allow anyone to escape for any sum of money. He knows that as a foreigner, he makes a very tempting scapegoat.

Edward has the unique ability to detect sorcerers, which has served him well in his current post. Several weeks before coming to

Montaigne, he inherited a ring that once belonged to his ancestor — the legendary Thomas who fought against the foreign Porté mages. The ring has boosted his latent Glamour ability. He can use the Thomas Knack as if he were a Master Glamour mage despite having no other Glamour Knacks. He detects sorcerers through smell, and sees his current position as an opportunity to cash in on his heritage. If it ends, he plans on offering his services to the Inquisition next and has already communicated with them by letter.

### Arnaud du Charouse, Member of the Council of Eight

Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 5, Panache 2  
Reputation: 82

Background: None

Arcana: Hot-headed

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Indomitable Will, Montaigne Accent (South), University

Artist: Writing 5

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

Scholar: History 4, Law 5, Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 3, Philosophy 5, Research 5, Theology 2

More on Arnaud can be found on pages 63 and 107 of the *Rilasciare* sourcebook.

The Rilasciare's quietest member has come a long way from his days taking notes at the Jacob's Society. His compassion for the people — coupled with a naive faith in *l'Empereur* — prompted him to draft *The Commoners' Cause* (see page 9–10). That alone made him a hero of the Revolution, but he and the rest of the Jacob's Society also built the framework for the new system of government, and his hard work was instrumental in making the Montaigne Parlement a reality. He was elected to the Parlement by an overwhelming majority and joined the Council of Eight behind unanimous acclaim.

Always a bureaucrat, Arnaud kept quiet during the Parlement's early days, allowing Hubert du Gloyure and Eugene du Crieux to lead the assemblage. He handled the nuts-and-bolts aspects of government: balancing ledgers, budgeting fund, and determining the legislative schedule for the Parlement. He seemed to have his hands in everything, always happy to do the work which no one else would touch. He occasionally delivered public speeches, which impressed his peers with high-flown rhetoric, but mostly just kept his nose to the grindstone.



Arnaud du Charouse

When du Crieux was assassinated, Arnaud took his place at the head of the Council almost by accident. No other member had knowledge as detailed as he; no one else had their hands so deep in every aspect of the government. They began deferring to him on numerous issues — asking for his advice, deferring to his opinions, and so on. Though no one ever said it directly, du Charouse soon had the Council — and through it, the Parlement and the entire country — under his thumb.

He groomed his political skills to a sharp point with his new position. He composed brilliant orations, and could deliver eloquent speeches provided he had his notes to help him. He also learned how to sway the crowd, how to vilify his enemies, and how to paint himself as a selfless defender of idealism. The events of Bloody Feast Day, coupled with his fervent ideals and high-strung nature, prompted Arnaud to launch the Frenzy. It began with Statement 15 and his accusation against Madeline du Charouse. It has yet to abate.

For all intents and purposes, du Charouse rules Montaigne. The other Council members follow his lead, and his newfound political experience makes him a formidable adversary. At his word, hundreds of people are sent to *le coiffeur*, while the Committee of General Welfare destroys his enemies. The Frenzy is still



in its early stages, but the sallow little bureaucrat may yet surpass Léon for bloodthirsty tyranny.

The tragedy is that he genuinely fails to see the damage he has caused. He still considers himself a devoted servant of the people and works long hours to ensure their welfare. He attends meetings at the Jacob's Society, and refuses to move from his middle-class home even though he could take any building in Charouse if he wished. His ideals have blinded him to the growing Frenzy. The notion of a counterrevolution truly terrifies him, both for his personal safety and for the "new" Montaigne he is trying to build. In his mind, the blood and the bodies are worth it if they can prevent a return of Montaigne's old regime. Once he has purged Léon's defenders from the country, it will truly be the utopia he always envisioned.

Theus help anyone who stands in his way.

**Madeline du Chatelaine, Member of the Council of Eight (Deceased)**

Brawn 3, Finesse 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Panache 3

Reputation: -31

Background: Vendetta

Arcana: Fanatical

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Connections (many), Membership (Sophia's Daughters), Noble, Servants



Madeline du Chatelaine

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

*Scholar*: Astronomy 2, History 3, Law 4, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 3, Research 2

*Scrying (Apprentice)*: Scry 3

*Servant*: Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Menial Tasks 3, Seneschal 4, Unobtrusive 4

*Spy*: Conceal 4, Forgery 4, Lip Reading 4, Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

*Commander*: Incitation 5, Logistics 4, Strategy 2, Tactics 3

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

*Rider*: Mounting 2, Ride 3

More on Madeleine can be found on pages 68–69 and 117 of the *Sophia's Daughters* sourcebook.

The stats above reflect her abilities at the time of her death.

The late Madeline du Chatelaine became a victim of her own patriotic fervor. She stockpiled arms and ammunition before the Revolution, anticipating the coming firestorm through her contacts in the Sophia's Daughters. She ensured that the peasants had arms when they rose against Léon, and fiercely admonished the Charouse crowds during those first heady days. Because of her passion, the people overlooked her noble ties (at least for a time), and the new government rewarded her with a spot on the Council of Eight.

Unfortunately, she remained as devoted to the Daughters as she was to the Revolution, playing an active role in their schemes and maintaining contact with fellow members — even those who practiced *Porté*. Her new position subjected her to intense scrutiny, and though she ardently supported the ideals of *la Vallée*, others began to suspect the purity of her motives. They secretly watched her, looking for signs of deceit.

The blow came without warning. Madeline was accused of treason on the floor of the Parlement and arrested for crimes against Montaigne. During her trial, Arnaud du Charouse produced evidence implicating the woman in "a vast sorcerous conspiracy." Though he believed her connections to be pro-royalist, he might have uncovered more of the Daughters' operations had he dug any further. The Sophia allowed Madeline to be sacrificed for the greater good. She was convicted and executed, protesting her loyalty to the end. Arnaud and his cronies wrote her off as a simple pro-royalist, and turned their attention elsewhere. The Daughters' secrets were secure. Though reviled as a traitor in Montaigne, she remains an honored figure to the secret society she died to protect.

**Professor Eugene Suchet du Crieux,  
Member of the Council of Eight (Deceased)**

Brawn 3, Finesse 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4, Panache 2  
Reputation: 52

Background: None

Arcana: Intuitive

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W),  
Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Connections  
Montaigne Accent (North), University

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 5,  
Fashion 3, Gossip 2, Oratory 5, Politics 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, Examiner 3, First Aid 3,  
Quack 1, Surgery 3

Scholar: Astronomy 4, History 3, Mathematics 5,  
Natural Philosophy 5, Philosophy 5, Research 4

Rider: Animal Training 3, Mounting 3, Ride 4,  
Trick Riding 2

The late Eugene Suchet spent most of his life teaching philosophy at a small university in Crieux. Like everyone else in Montaigne, the Revolution turned his life upside down. The local Duc, Allais du Crieux, fled the city and was executed before he could escape Montaigne. Eugene volunteered to help run the civic government until a replacement could be found. He did such a good job that he soon found himself elected to the Montaigne Parlement, and from there to the Council of Eight.

Eugene's lecturing skills translated well to the political arena, and his natural charisma quickly made him an admired figure among his peers. He soon took command of the Council of Eight, and negotiated several impending crises quite well. An ardent idealist, he argued passionately for high-minded notions, yet he never lost sight of the practical necessities of running a nation. While he loudly condemned the attempted coup of Quintus, 1669, he opposed executing the ringleaders just as loudly. His pleas for clemency ultimately saved their lives, at least for a time.

Early in his tenure, he struck up a friendship with Aristide Baveux, a man close to his own age who shared a mutual love for Crieux. The two spent many long hours together, taking tea or arguing about some political point or another. It was during one such argument that his killers came upon him, cutting him down before he could so much as register their presence (see page 15). His sudden death made him a martyr to the Revolution, and served as unspoken justification for the descent into the Frenzy. Eugene's meteoric rise symbolized all of Montaigne's democratic hopes, and though he ruled for but a few short months, his legacy will be felt for some time to come.

