

SAGA PACIK

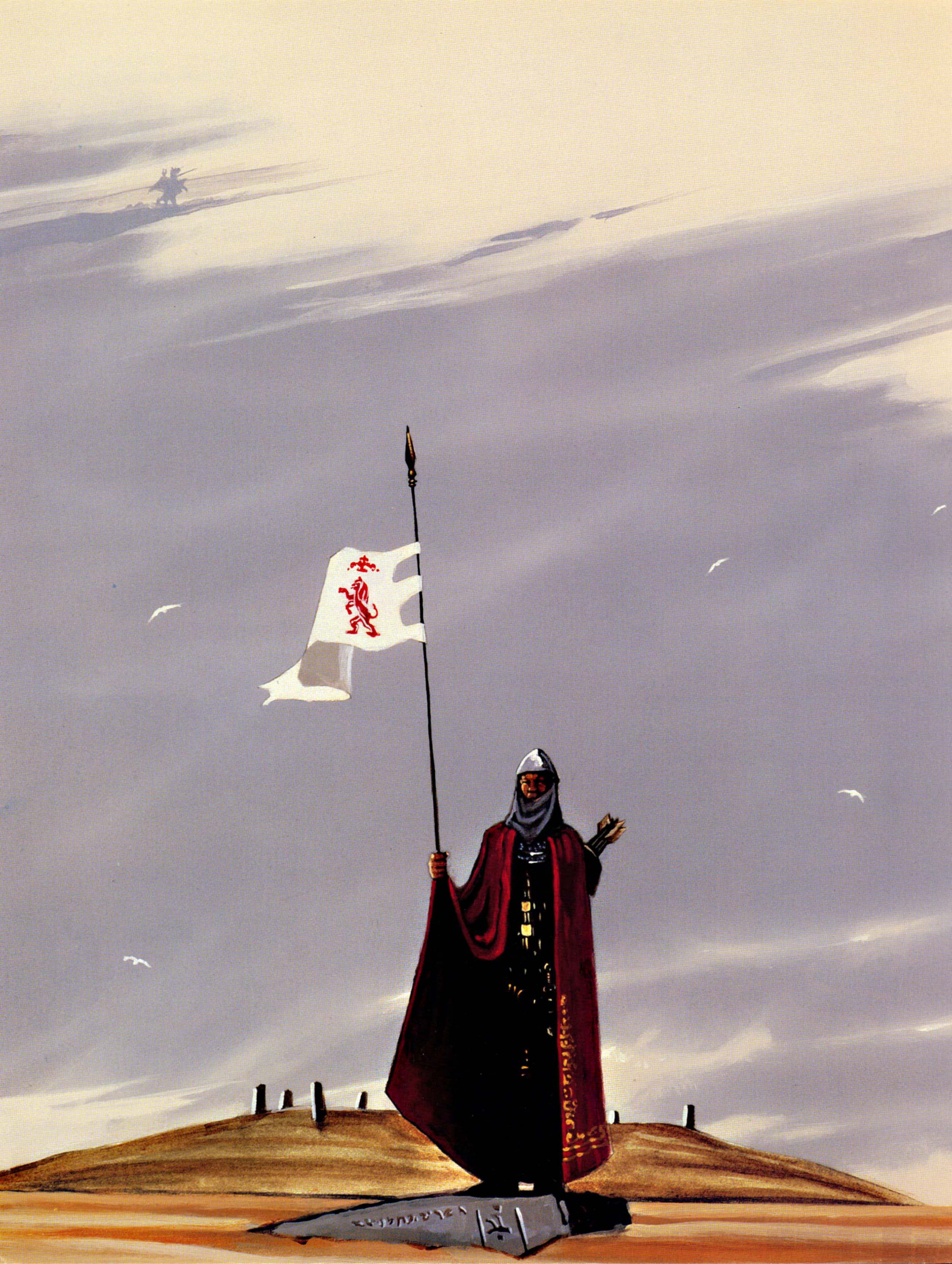


Lion Rampant

This *Ars Magica*™ supplement includes:

- A 3 panel Storyguide's screen. With all the charts you will need to play *Ars Magica*.
- 16 complete grogs, with fully detailed personalities (so you don't have to roll them up yourself!), vivid examples of what grogs can be.
- Numerous briefing sheets on the Art of Story Design, Life of the Grog, Creating Companions, Limits of Magic, Mythic Europe™, the Code of Hermes, as well as many excerpts from the various Tomes of the Order of Hermes.





Combat Sequence Chart

1. Between Time
2. Movement
3. Missiles
4. Melee
 - First strike vs. First strike
 - Attack vs Defense
 - Damage vs Soak
5. Magic and 2nd Missiles

Missile Rate Table

Rate Total	Shots/Round
up to -20	1/4
-19 to -10	1/3
-9 to 0	1/2
+1 to +10	1
+11 or better	2/1

Missile Fire Table

Difficulty - Ease Factor	Example Conditions
Free Shot - Automatic Hit	you are standing over prone, non-moving target
Simple Shot - 6+	point-blank range, slow or non-moving target
Easy Shot - 9+	point-blank range, target moving standing person, 20 to 50 paces
Medium Shot - 12+	small or quickly moving target at point-blank range moving human-size target at 20 to 50 paces
Hard Shot - 15+	dodging target at 20 to 50 paces tiny, quick target nearby, like a bat long range shot with long range weapon, such as a bow
Very Hard Shot - 21+	long range shot with short range weapon, such as a sling target obscured by darkness, underbrush, dust

Missile Weapon Chart

Weapon	Expense	Rate	AtkB	WpnDam	Str	Load	Range
sling	inex	+2	0	+4	n	0	100
self bow	inex	+3	0	+8	0	0	120
long bow	stan	+6	0	+14	+2	.5	250
composite bow	expn	+4	+1	+9	-1	.5	225
light crossbow	expn	-8	+1	+10	0	.5	200
heavy crossbow	expn	-15	+1	+15	-3	1	300
arbalist	expn	-23	+1	+19	0	1.5	400

Expense- inex=inexpensive, stan=standard, expn=expensive.

Rate- The bonus to Rate total, which determines how often you can fire the weapon.

AtkB, Attack Bonus- The bonus to your Attack roll.

WpnDam, Weapon Damage- The bonus to your Damage roll.

Str, Strength- The minimum Strength needed to use the weapon.

Load- Represents the weight and awkwardness of the weapon, used to figure Encumbrance.

Range- Maximum range in paces.

Damage Effects Chart

1-5	Drop one body level
6-10	Drop two body levels
11-15	Drop three body levels
16-20	Drop four body levels
21-25	Drop five body levels
etc...	

Ease Factor Chart

3	Very easy
6	Not too hard
9	Difficult
12	Very tough
15	Extremely difficult

Wound Recovery Chart

Wounds	Roll							
	0	1-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18+
Light	X	14	10	7	6	5	4	3
Medium	X	60	40	21	18	16	14	12
Heavy	X	X	80	45	35	28	25	21
Incip.	X	X	X	90	45	35	28	25

Roll a stress die plus **Stm + Chirurgeon's Skill**; compare the roll to the type of wound from which you suffer. If the result is a number, that is the number of days it takes you to recover. If the result is X, roll on the Catastrophe Sub-Chart.

Catastrophe Sub-Chart

After you roll on this chart, roll again on the Wound Recovery Chart to determine how long it takes you to recover. It is possible for you to have to roll again on the Catastrophe Sub-Chart. Roll a stress die plus **Stm + Chirurgeon's Skill**.

0	Death.	5-6	Festering wounds, infection, gangrene. Drop a body level and roll again for recovery.
1	You fall into a coma. Re-roll for time to recover (at -2) and double the time. Then make two aging rolls.	7-10	Make an aging roll.
2	Permanently enfeebled; see the flaw "Enfeebled."	11-12	Wounds fail to heal completely; gain 1 Decrepitude point.
3-4	You are permanently crippled in some manner. Perhaps amputation is necessary. Choose an appropriate flaw, such as "Missing Foot."	13	Nightmares or flashbacks torment you for a long time to come. Three extra botch rolls on any kind of Brave rolls.
		14+	Slow recovery; roll again and multiply time by 1.5.

Credits

Design:
 Mark Rein•Hagen (Briefings)
 Lisa Stevens (Gros)

Design Contributions:

Marty Dennis
 John Nephew
 Jonathan Tweet

Editing:

John Nephew
 Nicole Lindroos
 Lisa Stevens

Art Coordinator:

John Nephew

Cover Art:

Michael Weaver

Production & Layout:

Kirsten Swingle
 Nicole Lindroos

Special Thanks To:

Woody Eblom
 Derek Greco
 Kristen Hagen
 Paul Hartwigson
 Deej Heath
 Andreas Wichter

Words and Gestures Table

Voice	Penalty	Gesture	Penalty
Firm	0	Bold	0
Soft	-5	Subtle	-2
None	-10	None	-5

Brawling Maneuvers Table

Maneuver	Your Roll	Opponent's Roll	Close Fighting
Strike	Str + Brawl	Soak	0
Throw	Str + Size + Brawl	Qik + Size + Brawl - Enc + 5	-4
Tackle	Str + Size + Brawl	Qik + Size + Brawl - Enc	+4
Wrest Weapon	Str + Brawl	Str + Brawl	0
Immobilize	Str + Brawl	Str + Brawl + 5	+4
Close	Qik + Brawl - Enc	Def	n/a

Distraction Table

Struck in combat	12 + 1 per point by which you miss your Soak roll		
Walking	6	Fall	12
Running	12	Knocked Down	15
Jostled	9	Blown Over	21
Sudden noise or flash of light		9	
Imminent personal threat		12	

The numbers are ease factors for a Concentration roll.

Travel Chart

Difficulty	Foot	Horse	Wagon
Easy	25/1	30/1	15
Light	20/2	25/1	10
Medium	15/2	20/1	8
Hard	10/3	12/2	3
Very Hard	5/3	3/2	-
Terrible	2/3	1/2	-

The first number is miles traveled in a day. The second is the number of long-term fatigue levels lost. A Fatigue roll of 6+ lets the character lose one level less.

You might require other rolls for the characters to accomplish the day's journey, such as a Survival roll from the navigator when moving through wild terrain.

Power Interaction Chart

Magical Area	1-10	Power Affected:			
		Magic	Divine	Infernal	Faerie
		+	-	0	+2
Dominion	1-2	-	+	-	-
	3-5	-	+	-	3-
	6-9	-	+	2-	X
	10	X	+	X	X
Infernal Place	1-7	-	2-	+	2-
	8-10	-	5-	2+	X
Faerie Area	1-8	+2	-	0	+
	9-10	+	5-	-	2+

Key:

- 0 No effect
- + Add the rating of the place to rolls. If there is a number in front of the +, multiply the rating by that number before adding it to rolls. +/2 means the bonus is divided by 2 before being applied.
- Subtract the rating of the place from rolls. If there is a number in front of the -, multiply the penalty by that number before applying it.
- X Supernatural powers of this type do not function in this area.

Armor Chart

Armor	Expense	Protection	Load
Cuirass Armor			
Leather/Fur/Quilted	inex	1	0.5
Heavy/Hard Leather	inex	2	1
Ring Mail	stan	4	1.5
Scale Mail	stan	5	2
Chain Mail	expn	8	3.5
Plate	expn	10	4
Hauberk Armor			
Leather/Fur/Quilted	inex	3	1.5
Heavy/Hard Leather	inex	5	2.5
Ring Mail	stan	7	3
Scale Mail	stan	9	4.5
Chain Mail	expn	12	5
Plate	expn	15	6
Full Armor			
Leather/Fur/Quilted	inex	4	2
Heavy/Hard Leather	stan	6	2.5
Ring Mail	stan	8	4
Chain Mail	expn	14	6
Plate	expn	17	7

Expense- inex = inexpensive, stan = standard, expn = expensive.

Protection- Protection + Stm + Size = Soak total.

Load- Represents the weight and awkwardness of the armor, used to figure Encumbrance.

Melee Weapon Chart

Weapon	Expense	Speed	AtkB	WpnDam	ParB	Str	Load	Space
Dagger (1h)	inex	+1	+4	+2	+1	n	0	0'
Shortsword (1h)	stan	+2	+4	+4	+2	-2	0.5	0'
Broadsword (1h)	expn	+3	+4	+6	+3	0	0.5	1'
Bastard Sword (1h)	expn	+4	+3	+8	+3	+2	0.5	2'
Bastard Sword (2h)	expn	+4	+3	+10	+4	0	0.5	2'
Greatsword (2h)	expn	+5	+3	+11	+5	+1	1	3'
Short Spear (1h)	inex	+5	+2	+3	+1	-1	0	1'
Short Spear (2h)	inex	+6	+3	+5	+2	n	0	0'
Long Spear (2h)	inex	+8	+2	+6	+3	-2	0.5	0'
Lance (mtd) (1h)	stan	+7	+2	+8*	+1	0	1	1'
Hand Axe (1h)	inex	+2	+2	+7	+1	0	0.5	1'
Battle Axe (2h)	stan	+4	+2	+12	+2	0	1	3'
Pole Axe (2h)	stan	+5	+1	+13	+3	+1	1.5	4'
Halberd (2h)	expn	+5	+1	+15	+3	+1	2	4'
Club (1h)	inex	+2	+3	+2	+1	-2	0	2'
Club (2h)	inex	+2	+3	+3	+2	n	0	2'
Quarterstaff (2h)	inex	+5	+2	+4	+6	-3	0	2'
Mace (1h)	stan	+2	+3	+5	+1	0	0	2'
Mace (2h)	stan	+2	+3	+7	+2	-2	0	2'
War Maul (2h)	stan	+3	+2	+10	+2	+1	1.5	2'
Morning Star (1h)	stan	+3	+2	+8	+1	+2	0.5	3'
Morning Star (2h)	stan	+3	+2	+10	+1	0	0.5	3'
Military Flail (2h)	expn	+4	+3	+10	+2	-1	1	4'
Throwing Knife	inex	-2	-1	+0	N/A	n	0	N/A
Javelin	stan	-5	-1	+5	N/A	-2	0	N/A
Throwing Axe	stan	-4	-2	+6	N/A	-1	0.5	N/A
Target Shield	inex	+1	+3	-2	+2	n	0	1'
Round Shield	inex	+2	+2	-1	+3	-2	0.5	1'
Knight Shield	stan	+2	+1	0	+4	0	1	0'
Kite Shield	expn	+1	+1	0	+5	+1	1.5	1'
Tower Shield	expn	0	0	-1	+6	+2	2	1'

Expense- There are three types of weapons, classified by the cost of making and maintaining them: Inexpensive (marked "inex"), standard (stan), and expensive (expn). Weapons available to you depend on your background or your covenant.

Speed- The bonus to the First Strike roll when using this weapon, based on the length, weight, and style of use. A long, light weapon held in front of the user has the edge over a short, heavy weapon swung from over the shoulder.

AtkB, Attack Bonus- Attack Bonus + Dex + Skill = Attack Total.

