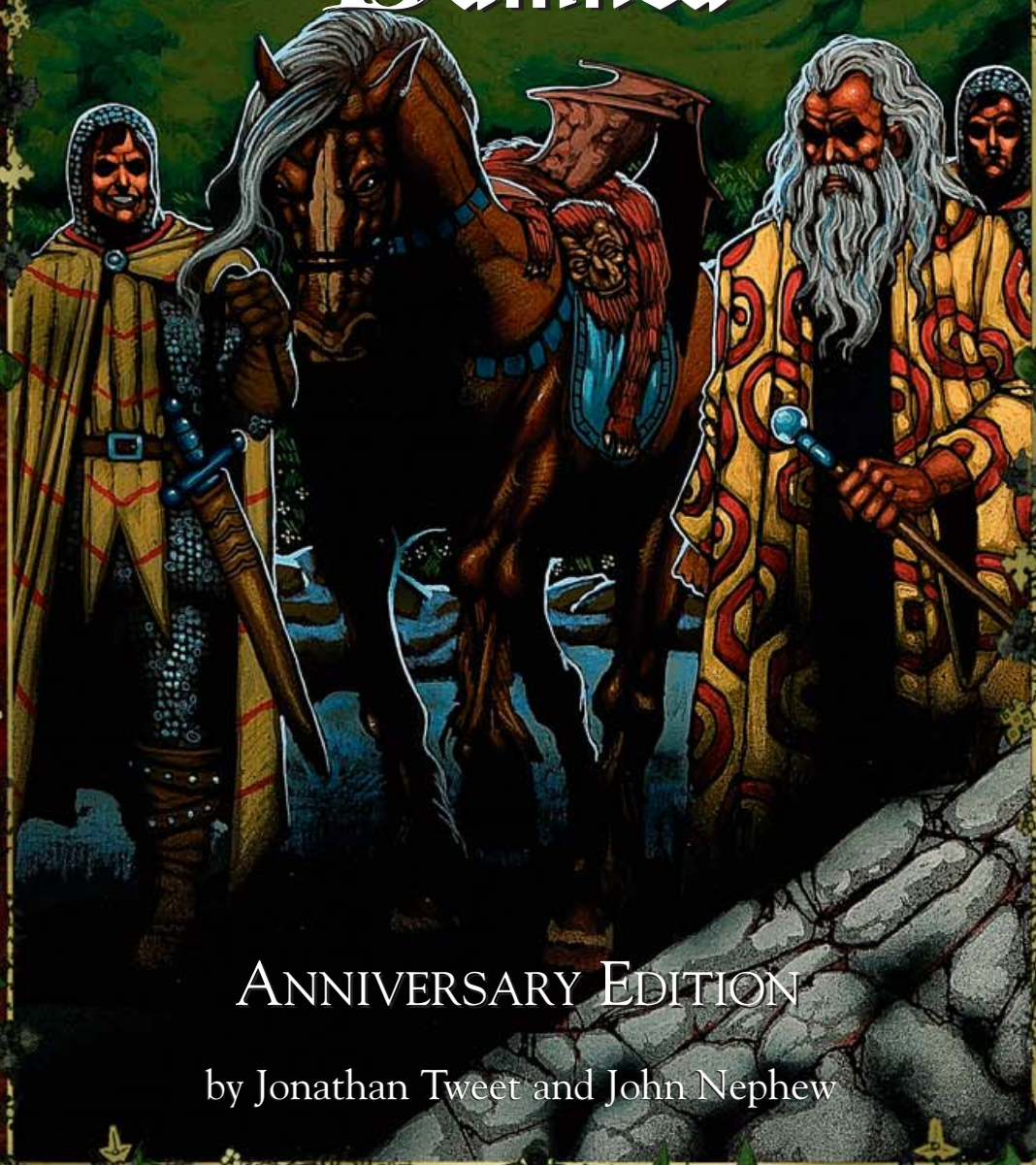


Ars Magica

Festival of the Damned



ANNIVERSARY EDITION

by Jonathan Tweet and John Nephew

Festival of the Damned

Anniversary Edition



*Two Classic Ars Magica™ Adventures
by Jonathan Tweet and John Nephew
Revised and Updated for the Fourth Edition*

Festival of the Damned Anniversary Edition

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Project: Redcap archives and links to many of the fan-created *Ars Magica* pages on the World Wide Web. To get to Project: Redcap, point your browser at <http://redcap.org>.

Errata for the first printing of the fourth edition of *Ars Magica* is available on request. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to PO Box 131233, Roseville, MN, 55113. Up-to-date errata is also posted on the Atlas Games World Wide Web site.

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Table of Contents

Foreword..... 4

PART ONE

The Ghoul of St. Lazare

Chapter 1. Introduction..... 6
 Players' Background..... 6
 Storyguide Background..... 7
 Notes to the Storyguide..... 8
 Theme..... 10

Chapter 2. Vézay..... 11
 The Church of St. Lazare..... 13

Chapter 3. Events..... 18
 The Death of Noilis..... 18
 A Parody of Resurrection..... 22
 The Unholy Hour..... 24
 Conclusion..... 26
 The *Diabolopsuche*..... 27

Map of Vézay..... 28

PART TWO

Festival of the Damned

Chapter 1. Introduction..... 30
 Time and Location..... 30
 Summary of Plot..... 32
 Groups..... 33
 Explanatory Notes..... 34

Chapter 2. Vézay..... 36
 Key to the Map..... 36
 Villagers..... 41

Chapter 3. The Witches..... 36
 Position in Vézay..... 57
 Current Activities..... 58
 The Midwives' House..... 58
 The Cursed Cloth..... 59
 Investigating the Fevers..... 60
 Pacing the Mystery of the Witches..... 62
 The Witches..... 63