**Hubert du Gloyure, Member of  
the Council of Eight**

Brawn 2, Finesse 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Panache 4  
Reputation: 75

Background: None

Arcana: Proud

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Connections (4),  
Inheritance, Montaigne Accent (South), Noble,  
University

Artist: Drawing 5, Sculpting 2, Writing 5

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4,  
Fashion 3, Oratory 4

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 1

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

More information on Hubert can be found on  
pages 62–63 and 106–107 of the *Rilasciare*  
sourcebook.

Hubert has an artist's temperament, and sees the Revolution as nothing more than a great canvas upon which to paint. He owes his position on the Council to the Jacob's Society, and to his paintings which were renowned even before Léon's overthrow.

Though he led the Society for many years, the drudgery of day-to-day politics quickly bored him. He allowed others like Arnaud du Charouse and Eugene du Crieux to take the forefront, while he turned his talents towards brilliant propaganda displays. In the early days of the new government he staged a production of his play *The Birdcage Revolt* — featuring actors in elaborate costumes and the active participation of the audience — throughout the streets of Charouse. His funeral for the Bloody Feast Day victims catalyzed the public's anger, and subsequent displays only increased Revolutionary fervor in Charouse. He orchestrated speeches, staged brilliant parades, and commissioned new statues honoring revolutionary heroes.

By the time the Frenzy began, Hubert had Charouse in the palm of his hand; he could sway the mob into any direction he chose, and his efforts reverberated throughout the countryside. He currently serves as an unofficial Minister of Information, parlaying his artistic skills to the Council's ends. He also continues to paint, and has produced at least one genuine masterpiece, *The Shattered Sun*, since the Revolution. Many of his works — including previously forbidden paintings, such as *The Maid's Mistake* — are available for public viewing. He is one of the only people in Montaigne who can openly defy Arnaud du Charouse.





Hubert du Gloyure

**Pvt. Jerome, Hero of the Revolution**

Brawn 3, Finesse 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Panache 2  
Reputation: 70

Background: Romance

Arcana: Passionate

Advantages: Montaigne (R/W), Citation, Connections (Several), Montaigne Accent (West)

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Leaping 3, Rolling 2, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3

Hunter: Skinning 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Tracking 3, Trail Signs 2

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 3, Parry (Polearm) 3

Streetwise: Scrounging 3, Shopping 2, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 2

More on Jerome can be found on pages 68–69 and 113 of the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

The spark which lit the Revolution wisely decided to avoid public life. Though a hero to the entire nation, Jerome has not succumbed to Revolutionary fervor, nor does he wish to parlay his status into an influential position. The politics of Arnaud du Charouse and his allies make him uneasy, and he lacks the public presence to make effective speeches. Though he occasionally attends public events, he and his lady love have retired to a comfortable farm in the countryside, where they try to live their lives as peacefully as they can.

**Major Gilbertine du Muguet, Member of the Council of Eight**

Brawn 4, Finesse 4, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Panache 3

Reputation: 53

Background: None

Arcana: Adaptable

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Combat Reflexes, Commission (Special), Montaigne Accent (South), Puzzle Sword

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Leaping 2, Side-step 4, Sprinting 4, Swinging 4, Throwing 2

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 3, Oratory 2, Politics 4, Sincerity 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 4, Throw (Knife) 2

Valroux (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Tout Près (Master): Corps-à-corps 4, Double-parry (Fencing/Improvised Weapon) 4, Tagging (Improvised Weapon) 4, Exploit Weakness (Tout Près) 5

Major Muguet (he refused to claim a higher rank, at least publicly) is a hardened veteran of the Montaigne-Castillian war, who had returned from the front for some well-earned leave when the Revolution broke out. Acting quickly, he took control of the nearby garrison (whose commander had fled), and kept them from firing on the nearby mob. He then parleyed those heroics into an elected position on the National Assembly. His sterling record in the war ensured him a spot on the Council of Eight.

Gilbertine is a political opportunist. He loves his country, but has no real belief system beyond that. He belongs to *le Vallée* because it increases his clout, but could change his allegiance if the winds shift. One ruler's as good as another; why shouldn't he be the one pulling the strings? He respects Arnaud du Charouse as a man of purpose, but keeps his own political cards close to the vest. It wouldn't do to find oneself on the losing side.

He currently serves as a liaison between the Parlement and the military, processing the needs of various generals and admirals. Time on the front taught Major Muguet the horrors of war, as well as hardening him to gruesome necessity.



Pvt. Jerome

He views the Frenzy as he would an order to storm an enemy position. People will die, but it will get the job done.

**Jean-Marc Navarre, Member of the Council of Eight**

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

*Reputation: 32*

*Background: None*

*Arcana: Ambitious*

*Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Montaigne Accent (West), Ordained, University*

*Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 4, Politics 3, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4*

*Doctor: Dentist 2, Diagnosis 3, Examiner 2, First Aid 3, Quack 1*

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

*Scholar: Astronomy 3, History 2, Law 4, Mathematics 3, Natural Philosophy 3, Occult 2, Philosophy 4, Research 4, Theology 4*

*Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 1, Reload (Firearms) 1*

Father Jean-Marc Navarre languished in prison for some nine months before the Revolution, arrested by *l'Empereur's* men for refusing to pay the oppressive church levies. Liberated by the storming of the jail, he suddenly fond himself a hero to the cause. When word spread of the new

national government, he and several other Church officials decided that a formal Vaticine presence was needed among the delegates. Once elected, it was child's play to maneuver himself onto the Council of Eight. The revolutionaries were eager to make peace with the Church, and a Vaticine priest within the inner circle made an attractive olive branch.

Father Navarre serves the Church before Montaigne, though he claims to be devoted to both. He considers himself the guardian of the nation's reclaimed soul, and likes to think of himself as the Council's good conscience. Unfortunately, his position has awakened new ambitions within him, and he sometimes eschews his better judgment in favor of politics. He supported the Frenzy because he did not wish to share Madeleine du Chatelaine's fate, and he supports Arnaud du Charouse because he knows that is the quickest path to power. He does what he can to ease the people's suffering, but not at the expense of his own power or prestige.

Though Navarre has done much to restore a Vaticine presence in the country, he has dragged his feet on the Church's most pressing problem: the missing archbishops. Though he makes loud noises to the contrary, he actually has no desire to find them. He is currently the most powerful clergyman in Montaigne (barring the odd visit from Cardinal Durkheim), and doesn't wish to change that — not until his position is more secure at least. Who knows? If he plays his cards right, he might become the new Cardinal...

**Marie Paix: Head of the Committee of National Welfare**

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

*Reputation: 35*

*Arcana: None*

*Background: None*

*Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Connections, Dangerous Beauty, Membership (Musketeers)*

*Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 3, Oratory 4, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4*

*Criminal: Ambush 4, Gambling 2, Pickpocket 3, Quack 1, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4*

*Streetwise: Socializing 4, Street Navigation 4, Underground Lore 3*

*Commander: Incitation 4, Leadership 4, Strategy 3, Tactics 3*

*Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapons) 5, Eye Gouge 4, Parry*



(Improvised Weapon) 5, Throat Strike 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 4

*Fencing*: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4  
*Tout Prés (Master)*: Corps-à-corps 5, Double-parry (Fencing/Improvised Weapon) 5, Tagging (Improvised Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Tout Prés) 5

Though born to a poor family and living a life of petty theft, Marie Malvoire has changed history three times. While she was still a gawky teen, she was drafted into the army. Several years later, she was caught selling military supplies to civilians. They were only table scraps which she sold to starving peasants, but she was still sent to Charouse to face trial and execution.

While awaiting trial, the Inquisition invaded Montaigne looking to seize *l'Empereur*. As the Castillians closed on the city, her jailers freed her from her cell and ordered her to hold the gates of the Imperial palace alongside (then) Corporal Montegue. Montegue's Stand made her a hero; the charges against her were quietly dropped and she was offered a promotion. Instead, she requested to take the test to become a musketeer, thinking that after she failed, she could slip back to her old life. To her surprise, she passed with flying colors.

Then came second time she changed the course of history: the fateful day when *l'Empereur* ordered the Musketeers to attack the peasants rebelling in Charouse. She was one of the first Musketeers to openly defy his orders, and the men beneath her immediately rallied to her cause.