WpnDmg, Weapon Damage- Weapon Damage + Str + Skill = Damage Total.

ParB, Parry Bonus- Parry Bonus + Skill - Size = Defense Total.

Str, Strength- The minimum Str required to use the weapon effectively. An "n" means no minimum Str score is required.

Load- Represents the weight and awkwardness of the weapon, used to figure Encumbrance.

Space- Feet needed around the wielder for effective use; think of it as a zone, and if the zones of two people overlap there could be trouble.

* See the combat section on Charging.

Lyper Devont

How you ended up at the covenant is a long tale. Suffice it to say that Sir Belnedrin De Malorne wasn't amused at the wisecracks you made about his wife, especially when he found out that you made them from first hand experience! Since Sir Belnedrin was very influential, with many friends among the church and nobility, the covenant seemed like the only alternative for a man who desperately wants to keep his head firmly attached to his neck.

You have risen among the ranks by your ability to keep yourself alive. Why risk your life when there are plenty of other fools out there who are willing to throw their's away while you get to feast and drink ale yet again? Not many of the other grogs like you, but what do you care? You'll be here next year, while the odds that they will are slim. Actually, it looks like coming to the covenant was probably the best desperate move you ever made. Life can be pretty easy here, especially when you know how to play the game and stack the odds in your favor. You have nurtured your tracking and mountaineering skills so the magi won't get the idea that you would better serve them on the front line. Sure, trackers have to be out in front, alone, but if you keep quiet and hidden, you don't have to confront anything you find. And besides, your feet can move pretty fast when there's death on your heels.

Speaking of the magi, you don't trust them as far as you can throw a horse. Sometimes they really piss you off and you feel that you have to tell them a thing or two. So far you haven't been subjected to any punishment worse than a minute or two hanging upside down in the air. Besides, you doubt that the magi would waste a valuable talent like yourself. But then again, it's better to be safe and alive than sorry and dead. You'll have to watch that tongue of yours, you talk back to the wizards far too much for your own good. You won't hold back to anyone but the wizards though, you'll lip off to the grog sergeant or that stupid scholar who holes up in the library. Being a smart aleck is a lot of fun, so you aren't likely to give it up soon. The other grogs might get sore about it, but those cowards would never dare do anything about it....

Narryn

You love to fight. Not that sissy kind of fighting with weapons and armor and stuff. Real man's fighting. Fist to fist, hand to hand, foot to foot. Wrestling around the floor, might pitted against might. That is how God expected men to fight. The sword comes in handy against the monstrous types, but men should fight like men. If they want to use swords, you take no pity on them and dispatch them mercilessly. But a good brawl — it makes drinking worthwhile.

Your brother Braeble doesn't exactly approve of your rambunctious ways. Perhaps that's why he brought the two of you to the covenant in the first place; to keep you out of trouble. Actually, life here isn't so bad. There's often plenty of other grogs to fight with and the magi are always going off on some dangerous mission or another. The food and ale are decent, much better than in other mercenary jobs you've had. You like your brother Braeble sometimes, but he's way too stuffy, you're getting a little bit sick of him. Sometimes when you go to town to drink a little, fight a little, and spend some time getting to know the local girls, Braeble steps in and breaks up the fun. If he wasn't your older brother, you'd have thrashed his hide long ago.

Braeble always talks about responsibility and reliability, but you just want to keep your hide intact so you can live for another day. For some reason, however, whenever things get rocky, you find yourself volunteering for the most dangerous of missions. You probably want to show up Braeble. Since he's older, he's always had a head start on life, and gotten to tell you what to do. If you can get a reputation for being the best grog in the covenant, boy would that get Braeble. Not that you have a death wish or anything. You'll leave dying to the other grogs; life is way too much fun to lose.

Narryn Age: 22 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence 0 Strength +2 Presence +2 Dexterity 0
Perception -1 Stamina +2 Communication +1 Quickness 0

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	6
Bastard Sword (1h)	3
Round Shield parry	2
Charm	1
Guile	1
Leadership	1

Virtue:
Knack: Brawling (+2)

Flaw:
Deep Sleeper

Personality traits	
Brave	+3
Loyal	+3
Reliable	-1
Impulsive	+2
Cowardly	+1

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Bastard Sword +7 +8 +14

Defense
Parry: Round Shield: +5
Dodge: -3

Armor
Type: Scale Hauberk
Protection: 9
Load: 4.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 5.5 (Str 2) Enc 3

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +11
Fatigue Total: -1

Lyper Age: 32 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence 0 Strength 0 Presence 0 Dexterity +2
Perception +1 Stamina 0 Communication -1 Quickness +3

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Self Bow	4
Short Sword	2
Alertness	3
Scan	3
Climb	1
Athletics	1
Dodge	3
Woodland Survival	2
Woodland Track	3
Stealth	2
Area Lore	2

Virtue:
Keen Vision

Flaw:
Social Handicap:
Cockiness

Personality traits	
Brave	+1
Loyal	-1
Reliable	-2
Hyper	+2
Sluggish	-2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Self Bow +8 +5 +8
Short Sword +5 +8 +6

Defense
Parry:
Dodge: +4

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Hauberk
Protection: 3
Load: 1.5

Reputation Location Score

Cockiness Covenant 2

Equipment

Load 2 (Str 0) Enc 2

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +3
Fatigue Total: -2

Hojo

You can't understand why everybody seems to hate you so much. You're one of the best glassblowers in the area, yet no one can stand being around you for more than a few minutes. It couldn't be the fact that your voice is a high, nasal whine — people wouldn't judge you on such a superficial trait, would they? Why, they'd never get to see what an interesting and intellectual person you really are! You admit you're a bit talkative, but you're not all that bad a guy. If only they would stay and listen for a while....

It was probably your God-accursed voice which brought you to the covenant in the first place. You had tried to start your own glassworking business, but people were so put off by their first impression of you that they didn't come back or recommend you to others. You couldn't make the payments to the money lender, so to save your body from irreparable harm, you gathered your precious glassblowing equipment and travelled to the covenant for protection. Who needs more glassware than magi? You had already dealt with the covenant before. It saved them both time and money to have you at the covenant. Your place was set.

For the past year, you have been trying to get people here to like you. The magi generally don't seem to be influenced by such petty things as a person's voice, but a few of them have come close to shutting you up permanently. Therefore, you have attempted to diversify and make yourself indispensable. Your glasswork is of high quality and you craft it swiftly. If a magus has a unique job, you work closely with him, working the glass into the form needed for the experiment and adding your expertise to the design of the glassware. You've also noticed that the grogs with the biggest weapons seem to get the most respect. Therefore, you've taken to carrying around a large, long spear. You really don't know how to use it yet, but it sure looks mean. Since childhood, people have picked on you, so you've learned to fight unarmed very well. Your physical features are nothing magnificent, but you make up for that with dirty fighting and by paying attention to technique. Someday, you'll show the rest of the covenant that Hojo is worth more than just his glassblowing skills.

Kara

You arrived at the covenant six years ago with seven other sisters-in-arms. Now you are the last one left. Fate has dealt a cruel blow to the Sisterhood of Steel. Of all the members, you were the least worthy to live, and yet here you are today, alive and well while the rest of them are buried in unmarked graves all across the land. You were the surgeon of the group; it was your skills which should have kept them alive. It looks like you failed in the one area in which you have any skill. Now life drags on at the covenant, your only solace being the life you can bring to the people at the covenant, if only you were better at what you did. Hopefully you won't let them down like you did the Sisterhood. You look forward to the day that you can join the Sisterhood in the great beyond and atone for your inadequacies.

At the covenant, the people you live and work with tend to appreciate you. Little do they know that when the chips are down, you flub up. You just can't seem to bring it all together when it gets really tough. You break under pressure, you just can't deal with it.

Chirurgy is your life. The benefits it brings to others is the only thing that keeps you going sometimes. You first learned the art of chirurgy when your father took in a traveling tinker one cold winter. In exchange for room and board, the man, Fylius, taught you how to take care of wounds, a little of survival in the wilderness, and the past history of southern France. When spring came, the highways and byways claimed Fylius. You have not seen him since, but his teachings live on in you — yet if he were here today, you would be ashamed to look him in the eye. So life goes on and you try to do your best, if not for the Sisterhood, for those the Sisterhood chose to serve before they met their end. Oh, why does life have to be so sad?

Kara Age: 21 Gender: Female Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence +3 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity +2
Perception +2 Stamina 0 Communication 0 Quickness +3

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Self Bow	3
Short Sword attack	3
Short Sword parry	2
Wilderness Survival	1
Chirurgy	4
Area Politics	2

Virtue:
Healer

Flaw:
Weak-willed

Personality traits	
Brave	-1
Loyal	0
Reliable	+3
Caring	+2
Self-Depreciation	+3
Follower	+2

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Self Bow	+7	+5	+8
Short Sword	+6	+9	+8

Defense
Parry: Short Sword: +4
Dodge: +1

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Hauberk
Protection: 5
Load: 2.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 3 (Str 1) Enc 2

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +5

Fatigue Total: -2

Hojo Age: 20 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence +1 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity 0
Perception +2 Stamina 0 Communication 0 Quickness 0

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	3
Glassworking	5
Dodge	3
Swim	1
Long Spear	0
Evaluate	2

Virtue:
Knack (+2) Glassblowing

Flaw:
Nauseating Voice: -5
to all initial Prs rolls

Personality traits	
Brave	-2
Loyal	+2
Reliable	+1
Talkative	+3
Eager	+2
Indecisive	+2

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Long Spear	+3	-3	+2

Defense
Parry:
Dodge: +2

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Cuirass
Protection: 1
Load: 0.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 1 (Str 1) Enc 0

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +1

Fatigue Total: 0

Palestina

You are the best damn warrior at the covenant and you're proud of it. Almost every time the magi venture forth on a mission, you are chosen to accompany them. With your battle axe as your constant companion, you have gained a reputation among the rest of the covenant as being the toughest grog anybody has ever seen. The fact that you're a woman never seems to phase anybody in the covenant, which is good, because that would make you mad. Down in the valley, people tend to think that a woman's place is in the home, tending to the children, anything else is seen as strange and threatening. It was this attitude that led you to join the turb in the first place.

Being a rather large woman and muscular to boot, you like to be in front of the group when it's out on an expedition. The thrill of battle, the heady rush of victory, and the savoring of the magi's praise are what you live for. You like to fell your opponents with one blow, often you'll wait to let them have one blow at you, then you'll let them have it with everything you've got (a great blow). You like to keep track of how many opponents you bring to their knees in one blow; so far you're up to 7.

You also have a reputation for being nearly indestructible. There was that time when you were run over by three galloping horses — and all that happened is your clothes got a little dusty and you collected a few bruises. Those horsemen paid dearly for that, you brought down two of them yourself. You realize that someday your luck has got to run out and you'll end up dead on some battlefield. But ah, what a glorious end!

Braeble is your fighting companion when he's not extracting Narryn from some mess or another. When you're fighting back to back with Braeble, there is nothing in this world (or any world beyond) that you can not take on. The way his muscles ripple in the sunlight; ahh, what a warrior!! Damn him, though, he sometimes makes you feel like one of those air-headed country girls. You'll just have to concentrate on battle and things will work out.

Sicarius

Though well liked, you are largely an unknown member of the grog turb. If any grog were pressed to describe your function in the turb, he or she would have a hard time; all the while repeating that, whatever your function, you must do it well.

You seem naive and innocent enough to the grogs, but there is a darker and more devious side to you that only a few of the magi know. These magi have "hired" you in the past to do certain nefarious deeds. Of course, you are paid well for these little jobs. That no one has any idea that you were involved in these incidents is a source of pride for you.

You try to maintain a low profile. If people have a hard time describing you at a later date, you have done your job and it will be a lot harder for people to trace things to you. To this end, you try not to obtain any reputations, even among the magi or grogs. The less anybody knows about you, the better you feel. To aid you in remaining incognito, you have become a master of disguise. As a matter of fact, you rarely, if ever, are seen in public as you really are. Many of the newer grogs actually think that you are more than one person. You do little to rectify these conclusions. The more mysterious you remain, the better. Within minutes, you can go from country bumpkin to noble courtier.

There is one small problem. Occasionally, someone gets you so mad that you see red, and then the only thought in your mind is how to kill the creep. You've been working on controlling yourself, but so far, the person you've gotten mad at has always ended up with a slit throat. This can be an inconvenience when there is still information to be gained from the subject in question. Thank God that people have a hard time pinning these deaths on you, for if someone discovered you, they would have to die as well....

You work to be "friends" with almost everyone in the covenant. Their trust usually means that you get secret information. If the situation called for it, you wouldn't hesitate to betray any of your "friends." The intrigues of the covenant are your bread and butter. Amongst the petty in-fighting between the magi, whether to gain *vis* or satisfy the increasing paranoia of an aging magus, you'll find your sustenance until your fate calls your life to an end.

Sicarius Age: 34 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 3

Intelligence +2 Strength +1 Presence +2 Dexterity +2
Perception +2 Stamina +1 Communication +3 Quickness +2

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	1
Empathy	3
Short Sword attack	2
Self Bow	2
Short Sword parry	2
Alertness	2
Pretend	3
Folk Ken	3
Subterfuge	2
Diplomacy	2
Intrigue	2

Virtue:
Empathy

Flaw:
Uncontrolled Anger: a roll of 7+ will cause you to kill the object of your rage

Guile 1
Charm 1
Disguise 3
Acting 2

Personality traits	
Brave	+2
Loyal	-2
Reliable	-1
Tempermental	+2
Compassionate	-3

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Short Sword	+5	+8	+7
Self Bow	+6	+4	+8

Defense
Parry: Short Sword: +4
Dodge: +1

Armor
Type: Leather Hauberk
Protection: 3
Load: 1.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 2 (Str 1) Enc 1

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +4

Fatigue Total: 0

Palestina Age: 26 Gender: Female Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence 0 Strength +3 Presence +1 Dexterity +1
Perception -1 Stamina +4 Communication 0 Quickness 0

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	4
Battle Axe attack	5
Short Sword attack	3
Short Sword parry	3
Athletics	2
Drinking	2

Virtue:
Tough

Flaw:
Compulsion: to participate in combat

Personality traits	
Brave	+3
Loyal	+3
Reliable	+2
Impulsive	+1

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Battle Axe	+6	+8	+20
Short Sword	+2	+8	+10

Defense
Parry: Short Sword: +5
Dodge:

Armor
Type: Chain Hauberk
Protection: 12
Load: 5

Reputation Location Score
Tough Covenant 3

Equipment

Load 6.5(Str 3) Enc 3

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +16

Fatigue Total: +1

Oeric

Argus is your only friend. He's a dog alright, but he's so much more than that. Other people can't see how special he is, that's because he doesn't talk to them like he talks to you. Not out loud of course, but you can hear him all the same. You haven't told anybody that yet, but you think the magi are suspicious, sometimes they look at you funny. If they ever find out, they might try to take him away from you and make him one of their misshapen familiars. You could never allow that, so for now you keep it secret.