Chapter 4. Temptations..... 66
 Palm Sunday..... 66
 Monday..... 68
 Tuesday..... 73
 Wednesday..... 77
 Maunday Thursday..... 78
 Good Friday..... 82

Chapter 5. Easter Sunday..... 36
 The Day..... 86
 Dusk..... 86
 After the Fight..... 90
 End of the Vigil..... 91
 Curse of the Fiends..... 91
 Fiends of the Seven Deadly Sins..... 92
 Aftermath for Vézay..... 98

Reference..... 99
 Villager Checklist..... 99
 Mystic Auras..... 100
 People from "Ghoul"..... 101
 Timeline..... 101

Foreword

Milwaukee, summer, 1990: I stood in a corner of the Lion Rampant booth at Gen Con, hanging out with my friends and former housemates, hawking copies of *Tales of the Dark Ages*, a 64-page book with a strikingly plain cover printed in blue and black.

I had four years of freelance writing and editing under my belt, including a year on the staff of Lion Rampant, which had just moved from Northfield, Minnesota, to the Atlanta area. With *Tales of the Dark Ages*, I stayed behind and struck out on my own.

I don't put a lot of stock in anniversaries, but the release of this book does mark eight years of Atlas Games (and more than a decade of **Ars Magica**, which first came out in late 1987). In an industry as challenging as this one, survival itself is an accomplishment. I'd like to think that we have lived up to some of the vision I set forth in the introduction to *Tales of the Dark Ages*.

The company started with a licensed book of adventures for **Ars Magica**, now publishes the game itself. Since the contents of this book have been out of print for about

five years, we are pleased to celebrate our birthday by bringing these stories back.

The first part of this book is one of the adventures from *Tales of the Dark Ages*. "The Ghoul of St. Lazare" is a story I ran for the gang at House Rampant. Our saga, Patina, was in a fantasy North America that had been colonized by late imperial Romans. For publication, I transplanted the tale to Occitania, which the then-current 2nd Edition had made **ArM's** official setting.

"Festival of the Damned" was published in 1991 as a stand-alone book. Jonathan developed it as a sequel to my story. I'm afraid my own little adventure looks a little weak beside his masterpiece. A number of **Ars Magica** fans have told me over the years that they think "Festival" is one of the best RPG adventures ever published. Strong praise, but I would have to agree.

It's a delight to make these stories widely available to **Ars Magica** storyguides once again.

John Nephew
Roseville, Minnesota
June 10, 1998

Part One The Ghoul of St. Lazare



by John Nephew



Chapter I

Introduction

This adventure is designed for a smaller or weaker party of **Ars Magica**[™] characters — a beginning magus, perhaps, young companions, and of course grogs. If other sorts of characters are to be used, and the storyguide thinks the party's power and abilities warrant it, the monster who appears in this adventure should be “beefed up” to give the party a greater challenge. In any case, a magus with a good score in Corpus would be particularly suitable for unraveling this adventure's mysteries.

“The Ghoul of St. Lazare” is implicitly set in southern France in the early 13th century. Names and languages are easily altered to accommodate other settings.

Although it is designed for **Ars Magica**, you should find that this adventure is easily adaptable for other fantasy role-playing game systems, and even games of other sorts. With a little effort you could even adapt this scenario for modern or science fiction role-playing games.

Players' Background

The beginning of this adventure takes place at the troupe's covenant. The

adventure background presupposes that there is, near the covenant, a river. If this is not the case, the storyguide will need to engineer things so that the characters who will participate in this adventure will be near a river somewhere — perhaps a covenant, town, or village they are visiting — so that they can be called upon to investigate the strange event.

The strange event is, simply enough, a human corpse that has washed up on the banks of the river in question. The curious thing that will be discovered about this corpse, however, is that it seems to have been exhumed — evidence of the activity of grave robbers or, worse yet, a cult of evil diabolists.

The situation clearly demands action. If there is a active coven of diabolists upriver, it will surely lead to trouble. Who knows but that the covenant's own graveyard will be visited next by prowling ghouls! (It will be known that the corpse is not from the local churchyard, although as a matter of course it should be buried there, with appropriate ceremony, as soon as possible.) For magi no less than respectable townsfolk, it is imperative that the matter be investigated.

The next graveyard up the river is at a village named Vézay. The priest there, Father Tanchus, is eccentric (and, some whisper, sympathetic to the local heresy), but he may serve as a starting-point for the inquiry.

Storyguide

Background

Father Tanchus is not merely the starting point — he is in fact the destination of the investigators. For the storyguide's reference, we will here present his lamentable history.

Tanchus used to be closer to the center of things, the respected pastor of an urban parish and an avid reader of all ideas. He was of rather unstable personality, however, and wont to be persuaded by, shall we say, *unorthodox* views. He came to disagree with his episcopal superior over several theological issues.

This is not to say Tanchus was a heretic from the start, by any means — oh, no! — but the reaction of his bishop was not quite that of a good shepherd, eager to guide his sheep back to safety and truth. Instead the bishop simply removed Tanchus from his pleasant parish and reassigned him to one far out in the wilderness (“wilderness” at least to the urban mind), the village of Vézay, a place altogether less pleasant, with a poor congregation whose Christianity is probably just a veneer over the ancient beliefs of their pagan ancestors.

Being a man content with poverty, Tanchus was not economically discomforted by the new situation. What hurt him was the intellectual poverty of the locale — Tanchus' weakness was gluttony of the mind, not the body. Afforded little menu for study, Tanchus voraciously purchased and devoured anything he could read. This consisted of the rare and random books that might be brought, every second month or so, when the Jewish merchant, Levi-Isaak, passed through the village.