After that, Marie served as an important figure in the Revolution, bringing her knowledge of the military and the streets to the chambers of the Parlement. She petitioned Arnaud du Charouse to help ferret out enemies of the Revolution, and proved well-suited for the task. When the Committee of General Welfare was assembled, Arnaud personally selected her to serve at its head.

Marie proved an excellent choice, creating a fearsome troop of investigators and spies who ferret out traitors throughout Montaigne. She has converted an old monastery into the most oppressive prison in Montaigne, the Chateau of Roulement Noble. The Committee also created a highly efficient Office of Documentation which instituted a policy of identification and eliminating any and all threats to the Revolution.

Marie herself is a well known public figure in Charouse. Her dainty figure and smiling features have lead to several marriage proposals.

She always declines the offers, saying she is married to the Revolution. Marie always wears colorful gowns and a rapier when attending the numerous plays and parties among the new intellectual elite. Her manner is intimate and teasing to all who meet her, although she turns ice cold at the slightest hint of disloyalty to the new regime. She is a skilled dancer and debater, as well as an excellent swordswoman. She has learned to use anything within her reach as a potential weapon and often surprises opponents who concentrate solely upon her sword.

Marie's ambition has grown with her power, and she now seeks nothing less than a position on the Council of Eight. If she can destroy some major threat to Montaigne, she believes such a position within reach. And after that... it shouldn't be too much to unseat the fallow Arnaud du Charouse, would it? From poverty stricken peasant to ruler of Montaigne... her rise to power seems inevitable to her.

#### **"Citizen Sausseur," Member of the Council of Eight**

*Brawn* 3, *Finesse* 2, *Wits* 2, *Resolve* 5, *Panache* 1  
*Reputation*: 68

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Hateful

*Advantages*: Montaigne (R/W), Indomitable Will, Keen Senses, Montaigne Accent (South), Toughness

*Hunter*: Ambush 3, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Tracking 2, Traps 2

*Politician*: Etiquette 1, Incitation 5, Oratory 4, Politics 5, Rabble-raising 5, Scheming 4, Sincerity 2, Socializing 1

*Athlete*: Break Fall 1, Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Leaping 3, Lifting 4, Sprinting 2, Swimming 3, Throwing 5

*Dirty Fighting*: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 4, Eye-Gouge 3, Kick 2, Throat Strike 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 3  
*Knife*: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 1, Throw (Knife) 1

*Streetwise*: Scrounging 5, Socializing 2, Street Navigation 1, Underworld Lore 2

Emilie Sausseur represents the Charouse mob at its most base: a cruel, bloodthirsty woman aching for revenge against her former oppressors. Her seat on the Council of Eight comes largely from support among the lower-classes, who see her as their personal champion. She taught herself to read at an early age and now revels in the power her new position affords her Ostensibly,

she fosters new public programs designed to help the poor. In actuality, she ruthlessly persecutes the nation's nobility: drafting anti-Porté laws, redistributing upper-class wealth, even calling for war with any nations housing émigrés. Her personal maid was once an influential marquess, whom she allowed to live in exchange for becoming her indentured servant.

Though she talks a fierce game, Sausseur sits in humbled awe of Arnaud du Charouse. The little lawyer quickly learned to use her for his own purposes, and can count on her to help stir up the Charouse populace. She often extols the crowd before executions, and rumor holds that she keeps the severed heads of numerous noblemen in her basement. Despite her powerful position, she remains a peasant at heart, and sees no need to learn proper diction or manners.

## Ussura

### Sergey Ivanovich, Conspirator

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

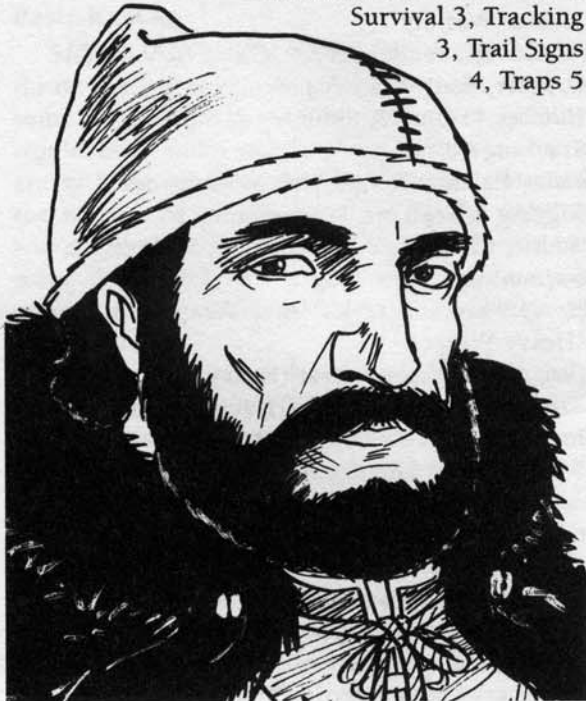
Reputation: -12

Background: None

Arcana: None

Advantages: Théan (R/W), Ussuran (R/W), Academy, Commission, Ordained

Hunter: Ambush 4, Stealth 4,  
Survival 3, Tracking  
3, Trail Signs  
4, Traps 5



Sergey Ivonovich

Bogatyr (Apprentice): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 2, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 4, Throw (Heavy Weapon: Axe) 3, Exploit Weakness (Bogatyr) 2

Commander: Ambush 4, Leadership 2, Strategy 2, Tactics 4

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

Sergey is the last of the conspirators who placed Valerii on the Somojez throne following the death of the "real" Borin (see *Ussura*, pages 116–117). When Sergey Ivanovich first installed Valerii on the throne, he believed he was doing the right thing. He also believed it would be a temporary measure. However, "the right thing" rapidly mutated into "the convenient thing". Ivanovich has had plentiful opportunities to set the situation aright, but it is simply easier for him (and sometimes even fun) to keep Valerii afraid for his family's life.

## Vendel/Vestenmannavnjar

### Sigurd Jarlsgaard, Mayor of Fornuft

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

Background: Obligation (to Fornuft)

Arcana: Stubborn

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 2, Knotwork 4, Pilot 2, Rigging 1, Sea Lore 3, Swimming 3, Weather 2

Captain: Bribery 2, Diplomacy 3, Incitation 4,

Leadership 3, Logistics 2, Strategy 3, Tactics 3

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

Leegstra (Journeyman): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5,

Corps-a-corps 4, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 4,

Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Wrestling: Bear Hug 3, Break 2, Escape 2, Grapple 2, Head Butt 4

Sigurd Jarlsgaard is not a politician by training. If asked, he would reply, "I am a Vestenmannavnjar. We have no such thing."

Nonetheless, Jarlsgaard has proven effective at representing his people's interests, possibly due to his sheer stubbornness. He is clumsy in a debate, and has little to no grasp of how to manipulate an opponent. That said, no opponent can do such to him, either. He simply says "no" one more time than they say "yes," and that is enough for him.

Sigurd and his co-mayor Joran Hawk rarely see eye to eye on any particular issue, though each holds a grudging respect for the other.



**Joran Hawk, Mayor of Fornuft**

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

*Background*: Obligation (to Fornuft)

*Arcana*: Friendly

*Courtier*: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 3, Politics 4

*Merchant*: Accounting 2, Appraising 4, Jeweler 3

*Scholar*: History 3, Law 2, Mathematics 1,

*Philosophy* 4, *Research* 2

*Fencing*: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 4

Unlike his co-mayor, Sigurd Jarlsgaard, Joran Hawk openly admits to being a politician. With a wry grin, he occasionally elaborates, "I am a Vendel. Are we not all politicians of a sort?"

The city of Fornuft is actually Joran's brain child, born of his many late nights thinking on the Vesten problem. Or more correctly, the Vesten and Vendel problem. Joran realizes that for peace to come between the two cultures, there must also be understanding, and both sides must be willing to compromise. Fornuft is Joran's grand experiment, with which he hopes to prove his hypothesis.

Despite his seniority, he has never pulled rank on anyone in the Fornuft government. In his mind, that would defeat the point.