Argus started following you one day when you were in town with your father, attending the weekly market. All day this dog followed you around, keeping a fair distance between you and him, but always there a little bit behind you. Later in the evening, you heard a voice calling your name. Looking around, you saw no one you knew. You called out for your mother and father, and yet no one returned your calls. Then you heard it again, your name. Suddenly, you realized that the sound was in your head, not in the air. Turning around, you came face to face with this dog. At first you thought it was a demon, and you ran and ran and ran to get away from the beast from Hell. When you finally stopped running and broke into tears he began to lick your face. You realized that you were still alive, and your soul was intact. A calm overcame you and you began to pet him — from then on the two of you have been bonded souls.

At the covenant, you take care of and train the covenant's hounds. That's all they really ask of you. You're a fairly decent fighter, but your animal handling skills are of the utmost importance. They can always find another dumb fighter, but a decent animal handler — those are rare. You don't associate with the other grogs much, spending most of your time with the animals. You don't act like an animal, but prefer their unconditional love to the petty infighting that all the other covenfolk are involved in. Argus helps you communicate with the rest of the dogs and because of it they give you their loyalty. You are so secure in your job that if a magus asks you to do something with one of your dogs that might be especially dangerous, you might just say no. You aren't afraid of them, you've got Argus.

Paidric

Let's face it. The main reason the magi bring you along on their little expeditions is to make those grungy trail meals taste good. Ever since you were little, you have been able to make food that has tasted great. Heck, even your mud pies tasted good when you were a kid. Now that you have grown, older as well as a bit rounder, you have been putting your cooking skills to good use.

Actually, you were going to inherit your father's inn, but the two of you got in a big fight and you were forced to hit the road when you were 13. You tried to find a job as a cook for someone else, but your moodiness lost you a lot of jobs. Dumping a ladle of soup on a patron's head isn't good service in most inns. A man with a group of hardened warriors saw that fiasco. Laughingly, he asked if you were now free to accept a job at the place where he lived. With no place left to go, you quickly accepted. That's how you wound up at the covenant.

The wizards have been fairly decent to you for the few months that you have been here, and you have hit it off well with the grogs too (it must be that your cooking is better than anything that they have tasted for years). You're actually starting to feel that you might have found a home here. Besides, your temper tantrums are pretty well tolerated, all things considered. The grogs just laugh at you when you get mad, and let you blow off steam. It works out pretty good — they don't steal too much food from the kitchen.

When you're not moody, you tend to be rather jovial and cheerful. Because of this strange dichotomy, it takes a while for people to become good friends; people like you for your cooking skills and jovial spirits, but are put off by the moodiness. Sometimes, when you are feeling particularly morose, you actually find it soothing to engage in combat. The magi don't like to see you risk your life like that, but if you need it, you need it. You're planning on learning how to use a crossbow soon.

Paidric Age: 15 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 2

Intelligence -1 Strength +3 Presence 0 Dexterity +1
Perception 0 Stamina +2 Communication 0 Quickness +1

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	1
Mace (2h) attack	4
Mace (2h) parry	3
Cooking	3
Guile	-1
Knife	1
Drinking	2

Virtue:
Food tastes better when
Paidric cooks it

Flaw:
Obese

Personality traits	
Brave	0
Loyal	+1
Reliable	0
Jovial	+2
Moody	+2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Mace (2h) +7 +8 +14

Defense
Parry: Mace (2h): +5
Dodge: +1

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Cuirass
Protection: 2
Load: 1

Reputation Location Score
Simple Covenant 2

Equipment

Load 1 (Str 3) Enc 0

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +4

Fatigue Total: +2

Oeric Age: 18 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence 0 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity +1
Perception 0 Stamina -2 Communication 0 Quickness +1

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Animal Handling - Dogs	4
Animal Ken	3
Long Spear	2
Dodge	2
Wilderness Survival	2
Dagger	1

Virtue:
Animal Companion:
Argus

Flaw:
Orphan: raised by
step-father

Personality traits	
Brave	-1
Loyal	+3
Reliable	+1
Patient	+2
Kind	+2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Long Spear +11 +5 +9
Dagger +3 +6 +4

Defense
Parry:
Dodge: +3

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Cuirass
Protection: 2
Load: 1

Reputation Location Score
Loyal Magi 1

Equipment

Load 1.5 (Str 1) Enc 0

Physical Description:

Soak Total: 0

Fatigue Total: -2

Turbaton

You're a simple man, born and raised on a farm. The wizards came to your parents' farm when you were not yet a man and bought you for more money than your family would have seen in years. With tearful eyes, you were lead away to the covenant. Now you farm the bodies of the covenant's enemies with your broad sword, and you do it with as much passion as if you were threshing barley. Of course, you have only traded one series of blows before. You've actually never been hurt yet, being a veteran of a single mission, but you're sure that you can stand up to a little pain. At least you think so.

The most interesting thing in your life happened on that one mission with the covenant. The party had travelled south and you had run into people who spoke a different language. Having never before travelled more than a mile from your home, you had difficulty grasping the idea of there being a different language. I mean, if your language worked fine enough for everyone in your area, why couldn't everybody use it? Why bother inventing a whole new language when there was a perfectly useable one where you lived? One of the magi cast a spell to help you understand the concept of foreign languages, but the spell worked too well. While you were in a faerie forest, the different plants and animals in the forest started talking to you in a language which none of the other people, including the magi, could understand! By conversing with the faerie creatures, you helped that mission succeed. Now you are constantly under close scrutiny by the magi. There even has been talk of making you an apprentice, God help you! Lately, you have been visited by a number of faerie creatures, but you've told no one, for fear that they actually will make you an apprentice.

You're loyal to the covenant to the point of death; you have no other home and wouldn't know where to go if the covenant wasn't there. You simply follow orders and keep to yourself, and everything seems to work out just fine.

Woof

"Where did you get a name like Woof?" That question is asked of you time and time again. It all happened so long ago, when you were but a child. A pack of mangy dogs had cornered you and were leaping and barking at you, trying to get the pastry you were eating. Your crying and screaming brought some of adults and they had chased the dogs away. The old folks forgot the incident soon, but the kids didn't. Day in and day out, they would follow you around, barking like a dog, "Woof, woof, woof," until they got you to cry, at which time they would laugh and walk away. Finally, one day, you had enough, and bit the biggest kid on the leg. He screamed and you wouldn't let go. The adults came and still you hung on. After about an hour, you finally let go, too tired to hang on any longer. That kid has the scar to this day. The other kids didn't tease you any longer, but everyone in the village started calling you Woof. It has been so long now, that you can't recall your given name.

You have been at the covenant almost as long as Cyanella. Your specialty is the bow. As a matter of fact, you are the best archer in the entire covenant. Good enough, in fact, that when your leg was maimed in a battle, the magi undertook to find a certain healing spring which restored your leg. As a result of your healing, you now owe a favor to the nymph in the healing spring. This favor can be called upon at anytime, and you will do your best to do what the nymph asks of you.

You have never been married, but have had relationships with a number of men among the grogs. The trouble is, all of them have died in the line of duty. Your heart has been so scarred by this, that you have not loved anyone for five years now. It's hard to love someone that will most likely die in a short period of time. Perhaps it's a curse, that those you love will die shortly thereafter. Best to avoid the men then — if only they would leave you alone! You're no beauty, but you are fun to be around, so you get your full share of attention.

You do your duty well, you're definitely a survivor, and you've begun to socialize more and more as you begin to get over your last love. In battle you are cold and calculating, while at home you are caring and lighthearted. In a few more years, the magi will let you retire at the covenant and maybe then you will find a man among the covenfolk. Until then you live life day by day.

Woof Age: 30 Gender: Female Size: 0 Confidence: 3

Turbaton Age: 17 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence +1 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity 0
Perception +3 Stamina 0 Communication -1 Quickness +1

Intelligence 0 Strength +3 Presence -1 Dexterity -1
Perception 0 Stamina +2 Communication -1 Quickness +1

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Self Bow	5
Short Sword attack	3
Short Sword parry	3
Alertness	3
Scan	2
Charisma	2

Virtue:
Knack: (+2) Self Bow

Flaw:
Faerie Obligation: Owe a favor to nymph at the healing spring

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Broad Sword attack	3
Broad Sword parry	3
Climb	2
Swim	1
Farming	2
Folk Ken	2
Drinking	2

Virtue:
Can understand the languages of faerie creatures

Flaw:
Simple-minded

Personality traits	
Brave	+2
Loyal	+3
Reliable	+1
Vengeful	+2
Love shy	+2

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Self Bow	+5	+8	+8
Short Sword	+2	+7	+8

Defense
Parry: Short Sword: +5
Dodge: -3

Personality traits	
Brave	+2
Loyal	+4
Reliable	+3
Cowardly	+2
Impulsive	+2
Simple	+2

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Broad Sword	+6	+6	+12

Defense
Parry: Broad Sword: +6
Dodge: 0

Reputation	Location	Score
Expert archer	Covenant	2

Armor
Type: Chain Hauberk
Protection: 12
Load: 5

Reputation	Location	Score
Fey	Covenant	2

Armor
Type: Full Ring Mail
Protection: 8
Load: 4

Equipment

Load 5.5 (Str 1) Enc 4

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +12
Fatigue Total: -4

Equipment

Load 4.5 (Str 3) Enc 1

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +10
Fatigue Total: +1

Caerwissen

You are a woodsman, guide and scout first and foremost. Your father was a woodsman, earning his living selling the wood that cooked people's food and kept their houses warm when the weather turned cold. He was killed one winter by a noble who blamed your father for scaring the deer out of the woods. Your mother died of starvation the following winter and you were left alone to fend for yourself. You were so desperate that you turned to the covenant. It had lingered there on the outskirts of your life for years, something of which the local folk talked about in whispers. Starved and numb with the cold, you staggered to the front gate and were taken in. Even the church had turned you away, and yet these mysterious wizards let you, a complete stranger, into their home. The wizards are not evil like people say, they are good, very good, and mean to do only good for the world. That is why you serve them.

You were befriended by the grogs who quickly made use of your wood sense. Many were the days that you would traverse the local woodlands hunting for rabbits and deer. Soon you became a grog yourself and began to accompany the wizards on their travels. You studied the forest to become even better at woodlore, to make yourself truly useful to those who saved your life and gave you something to live for. You want to make them proud of you, to ensure that they never get lost or are ambushed as long as you guide them.

You carry a drake scale on a thong around your neck; it is a memento of the ferocious drake which you helped kill. Around your left leg, you also carry the scars of a wolf bite and memories of another battle. You are friendly with all the other grogs, and are the happiest when you are hunting with them in the forest. You hate nobles however, and would love to get a chance to put your axe through one of their foreheads.

Cyanella

At the ripe old age of 41 (old, that is, for a grog) you are the senior grog at the covenant and the job of grog sergeant has fallen upon your capable shoulders. You attacked this job with relish and have literally beaten discipline into the rag-tag group that you have been given to command. With a couple of exceptions, all of the grogs follow your commands now, but it hasn't always been that easy.

Throughout your life, proving that a woman could do a man's job has been an uphill battle for you. You have had to kick, scratch, claw, punch, swing and otherwise fight your way to respectability. Outside of the covenant you found this an impossible task. If you aren't born into the nobility, nobody gives a damn what a woman thinks. At the covenant, things are different. If you can prove yourself better than the males, the wizards will treat you with respect and will grant you authority. This suits you fine and there have been plenty of broken bones and swallowed prides scattered behind you on your way to the top. Now that you are here, you'll be damned if you are going to let any snot-nosed little kid come in here and undermine your authority.

You maintain a calm and authoritative demeanor. None of the other grogs can be counted among your friends, but this is the price that you have to pay to keep control over the turb. Your main satisfaction in life is the praise the magi give you when a mission is done well and the grogs act properly, as a team. You drive the turb hard, but more of them will survive to thank you later. For now, they don't know what is good for them, so you'll just have to take those piercing stares and petulant sneers. It comes with the territory.

Cyanella Age: 32 Gender: Female Size: 0 Confidence: 4

Intelligence -1 Strength +2 Presence +1 Dexterity -1
Perception -2 Stamina +3 Communication +2 Quickness -1

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	5
Morning Star (1h) attack	4
Knight Shield parry	3
Leadership	3
Charisma	2
Folk Ken	2
Alertness	2
Intimidation	2
Drinking	1

Virtue:
Self Confident

Flaw:
Driving Goal: To prove yourself better than any man.

Personality traits	
Brave	+2
Loyal	+2
Reliable	+2
Cold	+2
Authoritative	+3

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Morning Star(1h) +2 +5 +14

Defense
Parry: Shield: +7
Dodge: -5

Armor
Type: Full Chain
Protection: 14
Load: 6

Reputation Location Score
Hotheaded Covenant 1

Equipment

Load 6 (Str 2) Enc 4

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +17

Fatigue Total: -1

Caerwissen Age: 17 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence -1 Strength 0 Presence 0 Dexterity +3
Perception 0 Stamina +1 Communication +1 Quickness +3

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	5
Hand Axe (2h) attack	2
Self Bow	2
Hand Axe parry	2
Wilderness Survival	2
Alertness	2
Scan	2
Track	2
Climb	2
Athletics	2

Virtue:
Knack: Woodlands (+2)

Flaw:
Deep Sorrow: Death of your parents

Personality traits	
Brave	+1
Loyal	+3
Reliable	+2
Patient	+2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Hand Axe (2h) +4 +7 +9
Self Bow +5 +2 +8

Defense
Parry: Hand Axe: +3
Dodge: 0

Armor
Type: Hard Leather Hauberk
Protection: 5
Load: 2.5

Reputation Location Score
Puissant Covenant 1

Equipment

Load 3 (Str 0) Enc 3

Physical Description:

Soak Total: +6

Fatigue Total: -2

Armiger

Your duty is to be a shield, a shield to protect the magi from all danger. This you do exceedingly well, for no magus has ever died under your vigilant protection. Originally you were hired and trained as the personal shield grog for the magus Conchobar. But now that he has left the covenant for parts unknown, you have become common property, so to speak. It almost seems that every magus wants you to protect them. And why not? You do your job damn well. You realize that some day you will fail in your duty; but you won't live to feel the shame, for when you fail it won't be because you lack courage or stamina, you will be dead.

Unfortunately, there is one black spot on your record. It was the time you caught the plague. Watching yourself slowly and painfully die, reduced to crying and sniveling, was the most horrible thing that ever happened to you. Even after the magi had cured you, it was hard for you to stop thinking of death. Now, death at the point of a sword or spear is something you almost look forward to, but the slow, decaying rot of disease scares you senseless. You also view old age as a type of disease and fear dying that way, old and senile, more than anything else. But being a grog, and a shield grog at that, probably means you're going to die on the field of arms — and for that you are grateful. It certainly makes you a better shield grog. The other grogs think you have a death wish, but that really isn't true. You're just willing to give everything you've got to do your job.