Where Levi-Isaak acquired these books, who can say? The Jew quickly

learned, though, that Tanchus would gladly exchange anything he had for a new book, and the shrewd merchant did all he could to sate the priest's appetite.

One such book, sold to Tanchus along with Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and and Moses Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, was written in Greek. Though Levi-Isaak could not so much as read the cover, the priest was familiar with that script and tongue. The book bore the title Διαβολοψυχη — “Diabolopsuche” (see the boxed insert at the end of the adventure for the book's description), and named one Tharene of Tyre as its author.

Reading this wicked book led Tanchus further down the path toward heresy and, yes, evil. It told him that Christianity is a great lie, an instrument in fact of the Evil One, who has managed to subvert truth and beauty by mockingly taking its form. It contained detailed rituals for communion with “the true God” — for returning the Deity to His rightful rulership over the Earth. These were, of course, all lies; but to poor Tanchus' unstable, isolated mind, they seemed like a breath of Divine inspiration. So deluded was he that he failed to perceive the obvious evil in the means the book prescribed. Convincing himself that it was for the love of God, and garnering the aid of his simpleminded assistant, Brother Noilis, Tanchus began the ritual that in fact would supplant the sanctified, Divine aura of Vézay's little Church of St. Lazare with one of Infernal nature.

They gathered a dozen toads, and — furtively, late at night — exhumed the remains of a village girl who had recently died of the pox. Tanchus spoke vile incantations, as the book directed, and from these ingredients stewed together a filthy potion with the power to instill an Infernal aura, when splattered about a place.

The night after this evil ritual was complete, there appeared an amazing





thing — the corpse’s grave was now miraculously covered with grass and flowers! Tanchus interpreted this as a sign of approval from the Deity, and the villagers remarked that the saints smiled on their poor H el ene (for that was the girl’s name), and had perhaps accepted her among their number. However, this of course meant that Tanchus could not rebury the corpse in the same locale — the whole village would take note.

Instead, he directed Brother Noilis to dig another grave, out in the woods. On his surreptitious way out of the village, Noilis tripped — on a rock, it seemed, or was it a toad? — and dropped the corpse into the river. Noilis happily concluded that such was as good a burial as he might grant — and he felt little like digging anyhow — and so he returned, and spoke not of the matter to his superior.

Thus while Tanchus proceeded in his unholy task, the corpse he used and discarded made its way downriver, into the hands of the covenant — thereby providing means of deliverance from the scourge soon to be unleashed.

Notes to the Storyguide

“The Ghoul of Saint Lazare” is a story of mystery. An enigma — the corpse — has come the way of the magi, enticing (if not obliging) them to find from where it came and what it means.

The storyguide should not *give* the players details, if he can help it — he should make them ask for them. A Corpus magus of the covenant, for instance, should be obliged to performed a sort of “autopsy” on the body, to find what resulted in its death. Such an examination may reveal several details:

- The victim is female, about 15 years old, with brown hair, and skin covered with pock marks.
- The body is mutilated, but there are no marks of resistance or violence.
- The victim was already given a Christian burial, thwarting such divinatory magics as *Whispers Through the Black Gate* (InCo 15) that would attempt to contact the dead girl’s ghost. A spontaneous Int ellego Corpus spell of level 10 or better can reveal or confirm this important detail about the body itself: It is pox that killed the girl; the mutilations of the body came afterward.

Another bit of knowledge that may be relevant (and that, if not realized by the players, may be supplied via appropriate rolls of Folk Ken, Theology or Civil and Canon Law) is that such treatment of a corpse as this, even for medical reasons, is strictly prohibited by the orthodox Christian faith.

Other key tidbits of information are supplied throughout the adventure text. Here again it is best to let the players take the initiative in piecing together the mystery. When they are straying too far off track, use Perception (or even Intelligence) rolls to give them clues.

There are bound to be many details about which the characters inquire that are not described in the adventure text. What should you do? Make it up — immediately! It is important that players have to think to sort out what is relevant from what is not. You may even place some deliberate red herrings; already there is the whole issue of the smallpox, which has no particular relevance to the plot line. In the original playtesting it gained prominence, since the characters were inclined to investigate the disease in the village because of its connection to the corpse of H el ene. I played the scene off the cuff; but in the end it turned out valuable for the characters. By assisting the healing of Anna and Mathilde, they

won themselves some trust in the village. This was of inestimable value, since they were after all strangers, eventually confronting the village priest.

You must be acutely aware of timing as you run this adventure. You do not want to wantonly obstruct the characters, just to keep a “schedule” of revelations, but you must be ready to lengthen or shorten the adventure timetable according to the progress of the characters’ investigations. The text is written for three nights of stay in Vézay, for example, but in the original playtesting it was shortened to two. The characters were on the verge of either figuring things out, or simply departing from the village, after Noilis’ funeral. Furthermore, the evening of gaming was getting late. By compressing the two nights of the revenant into one, I kept the pace from slowing, and I avoided the need to make up excuses to delay the party.

(They had already gotten a glance at the first part of the *Diabolopsuche*, and were quite certain that Tanchus was a bona fide heretic — or worse.)

Finally there is the issue of atmosphere. This adventure is written for an atmosphere of suspense. Ideally the players will be on the edge of their seats — always fearful that some gruesome new clue will be uncovered. I encourage you to make use of detail and timing to evoke this atmosphere. Be warned, however, that some players, or the chemistry of some gaming groups, simply is not conducive to this atmosphere. Do not despair! If you think in advance that this is the temperament of your group, or if you find quickly enough that the atmosphere just isn’t being set, take a different tack. Make it a more intellectual puzzle of intrigue, or hasten to the climax for an action-packed finale.