**Ulf Falgirson: Villain**

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

*Background*: None

*Arcana*: Greed

*Advantages*: Able Drinker, Vendel (R/W), Vesten (R/W), Large, Scoundrel

*Criminal*: Cheating 1, Gambling 2, Lockpicking 3, Pickpocket 2, Quack 1, Scrounging 2, Shadowing 4, Stealth 3

*Streetwise*: Scrounging 2, Shopping 1, Socializing 2, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 3

*Dirty Fighting*: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 1, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 2, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 1, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 3

*Wrestling*: Bear Hug 4, Escape 2, Grapple 3, Head Butt 2

Ulf is a villain without any loyalty except to the guild. For the moment, he aids the terrorist Uvitenhet in her crusade, but only until the price is high enough for him to turn her in.

**Brian Skar, Vendel Twin**

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

*Reputation*: -33

*Background*: Hunting (for Erick Skaarsgaard)

*Arcana*: Fanatical

*Advantages*: Vendel (R/W), Théan (R/W) Able

Drinker, Foul Weather Jack, Large

*Courtier*: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2,

*Oratory* 3

*Sailor*: Balance 4, Climbing 2, Knotwork 3,

*Navigation* 2, *Pilot* 3, *Rigging* 2, *Swimming* 3,

*Weather* 2

*Firearms*: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3

*Rasmussen (Apprentice)*: Pommel Strike (Pistol) 3,

Reload (Firearm) 3, Trick Shooting (Pistol) 2,

Exploit Weakness (Rasmussen) 1

Skar's Rasmussen school applies to pistol dueling, and can be found on pages 95-96 of the *Vendel/Vesten* book. His Apprentice rank gives him the ability to draw and fire a pistol as one action, and negate the off-hand penalty when firing a pistol. It also reduces his Short Range Penalty by 5.

Brian Skar has lost a great many things. He lost his brother to the Vesten, in a figurative sense, and later, his parents in a much more literal sense. The most important gift his parents hoped to give to Erick and Bron Skaarsgaard was the gift of self-determination. When Brian's parents were killed by the Vesten raiding ship and her crew, Brian did not choose his path, Brian's path chose him. Vengeance has a way of doing that.

**Erick Skaarsgaard, Vesten Twin**

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

*Reputation*: 13

*Background*: Hunted (by Brian Skar)

*Arcana*: Worldly

*Advantages*: Vendel (R/W), Théan (R/W), Able Drinker, Foul Weather Jack, Large

*Hunting*: Fishing 3, Skinning 2, Survival 3, Tracking 4

*Sailor*: Balance 3, Climbing 2, Knotwork 2,

*Rigging* 1, *Sea Lore* 3, *Swimming* 3

*Athlete*: Climbing 2, Footwork 1, Sprinting 2,

*Swimming* 3, *Throwing* 3

*Heavy Weapon*: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2

*Leegstra (Apprentice)*: Beat (Heavy Weapon) 2,

*Corps-a-Corps* 3, *Lunge (Heavy Weapon)* 2,

Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 1

*Wrestling*: Bear Hug 2, Grapple 3

Erick Skaarsgaard is indubitably a Vesten raider. However, he is not careless with his victim's lives. He heard the news of his parents' death, and he has since been very careful to only kill those who threaten his crew. The rest, he allows to escape on life boats. Occasionally, if the survivors are far from shore, he brings them

aboard and offers them safe passage to the nearest port.

He would have returned to comfort his brother when their parents died, but he was far out at sea. By the time he returned and received word, months had passed, and he didn't want to open old wounds by returning to his brother after so much time had passed. He may regret his mistake.

## New Skill: Politician

While courtiers may think themselves the masters of politics, they are all-too often more knowledgeable about fashion than about the proper use of power. A politician knows about power. How to gain it, how to use it, and how to recognize it in others. A master of politics can tell what people want with a minimum of information, and knows how to get it. If not, he knows who to go to for it.

Also, as the Montaigne Revolution progresses further, and Théan recoils from the impact, more and more courtiers will be forced to acknowledge the needs of the people they rule. As they do so, Theah's aristocracy will need to learn increasingly more about the realities of government, and less about social graces. The age of the Courtier is ending. The age of the Politician has just begun.

### Basic Knacks

*Etiquette:* While it might be acceptable to throw the bones of your meal upon the floor in some regions, it is certain that other nobility would faint upon seeing some ruffian throw a greasy bone on their new rug. You have learned the niceties of events sponsored by the nobility and can avoid such social *faux pas*. When you are using this Knack in a place whose customs you are unfamiliar with, you are at a penalty of -2 unkept dice.

*Oratory:* You know how to speak eloquently and formally. Oratory is an invaluable political tool, because it allows you to make speeches and carry on debate (the strength of an argument is based upon Politics, but the eloquence comes from Oratory).

*Socializing:* Knowing where to meet the right kind of people can be vitally important. You seem to know where every diplomat goes for beer, and what taverns to go to when you need to hire a ship's crew. Note that Underworld Lore covers the less reputable inhabitants of the city.

Successful rolls with this Knack will grant you contacts within the locale, as determined by the GM. You are at a penalty of -2 unkept dice when using this Knack in a city that you are unfamiliar with.





### Advanced Knacks

*Diplomacy:* You know the fine art of getting people to agree with you. For a politician, who lives by his word, this Knack is invaluable. You can make angry men see reason, and twist reasonable men around your finger. With enough time to convince them, you could sell snow to the Vesten.

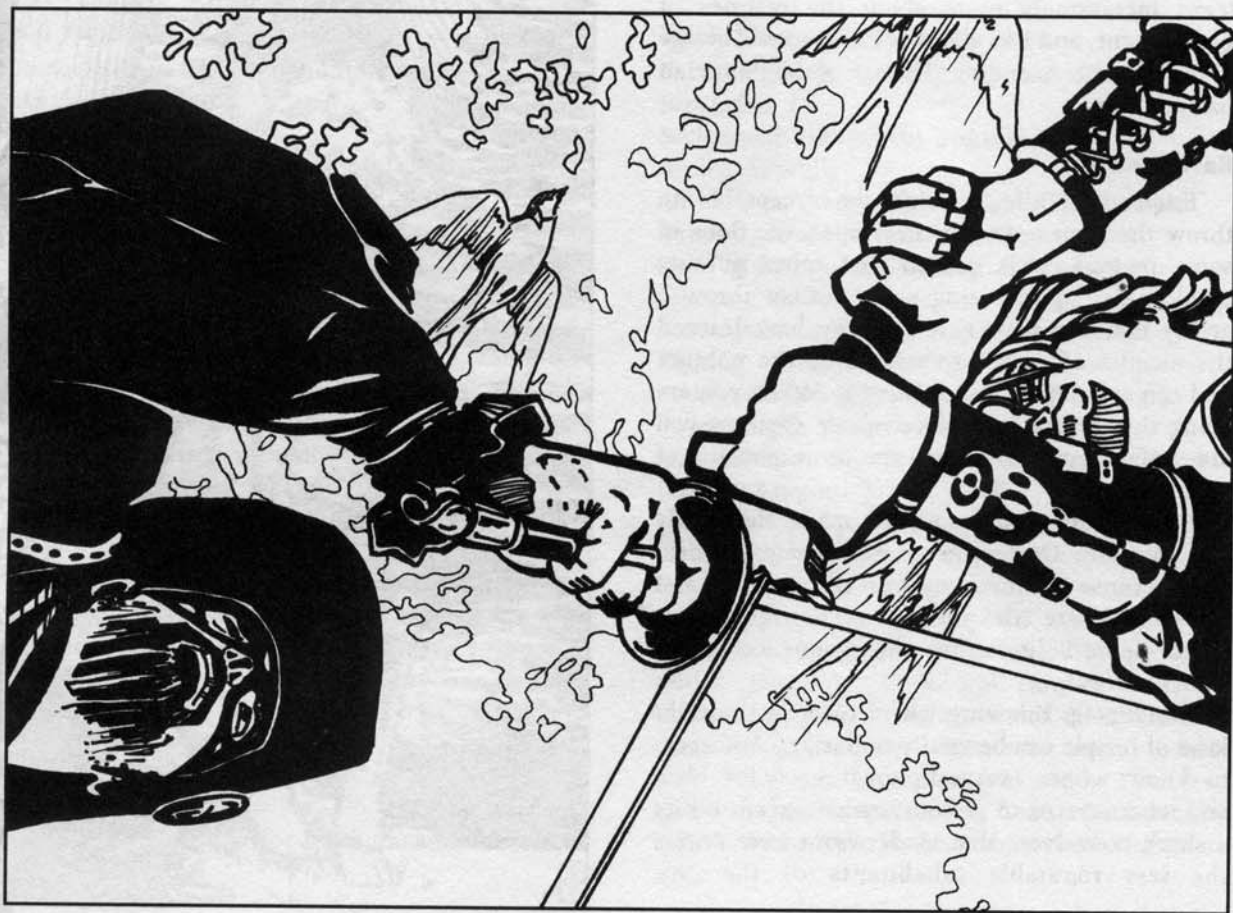
*Incitation:* You can inspire men to victory. They listen to your words before and during the battle, and they know that they cannot be defeated. They know that you will make the right decisions, and that they won't lay down their lives for nothing. This Knack is used (mostly) with the mass-combat rules, which your GM has access to in his *Guide*.