Unlike most of the grogs in the covenant, you can speak Latin. Conchobar painstakingly taught you Latin, so he could command you easily, without having to switch to an unfamiliar tongue. Therefore, you are often used as a translator between the magi and the rest of the grogs and consors. This has given you a reputation as a brown-noser with the rest of the grogs, but most of the name calling is in fun, and nothing serious has come of it. The other grogs are a bit jealous of the high regard with which the wizards hold you, but you figure you'll be dead before you make any real friends.

Braeble

You joined the covenant a few years ago with your younger brother, Narryn. The two of you do just about everything together. Being older and wiser than Narryn, you always have to watch out for his headstrong ways; he thinks that he can do just about anything. At times you actually believe that may be true, he has grown up to be quite a man, but usually you have to keep him out of trouble. You care greatly for your brother, he's all you've got left, you just wish he would listen to you a little bit more and give you the respect you deserve.

Your family was left homeless when your village was burned during a baronial war and over the next few years most of them died of starvation. You and Narryn became mercenaries early on, but it was dangerous and unrewarding work. You had small stints in different mercenary armies, but the food and pay were terrible. As the glamour of the mercenary life started to fade, you started to look for something more permanent. By mercenaries' standards, working for the magi is about as permanent as you get. The wizards are strange and mysterious; life around them is far from boring. Besides, the pay is good and you are guaranteed a clean, warm place to sleep when you're not on the road.

You've given your word to the magi that you will lay your life down for them. This is an oath that you take very seriously. You'd never knowingly break it. Actually, you have a hard time telling a lie and feel that honor and honesty are all that separates you from the serfs. You usually manage to keep your temper in check, but sometimes your anger gets out of hand and causes you to do things in an unmilitaristic manner. These black spots on your record are hard to erase, but you work hard to make up for them.

Braeble Age: 25 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 3

Intelligence +1 Strength +4 Presence -3 Dexterity +1
Perception +1 Stamina +4 Communication -3 Quickness 0

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	3
Bastard Sword (1h)	5
Round Shield parry	4
Riding	2
Athletics	2
Guile	-3
Drinking	1
Carpentry	1

Virtue:
Tough

Flaw:
Dutybound

Personality traits	
Brave	+4
Loyal	+5
Reliable	+3
Angry	+1
Calm	+2
Impulsive	+2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Bastard Sword(1h) +8 +9 +17

Defense
Parry: Round Shield: +7
Dodge: -1

Armor
Type: Scale Hauberk
Protection: 9
Load: 4.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 5 (Str 4) Enc 1

Physical Description:

Soak Total: **+13**

Fatigue Total: **+3**

Armiger Age: 16 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence 0 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity +2
Perception 0 Stamina +1 Communication 0 Quickness +2

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	2
Hand Axe attack	3
Kite Shield parry	4
Speak Latin	3
Survival	2

Virtue:
Resilient Constitution

Flaw:
Fear of old age or catching a disease

Personality traits	
Brave	+3
Loyal	+3
Reliable	+2
Tenacious	+2

Weapon 1st Atk Dam
Hand Axe +2 +7 +11

Defense
Parry: Kite Shield: +9
Dodge: -3

Armor
Type: Full Ring Mail
Protection: 8
Load: 4

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 6 (Str 1) Enc 5

Physical Description:

Soak Total: **+9**

Fatigue Total: **-4**

Davis

You spent your childhood down by the docks, watching the boats come in and helping out the sailors wherever you could. The afternoons were spent swimming in the river with the other kids from the docks area. As you grew older, you began to go with the ships, sailing to exotic ports, both near and far. To be of use in warding off pirates or other raiders, you learned the shortsword and began to practice with the throwing knife.

Perhaps it was fate that brought the water magus to you at the point in your life when being a sailor was getting a bit boring. You had first seen her on the boat. She was travelling as a passenger accompanied by some personal guards. There was something wild and untamed about her that you couldn't put your finger on. She didn't act like the other women you had come to know back home; she was strong, proud, and very beautiful. Then the storm hit, threatening to capsize the ship. As you were praying for God to save your soul, you saw her speak some words and suddenly the sea went glassy smooth around the ship. About twenty-five yards out, you could see the storm raging onward. Throughout the night, she kept the storm at bay through great exertion on her part. Finally the storm subsided. With fearful eyes, the crew continued with the journey, always keeping an eye on the "devil" in their midst. But you understood what you had seen, she was a person of power, one of the ancient sea gods who had finally decided to emerge from the sea again. When she had asked you to come with her to her home, you didn't hesitate to say yes.

Life at the covenant hasn't been quite as exciting as you thought, but it sure beats eating stale bread. You miss the sea and its wild ways however, and take every opportunity the covenant offers to get back to it. You get along well with the other grogs, being an outgoing person at heart. So far, you have been able to drink any other grog under the table, though a few have really pushed you. Due to your travelling abroad, you are a source of knowledge on the styles and customs of the kingdoms around the covenant. Because you've spent most of your life on the great, wide seas, you don't like to be cooped up indoors for more than short periods of time. If, for some reason, you are kept inside for a long period of time, you get irrational and can't really be held responsible for your actions. You just hate caves and caverns, and don't like the mountains all that much either.

Haniel LeBarre

You were christened Daniel LeBarre, but you were never able to pronounce it right, saying "haniel" instead of "daniel." Eventually, everyone started to pronounce your name "haniel" and it's been your name ever since.

Your parents lived near the covenant, so you never had the ignorant awe with which the common people usually treat the magi. The covenant seemed like an exciting place to make a living — good pay, good food, little work. It sure beats pulling weeds on some rocky plot of land. Amongst the villagers you grew up with, you quickly gained a reputation for having an eagle-eye. Your keen sight makes you a natural scout and lookout and this is the niche you fill in the covenant. The magi recognized your talent as a youngster, so when you asked to join the covenant, you were quickly accepted.

Being quiet by nature allows you to hear and see things that most people would commonly miss. Normally you're pretty straightforward with people, telling them what you think, though your brusque manner can sometimes hide the truth within its brevity. Your short bow is special to you; your father hand-crafted it and gave it to you when you joined the covenant. It is near you at all times.

The magi use you as a tracker and scout. The years you spent running around this neck of the woods, playing Catch the Dagger with the other kids, make you a natural for this position. This suits you fine, since it allows you to be off alone and keeps you out of the thick of the battles.

Haniel Age: 20 Gender: Male Size: -1 Confidence: 2

Intelligence +3 Strength +1 Presence +2 Dexterity +1
Perception +4 Stamina 0 Communication +1 Quickness +1

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	1
Tracking	3
Stealth	2
Area Lore	3
Dodge	2
Short Bow	3
Dagger	1
Subterfuge	-2
Storytelling	1
Alertness	2
Scan	2

Virtue:
Lithe

Flaw:
Obsessed: To keep his bow with him at all times

Personality traits	
Brave	+2
Loyal	+1
Reliable	+1
Cowardly	+1
Reticent	+2
Impulsive	+1

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Self Bow	+7	+7	+8
Dagger	+3	+6	+4

Defense
Parry:
Dodge: +4

Armor
Type: Leather Hauberk
Protection: 3
Load: 1.5

Reputation Location Score
Sharp-eyed Village 2

Equipment

Load 1.5 (Str 1) Enc 0

Soak Total: +4

Fatigue Total: +2

Physical Description: You are smaller and slighter of build than average, and you have one fewer body and fatigue level because of this.

Davis Age: 21 Gender: Male Size: 0 Confidence: 1

Intelligence +2 Strength +1 Presence 0 Dexterity 0
Perception +2 Stamina 0 Communication 0 Quickness 0

Starting Abilities	Score
Speak Own Language (4)	4
Brawl (1)	3
Short Sword attack	2
Short Sword parry	2
Boating	3
Drinking	3
Storytelling	2
Climb	2
Throwing knife	1
Alertness	2
Scan	2

Virtue:
Well Travelled

Flaw:
Claustrophobia

Personality traits	
Brave	+1
Loyal	+1
Reliable	+2
Obsessive	+2
Flippant	+1

Weapon	1st	Atk	Dam
Short Sword	+2	+6	+7
Throwing knife	-3	0	+2

Defense
Parry: Short Sword: +4
Dodge: -2

Armor
Type: Heavy Leather Hauberk
Protection: 5
Load: 2.5

Reputation Location Score

Equipment

Load 3 (Str 1) Enc 2

Soak Total: +5

Fatigue Total: -2

Physical Description:



Dialectic on the Wizards of Hermes

An excerpt from a report by Brother Reginald of the Abbey of Albernion, to the Diet of Avignon, the Year of Our Lord 1217. This report caused quite a stir among the clergy and nobility, as it was based on Father Reginald's sojourn among the magi of Belforay, and served to dispel some of the more outrageous legends concerning the wizards' ties to the forces of Satan. It has found its way into the libraries of many covenants, for many magi read it to understand how mortals view the Order. Some even value it as thoughtful criticism.

Esteemed Brethren in Christ:

Of course you know of the Magi, those tormented souls who ignore the words of our faith and seek the evil knowledge from the past so as to acquire a mystical power. For long we have ignored these wizards, thinking them merely to be misguided spirits, but I have found them to be potent practitioners of the magical arts, and to be feared. I have recorded, at the request of our Holy Father, all I have learned of them, that we might understand what these outcasts from society are truly like. I hope that not only will my manuscript enable you to guard against the danger they pose to us, but to rid you of some of your unfounded fears of them as well.

You must forgive me if I speak of matters of which you already know, but it is my feeling that I must ensure that every detail of their lives be stated clearly and without the clouding of fear and hate.

Magi all belong to the great Order of Hermes, their loose fellowship that guards against the conflicts that arose in the days of old. Today peace reigns among the members because of the strength of the Order and the wisdom of its Code. The wizards, today, all follow the Hermetic Order's centuries old traditions and recognize its tribunals' authority over all Hermetic concerns. Yet we should not fear them because they are united, for their Order only prevents conflicts between them and does not really serve to allow them to work together as a whole. The only time the wizards work with one another is within the safety of their own covenant.

Like-thinking members of the Order of Hermes live together in communities, which they call covenants. One cannot help but notice how close this name is to coven, yet despite the similarity, I am convinced that there is a vast difference. These wizards are not diabolists. While they are not one in the Spirit with the community of the Church, they are not hostile to the One True Faith either. In many ways their "covenants" even resemble the monastery in which I have resided for so many years.

Because of this similarity, I immediately understood much of how their covenant works and how the inhabitants

think. They are called covenants because each of the members makes a certain solemn oath to abstain from certain actions against their fellows and to resolve problems in the spirit of good faith. It seems the wizards are more frightened of each other than they are of the dangerous magies they weave.

Many magi have pet animals that are more than simply pets and that are also more than simply animals. The witch's black cat is well known, and magi form similar attachments to beasts of all varieties, even creatures of legendary nature. I saw, for instance, a painting of a wizard standing beside a small dragon. Upon inquiring I was told "the drake was Liagroth's familiar." This seems extreme but I little doubt the veracity of this statement; the wizards have no need to lie. Wizards show remarkable attachment towards these beasts, and seem to have formed intimate relationships with them. Because they do not marry, their friendship with their familiar may often take its place. While it is certainly a sin, the wizards value them above all else.

Because the wizards can rarely be friends with one another, they often make friends with those who are educated or wise, but are without magical power. Indeed some wizards even thought of me as a friend, though in truth I could not bring myself to call them the same. The friends of the magi can be found in many a town and dell, but most of them live with the wizards in their covenants. Many of them even seem like good people of God, so it is hard to understand why they endanger their souls by aiding the wizards. I met a hermit at the covenant, a holy man from the forest of Albien. When I inquired as to his purpose, he replied that he was doing God's work. He did not have the look of a mad man, yet I find it difficult to accept his words.

The magi also employ guards, whom they call "grogg." The magi say it means "hero" in some ancient language of unknown background, but a good monk in Sebantian monastery, a scholar of ancient languages, has assured me this is not so. Some wizards treat their warriors with contempt and scorn, and use magic upon them. Though I have witnessed a few demonstrations of genuine friendship between wizard and grogg, they are mostly Lord and Vassal. The grogg are little more than unscrupulous mercenaries who have stooped so low as to fight for a sorcerer's silver. Yet the grogg seem to have a strange respect for most of their masters, and fight fiercely for them. I do not believe it is any sort of magical compulsion, nor is it the coins they receive alone. Perhaps it is the freedom these grogg find within the confines of the covenant, and its usefulness as a refuge from all the complications of the outside world. Perhaps even these brutal mercenaries value the peace and solitude which they find at the covenant.

Every wizard has a private laboratory, and in it they study, research, and brew foul strains of ancient magies by the week and month. In the time I spent at Belforay, one magus did not come from his laboratory the entire six months I spent there. The only reason I knew anyone was there at all was that one evening I spied a tray of food being brought into his rooms. The sanetum (a wizard's laboratory and quarters) of each wizard is designated with a warning mark. If a magus enters another's laboratory, that can be taken as *prima facie* evidence that the other wizard was invading the sanetum. If one wizard is killed in another sanetum, the action is considered to have been one of self defense. For this reason, none but the most friendly and trusting of wizards will enter another wizard's sanetum. Their study of arcane lore makes them fundamentally mistrustful and cautious.

Just as we in the church use Latin, so do the magi. Their Latin is of a different nature than ours; their seminal texts come from a more ancient time in Rome. The wizards claim that they employ classical Latin, while we use a hybridized clerical Latin; this indeed may be true. I found myself quite able to read most of their texts. Glad was I that our Holy Father had given me a remission of all sins I might be forced to perform prior to entering the covenant, for much sacrilege did I read in their tomes.

Some wizards lead lives full of splendor and riches, and others exist as would the most pious of friars. Money, wealth, and the eastern trappings of luxury do not seem to interest most of them. The search for knowledge of both mundane and magical affairs seems to occupy most of their attention. They do not desire the wealth of the church but simply seem to want to be left alone. As I left the covenant where I was residing, several wizards made this clear to me. From their countenance, I judge what they say to be true. These wizards have monastic temperaments and wish to have nothing to do with society at large.

When magi greet one another, they cross their arms over their chests, with their hands closed. They never shake hands as is common among most folk, nor do they ever bow to one another, nor kiss the hand of another; they consider one another to be equal. Two magi who are very close friends may hold both arms towards one another and elench hands, but this is very rare. The most virtuous of the apprentices greet their master but never look directly into their master's eyes — rather, they look to the ground until they are given permission to look up by their master. This practice is often continued even after apprenticeship is completed. Other apprentices, more rebellious and proud, ignore this tradition. Some wizards honor those whom they respect by offering the same submission to them. This is a deeply symbolic act for most wizards, since most wizards will admit inferiority to no one.

The wizards have the peculiar belief that they are somehow above other folk, that they have loftier thoughts and ideals, and are aware of knowledge long gone from mortal ken. They are arrogant and haughty and clearly have forgotten our Lord's words about such vanity.