Theme

This story deals with a number of issues, but the central theme is Faith. Father Tanchus is a figure of disillusion, whose religion has been stolen from him because of the faith he put in the written word. On the one hand, he saw Christianity so much in terms of its textual substance — the Gospels, for instance — that when the text was undermined (whether such an undermining is really possible, or merely seemed so in Tanchus' unstable psyche, is not a matter for us to address; the latter is enough for the purposes of our tale), the whole edifice of “faith” came crashing down with it. This story is an allegory of the self-destruction that is inevitable for Tanchus; the same critical doubt and methodology he saw applied to the Bible by the imaginary *Diabolopsuche*, he would inevitably turn on the *Diabolopsuche* itself, with damning results. The revenant can be taken as a metaphor for the goblins of the mind, spawned by doubt, that can wreak destruction all too real.

Tanchus' reaction is not the only one possible. Every day people see their faith challenged, even contradicted. What if there were a *Diabolopsuche*, and it contained some truth? Biblical criticism in our day has challenged the contents of the Bible, and their traditional interpretations. What if a great deal of fiction lay hidden in the heart of Christian writings? Should the institution then collapse? Does there remain something inherently valuable in the Christian ethos — or, for that matter, how can one even define the “Christian ethos” — if the historical foundation is undermined? Is it possible for there to be faith when the object of faith has been brutally assaulted, even overthrown? Søren Kierkegaard might say that only when the matter of faith seems utterly futile is true faith even *possible*. On the other hand,

one might have such faith in the tenets of one's beliefs, the practical side, that in some sense their historical “validity” is irrelevant. And many people will grow stronger as their beliefs are ridiculed and attacked, and even their very persons punished on their account; this was precisely how Christianity first grew strong.

As the storyguide explores the issue of faith in running this adventure, he should not restrict himself to religious issues alone. What of faith in other persons? Noilis meets his end out of fear; he did not have enough faith in his friendship with Tanchus that he could confess his failure to bury Hélène's corpse. Will similar situations arise between grogs and magi? Will the adventurers keep faith in each other, in the ideals of their covenant? Find ways that this adventure will test all those bonds. The very atmosphere of horror and suspense is meant as another trial of faith — a test of faith in the self, of confidence.

Finally, I would like to note that this adventure is not meant as an assault or critique of any organized religion. It is an allegory, a means of exploring many levels of issues, including religious ones. The *Diabolopsuche* and all characters and events herein (and *Vézay*) are imaginary. Descriptive details, especially in the climax, are provided for dramatic effect. The storyguide should be sensitive, when he runs this adventure, to the tastes and sensibilities of his players, and may wish to alter the adventure's content and presentation accordingly, so as not to offend. Offense has its time and place — but I don't think it's in the friendly intimacy of a gaming group. On the other hand, don't be too squeamish about things; the adventure should have people on edge, as a matter of entertainment, and should further challenge them to think and discuss — preferably in character! A theological discussion between the roles of an agnostic magus and a religious companion could be the very highlight of this story in play.

Chapter II

Vézay



Vézay is not far upriver — no more than two or three days' journey by foot. The travel is not difficult, as a fairly clear path trails along the river's side. Characters will approach Vézay from the north (since the river flows away from the mountains lying to south), passing first a couple of outlying cottages. The river trail goes right through the middle of the village (see the map), beside the iron-grill fence that rings the churchyard. North of the Church of St. Lazare there is a bridge across the river, and thence the path travels west through the forest to the next hamlet.

A map of the village is on page 28. The numbers on the map refer to the descriptive key in Part 2 of this book (pages 36-41). Note that the map and key contain some descriptions subsequent to events in Part 1. In particular, locations 2 (the new chapel) and 12 (the new graveyard) do not exist at the beginning of this story.

About 45 souls inhabit Vézay, although the community really includes a good many more people who live within half a day's walk of the village, and come here for trade, news, and priestly ministrations. The folk are typical — simple and ignorant on the whole, but kind-hearted and wise in a natural sort of way.

The chief village elder and acknowledged spokesman is named **Rostagnus**. At age 74, Rostagnus is no longer the

energetic, exciting man he used to be, capable of rallying the villagers in an instant to assist one of their neighbors who fell prey to misfortune. Decrepitude has taken its toll on his mind as well as his body, but while much of his memory, judgement, and hearing may have been stolen, his big heart remains healthy and true. As Rostagnus' faculties have deteriorated, the villagers have increasingly looked to **Father Tanchus** (see below), their pastor, as judge and spokesman.

Characters asking villagers to be taken to the leading elder will be led to Rostagnus' cottage. Play out their interaction with him. Rostagnus borders on senility, and his poor hearing invariably leads to misunderstandings. He will undoubtedly mistake the characters for something they are not — tax collectors, merchants, pilgrims, or wandering knights, for example — and then misconstrue their words as having something to do with that identity: "Has anyone in your village died of the pox?" — "Eh? What's that? Pax? Oh yes — *pax*, peace. Damn northern accents! Yeah, we have lots of pax here. Why, pax has reigned in these parts since old Charles Martel Le Mange kicked them paynims." — "No, not pax, I said pox, you old fool." — "Eh? You'd like a stool? Young knights like yerselves be needin' stools? Seems to me you must be all set to go, to find some less peaceable place for your adventures.



Nothing but peace here. But we're friendly. Hey, Willa! Can you fetch the Good Knight a stool? I don't quite know what you want here'bouts, but we'll try to accommodate you." — and so forth.