*Politics:* For a Courtier, politics is just another idle distraction in a life of luxury. A true statesman or stateswoman understands how laws, society, and power interact to form the lifeblood of civilization. To understand politics is to understand humanity; our desires, our fears, and our lives. You know how to get a law made, or revoked. You can tell by title what kind of power an official has.

*Rabble-raising:* You know how to gather a mob and infuse them with certain basic emotions. Rabble-raising is different from Sincerity or Oratory in that it is almost purely emotional. The mob cares little for the words you use, and the use of Demagoguery is highly instinctual. You must get a feel for them, as a living, breathing organism. This Knack can be used to draw a crowd in a public place. (Use the Repartee system, *Players' Guide*, pages 192–193, to determine whether you can sway them to your way of thinking.)

*Scheming:* Great minds think alike. So do devious ones. When you consider the complex world of political machinations, you can see the strings attached to each of its participants with a special clarity and, with enough practice, the puppet masters behind the scenes.

*Sincerity:* You have turned lying into an art form. People are amazed at your honesty while you lie through your teeth. More than that, however, is that people want to believe you. Nobody ever doubts that you mean what you say, even if you couldn't care less.



## Appendix II

# Maps and Timeline

The following is a timeline of developments in the 7th Sea world between Primus 1, 1668 and Corantine 30, 1669, followed by a trio of maps depicting the Théan nations most affected by the recent upheavals.

The timeline provides a general overview of the most important events to affect Théah during that period. More information about these events can be found elsewhere in this book, and has been cited in the appropriate entry. Keep in mind that while these events are considered canonical, they may be adjusted or eliminated to fit the particulars of your campaign.

**Secundus 2, 1668** — The city of Fornuft is founded on the Vesten Island of Viddenheim.

**Secundus 29, 1668** — an earthquake off the coast of Vodace uncovers an abandoned keep, built into the shoreline cliff of Falisci territory.

**Tertius 3, 1668** — After months of heated fighting, the Castillian army is forced to retreat from San Augustin. The Montaigne seize control of the city, using its naval facilities as a marshalling ground for the navy. Without San Augustin as an anchor, General Montoya is forced to abandon plans for a counterattack. The Castillian army on the peninsula prepares for a Montaigne assault.

**Tertius 10–30, 1668** — El Vago strikes at numerous locations along the Montaigne front: disrupting supply lines, sabotaging cannon emplacements, and attacking squads of soldiers.

**Tertius 16, 1668** — A Vendel League vessel scuttles a merchant ship belonging to Prince Giovanni Villanova.

**Tertius 23** — Vincenzo Caligari dines with Cardinal Beppo Mueso, asking for permission to trade with the Crescent Empire.

**Quartus 1, 1668** — Montaigne's General Du Toille launches an attack on La Muralla al Ultimo. A stirring defense by General Montoya, plus the Vagabond's guerrilla activities, spell defeat for the Montaigne.

**Quartus 14, 1668** — Castille's Admiral Orduño launches an assault against the Montaigne fleet. His superior tactics allow him to shatter their blockade of the western peninsula. The Montaigne fleet is scattered across La Boca, and supplies can once more be shipped to General Montoya's army.

**Quartus 21, 1668** — Admiral Alazais Valoix takes command of the Montaigne Navy. He promises a swift resolution to the Montaigne-Castillian War.

**Quartus 26, 1668** — After receiving a letter from his wife (see *The Lady's Favor* in the 7th Sea GM's Screen), General Montegue orders a retreat from Ussura. His forces march straight towards Odyesse, where ship wait to take his army home.

**Quartus 29–30, 1668** — Dominique du Montaigne goes into labor. She and her Fate Witch Anna conduct the secret ritual required to transfer the baby's sorcerous power into her. The ritual succeeds, but the baby is stillborn and Dominique is left barren.

**Quartus 30, 1668** — Captain Jeremiah Berek of Avalon is lost at sea.



**Quintus 2-10, 1668** — *L'Empereur* commissions the raising of new taxes and instigates a series of laws designed to punish the Vatican Church. Oppression in Montaigne reaches an all-time high.

**Quintus 8, 1668** — Beatrice Caligari arrives in Charouse to comfort her sister, the Imperatrice Morella.

**Quintus 10, 1668** — Beatrice Caligari is slain while conspiring with her sister. Morella is placed under heavy guard and forbidden to leave the Château du Soleil.

**Quintus 15, 1668** — The Battle of Derevyanniy. By feinting towards the city of St. Tremult, Montegue draws away the Ussuran army waiting for him in the Derevyanniy forest. The Montaigne army slips safely through the lines, and casualties on both sides are limited. However, subsequent Ussuran partisan attacks slow the Montaigne progress toward Odyesse.

**Quintus 23, 1668** — The Battle of San Felipe. Admiral Valoix attempts to launch a counterattack against the Castillian Armada, targeting various ports along the Gallegos peninsula. Enrique Orduño anticipates the move and engages the Montaigne fleet off of the coast of San Felipe.

**Sextus 2, 1668** — Fearful of possible Vendel encroachments into the Crescent Empire, Prince Gespucci Bernoulli orders his ships to attack and sink any Vendel merchant vessel they might encounter.

**Sextus 5, 1668** — Captain Allende is captured in the port town of San Felipe by agents belonging to Vincenzo Caligari.

**Sextus 15, 1668** — The Single Shot. Admiral Orduño refuses to board a vessel belonging to the General, an Eisen mercenary working for Montaigne. He is arrested by the Inquisition and charged with heresy.

**Sextus 21, 1668** — Without Orduño to oppose him, Admiral Valoix launches a devastating series of attacks against the Gallegos peninsula. He inflicts heavy damage upon the Castillian infrastructure in Avila, San Felipe, San Gustavo and elsewhere.

**Sextus 23, 1668** — Castillian troops turn back an attempted crossing of El Rio de Delia by the Montaigne army.

**Sextus 24, 1668** — The Battle of Ekaternava. Montegue arrives at the Ussuran city of Ekaternava, just as partisans are engaging the Montaigne forces there. Montegue's quick action allows the Montaigne army to escape the island and continue their retreat.

**Late Sextus (21-30), 1668** — The Siege of Freiburg. A vein of drachenesien — possibly the largest ever recorded — is found beneath the city of Freiburg. Two armies, one from Fauner Pösen and one from Stefan Heilgrund, soon lay siege to the city in an effort to claim the mine for themselves. The city's defenders eventually fight off the armies, and Niklaus Trägue takes control of the mine. (See the *Freiburg* boxed set for more information.)

**Julius 6, 1668** — Admiral Orduño is tried by the Inquisition and found guilty of heresy. He is moved to the fortress of El Morro, there to await execution.

**Julius 7, 1668** — Montegue's army reaches the city of Odyesse. Saboteurs in the pay of *l'Empereur* have burned his ships to the ground. Exhausted and bereft of supplies, the army has no choice but to head west into Eisen.