Belforay was inadequately guarded, by the standards of most of the castles I have visited; indeed there was only one guard post for the entire citadel. But the wizards do not seriously fear attack, for their magic gives them warning of the things that cause them danger. I have been told that this is merely a characteristic of Belforay and that not all covenants are so ill-defended. Nearly all covenants weave a spell around their citadel which gives them magical protection against invaders and warning of magical serying. They call this enchantment their "Aegis of the Hearth."

The government of the Order of Hermes seems to be entirely made up of infrequent tribunals of magi. These loosely organized gatherings have powers which are nebulous, but at times wield incredible authority. I was not allowed to witness a tribunal, but I was told they are highly ritualized affairs, in which decisions are made through the casting of ballots, in the form of objects called sigils — a similar process to that used in ancient Greece. It is this antiquated form of government that seems to breed the strife and chaos in this arcane order of wizards.

There are many minor and major squabbles among the wizards, but the violence of such antagonisms seems to be largely held in check by their Code of Hermes. I found the wizards more willing to obey the law than many Knights who have taken the holy vows and fight as Templars for our Holy Church. They all have given an oath to uphold and abide by the code; this pledge is the only thing that holds them together. When they do have a disagreement they will generally agree to engage in a duel of immense magical potency, a ritual which they call *certamen*. I was able to witness many of these duels, and found them fascinating and terrifying affairs, for on such occasions one can see the magic which they all hold, unleashed to its fullest extent. I was told that the ritual they use to begin the duel safely contains the magic, but I was still unsettled by what I saw. Most conflicts between the wizards, major and minor, are settled through *certamen*. In the Order of Hermes, it is the strong that rule, and there is no Church to protect the weak.

These words which I have signed, I pledge hold only the record of what I saw and heard in my sojourn among the wizards of Hermes, and are the truth as far as I know it.

Your humble servant in Christ,

Brother
Reginald



The History of the Order

This text, as penned by Vernasius, presents the basic history of the Order of Hermes, and is the standard discourse on the origins of the Order. All apprentices are taught from this tome, and many magi refer to it during their studies. Copies of this document have even been found in the Papal library at the Vatican. This excerpt is from the prologue of the tome.

The Order began in the days of Rome, being directly descended from the cult of Hermes, the Greek god of magic. Roman members were priests of Mercury. They were able to work powerful magics in prolonged rituals involving many participants. Some scholars trace the Order back to ancient Egypt or Persia, and claim that the Order is an eternal institution taking different forms in different ages. Whatever the case, the Order of Hermes did not take its current form until after the disintegration of Roman power in the West.

Since the cult of Hermes required difficult rituals and broad support, it lost much of its power as Rome decayed. When Emperor Constantine brought Christianity to the Roman Empire, the cult of Hermes progressively moved out of the cities and into the wilderness, out of political power and into seclusion. Already it had lost much of its religious vigor, and its members were, by this time, more interested in increasing their personal influence and knowledge of the world than in conducting rituals devoted to Hermes and the protection of the Empire.

By the time the western Roman Empire had dissolved, the cult had already been formally disbanded, and individual magi were forced to survive on their own. This had one particularly profound effect: the magi had to modify the magic they knew, which relied on large gatherings, a temple, and other such resources no longer available to a lone magus. Using other sources (possibly Greek or Egyptian), the wizards developed and began to use another kind of magic more suitable for an individual practitioner.

Naturally, the magi still tried gathering into groups to share their knowledge, but on the whole these groups were short-lived. These were dark days, when wizards' hands were raised against one another, even as barbarian warlords, aristocratic Roman landowners, and secular-minded clergy struggled over the shards of the Empire. Each magus hoarded precious secrets, leading to jealousy and distrust. A wizard who could slay a fellow magus would then be free to loot the library and magical holdings of the deceased, and therefore mortal combat was common. Wizards in this period, unwilling to trust one another, rarely worked together. Without the benefit of shared wisdom, the knowledge of the magi dwindled over the

years. As even apprentices could not be fully trusted, the numbers of magi in the world sharply dropped. Many believed, with good reason, that civilization in western Europe had come to an end.

Some time in the 8th century, a group of far-sighted wizards gathered in the Black Forest in a place called Dörenmar. Led by the wizard Bonisagus, they formalized a system of magic that would allow them to share what they knew. Bonisagus also shared powerful knowledge with them: the ritual of the *Parma Magica*, which protected them from each others' spells. These shields gave them the assurance they needed to work together, providing enough security that they could swear an oath not to slay each other or interfere in each others' work.

Since these magi could work together and share what they learned, they grew quickly in power. They realized that with the power of magic at their hands, the only other mortals they needed to fear were other magi. Systematically they sought other wizards out and offered them membership in the newly reformed Order. Those who joined could be trusted, but those who refused to join were still a threat, and the Order eliminated them or drove them away. It is because of their mammoth efforts to consolidate wizards into the Order of Hermes that almost all of the wizards in Europe are members and follow the Hermetic tradition today. Nevertheless, isolated, independent wizards and even groups of wizards continue to exist, scattered across the continent. They are typically hedge wizards, with relatively minor powers; but they are not bound by the Order's Code of Conduct, and so are regarded as a threat to the Order's security and stability. Attempts to eradicate or convert them since the days at Dörenmar have generally not been considered worth the effort.

The official year of the founding of the Order is A.D. 767, when magi from all over Europe converged at Dörenmar, approved the Code of the Order of Hermes that they had wrangled over for months, and swore to uphold it. The wizards of Europe, now free to cooperate and having eliminated the major threat to their lives, grew and prospered. The modern Age of Magic was begun, and the quest to find the meaning of magic itself was started. That history shall not be a part of my Codex, for as we speak it is still being written into the sands of time.





The Code of Hermes

The following article is excerpted from the tome *Ars Magica*, written by the famed mage, Manifestius of the House Bonisagus. Manifestius was known throughout the Order for his competence as a scholar and teacher. *Ars Magica* is the first text that nearly every apprentice reads as he or she begins to delve into the arts. It contains sections on everything from the theory of magic and the casting of spells to explanations of the Code and its various amendments.

The Code of Hermes is what binds our Order together. Without the Code, each magus would be pitted against the others in a struggle for resources. With the Code, each magus knows his place within the Order and the place of the Order in society. Only by following our few simple laws is the peace between us maintained.

Of primary importance to the founders was peace among the magi. Then, as now, wizards were so individualistic that actual cooperation was rare; thus "peace" is narrowly defined as lack of destructive conflict. The rules governing crimes, punishment, and *certámen* are mostly designed to eliminate or reduce sources of conflict.

Of secondary importance to them were relations with the rest of society. The Code dictates peaceful relations: magi are instructed not to interfere with the workings of mortal politics, lest the Order of Hermes be drawn into wars and feuds.

Thirdly, the Code explains how important it is not to offend the supernatural powers of the world. Deals with Infernal powers are strictly forbidden, since contact with devils can corrupt even powerful magi and endanger the entire Order.

In swearing to uphold the Code, an apprentice swears not to endanger the Order and its members. Any magus who nevertheless brings the Order into jeopardy leaves himself liable to be cast out of the Order.

Unlike Gaul, the Code of Hermes is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the various offences and breaches of the Code. The second is a list of punishments for these offenses. The first section is itself divided into two parts. First are examples of Low Crimes. These include trespasses onto another wizard's claimed territory, breaking an oath (an oath which has been witnessed by a Quaesitori), disagreement with the common decision of all wizards in one's House or covenant, entering another wizard's sanctum (their laboratory) without permission, or failure to carry out the instructions of a tribunal. In each case, the offense consists of one magus refusing to abide by the express wishes of other magi. In fact, Low Crime is a misnomer, as they are more of a dispute between magi than a breach of the Code. These crimes do not break the oath that the wizard takes during initiation, but they are often not without their repercussions. The principle that guides justice for Low Crimes is "an eye for an eye."

Disputes between magi are resolved through *certámen* or the award of reparations at a Tribunal. Often a ruling by a Quaesitori is considered adequate grounds for the resolution of a Low Crime. If a wizard refuses to abide by the Quaesitori's ruling, the Quaesitori may refuse to serve the covenant any

longer. As this would deprive the covenant of a formal witness and signifier to important events, such as the admittance of new members, it would be a severe setback. It would in effect separate a covenant from the society of wizards — any oaths made would not have the power of the Code behind them.

Punishments for Low Crimes fall into two categories: retaliation and reparation. Retaliation is damaging the aggressor in amount equivalent to the damage the aggressor has done. Reparation is forcing the aggressor to make up for the aggression. Often the two are combined. For instance, it is common for a Quaesitori to rule that an aggressor must add to the library of the victim for a certain amount of time. The aggressor is punished by loss of valuable time, while the victim benefits by the addition of knowledge to his personal library or that of his covenant.

Much more heinous are those offenses called High Crimes. These include refusing to abide by a decision made by *certámen*, spying on other magi by magical means, stealing *vis* or tomes from another wizard, destroying a magus' magic devices, raising the ire of mortals against the Order, slaying a magus' apprentice, crippling a magus, slaying a magus' familiar, slaying a magus, depriving a magus of magical ability, or dealing with the minions of Satan. In each case, the crime of the offender brings serious injury to another magus or the Order.

The punishments for High Crimes are ranked from Lesser to Greater. The least of these is the destruction of the offending magus' laboratory, so that he must acquire a new one before continuing his studies. The next is the confiscation or destruction of his magic devices or stores of raw *vis*, thus depriving him of his stores of power. The next is the execution of his familiar, which causes great pain and loss. The next is striking off his hand or removing his tongue, hampering his ability to cast spells. The next is a condoning of a Wizards' War, which permits the offended magus to destroy or loot the property of the defending magus. The most severe punishment is the calling of a Wizards' March by a council of magi.

The Code of Hermes prescribes neither a specific way to determine guilt or innocence, nor one to pass sentences which will be universally enforced. The Founders could not come to agreement, so individual tribunals use their own methods. Ours in fact is a justice of tradition rather than law. The precedents set by tribunals since the founding of the Order constitute the bounds of acceptable activity and the types of punishments which are suitable for a crime.

Over the years, the magi of the Order have interpreted the Code in various ways, producing a large amount of writing on how various disputes have been settled. These writings are used as precedents for settling later disputes, but magi do not swear to uphold these peripheral writings, so they are not bound to live by them. Nevertheless, they are useful in coming to an reasonable decision when two magi have a dispute. The Quaesitori give the peripheral code broad import and base most of their decisions upon it. To change precedent is difficult without the full support of a formal Tribunal of the Order.



Companions

Companions work with a covenant for a variety of reasons. When you create a character it is always important to explain the motivation(s) for his or her sojourn with the covenant. Companions are not typically hired by the covenant as are the grogs, nor do they live there out of tradition as do the magi.

Their reasons for being at the covenant are as unique as they are.

There are, however, some general reasons commonly seen, and below we list 13 of them. Look over this list, but do not let yourself be limited by our imagination. Use them, rather, to come up with your own ideas. Establishing a motivation for your work at the covenant will not only add realism to your character, but will be the genesis of a few engaging stories as well.

1. You are hired by the covenant because of your skills and talents. It's a straight money deal, and while you are paid well — damn well, often your loyalty lasts only as long as the money does. You will tend to have a mercenary-type personality, but may slowly, over time, come to genuinely enjoy your duties and give honest loyalty and trust to the wizards.

2. You have come to the covenant to escape persecution. In the outside world, you are not accepted by society and may even be hunted. At the covenant, you can avoid this constant harassment and are protected from your enemies — it is your place of sanctuary. Your persecution might be based on your religion, appearance, family ties or even sex (typically only noble women were accorded any form of respect). You might be an escaped criminal, have political enemies, or be wrongly accused of a crime.

3. You use the covenant as a refuge from the turmoil of the outside world. Life is complicated and confusing, and you have always sought a way to lead a simple life — yet you are not spiritual enough to join the church or become a hermit. You have come to the covenant to escape it all; this is your place of refuge. It is unfortunate, you think, that you must periodically accompany the wizards on their expeditions. It doesn't happen too often, and you get well rested up between times, but you still don't like it. Security, safety, and peace and quiet are what you look for in life, and here you have been able to find it.

4. The wizards offer you power, more power than you can find anywhere else in the world. They have more power to give, and are more willing to let others have a piece of it. You intend to convince them that you deserve some of that power, whether it be magical powers or the mantle of authority. When you stand by a wizard's side you stand a little taller, people respect you (or maybe it's simply fear — but who cares?). Perhaps you are looking for the chance to rise in the ranks of the covenfolk, or simply want to get enough influence and contacts (or magical artifacts) from your work with the wizards that you can strike out on your own.

5. You were born at the covenant, and it is the only home you have really ever known. You are very loyal because the people at the covenant, wizards included, are all part of your extended family. To betray them would be unthinkable — or perhaps your character is an exception to that rule, a black sheep who just doesn't have anywhere else to go yet. Whatever the case, you probably do not understand the outside world very well and are fearful of it. The strange and exotic confines of the covenant are all you really know, and you believe your life to be a very normal and ordinary affair. You cannot imagine any other way to live it.

6. You have an obligation of service to the covenant for a certain amount of time. Perhaps a wizard saved your life, or your clan owes the covenant a favor. Whatever the particular reason, you are serving the wizards because that is the honorable thing to do. Your debts must be repaid. Perhaps you don't even like the wizards, or are afraid of them. Once the obligation is completed, you might stay on, simply because you enjoy what you are doing.

7. You are magically compelled to serve the wizards, and do not do so willingly. You may be constantly trying to escape this control, while another part of you fights to prevent you from leaving — a fascinating dilemma to role-play (but it requires a nasty sort of wizard to take responsibility for casting the spell in the first place). Perhaps the spell is so complete that you don't even consciously realize that you are under a compulsion, but believe that you "like it here." In various circumstances, your true feelings might emerge and make themselves known.

8. Something you desire has drawn you to the covenant. Perhaps you are in love with a person who lives there, or you secretly seek the eyes of Quendalon, which you know to be hidden somewhere in the covenant. You are looking for something, and once you find it, a new goal may keep you at the covenant or cause you to part ways.

9. You have personal reasons for being involved with the wizards, and you might not like to talk about it. It might be a feeling of defiance to your father or it could be to spite an old lover. You want to use the wizards to get revenge on an enemy, or to show your family that you are worth something after all. Perhaps the wizards are helping the world and you believe that by helping them, you are helping others.

10. Spy — you are actually a spy for the Church, for a noble, or even for another covenant. This is a tricky role, because it might hurt the characters of the other players and perhaps their real-world feelings. If you do it right, however — fairly and without spite — it can be very exciting. At least one other person in the troupe must know about your background, so that your ulterior purpose can be woven into different stories and there will be a chance for your discovery.

11. You have a lust for knowledge, and it is here at the covenant where your craving is best fulfilled. They have more books here than you have ever seen; many of them are extremely antiquated and of great value. They even have some texts in the original Greek. What's more, the wizards themselves are scholars of broad education, and there is much you can learn from them. Here at the covenant, you are generally given the freedom to study whatever you wish, and are not forced to waste your time on subjects in which you have no interest.