Willa is Rostagnus' daughter. If Rostagnus doesn't get around to sending the characters to Tanchus, she discreetly apologizes for her father's incomprehension, and suggests that they may have better luck taking their queries to St. Lazare, the church. She does not say this in front of Rostagnus, for fear of offending him or making him conscious of his failing state.

Villager of Vézay

Characteristics: All characteristics are assumed to be average (0).

Age: Varies

Size: 0

Confidence: 1

Personality Traits: Submissive +1, see below

Another personality trait should be made up by the Storyguide on the spot, to give each individual personality — for example, Brave, Cautious, Defiant, Dreamy, Gossiping, Lazy, Sarcastic, Suspicious — and this trait should be played to an extreme, to help differentiate that villager from the others.

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist)	+3	+2	+2	+0	+2
Club	+5	+4	+5	+3	+2

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl 2, Craft (farming, smithing, etc.) 5, Single Weapon 2, Speak Provençal [or other local language, if the storyguide places Vézay in another region] 5

Equipment: If expecting a fight, villagers can arm themselves with clubs and assemble minimal armor (furs, quilted, or equivalent). Combat statistics above presume this.

Encumbrance: 0

A couple of villagers may have important interaction with the player characters in the course of the adventure.

Anna and her daughter, **Mathilde**, both have the pox, and are quarantined in a building on the edge of town. They will probably both survive, although Anna is further down the road to recovery than her daughter. Father Tanchus visits them daily, bringing them food and praying with them. Characters may win goodwill by hastening the recovery of these unfortunates through healing magic. They must be careful in doing so, however. The villagers of Vézay, like many others on the edge of civilization, are not that far from the paganism of eight centuries earlier. They are illiterate and intellectually poor, and wouldn't recognize heresy if it looked them in the face — which in fact it has for some time, in the person of Father Tanchus. Nevertheless, anyone can recognize witchcraft (or believe they do!) and fear the Devil, so magi must be careful to appear inspired by something more like holiness than the Evil One.

Martína, the younger sister of the late Héléne, is another non-player character the storyguide might use. Martína is a curious little girl, aged 8 or so, and not shy at all. She is likely to poke her nose into what the characters are doing, if they are in the village at all. Characters who closely examined Héléne's corpse may (on a Perception roll of 9+) get the feeling the little girl's face looks familiar. Martína's resemblance to her sister may be used to clue characters into investigating Vézay with some care; her bubbling curiosity may also make for roleplaying fun.

Several specific villagers are described in detail in the sequel adventure, "Festival of the Damned," which is Part 2 of this book. Other villagers may be made up as the storyguide sees fit. Here are some sample names of Provençal flavor, for making up characters on the spot:

Male Names: Alban, Carlus, César, Gaucher, Ricard, Roger, Tomas.

Female Names: Damiena, Eugenia, Gisela, Henriette, Marie, Véronique.

The Church of St. Lazare

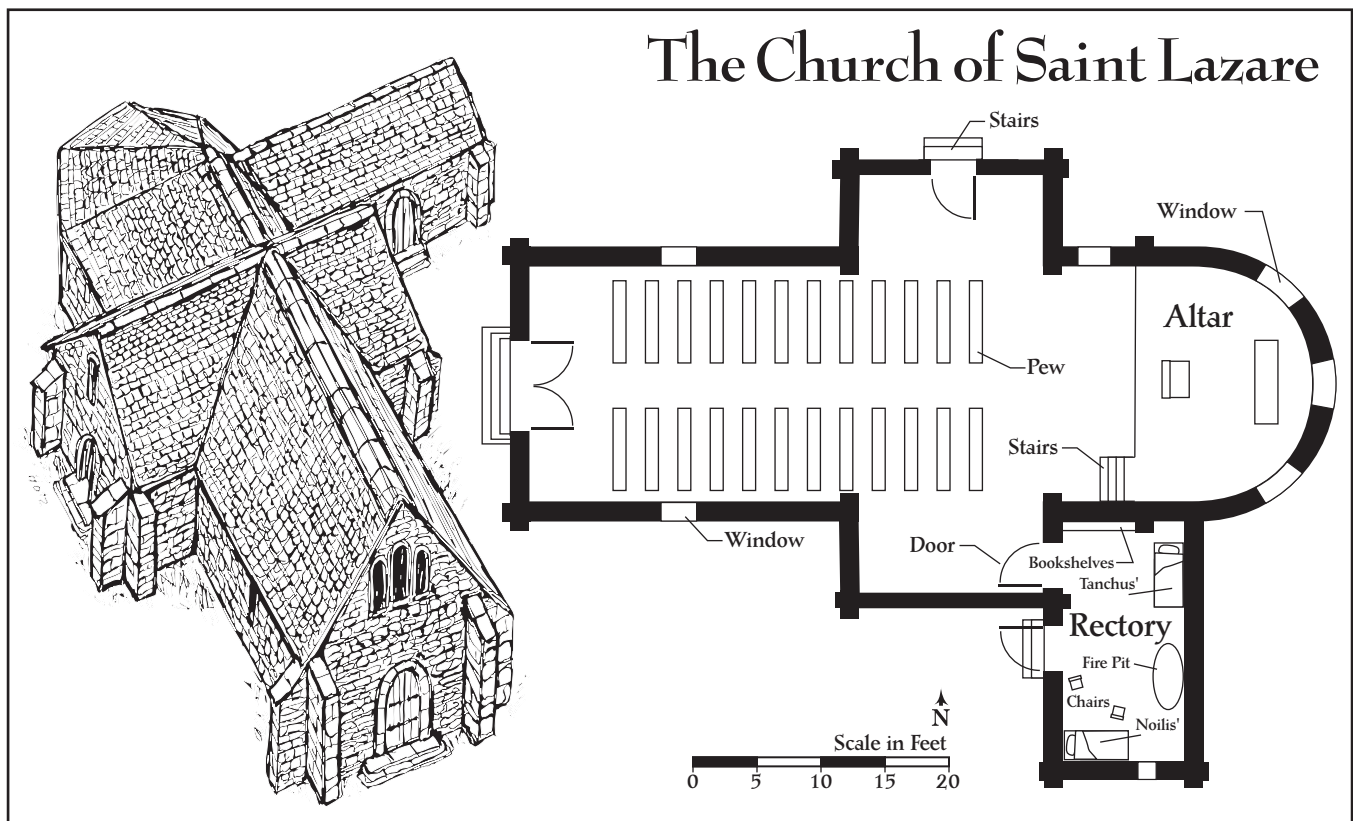
St. Lazare is the church of a humble parish. A simple iron fence surrounds the churchyard on all sides but the west, where there is the river. There are three buildings within: the church and rectory (which are joined), and a guest house. The northern side of the enclosure is the graveyard.