**Julius 20, 1668** — Eisenfürst Reinhard von Wische reawakens from his lengthy coma. He immediately reassumes rulership of his kingdom with Gisela Inselhoffer, whom he believes to be his dead wife.

**Corantine 1, 1668** — Théah's mystics all simultaneously awaken with a terrible vision of the Island of the Sunken Eye. Their visions grow worse as time goes on.

**Corantine 15, 1668** — The Battle of Salzsumpf. Montegue's army is met in eastern Eisen by an army lead by Fauner Pösen. Despite a valiant defense, Montegue's forces are defeated. Karl Steiner flees in terror and Pösen takes Montegue hostage; The general is left a comfortable prisoner in a fortress/estate on the Pösen frontier.

**Corantine 22, 1668** — On the day of Orduño's execution, the General arranges a daring rescue of the condemned Castillian. He and his crew use Porté magic to breach El Morro's defenses, then avoid Castillian reprisals by pulling their ship into a gigantic Porté hole, the largest ever created.

**Corantine 25, 1668** — Admiral Valoix strikes for the heart of Castille: San Cristobal itself. By destroying it, he hopes to paralyze the Castillian armies and allow Montaigne to complete its conquest of Castille.

**Corantine 30, 1668** — A band of escaped prisoners steals a Syrneth water vessel from the heart of Vincenzo Caligari's island. The act triggers a cataclysmic reaction and the island sinks beneath the sea.

**Septimus 1, 1668** — Triggered by the combined efforts of a renegade Explorer and the Corsair Kheired-Din, an ancient Syrneth island — Cabora — rises from the depths of the Mirror.

**Septimus 4, 1668** — *L'Empereur* refuses to pay the ransom for the release of General Montegue, who remains the unwilling guest of Fauner Pösen.

**Septimus 5, 1668** — Admiral Valoix is thwarted in his bid to capture San Cristobal by the timely efforts of Admiral Orduño's wife, Margareta.

**Septimus 8, 1668** — Valoix kills the Porté messenger sent to bring him back to *L'Empereur*. He is now considered a renegade.

**Septimus 13, 1668** — Private Jerome of Montaigne returns home from the Castillian front. After finding bruises on his lover's wrists, he kills the woman's husband in a fit of rage and is arrested for murder.

**Septimus 19, 1668** — Assassins strike at five of the remaining six Vodacce Princes. Four of them are thwarted, but Prince Alberto Lucani is struck down, leaving no clear heir to his title.

**Septimus 20, 1668** — In a lightning-quick move, forces belonging to Vodacce Prince Alcide Mondavi invade territory belonging to the Lucanis, Villanovas, and Caligaris. Mondavi is aided by Eisen mercenaries under the command of Erich Sieger.

**Septimus 22, 1668** — Rilasciare member Arnaud du Charouse makes an effort to present the *Commoners' Cause* to *l'Empereur*. The document pleads for an end to many oppressive taxes, an easing of sanctions against the church, and the formation of a national assembly "to advise His Majesty on matters of the state." Leon refuses to allow Arnaud past the gates.

**Septimus 24, 1668** — Pvt. Jerome arrives in Charouse, to be held before his execution. The spectacle of a loyal soldier being led in chains to his doom sparks a riot, which quickly spreads to all corners of the city. With the army occupied in Castille, *l'Empereur* lacks the forces to quell such widespread unrest.

**Septimus 25–Octavus 15, 1668** — The Charouse rioting soon escalates into a full-blown revolution. Nobles are attacked, government offices looted, and royalist sympathizers jailed. Many nobles flee the country. Others are caught and either imprisoned or flat-out executed.

**Septimus 25, 1668** — *L'Empereur* announces the dissolution of the Musketeers.

**Septimus 25, 1668** — Dominique du Montaigne disappears from her rooms.

**Septimus 27, 1668** — *L'Empereur* flees Charouse, and boards a ship bound for safe harbor. The ship vanishes at sea.

**Septimus 27, 1668** — Miriam du Montaigne is caught and executed by rioting mobs.

**Octavus 3-4, 1668** — Evelyn du Montaigne is arrested and executed after trying to board a ship for Avalon.

**Octavus 4, 1668** — Rosamonde du Montaigne is arrested after trying to save her twin sister.

**Octavus 5, 1668** — Rosamonde du Montaigne is rescued by her sister Ysabelle as she is led to the executioner's block. The two retreat to the open seas, becoming Montaigne's most wanted criminals.

**Octavus 10-11, 1668** — Nicolette du Montaigne is caught as she tries to flee to Eisen. She is tried by a kangaroo court and executed by hanging.



**Octavus 10, 1668** — Jacob's Political Society calls for the formation of a new government.

**Octavus 12, 1668** — *l'Empereur's* body is found hanging from a tree near the Montaigne shoreline.

**Octavus 14, 1668** — Eisenfürst Georg Hanizl defeats an attempted coup by one of his advisors, Philip Knef. The mad ruler takes on the personality of a great conqueror, and launches plans to invade a neighboring königreich.

**Octavus 17, 1668** — Vincenzo Caligari is forced from his hiding spot within his former territory.

**Octavus 18, 1668** — The Treaty of Cabora is signed by all major Théan powers. Ussurans refuse to allow any expeditions heading to the island of Cabora to dock in their ports, and the Church fortresses in the Forbidden Sea redouble their efforts to stop interlopers.

**Octavus 30, 1668** — Eisenfürst Georg Hainzl launches an attack against his neighbor Faulk Fischler. The invading force disappears without a trace.

**Nonus 7, 1668** — The Montaigne Parlement is assembled, consisting of elected representatives from every province. They are lead by the Council of Eight, elected by their peers, who dictate the Parlement's agenda and hold its most important posts.

**Nonus 8, 1668** — A group of Montaigne nobles announces the creation of the government in exile in the Eisen city of Siegsburg. They are lead by the Empereur's daughter Anne and her husband, Jean-Marie Rois et Reines.

**Nonus 14, 1668** — Peace talks between Castille and Montaigne conclude. Montaigne agrees to a peaceable withdrawal in exchange for reparations and the ability to maintain a garrison in Barcino. Castille reluctantly agrees to their terms.

**Nonus 18, 1668** — The Council of Eight successfully negotiates the return of the Ussuran army from Eisen. They cannot meet Fauner Pösen's ransom demands for Montegue, however, and maintain *l'Empereur's* lie that he was killed while returning to Montaigne.

**Nonus 19, 1668** — Admiral Valoix is reinstated as head of the new Montaigne navy. His first mission is to hunt down renegade nobles who threaten the security of the new Republic.

**Nonus 21, 1668** — Jacob Faust briefs the Explorer's Society on the disposition of Cabora. Based on his testimony, the Explorer's Society agrees to finance new expeditions into the western ocean.

**Nonus 28, 1668** — Amnesty is offered to all Montaigne nobles who will renounce the use of sorcery. The surviving members of the royal family will be allowed back into the country provided they renounce all ties to the throne. None of them do. Practicing Porté is punishable by the loss of the offender's left hand. The wearing of gloves is outlawed in Montaigne.

**Decimus 7, 1668** — The Council of Eight sells off *l'Empereur's* possessions in an effort to finance their debts.

**Decimus 30, 1668** — Valentina Villanova murders her own children.

**Prophet's Mass 3, 1668** — In an effort to escape the wrath of the Prince, Valentina Villanova and Juliette board a ship bound for Vendel.

**Prophet's Mass 6, 1668** — On the eve of the new year, Eisenfürst Niklaus Trägue commits suicide. The Wachturm collapses soon thereafter.

**Primus 13, 1669** — Logan Sieger becomes the Eisenfürst of Freiburg. He vows to rebuild the city, founded on the noblest ideals of Eisenfürst Trägue.

**Primus 30, 1669** — The Vaticine Church tells Alcide Mondavi to end his invasion or face excommunication.

**Secundus 2, 1669** — Alcide Mondavi halts his advance and makes peace with the four remaining Vodacce Princes.

**Secundus 17, 1669** — Stefan Heilgrund launches a secret expedition into the Schwarzen Walden.

**Tertius 13, 1669** — Margareta Orduño successfully petitions the King of Castille for a new expedition into the western ocean.