12. You like and admire a particular wizard and find him or her to be interesting and engaging company. You are certainly free thinking, for most people could never befriend a wizard; you may even enjoy swimming against the flow. Perhaps you met the wizard when he or she was out on an expedition and have been friends ever since, or maybe you began your acquaintanceship through letters. You continue to travel with the wizards out of a true sense of companionship; you enjoy it for its own sake.

13. You've joined the covenant just for the heck of it. You have been roaming the world for some time now, always looking for something new, for something different, for something to capture your imagination. Well, now you have found it. The covenant is the most exotic place you have ever been to, and for a while at least, you plan to stick around and see what pops up. It just might be worth the wait.

Companions need to find out how they fit into the hierarchy of the adventuring party. Wizards are ultimately the person in charge, yet how does your character help make the final decisions; how will you differentiate yourself from the grogs?

In most role-playing games there is no leader in the "adventuring group." It's a benevolent anarchy, and decisions are typically made by the first person who decides to do something: "I'm sick of all this talk. I go over and pull the lever...." In *Ars Magica*TM, things are done a bit differently. The wizards are in charge, and ultimately what they say, goes. This creates problems when players can't figure out what they *can* do if they aren't playing a magus. They just aren't used to role-playing in a hierarchy. The secret is figuring out a way to fit in, and then play out your role in that niche as completely as you can. If you are captain of the grogs, spend your time making sure they are in line, and lead all the battles. If you are good at talking and making deals, spend your time advising the wizard(s) and getting the party out of trouble. If you are a forester, be very loyal and steadfast to the wizard, but use the freedom that your companion status gives you to go off scouting on your own.

There is a great deal of room for companions to play a role in the decision making, as advisors and leaders of the grogs. Wizards often leave the management of the group up to the companions and worry solely about their own shrouded purposes. They just say, "Take us to Foix, I wish to speak to the Count." Then it's up to the companions to get the group to Foix, and the Count's castle. Companions have to fit in the middle between wizards and grogs, and split the difference between the two.

In real life, we are often thwarted in our aims and desires by those who have more power than we do. It is not unusual to resign yourself to obeying the wishes and commands of a parent, boss, or superior. People deal with this in many different ways: Some kids rebel, while others are still living with their parents when they are 40; some people are sullen, some lash out, some become indifferent. Figure out how your companion reacts to obeying the wizards' commands, and then decide how well your character actually obeys them. Don't always talk back to the wizards, but try to react to any personality conflicts between you and the wizards in a realistic manner.

Try to fit yourself into the leadership structure; the wizards may be officially in charge, but often they are not the leaders. The wizards are so caught up in their esoteric world of magic and thought, that they do not have the time or expertise to be the leaders themselves. They may see it as an unwanted hassle that they don't wish to deal with. It's something they leave up to the companions. The expedition probably requires someone to lead the grogs (usually a companion), and a person to handle problems with the common folk. Wizards often have a companion or two whom they rely upon for advice. While they have the final voice, they inevitably rely on others to aid them. Some wizards rely on their companions so much, that they let them make most of the decisions — "Well of course you do know what is best; go ahead."

In short: Remember that you must fit into the group somehow, even as an "outsider;" be aware of your place and consciously develop it, to give your companion a more believable personality and role.

Finally, an essential part of the development of a companion may be understanding their lives outside of the covenant. Grogs typically have simple, straightforward backgrounds, while wizards most often have lived the greater part of their lives cloistered in a covenant. It is the companions who most often have important outside lives and histories, and this background must be detailed.

When designing a companion, it is very tempting to pick virtues and flaws to make your companion as powerful as possible. In a way it's part of the fun of the character creation process — to see how powerful you can get your character, to make the most of what you've got. However, there are many ways to make the most of something. In the quest for power one often forgets other pleasures — like role-playing. If you pick your virtues and flaws so that you will have an interesting character to play, rather than simply a powerful one, you will never lack the desire to play that character. We tend to get bored of our powerful characters, since the pursuit of power is much more interesting than its retention.

Remember that weaknesses characterize a person as much as a strengths — it takes both to create a complete character. Choose your flaws with as much care as you pick your virtues, and make sure they make sense. If you avoid the temptations of mini-maxing, your character will be all the more potent and playable.



The Life of a Grog

Following is a speech given by an unnamed Grog Sergeant to some new recruits, as recorded by Fugacious the Wanderer of House Ex Miscellanea in a letter to a colleague at Mistridge. Copies of this section of his letter are found in many covenant libraries and read with great amusement by many magi.

I'll not mince words. You're a grog, and you're going to die a grog. You're a mercenary for a bunch of people most folk won't talk about, much less associate with. From this moment on, you're an outcast, and you're stuck here. There ain't no place you can go.

It's going to be your job to protect the wizards of this place when they journey out into dangers unknown. It's your duty to risk your life to protect theirs. Am I making myself clear?

Now if any of you scallywags intend to live to a ripe old age, you are a fool. You're going to die writhing on a bloody battlefield with a spear through your gut, so get used to the idea.

But let me tell you something — there ain't no better way to die. Everyone's gotta go sometime, and at least you won't waste away on a sickbed losing control of your God given functions and being generally a disgusting sight. No, when you go down, your sword will be coated in the blood of valiant enemies.

And in the meantime, you'll enjoy the protection and the silver of the most powerful people on earth. Lots of people will avoid you in town, and sometimes they'll say that you smell of brimstone, but you know you've got a good job. The wizards are going to trust you, and eventually, if you do your job, they'll respect you as well.

So be proud to be a grog. Follow orders, fight hard, and work damn hard to preserve the lives of our masters, the wizards. This is our code, and you'll live and die by it. Now get in line, and get ready for your first drill.

The Grog Pack

The following dissertation on the grog pack was prepared by the autocrat Romulus of the covenant Val Negra under the direction of the magus Vancasitum of House Flambeau. Their viewpoint is rather authoritarian and rigid, but their book "The Practical Guide to Expeditions" is thought to be essential reading for those magi about to undertake their first excursion outside the covenant.

Each grog should carry in their pack or on their person the following items, usable when needed or when a magus commands it (a person of lesser authority may be substituted for a magus in circumstances where the magus is not present or is busy elsewhere):

Five paces of hawser (stout rope). Flint and tinder. Two torches. A woolen blanket. A skin to be filled with two parts water and one part wine. Another skin filled only with wine may be carried with the permission of a magus. Biscuit, cheese, and dried, salted fish, the quantity of which will support the grog for a number of days, as ordered by a magus. Several empty sacks and pouches for the transportation of goods acquired at the order of a magus. Any personal acquisitions must be transported in the grog's own pouches, which should be worn on the left hip. Scraps of cloth and leather for bandaging wounds and repairing torn clothes. A small flask of oil and sharpening stones to care for weapons. A heavy cloak against inclement weather. Fish-bone needles and deer-gut thread for sewing. Any equipment the grog or magus deems necessary for fulfillment of other skills which the grog may possess.

In addition, at least one grog among the group will carry waterskins, biscuit, cheese, dried, salted fish, woolen blankets, and leather tarps for tents for use by all magi present. Also to be distributed among the grogs in the group are:

One set of pots and pans for cooking. Two grappling hooks. Ten iron spikes (hand's-length) and one wooden mallet. Two lanterns with one extra flask of oil.

The gear that each grog carries will be arranged so that a large majority of the load may be dropped at a moment's notice in emergency situations, such as a hurried preparation to fight off attacking enemies of the magi. The *consors* in command of the grogs also have the duty to order them to carry any other gear that may be necessary for the fulfillment of the mission. It should be kept in mind, though, that overloaded grogs are handicapped when fighting enemies of the magi and doing other strenuous activities. Possible solutions to this problem include pack-grogs or animals. All solutions must be approved by the *consors* who have been placed in charge of the expedition by the wizard leading it. This pack in the end should encumber the grog no more than a suit of chain-mail hauberk armor.

Grogs and the Magi

Excerpted from the History of Hibernian Sorcery, by the noted magus Seamus Mac Cormac, of the House Criamon. In A.D. 1227 Caecus, of the House Tylatus, of the master Coracol, spoke to the General Council of Hibernia (Ireland) regarding the treatment of grogs. Caecus' father had been a mercenary, and his wizard's training had not removed his interest in the martial life. His speech, obviously well rehearsed, given Caecus' usual trouble with words, was received with a combination of amusement, apathy, and some genuine interest.

Fellow magi, I speak before you about a part of our lives that many of us neglect, and do so to our shame. Some of you have heard of my views before. Perhaps you've heard that the warrior blood of my mercenary father has not yet been diluted by the wizards' potions I drink, causing in me a singular empathy with warriors. Whatever the case, I wish to speak to you about our grogs, those loyal servants upon whom all our lives depend.

In my own covenant I have seen the magi abusing these essential members of our communities. These magi are as foolish as those who mistreat their laboratory equipment yet expect it to function efficiently and safely. I have seen grogs punished for speaking their minds, assigned to magi who care nothing for their lives or suffering, and expended like so much *vis* when the magi found it convenient and expedient to do so. I have heard that similar treatment occurs in other covenants as well; perhaps it occurs in your own. We magi, who are so far removed from the grogs' mundane way of life, might find it easy to hold them in contempt, but for your own safety, I urge you to consider your own attitude towards your grogs.

First, you risk the danger of disloyal grogs. A grog is human, and in even the most loyal heart, some resentment will result from poor treatment. When a spear is hurtling towards you, it is the grog's unhesitating response that puts his body between the spearpoint and your heart. Any hesitation caused by a lack of loyalty could mean your death. It is not even inconceivable that grogs could turn against their masters, should they be pushed to the point at which their own deaths seem little worse than continued service. Remember that the arm that holds the sword at your side is not a mindless tool, like a balancing scale in your laboratory. It is connected to a human heart, one capable of passions like any other.

Some magi, as we all well know, try to overcome the imagined weaknesses of their grogs' spirits through spells that control the will. Be warned that a mind too manipulated by magic soon becomes no mind at all. It is better to cultivate true loyalty than to try to simulate it with spells.

If these words do not persuade you, let me say that abusing our grogs carries a more insidious risk than disloyalty: the risk of losing our own essential humanity. Some of you may be made uncomfortable by the assertion that a wizard's humanity is important enough to guard, but hear me out. Though we have drifted far from the mortal society that originally spawned us, most of us still retain some measure of humanity. Those who do not value their humanity are precisely those who fall to the temptations of the demons of Hell. These wizards give up their humanity to infernal powers, thinking that they lose nothing, only to find that they have lost the only thing that can make their power meaningful. And you know that I do not speak idly of gossip and superstition; seventeen years ago we shared this very chamber with a diabolist magus, one who is still roaming the world somewhere, possibly plotting his revenge against those of us who discovered his dark secret and joined together to banish him.

And even if you claim not to fear the demons, who are ever eager to seduce us magi into their master's service, know that the human heart can wither without infernal influence. Haven't we all seen magi so submerged in their magic that they lose the mental faculties required to lead a rational life? And haven't some of them been swallowed up by their own magic when it became too powerful for their spirits to master? I believe that only guarding our humanity can protect us from these dangers.

And I tell you that to neglect the grog is to take one more step away from humanity, and that it is a dangerous direction for anyone to travel. True, grogs may lack some of the virtues we value most, such as intelligence and learning. True, they delight in brutal and sensual amusements, such as fighting and drinking. True, they are far from us in experience, status, and spirit. But we share with them a common humanity, nevertheless. Recognize the grog's humanity, and respect them for it. Thereby will your life be protected and perhaps your heart be saved.





The Limits of Magic

From Hyperion's Treatise on the Nature of Magic, written in the 10th century. The Treatise is used by all magi to answer basic questions on the theory and workings of magic. This passage explores the two limits of Hermetic magic in Hyperion's effort to define what Hermetic magic actually is.

The Limit of Essential Nature

We have come to realize that our powers are strictly temporal and superficial. Though we might wield great power in the temporal world — the limited world on the surface of things in which most of us live out our lives — we cannot alter things at their eternal, inherent base. In the spiritual world, the ethereal world, the higher world, of which this one is only a dim shadow, magic has no real power. Magic is powerful, but it is still tied to our world, to the world of practicality.

A few applications of this limit will make its effects apparent.

First of all, magic cannot destroy an immortal being. While magic can destroy the physical aspect of a human, it cannot harm the soul, which is for all intents and purposes, immortal. To destroy it one would have to change it from immortal to mortal, a feat not possible through magic. The spell Demon's Eternal Oblivion apparently weakens a demon to such an extent that it cannot manifest itself for many, many years, virtually destroying it for practical purposes, but not doing so in actuality. Some part of the demon lives on, to return again, perhaps in a different form, on another day. A ghost is thought by many magi to be the soul of the human who died, so it too is immortal. A ghost can be summoned, coerced, but not destroyed.

Magic cannot age demons, faeries, or other things that do not normally suffer from aging. The spells that age people accelerate the inevitable aging process, so they cannot work against those things that have no inherent tendency to age.

Magic cannot make a mortal thing immortal. The flesh is inherently flawed and imperfect. Magic can prolong earthly life, and wizards are yet experimenting to see how long they can do so, but it cannot make the body absolutely immortal. Everything begins, and everything will someday die. Magic can make one more resistant to age and to physical damage, but it can never make one's body immortal.

Magic can neither create nor restore human life.

Powerful magi have created rituals to mimic human life and animate corpses, but true life is beyond the scope of magic. Only divine miracles have been known to restore true life to a dead person.

Magic can create living animals, which leads some philosophers to conclude that beasts have no souls. They must be, so the argument goes, merely products of this mutable world, with no essential component granted them from the outer spheres of the universe. Others maintain that animals do have souls, and that the animals created by spells are merely complicated golems, not true living things.

Magic cannot break true love. Though magi have debated the validity of this application of the Limit of Essential Nature since the founding of the Order, I know it to be true. Some say that true love, a rare thing, surpasses mundane, mortal reality, and becomes something essential to those involved. Thus no spell can permanently sever the bonds of true love, and true love can give one great resistance to magic of all kinds. Some say that true love is a magic in and of itself. Other magi insist that cases of true love thwarting magic are unsubstantiated rumors, exaggerated beyond the point of truthfulness. Since true love is a rare find and hard to measure, debate continues on this topic.

Magic cannot get the truth from faeries or demons. The truth known by faeries is so alien that magic cannot get the truth from them. Truth as the magi know it means nothing to the faerie folk. Demons, on the other hand, know of the truth, but are essentially the products and producers of lies. To force a demon to tell the truth would be to make it deny its true nature, something impossible through the power of magic. One can threaten and coerce a faerie or demon into telling the truth, but magic will never let a wizard know what a faerie or demon speaks is actually the truth.