The church grounds formerly belonged to a knight by the name of Aymardo Lazare de Vézay. Good Sir

Aymardo died a bachelor, thirty-five winters ago, with neither child nor clear heir. His will left provision for his meager personal estate to be given over to the church. His own humble manor was to be torn down, and in its place a church erected and devoted to Lazarus, Aymardo's own personal patron. This was done, and paid for with funds left for the purpose by the deceased. On the foundations of the old, modest manor house were built the church and rectory. Beneath them (and sealed off — Tanchus doesn't even know it's there) remains the crypt where Aymardo's ancestors — five generations of Sieurs de Vézay — rest in peace. Aymardo himself was the first to be buried in the new church graveyard.

The guest house is the oldest building on church grounds; it was the house of the knight's gardener, refurbished to serve as a fairly comfortable hostel.

Characters arriving in the village may first have sought the leading elder,





Rostagnus (above), but wherever they began, their questions will undoubtedly be referred to the pastor of St. Lazare's Parish, Father Tanchus.

Tanchus is happy to answer the characters' questions, and on the whole he does so with complete honesty. He can explain that there was a small outbreak of the pox in the locale, and it has claimed the life of one woman — poor young Hélène. The only cases that remain are a mother and daughter, Anna and Mathilde (see Vézay, above), who are now quarantined in a hut on the southern edge of the village. Tanchus is confident that they will recover good health soon.

Father Tanchus

Characteristics: Int +2, Per -2, Pre -1, Com +1, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex -3, Qik -2

Age: 52

Size: 0

Confidence: 2

Decrepitude: 2

Personality Traits: Eccentric +2, Compassionate +1, Brave -1, Skeptical -2

Reputations: Insubordinate (Church) 3, Eccentric (Vézay) 2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Quarterstaff	+7	+4	+7	+3	+4

Soak: +1

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Charm 2 (preaching), Chirurgy 3 (battle wounds), Concentration 3 (meditation), Craft 3 (evaluate books), Intrigue 2 (rumormongering), Occult Lore 2 (diabolical rituals), Organization Lore—The Church 3 (heresy), Speak Greek 3 (philosophical terms), Speak Latin 4 (Church rites), Speak Provençal [or other local language] 5 (preaching), Scribe Greek 2 (classical texts), Scribe Latin 3 (abbreviations), Great Weapon 3 (quarterstaff), Theology 5 (exegesis), Vézay Lore 2 (heresy)

Equipment: Quarterstaff

Encumbrance: -1 carrying quarterstaff

When characters say what brings them here, or ask about robbery of graves from the churchyard, Father Tanchus confidently says no, there have been no bodies taken from the graves — see all the fresh grass everywhere in the graveyard, even over Hélène's fresh grave? A Folk Ken + Perception roll of 9+ reveals a bit of opaque smugness behind this remark.

While priest and party converse, Brother Noilis scurries about doing various little tasks — dusting, rearranging, and so forth — as he obviously eavesdrops. A similar Folk Ken + Perception roll of 12+ (9+ if a player states specifically that his character is studying the assistant) will reveal that the monk becomes agitated when the corpse's discovery is described. Of course this is an ambiguous fact — the characters' tale would likely dismay many a listener. A related detail that might be noticed: At mention of the mutilated corpse, Noilis reflexively crosses himself — but Tanchus (as a heretic who denies the Trinity) does not.

Simple though he may be, Noilis realizes the truth — that the body he dropped has turned up elsewhere. He is desperately afraid of his mistake being found, so he resolves to frighten away the party, hoping it will cease its investigation or at least leave St. Lazare.

Tanchus does not immediately suppose there is any correlation between his unholy ritual and the corpse found by the party — although he means to have a discreet word with his assistant later in the evening (especially if the characters' description of the corpse is detailed enough that the priest sees a resemblance to his own handiwork). Tanchus assures the party warmly that it will need to go elsewhere along the river to find answers to their questions. In the meantime, since they must be tired from their travel and activities, the characters are invited

to stay in the priest's guest house, on the edge of the churchyard. It's not the finest of accommodations, but is free and much better than nothing.

Father Tanchus

When Tanchus was but a child, his parents handed him over to a monastery for training and holy orders. As the boy had promising intelligence and eagerness, he was ordained as a priest when he became an adult. His early years in the ministry were spent as a chaplain of the King's army, serving the spiritual needs of dying fighters — and often their physical needs as well. From this experience he gained chirurgy skill, and fair proficiency defending himself with a quarterstaff.