**Tertius 29, 1669** — New Explorers expeditions depart from Carleon to points west.

**Quartus 12, 1669** — An emissary from “the state of Kosara” arrives to negotiate with Gaius Ilya. He is killed before he can deliver his greeting.

**Quintus 3, 1669** — Pro-royalist politicians attempt to seize control of the Montaigne Parlement. They fail. The ringleaders are arrested and laws are enacted to prevent a potential coup from taking place again.

**Quintus 23, 1669** — Jyrgal Timurbek declares Kosara’s independence from Ussura.

**Sextus 6, 1669** — Thieves in the pay of Sarah MacDonald steal the Faery flag from MacLeod territory in the Highland Marches.

**Sextus 25–30, 1669** — The Vesten’s annual *althing* is held in the High King’s court of Thingvallvatn. For the first time, a member of the Vendel Guilds — George Skard — attends the proceedings.

**Julius 15, 1669** — “Bloody Feast Day.” Aristide Baveux and Eugene Suchet du Crieux are assassinated by a band of pro-royalist sympathizers. A third assassination attempt — against Council member Jean-Marc Navarre — is thwarted in the nick of time. Leadership in the Council of Eight suffers a terrible blow, and *de facto* power falls into the hands of Arnaud du Charouse, the only man with the organizational skills to handle it.

**Julius 16, 1669** — Hubert du Gloyure arranges a spectacular funeral for the slain leaders. The display whips the citizens of Charouse into a frenzy of violence.

**Julius 19, 1669** — Master Val Mokk and Mistress Sela Cole of the Vendel League appear together in public.

**Julius 24, 1669** — The Council assassins are captured in an abandoned estate outside of Paix.

**Julius 25–27, 1669** — The assassins’ trial. Arnaud du Charouse attends the proceedings, though he does not participate in the prosecution. The evidence against them is overwhelming and they are sentenced to death.

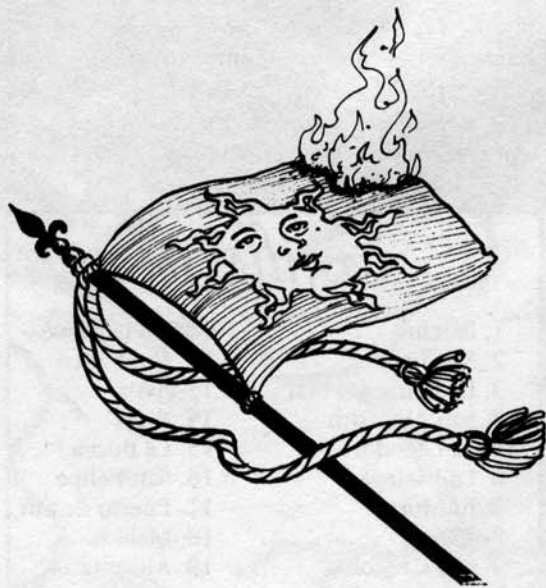
**Julius 28, 1669** — The assassins are executed in front of the Chateau d’Soleil. The last to go hints at a wider conspiracy and further acts of violence.

**Corantine 4, 1669** — In a law dubbed Statement 15, Arnaud du Charouse creates the Commission of National Welfare to pursue enemies of the state.

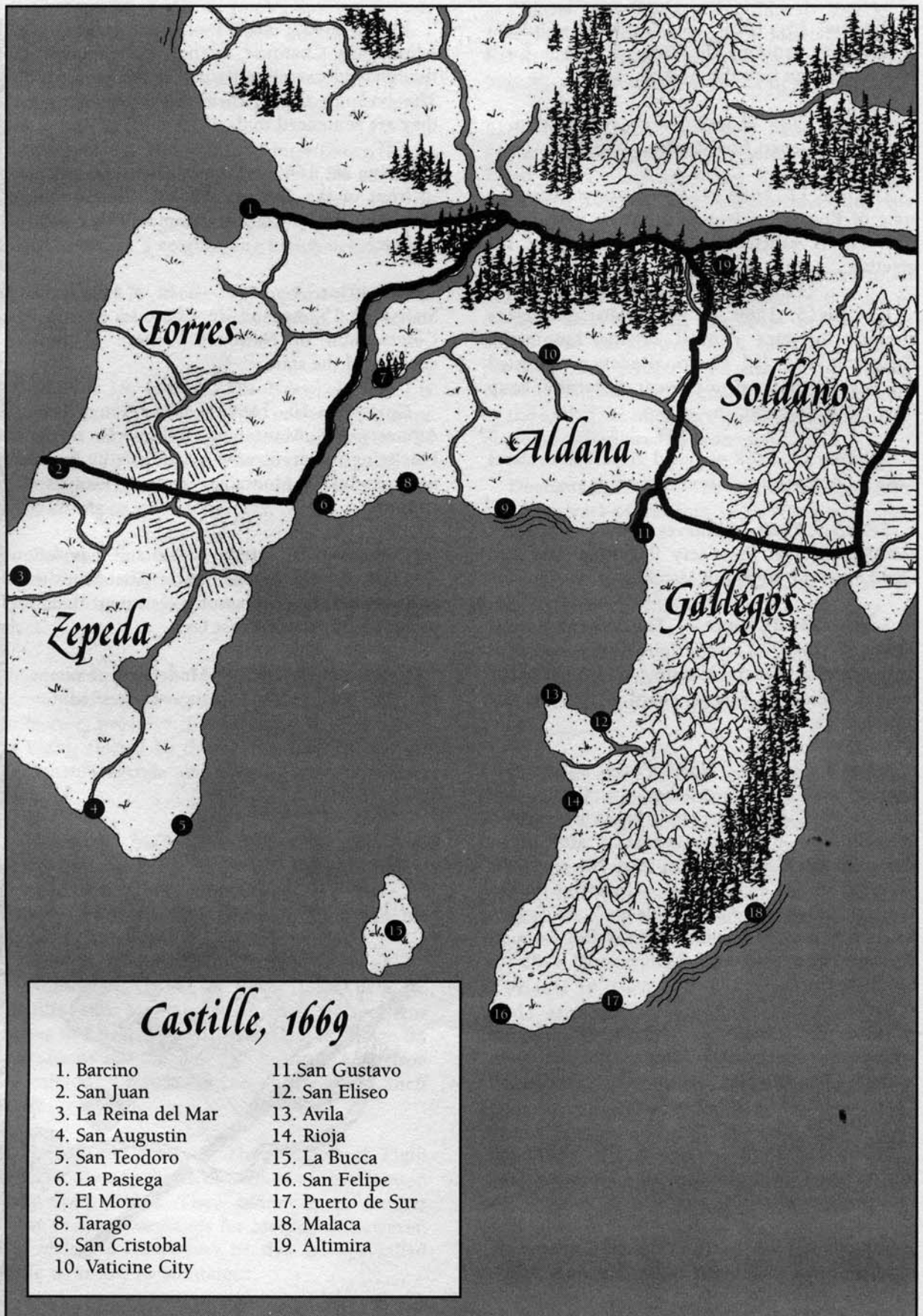
**Corantine 10, 1669** — The Frenzy begins. Amnesty for Montaigne nobles is revoked. Practicing sorcery is now punishable by death. A new exodus of Montaigne émigrés escapes the country.