Another aspect of human life which magic can't seem to affect is those essential bodily functions which all humans have to do. For instance, all magi grow fatigued with time and effort. There are no spells which cause a magus to become unfatigued. There are rumors that certain magi have invented spells which allow them to draw upon every source of energy in their bodies, causing them to act as if they were unfatigued until the last bit of bodily energy is used up, whereupon they die. The inherent dangers and the fact that the magi have to restore the energy they have used at some later time, make this type of spell only marginally useful. Fatigue hasn't been eliminated, just the body's recognition of it. Food and drink are another thing which magic cannot

overcome the need for. A magi can cast a spell to make someone think that they are not hungry or thirsty anymore, but the person will still die of hunger or thirst when the time comes. Magic cannot even prolong the need for food or drink. Without raw *vis*, a magi can only create food that lasts until sunset. When the spell runs its course, the partakers of the magic food will find themselves just as hungry as they would be if they had not eaten at all.

Reflections: This limitation has raised interesting questions for the Order of Hermes. While unable to affect a being's essential nature, a magus can transform the body and the mind. These abilities have led some Hermetic scholars to conclude that one's body and even one's thoughts are not essential to one's existence. Humans are not essentially human because they can be turned into animals, both in body and mind. What are humans essentially? And what about other beings? Or inanimate objects? No philosopher is really sure, and there is ongoing investigation of the issues that have been raised.

The Limit of the Lunar Sphere

All things on earth change, and magic gives one control over that changeability. The moon changes, but only in a regular, predictable way. It is at the border of changeability (below it) and eternity (above it). All things above the moon, such as the sun, the stars, the planets, and the heavens, are eternal. The moon and everything above it are not affected by magic. Some applications of this Limit follow.

Heavenly bodies cannot be affected. There is a spell to blot out the sun, but it actually just destroys the rays of the sun that have already passed the moon. Similarly, another spell controls moonbeams. No spell could affect the sun or moon themselves.

Time and fate cannot be altered. Time and fate are functions of the motions of the stars. Magic cannot alter either. Astrology can give one knowledge of the future, but never power over it.

Divine miracles cannot be stopped by magic. Divine power comes from the heavens, usually identified as the ultimate sphere surrounding the earth. Thus the miracles of the Church cannot be stopped by *Parmae Magicae* or dispelled. These miracles are rare but often of extreme power. Since magic is more involved in this world, it is more evident here. Divine power, which is superior, also comes from a distant source, and is therefore rare.

Pagan religions apparently use the power of the earth, because their magical effects can be countered to varying degrees of effectiveness by Hermetic magic.

Indeed, the Order of Hermes traces its roots through pagan Roman magic back to the ritual, pagan magic of the ancient East.

Magi also have problems with summoning ghosts of people who have had a Christian burial. One theory states that a ghost is the soul of the human before it has gone on to its eternal rest. As long as the soul is somehow bound here on earth, magi can find means to speak with it. Spells which supposedly destroy a spirit probably send the soul to its afterlife instead of actually destroying the soul, since this would violate the Limit of Essential Nature. When a person is killed, their soul stays in the vicinity of their body or the scene of their demise, not quite believing that it is dead. If the corpse receives a Christian burial, the soul goes on to the afterlife (Heaven) and ends up beyond the reach of magic, somehow traveling beyond the Lunar Sphere. However, if a soul goes to Hell, it is still technically within the reach of a magi's spells. The summoning back to earth of a soul which a demon has struggled hard to win may not endear the magus to the minions of Hell, and the consequences could be hazardous to the magus and those who associate with him or her. This is also treading into the forbidden ground of the Code of Hermes' restrictions on dealing with demons and their kindred.

On a similar note, magi have had a hard time investigating the afterlife by calling up ghosts and questioning them. Different magi get different stories about what happens after death. Perhaps this is due to an inability of magic to determine definitive metaphysical truths. Metaphysical truths are those questions which seem to plague our race forever, defying reason and refusing to be answered. Other well-known metaphysical truths are: Does God exist? What is the nature of evil? Do we have free-will here on earth or is our life already pre-determined? These are questions beyond the ability of mortals to answer, and magic, bound to this mortal sphere, also has the inability to help magi answer them.

Reflections: Because of this Limit, the magi have realized that their magic is related only to this earth and to Hell below. The powers of the heavens are something separate. Some magi have concluded that mastery of magic will eventually lead to renunciation of it and a development of higher powers, powers relating to the outer spheres of the universe; but since the outermost sphere seems to be that of God, the creator himself, this would seem to be a question of idle speculation.

My warning to you is to never get caught trying to bridge this gap of speculation, for therein lies the greatest danger. Those who have tried have invariably failed, for there are not only limits to our magic, but there are limits to understanding and rational discourse as well. The higher spheres are simply not within our bounds; they are above and beyond us, and they always shall be. In the end we too are mortals, despite our unearthly powers.



Creating Stories

Designing a story for your troupe is not an easy task, but it is one of the most exciting parts about being a storyguide. There are three basic foundations to any story. Once you figure out how you will include them in your story, you are well on your way to hacking out its basic structure. Everybody from the neophyte storyguide to the storytelling master can use these as the building blocks of memorable tales.

Conflict: A story should have conflicts or problems that the characters can resolve within the time available for a playing session. Every story must have some sort of conflict, which provides the motivation for the actions of the characters. The resolution of the conflict constitutes the plot, which is the backbone of the story. The conflict can be a problem the characters are trying to solve, the inner turmoil of a certain character, or can involve other groups of people. Try to vary the type of conflicts you employ from story to story, and try to come up with whole new kinds of conflicts for the characters to be involved in.

It is important to note that "resolution" does not necessarily mean that the characters will win, or that the conflict will disappear! It just means that some new state of affairs will come about. If the conflict was a character's hatred for her parents, resolution does not necessarily mean that she will somehow "defeat" them, or even overcome her hate; but she may come to understand her feelings in a new light, so that there is some qualitative change.

Theme: The heart of any story is its theme. The theme is something that unifies all the different scenes in a story; it provides a level of meaning that holds the threads of a story together.

A theme gives a story greater depth and significance than an unadorned "adventure" would, and often gives the players a sense of immediacy and poignancy that can make role-playing more real and engaging.

Your theme should be a general subject; avoid supplying the players with *your* own pat answer to a moral dilemma. Any "meaning" that you might give the subject through the story should be allowed to come naturally as an essential part of the story. Putting a theme into your story isn't so much trying to "teach" your players something, as it is a way for the entire troupe to explore different aspects of that theme.

As you get better at including themes in your stories, you can make your themes increasingly more complicated as well as more subtle. At first you should be pretty obvious and not try to express any great "eternal truths." But slowly you can get more and more serious about what you are doing.

It is important to understand that theme is nearly always tied up in emotion. To give meaning to a theme you will need to include emotion in your story. Emotion requires emphasis on some of the subtler shades of feeling, not just the

experience of battle lust. Try to have your players role-play out love, hate, jealousy, anger, and greed as part of the theme you have chosen. This will make your exploration of the theme much easier to do.

Some themes that you could include in your stories are: the perils of greed and avarice, the corruption of those with power, the meaning of mercy, overcoming temptation or fear, and the testing of loyalty.

Dramatis Personae: You will almost always want the characters to have some sort of interaction with non-player characters. This is the foundation of most role-playing in a story, and is often a way to provoke the players into role-playing amongst themselves.

Interesting characters could be talkative bartenders, sullen peasants, boisterous revelers, muttering beggars, and haughty priests. But that's only the beginning of a good character. The more you put into them, the better your role-playing will be. Make your characters as complete and interesting as you can; make them real and multi-dimensional.

You shouldn't include too many new characters in a story, otherwise the players won't be able to keep track of who is who and will become confused. More than three new characters in one playing episode is usually too many. If you are using characters that have been regular parts of the saga, and are therefore known well by yourself and the players, you can use up to six or seven. If there are more characters than that involved in the story, don't try to fully role-play out their characters, but use narration instead.

Whenever you take on a new persona, change the whole way you act and talk — make it clear that there is a change! Your characters must have something that differentiates them from one another, something obvious. Cock your head differently, speak with a slur, pick at your nails, blink often — give each character one obvious role-playable trait that immediately identifies him or her to the players. And remember to role-play out that trait *every* time you play the character! If, after you have played a certain character three or four times, the players still have to ask who you are, then you aren't doing enough to make the character special enough.

There are five things you will want to write down about every character before you start role-playing them; once you have these five basic things, you will have a good start on making a unique character that will be an interesting addition to your saga for a long time to come.

1. **Name:** In the Middle Ages, a person often did not have a last name but was known by what village or castle they came from, e.g. Luc of Trent. Sometimes they were known by a more romantic or descriptive appellation, e.g. Luc the Hawk.

2. **Role-playable trait:** A thing you can role-play that immediately identifies who this person is, and gives the players an insight into the character's personality.

3. Motivation: What does this person want out of life? Is it as basic as food, or is it political power, or is it simply wisdom? Motivation is basic to personality, you will find it greatly aids in defining a character.

4. Weakness: What are the weaknesses of the character; everyone has a vice of some sort. The dark side of a person often defines them better than the good.

5. Primary Trait: Establish what is really the character's primary personality trait. Is it stubbornness, a love of books, or hatred for Moors? In the players' first encounter with the character, stress this aspect of their personality, to give the players a handy reference to understanding (or at least remembering or identifying) the character. Then, later on, expand the character to make them more three dimensional.

The Big Seven

There are seven elements you will want to include in each story, details which will ensure the story is complete. These elements are: Action, Role-Playing, Problem-Solving, Options, Something New, Rewards, and Leads. Make sure you keep all of them in mind when you create a story, for they comprise everything a story needs to make it into an involving and interesting tale.

Action is something integral to role-playing. Most stories are essentially action adventures — and this usually means lots of fights. Combat is an important part of a story because it is one of the only times the entire party is brought into the action at once. It is exciting, competitive (against the enemy), and cooperative (with other players). You should make your combats risky, but generally the characters should have the upper hand. The wound and recovery rules make combat a dangerous activity, even for the superior side. Even if you are hesitant to kill companions and magi, at least be willing to let the grogs die in battle. Their deaths remind the rest of the party that the menaces they face are real and lethal, and warfare is not merely a game. There are other things that can provide action in a story however, and they can often provide a pleasant relief from non-stop warfare. You can include such things as rock climbing, quick escapes, and drinking contests to provide your story with action.

Role-playing is a core element of the story; we envision it as the most important. It gives players the chance to make their characters real by playing out their personalities and interacting with the world. Players can role-play any time they want, but in dangerous situations they are usually more intent on using their abilities to their maximum potential rather than playing out their characters' personalities. Though role-playing during stressful encounters can be most impressive, players usually require more gentle environments to get into character (though particularly good role-players can do so throughout the entire story).

Remember to involve the whole group during role-playing encounters, not just the leaders or designated speakers. Some people will try to hog your attention, but you've got to make sure they don't succeed.

Problem-solving is overcoming an obstacle through wit and strategy instead of through die rolls. It is

important to the players because when they solve a problem, they feel successful themselves, not just as their alter ego characters. Problems can be as direct as riddles that must be answered or as subtle as people who must be approached and dealt with in just the right manner for them to respond as the characters want them to. Take the example of Brother Adolphius the librarian at Denebrue monastery who has information that the wizards need. Bribes of silver will be scorned, while the offer of a rare tome might win a favor. Problem-solving can be involved in all the different parts of a story and makes a story more intriguing for the players. Problems should have several possible solutions to promote creativity and realism. It's intriguing to set up a problem without deciding on a specific answer ahead of time, just to see what the players come up with.

Options are something that too many stories lack. Many storyguides channel the characters straight through to a predetermined conclusion, thus robbing them of much of their freedom. It's like an old, stale dungeon adventure with the corridors leading from room to unrelated room. At some level of the story, you must provide the characters with the possibility of changing the outcome; not just failing or succeeding, but succeeding one way or succeeding in another. They should have some control over their fate; they should affect the plot in a relevant way. If you want the storyline to wind up at a given conclusion no matter what, *at least* give the players some options as to how they get there, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Something new added to each story keeps the world growing, whether it is a new character that will make later appearances, a new town to visit, a new enemy for the covenant, or a new inn to patronize. More details about old things, such as better maps or more detailed history, also qualify as something new. Stories are the main way that the world is built; add another piece to the world with each one — through this steady, consistent process your world will be revealed before your eyes.

Rewards can be anything from gold to personal satisfaction for a job well done. Rewards officially tell the players that they have done well. They also make the companions and grogs feel like they are getting something out of their work. If the stories benefit the magi but not the other characters, the other players could feel left out. A few pieces of jewelry and such for the non-magic characters will often keep them happy. Small, interesting magic items for the companions should be given later in the saga.

A **Lead** is some unfinished piece in the story that the players can follow up on later, making the story much larger than the session in which it is run. One lead could be a rumor overheard in a tavern that a worm has been sighted in the mountains to the north. Though it has nothing to do with the mission at hand, it could lead to a story later on. Leads lend a higher sense of realism to the saga because players realize that the current mission or object of interest for the group did not suddenly appear for their amusement, but existed in the universe before it became involved in their story, and thus is more real.



Decisions:



How to Be a Better Storyguide

Player decisions are the crux and center of role-playing; they are what makes the experience entirely unlike reading or watching a movie. Yet opportunities for letting players make important decisions can be missed. All too often the choices presented to players during an adventure are limited or unimportant. Sometimes players are led by the nose through the world, guided all the while by the omnipotent Gamemaster. But remember that in *Ars Magica*[™] there is no GM, there are only Storyguides — and their roles are not precisely identical. Designing a story that is open enough to allow significant decisions is difficult, but it is one of the most important parts of a storyguide's job. Letting players make real decisions is essential to quality role-playing.

One way to encourage better role-playing and to challenge the players is to give them a few decisions that count, decisions that are hard to make. A common mistake is to set up a "decision" in which there is only one answer. For instance, suppose a demon was casting illusions to fool the party into thinking that their friends are being held hostage. The illusionary "captives" would be set free if the party gave up the important mission they were on. It was a tense face-off, but since the players would never betray the mission, there never was really a decision involved. The players held firm (naturally) and the hostages were eventually exposed as illusions. As the gamemaster, you must set up the decisions so they are not easy to make, so the players really could choose any option. The Demon could ask for some information that might betray the mission, while not causing them to actually do so directly. This would let the players answer a real dilemma, and might even give them a chance to engage in some trickery.

Another factor that is required for decisions is that they make a difference. For instance, a pivotal decision might depend on whether the characters are willing to risk their lives in pursuit of some goal. If the goal is not the main goal of the mission itself, the characters are free to decide whether to take the chance or play it safe. But if, as a gamemaster, you only let characters die under extreme circumstances, the players will know that they can "risk their lives" without worry. As long as they know you will fudge the dice and manipulate the outcome, there is no true risk. The decision to risk their lives in pursuit of a goal is reduced to idle talk. If you are not willing to kill characters, give them the opportunity to risk a blow that you *will* deliver. Let them risk their social status, their wealth, or their health, for instance. That way they actually are risking something which you as storyguide are willing to take away.