Later Tanchus was assigned to an urban parish. Here he found himself caught up in the intellectual currents of the day. At first he interacted with just the regional intellectuals, almost all of them churchmen; he began to correspond with other thinkers from as far away as Ireland. Attracted to Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought through the works of St. Augustine and St. Anselm, he taught himself to read Greek, with hopes of garnering copies of the earliest philosophers' works in their original tongue. To this end he began to correspond with scholars of the Byzantine Empire, and even managed on one occasion to visit the great libraries of Constantinople (ostensibly on pilgrimage to the Holy Land).

When Tanchus, overflowing with new philosophical discoveries, returned from his library research and conversations with the cream of Byzantine intellectuals, he found that he had a new bishop. This man had no interest in debates and "original" thought; he also was wary of the pagan philosophers, and feared their work was dangerous and could con-

taminate Christianity. "Our duty," he told Tanchus, "is not to create, but to preserve. God inspired our forebears, and it is our holy task to attempt faithfully to pass on the sacred Word. We must not indulge in speculation, or presume in vanity to create something new. God has already given us all we need to know."

Against the bishop's command, Tanchus organized debates and discussions with other clerics, and began writing several works. The bishop censured him for disobedience, and brought him before an ecclesiastical court for his unorthodox writings. The court was reluctant to condemn him — after all, most of his work just parroted the prominent Parisian philosophers and theologians of the day — but, under pressure from the bishop, they condemned Tanchus' works, ordered all copies burned (while Tanchus looked on), and forbade





Supernatural Auras

Mystic auras imbue the village of Vézay and, specifically and importantly, the Church of St. Lazare. They also are of key importance to the events of the story. In the course of the adventure, as Tanchus proceeds with his evil ritual, and as night falls or day returns, the auras change.

The basic aura of the village is, naturally, Dominion. This power is, in most places, stronger during the day and weaker at night. Competing with Dominion is the Infernal aura being built by Tanchus. While there are two auras, only one at a time — whichever is stronger — can make its effects felt.

Following is a summary of the auras during the three days and nights that the party is supposed to be in Vézay. If you modify the timetable when running the adventure, take care to consider what the auras should be for certain events (especially the climax in “The Unholy Hour”). The “Basic Auras” are those before Tanchus began his unholy project. Subsequent dates carry the progression of the auras. When there are two auras, the stronger

completely overrides the weaker; if they are of equal strength, they neutralize each other. Those times and places where the Infernal aura is stronger are marked in **bold type**.

Take note of the effects of the auras on spellcasting magi! In general, the auras will result in substantial spellcasting penalties (see Realm Interaction Table, *ArM4*, page 239). But in addition, those times when auras cancel each other — meaning that magic-users suffer no penalty! — may serve as an enigmatic clue for investigating magi.

Night Auras: The effects of Tanchus’ project are felt at midnight each night; the aura after dusk of each night, before midnight, is thus identical to the aura of the previous midnight. At midnight the new aura (if any) goes into effect. For example, before midnight on the first night, the aura is the same as “Basic Aura — Night”; at midnight, the aura changes — noticeably, because the Dominion and Infernal powers cancel each other in the churchyard, possibly when the characters are investigating!

the errant priest to write any more. Moreover, the bishop arranged that Tanchus be transferred to the isolated parish of St. Lazare. Among illiterate villagers, thought the bishop, the priest could cause little trouble.

For twenty years now Tanchus has been pastor of St. Lazare’s. Isolated from the intellectual community, deprived of comment or counsel, his thoughts have taken increasingly bizarre turns. With so few books available, Tanchus devoured every document on which he could lay his hands, and tended to be easily con-

vinced of whatever it was trying to argue. In this state, and with his knowledge of Greek, Tanchus was the ideal “victim” for the *Diabolopsuche*.

In spite of all this, Tanchus remains a compassionate, sensitive human; as a priest, he puts the spiritual (or psychological, as we would say today) well-being of his flock above all else. In conversation Tanchus is pleasant, but perhaps too eager to show off his book-learning if his listener has expressed knowledge of or interest in intellectual pursuits. The priest is fond of quoting precisely from the books of his

Table: Vézay Auras

Date	Location		
	Village	Churchyard	Church
Basic Aura — Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
Basic Aura — Night	No Aura	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
First Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 1	Infernal 2
First Midnight	No Aura	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 4
Second Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 2
Second Midnight	Infernal 1	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 3	Infernal 5
Third Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 3
Third Midnight	Infernal 1	Dominion 2	Dominion 5
		Infernal 4	Infernal 6
Fourth Day	Dominion 1	Dominion 3	Dominion 5
		Infernal 2	Infernal 4

The scores of the third midnight and fourth day continue indefinitely, until someone (presumably the player characters) takes steps to increase the Dominion or remove the Infernal aura.



personal library, all of which he has read many times over, and misquoting others of which he has heard but not personally read. He tends to dismiss others' ideas, unless they can cite a written source from which it was derived.

Brother Noilis

Noilis is the simple-minded assistant curé of the parish. His duties chiefly consist in the care of the buildings and grounds. An ugly, misshapen man, slightly hunch-backed, Noilis has no friend but Father Tanchus — the children of the village stare or tease him (except little *Martína*, who once struck

up a conversation with the hunchback, until her older sister literally pulled her away), the good wives hide behind doors at his approach, and the men avert their gazes when they pass him. Understandably, Noilis prefers to stay in the confines of the churchyard, in the company of Tanchus, who does not shrink from the brother's deformities. Happiness in Noilis' world consists of a beautiful church and yard (though the poor, dimwitted monk is ugly, his loving hands have brought much beauty into the world, even for those who loathe him), an approving smile from Tanchus, and the occasional walk in the woods, alone or with the gentle animals, with whom he sometimes imagines himself able to converse.