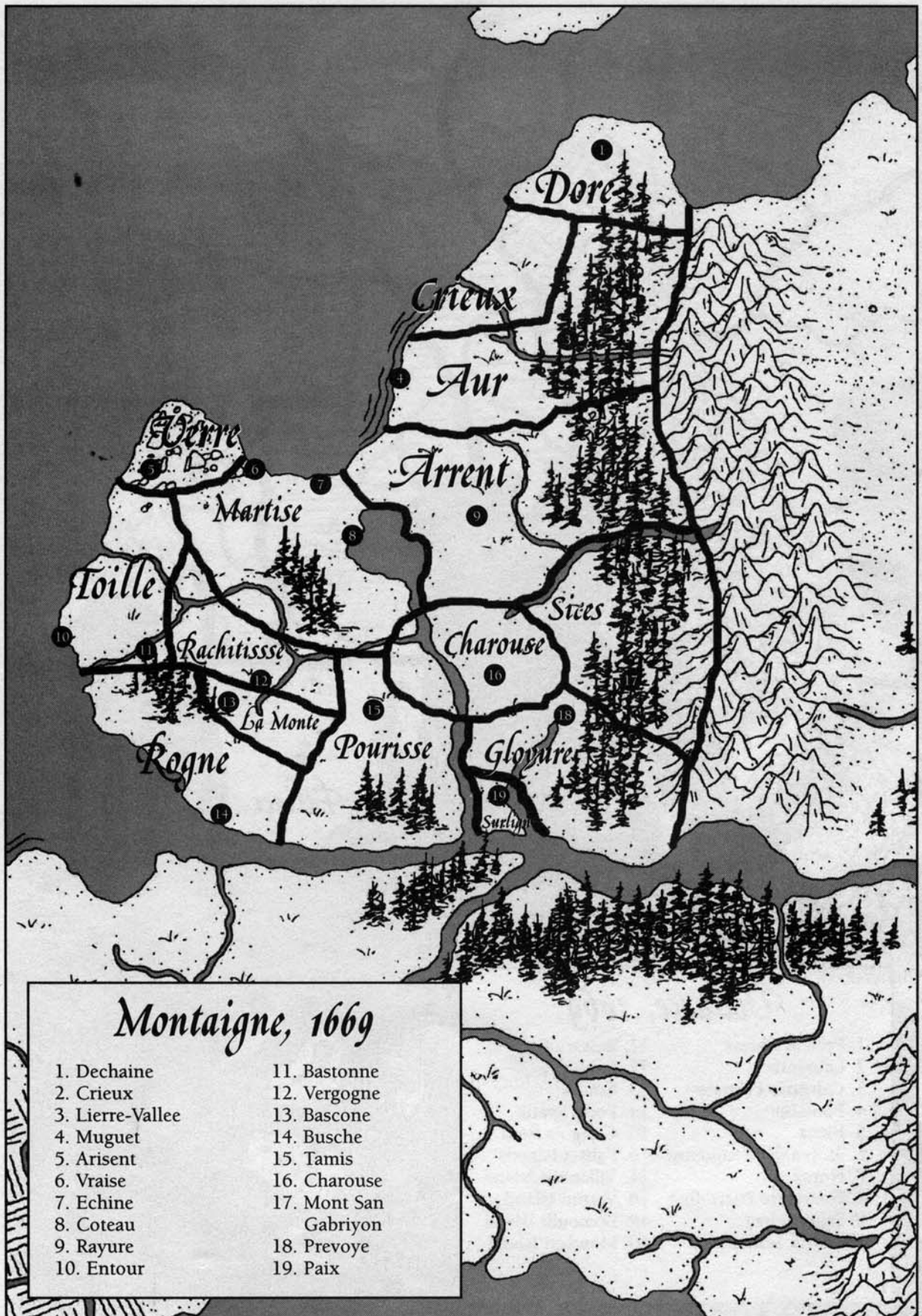
**Corantine 16, 1669** — Arnaud has fellow Council member Madeleine du Chatelaine tried and executed for treason, claiming that she orchestrated Bloody Feast Day.

**Corantine 19, 1669** — Moderates are removed from the National Parlement and executed.

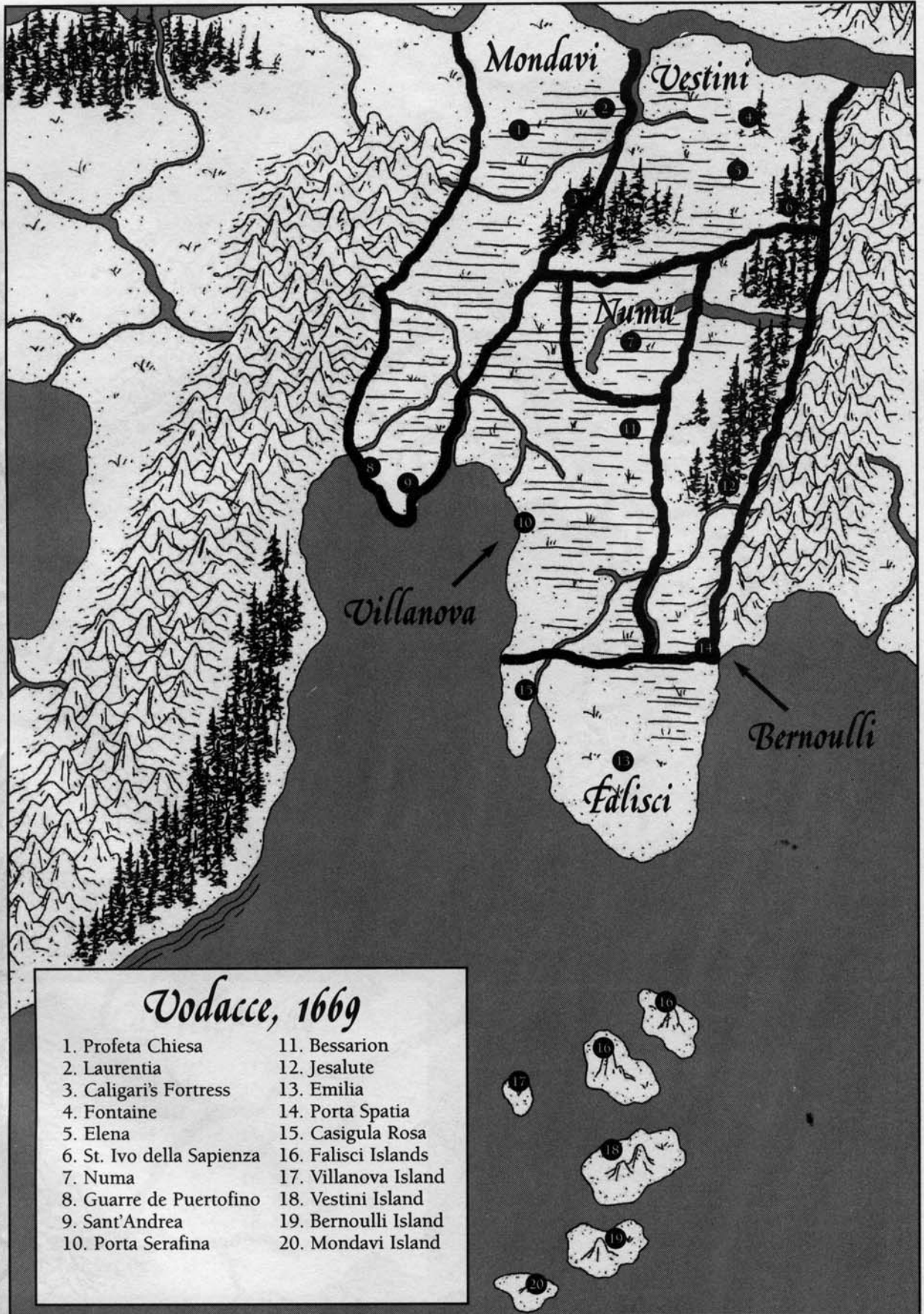






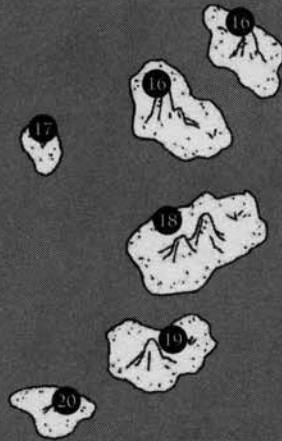






### Vodacce, 1669

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Profeta Chiesa         | 11. Bessarion        |
| 2. Laurentia              | 12. Jesalute         |
| 3. Caligari's Fortress    | 13. Emilia           |
| 4. Fontaine               | 14. Porta Spatia     |
| 5. Elena                  | 15. Casigula Rosa    |
| 6. St. Ivo della Sapienza | 16. Falisci Islands  |
| 7. Numa                   | 17. Villanova Island |
| 8. Guarre de Puertofino   | 18. Vestini Island   |
| 9. Sant'Andrea            | 19. Bernoulli Island |
| 10. Porta Serafina        | 20. Mondavi Island   |





7th Sea  
Game Year:  
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