It is also important to not *always* penalize the party for making the "wrong" decision. If you make a habit of rewarding "correct" decisions and punishing "incorrect" ones, your players will pick up on this and simply learn to choose the path of behavior that you favor, regardless of how much sense it makes in terms of the game world. This pattern reduces the decision to a mere test of the players' familiarity with your gaming style, and it's rather boring. For tactical decisions,

reward and punishment are useful, but for moral decisions, you should let players choose freely. This might mean that characters will sometimes suffer for being honest, faithful, or brave, and that sometimes they will benefit from being selfish and cruel — but that is how the world works. Again, many players will enjoy the possibility of risking and even losing something for the sake of higher goals and virtues. If they always gain from being virtuous, then virtue can become a selfish thing. Players will think, "Let's help those people because the gamemaster will reward us if we do," instead of the more virtuous alternative of, "Let's help those people even though it means we might suffer for it." That's not to say you should always make the characters suffer when they do good, but virtue should remain a goal in itself, not merely a means to a material reward.

So what new kinds of choices can you face your players with? First off, moral decisions are interesting. Tactical decisions are made routinely, and offer little new ground for role-playing, but if you give characters moral decisions to make, then the personalities and beliefs of the characters come into play instead of their skills, spells, and weapons.

Here are some concrete suggestions for moral decisions that you can place in front of players:

- The adventurers find a magic ring that is the heirloom of a noble family which has fallen in stature since the ring's loss. Do they keep it, do they return it to those who rightfully own it, or do they return it only in exchange for gold or favors?

- They come to a village where the inhabitants are under the spell of an evil witch. Since the people do not realize that they are under a spell, they spurn the party that claims to have come to save them. They don't understand why they need to be saved. Will the party help them even though they are not asked to, or will they only help when their egos are flattered by the grateful masses or are offered a reward?

- They uncover the violent activities of a wizard, who has been wantonly slaying the peasant settlers who have moved into her valley. Do they side with her, a peer, or do they try to end the slaughter?

Tactical decisions are often not fully explored in role-playing, while they are the basis of many board games. Storyguides often have so much control over battles that the decisions the players make have little effect on the outcome. There are going to be a certain number of blows exchanged no matter what the players decide or what kind of plan they have concocted. After all, the storyguide wants a certain amount of excitement to build up, and a complete rout certainly does not supply that. Yet if all your battles are conducted in this fashion,

they become boring and mindless dice rolling marathons.

Though it is often extremely difficult to judge the strategies of your players, you should make a concerted effort. You will not be perfect, and your decisions may not be appreciated by the troupe, but you will add a new level of realism to your battles. One secret for accomplishing this is to never discuss with them why you decided one way over another; it leaves you less open to criticism. Don't explain why their ambush doesn't work as they gallop out of the woods, just mention that it's slow going because of all the branches and bramble and they get to the trail too late. Encourage them to ask you questions as they plan tactics, so you can fill them in on things that they would know or would not work (Perception rolls are helpful here), but never give away information. The players should rely on themselves not on your beneficence.

It is important to retain your reputation for omniscience. Once the players start questioning your ability to judge their activities, you have lost their belief in the world and in the story you have created. You need the players to believe in the story, so they can imagine it fully. For this to happen, they must believe in you first. When you create a story you should list one or two different things the characters could decide to do in different combat or stress situations. You will be more impartial, and the players will trust your judgements much more if they know it is based on something that is written down. The most important thing to remember is that you have to find a way to let the players' tactics make a difference while still retaining their trust in you. It's a difficult tightrope walk, but getting to the other side makes it all worth while.

Another easy way to let players make important decisions about the outcome of the adventure is to provide two possible conclusions to each adventure: a satisfactory result and an outstanding result. Usually gamemasters have in mind a certain goal for the characters, and if they do not accomplish it, they fail. With this system, the characters must pursue the goal despite the risks or fail; and, inevitably, they risk whatever it takes to reach the goal. For instance, if they have to find the Crystal of Seven Eyes, they do not stop until they find it. If you warn them that they must travel through the dread Mountains of Despair to find it, they will unhesitatingly risk it, because they assume that you have set the adventure up for them to succeed and find the Crystal, no matter what it takes.

But if you provide two goals, one more difficult than the other, the players will be able to decide not to pursue the tougher one. As long as they accomplish the first, they succeed, so they do not feel pressured to pursue the second and more demanding task. If they do, they know they may gain more, but they also know they are risking something. (Note that it is important that your saga be consistent enough that the characters can judge the relative danger of different options. If they do not know ahead of time that a certain course of action is especially risky, then they do not get the thrill of consciously choosing a risky venture.)

Here are examples of other "two-layered" adventures:

- The characters hunt down a murderer and discover his connection with a small band of criminals. They can capture their original target and simply report their findings, or they can pursue that band on their own.

- The characters are out to get a powerful high priestess of a diabolist cult. They know that capturing her would give them valuable information about the cult and would be better than killing her, but do they risk a capture attempt, which is more tricky than a simple assassination?

- The caverns they are exploring are much larger than they originally thought, do they probe further into them, or do they depart for home with what they've got?

A twist on this scheme would be to have two different results for the story, but have the second one be a red herring. During a story the characters find evidence that one of the Guildmasters in Toulouse is secretly associated with the Franks of the North, yet when they investigate they discover he is actually a member of the Heresy.

One possible problem with "two-layered" adventures is that players will have to come to terms with their mortal limits. In most adventures, characters seem to be omnipotent because they tackle every problem the gamemaster puts in front of them. While this pattern is unrealistic, some players enjoy the power trip. Bringing reality into fantasy and including adventure obstacles that the characters might not be able to handle will not be appreciated by these players. You will have to be the judge of your playing group. You might want to make it clear to the group what you are intending when you begin to include secondary, risky ventures so they will not charge off after every goal, feeling safe in the mistaken notion that you would not give them the opportunity to get into trouble over their heads.

Most of the decisions in role-playing adventures are superficial, based on habitual tactics or the demands of the circumstances. Setting up opportunities for players to make decisions based on morals or personality, which let characters take risks above and beyond those required, could add new possibilities to your campaign. It could add a bit of thought, a bit of deliberation, and a bit of nervous sweat.

The essential tension that every story requires (both in and out of role-playing) is created by the illusion that risks are actually being taken. In order for a risk to be taken, there must be a free-willed decision made, and some sort of danger involved as well. Too often there is no tension because the person designing the story forgets this. Without that tension, there is no excitement and no emotional investment in the story. If you want your players to actually become involved in the story you have created, you must give them the power to decide and enter in the possibility of failure. This sounds very simple, and it is, yet it is something many of us too often forget.





Mythic Europe

Ars Magica™ was intended to be played in what we call Mythic Europe, a setting in which all our game supplements and adventures are based. Though you may have qualms about role-playing in an “authentic” medieval setting, you should know that it’s not nearly as hard to portray as you might think. You only need a general concept of how to evoke the feeling of the times and then let all the historical details come as they will. As your saga progresses, you can add more and more historical fact to your world (as you gradually learn it) — but never hold yourself back from doing something just because you’re not sure of a particular fact.

Mythic Europe is based heavily on historical Europe of the 13th century, but there are two major differences: magic and other supernatural forces and beings do unquestionably exist; and the medieval world-view is, in general, the way things actually are. Thus we have magi, demons, faeries, divine miracles, and the wisdom of Aristotle, declaring that heavy objects fall faster than light ones. Obviously, many medieval people disagreed over some questions, such as the nature of God, and these questions are still unanswered in the game world.

The Mythic Europe of **Ars Magica™** is not historical Europe, close as the two are, so ultimately you can portray it any way you wish. Future supplements from **Lion Rampant** will deal with specific regions of Mythic Europe, and provide more information about their histories.

We have a few additional suggestions for you, to help you play out the atmosphere of the times:

- Don’t pass up chances to talk about the filth and vermin that are found in every city, village, and castle. Castle moats were the sewers for the entire fortress, and they stank! There is disease everywhere and even healthy folk often carry the scars of earlier bouts with illness. The fresh, clean face of a young maiden is a rarity, and it stands out. The old hag and the crippled beggar are much more common sights; make sure you describe them often.

- Hierarchy is the basis of interactions between people. Those who are highborn get all the breaks; those who are not get trampled on. Point this out as much as possible, and emphasize how strange it is that the characters are the only people outside of this system. Serfs are likely to mistake the magi for nobility, and bow to them, or at least tug their forelock. Townsfolk are likely to get very confused — how do you treat a magus? They’re not noble born, but neither are they commoners.

- Human life is not as valuable as it is to us. It is a barbaric and violent world. Life is taken and given casually; some folk might see as much death and violence on the streets as we see on TV. Though most people live their lives peacefully, there are always periods during which the

streets flow red with blood. Death isn’t seen as shocking or even as mildly interesting — it is a regular part of life. Depict the taking of human life almost as an afterthought at times, mention it almost as if in passing, “As you walk past the fork in the road you see a corpse hanging from the gallows, alongside three or four skeletons.” Let the characters mourn the death of a street urchin who had befriended them, but play out the utter callousness of the bystanders — “It was only a beggar.”

- Play out the romance and beauty of the age as much as you can. It will stand out sharply in contrast to the darkness and misery you’ve spent much of your time depicting, so be sure to include it. There are lofty ideals in this world. These people are reaching out of the chaos and misery of their age in an effort to create a new world. Describe the beauty of the cathedral in the sunset, the oak trees creaking in the wind, the lovers in the glade, the festivals, and the church processions. Don’t forget chivalry either; make sure the characters meet a few virtuous knights who will fight to the death to uphold their honor.

- There is magic everywhere; it is found in the fragrance of a rose, in the light on a spring day, and in a bard’s song. Even though the Dominion limits the power of magic within its bounds, it can still be found, though it is subtle and seen out of the corner of the eye. Innocent and unassuming people (especially children) might encounter a sprite or a small gnome in a meadow, and there are stories of elves helping a kindly cobbler make shoes. Love weaves a web of magic, and the charms and potions of the serfs may actually work. Portray magic as being pervasive throughout the world, but remember that, except in the faerie forest, it is elusive and subtle. Build upon the mystery of it all, and try to create a feeling of wide-eyed wonder.

Background to Mythic Europe

Western Europe of the High Middle Ages is the product of the decline and collapse of the Roman Empire centuries earlier. After a long period of decadence, internal strife, and economic collapse, the western Roman Empire finally dissolved in the 6th century. In its place appeared the kingdoms of the barbarian warlords, such as Clovis. It was the Dark Ages, a time of dissolution, disorder, and untold violence. Though Europe has emerge from that period, it is divided into many different kingdoms and minor principalities, and there is ceaseless conflict and intrigue between them.

Throughout the chaos of the Dark Ages, the Church provided a sense of unity and continuity. So much so, that by the 11th century the Pope was able to call a Crusade against the Muslims who had taken Jerusalem. The Crusade united the hearts of commoner and noble, German and Frank alike. Unfortunately, in the past two hundred years, the Popes have grossly overused Crusades and excommunication as political tools, and many folk have grown tired of the Church's power. Heresy is rife, and the clouds of religious persecution loom.

Some say the clergy have grown distant from those they tend, spending more time managing their vast lands than preaching the word of God. At the beginning of the next century, the Order of Dominicans will arise, alternately using reason and the torch to assure dogmatic conformity to the Church's doctrine. As a counterpoint, the Order of Franciscans will be founded; their saintly lives of poverty and service to others setting an example to the common folk. The Franciscans wandered the countryside, aiding the peasants and preaching the work of a loving God.

The Twelfth Century

The Twelfth century is one of change, growth, and decay within a culture that has progressed far in the last few centuries. The Princes of Europe are still engaged in battles for wealth and glory. Some of them still hold to the doctrine of the Church, but the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire is outspokenly irreligious and openly contemptuous of the Pope. There is growing conflict between the secular rulers and the Church throughout Europe.

In the British Isles, the Normans have consolidated their conquest, led by William the Conqueror in the 11th century. The Norman nobility all speak French, while the common folk speak old English. England still wars with the clans of Scotland and, though Wales has been conquered, there are still occasional uprisings. Expeditions sent to Ireland have met with great success and half of the Emerald Isle has been conquered.

Stretching from the Pyrenees to the North sea is the Kingdom of France. In southern France, Catharist heretics are common, though they consider themselves good Christians. Along the south west coast in Aquitaine and Gascony, the Barons all swear fealty to the English King, though technically they are still part of the Kingdom of France. The relations between these two kingdoms is greatly strained because of this.

The Holy Roman Empire, also known as Germany, stretches from the Alps to Denmark (with the exception of the ever independent Swiss). More of a confederation of kingdoms than an empire, the Emperor has little influence beyond the borders of his own kingdom. In order to protect free and open trade, a score of mercantile cities

along the Baltic sea have banded together to form the Haessiac league. Several Holy Orders of Knights (Paladins) continue to battle the heathen in Poland and Transylvania, establishing new Kingdoms for themselves by recolonizing it with settlers from the West.

The young Christian kingdom of Portugal is established on land won from the Muslims, who hold the rest of the Iberian peninsula. The Moors still control most of southern Spain; their highly advanced culture still retains much of the glory of ancient Rome. Many scholars come south to learn from the highly literate and enlightened Moors. Christian knights have been battling the Moors for centuries, slowly pushing southward. The kingdom of Aragon, located just south of the Pyrenees, has been central to this effort. Less than a century ago, they were able to retake Barcelona, a city renowned for the commerce that flows through its port and the enlightenment of its inhabitants. Wizards from all over Europe visit Barcelona to savor the sweetness of southern living, and to meet with their fellows to study and conduct trade. No other city in Europe is as tolerant of them. Peasants are slowly settling the inland areas of the kingdom. The inland regions of Spain are somewhat barren and foreboding, having much in common with the American West.

Magic is on the retreat in Europe. As society has emerged from the Dark Ages, the population has increased and the wilderness has been cleared. Countless faerie forests and magical sites have been overcome by the Dominion. Knights have systematically eradicated threats in their societies' borders, driving back the faeries, ogres, elementals, serpents, and dragons. Slowly, magic is leaving the world — for though these mystical areas' may return on special nights, their full power and splendor are lost forever.

On the outskirts of the Dominion, the monsters and faeries still cling to existence, often embittered by their loss of power since the Dark Ages. In mountain and forest fastnesses, their influence is undiminished; in the vast tracts of wilderness still to be found across Europe, untold magical powers still hold sway.

The magi are in a unique and curious position, as they are part of both worlds — human and supernatural. They share in the culture of society, and benefit from the growth of learning and general prosperity; yet their power is derived from magic — it is their love. Some wizards have begun to realize the full extent of the situation, and wonder what will happen if — or *when* — the Dominion covers all of Europe. Will their power vanish with the faeries? Will the day come when the wizards will have to turn against the Dominion for the sake of preservation — or will that need be discovered too late, with the magic of this world already past the point of no return? Or perhaps there will always be some secluded, richly magical place where the reclusive magi might cloister themselves? These questions will have increasing importance in the years to come.