Chapter III Events

The Death of Noilis

It should come to pass, then, that the characters will be spending a night in Vézay, guests of the parish priest. Besides the convenience of hospitality, and the

hours of rest approaching, the party should have good reason to want to investigate further in this village; numerous clues (such as the pox having afflicted Vézay, the semblance of the girl *Martina* to the deceased, and so forth) should at least have piqued the characters' interest.

If people have been interviewed and questioned enough, and the party has learned as much from others' lips as they are likely to be told, what next? The graveyard is a most likely object of investigation, sooner or later, especially if there is a *Corpus* mage in the party. The storyguide should arrange so that the party sets out to examine the graveyard after dark.

Brother Noilis

Characteristics: Int -3, Per +1, Pre -5, Com -3, Str +2, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik -1

Age: 37

Confidence: 1

Personality Traits: Eccentric +2, Shy +1, Brave -1

Reputations: Moronic (Vézay) 3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (Dagger)	+3	+3	+3	+5	+5
Hand Axe	+6	+5	+5	+8	+7

Soak: +3

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl 2 (dodging blows), Organization Lore—The Church 1 (church services), Single Weapon 3 (hand axe), Speak Latin 2 (understanding Fr. Tanchus), Speak Provençal or other local language 3 (eavesdropping), Stealth 3 (moving silently)

Equipment: dagger, hand axe

Encumbrance: 0

The Graveyard

There are scarcely more than a dozen graves on church grounds; like St. Lazare itself, the graveyard is relatively young. Prior to the donation of the land to the church, the knights of Vézay were buried in a crypt beneath their manor and the peasants were given rude burials elsewhere.

The most striking grave is the sepulchre of St. Lazare's founding patron. The base of the tomb is like a great stone box (ten feet long, by six feet wide, by five feet high) carved with relief sculpture of crosses and the like. On a roll of 9+ in a

suitable Organization Lore (such as The Church or Knights Templar), a character will recognize that many of the symbols are in styles associated with the Crusades. It is likely, therefore, that the tomb's occupant saw the Holy Land (as in fact he did). Narrow, steep steps lead up on either side of the tomb. Atop is a great, marble headstone. It reads, beneath a stylized cross, "Aymardo Lazare, Sieur de Vézay." The dates show that Aymardo passed away 35 years ago, after living to the ripe old age of 57.

Since Aymardo, only three graves (all more than a decade old) are marked by stone. The others have simpler wooden markers of those who lie beneath.

The party will probably be concerned with more recent graves. There have been four deaths from the pox — three men (the storyguide may take names from the list of examples under Vézay, page 13, if they are needed) and the young woman, Héléne. This last grave, placed at the head of Sir Aymardo's, is noteworthy because, despite its recent occupancy, it is covered by an extraordinarily beautiful and dense bed of wildflowers.

Digging up one or more graves would be foolhardy — but fortunately there are simpler magical means of gathering information! (Note: If it is after midnight, the Infernal aura of this region has grown so that it cancels the Divine — it is as though there were no aura at all, which is not to be expected on Church grounds! See the Supernatural Auras insert on pages 16-17 for details.) A simple spontaneous *Intéllego Corpus* spell of level 5, for instance, can reveal that there is no body beneath the headstone of Héléne...

The same divination might realize — perhaps too late — that the party is not alone in the graveyard this night. Noilis has stealthily come out to observe the characters. When he sees them studying Héléne's grave, even a simpleton such as he can realize that they may find him out.

Panicked, Noilis tries to tip Aymardo's headstone on someone standing below, at Héléne's grave; then he flees. The character below must make a Quickness + Brawl roll of 6+ to avoid being hit. The stone does +5 damage (no strength bonus) to the person on whom it falls. Noilis scurries away, not bothering to see the effect of his action. He does not really want to hurt anyone — Noilis is not vicious — but he does want to scare the party off.

Surely the party will pursue their unknown assailant. The misshapen monk runs down by the river. Play the chase for suspense. If the party catches up to Noilis, down by the river, he turns about to defend himself with his dagger and hand axe. If not — or if the party is determined to subdue the monk for questioning — he dies by mishap, slipping on one wet rock (or — **croak!** — was it perhaps a toad?) and dashing his brains out on another. In any case, Noilis must meet his end.

Politically (if not ethically) it is probably better if it is by mishap rather than a player-character's sword that Noilis dies. The death of the assistant curé is impossible to conceal; furthermore, the party will doubtless wish to question Tanchus about the monk's strange behavior.

The Priest's Reaction

Tanchus is puzzled — remember, he considers his own activities the right thing to do (though they must be done secretly, since not yet everyone recognizes the "truth" Tanchus has discovered), and is not the least bit worried by them. He never knew about Noilis dropping Héléne's corpse into the river. Keep this in mind as you roleplay his interaction with the characters after Noilis' demise.





Tanchus is truly saddened by his assistant's death, but retains calm and composure as befits a leader. The best reason Tanchus can imagine for Noilis' activity is that the poor monk must have thought the characters to be intruders. Perhaps he was made edgy by the characters' report of the corpse; his poor dim mind may have jumped to the conclusion that the PCs were grave robbers.

The priest asks that the characters assist him in wrapping the body in sheets and bringing it into the church. There he plans to keep vigil over his departed friend until dawn; later in the day they will bury him.

The Vigil

Characters might not have been in the church before. It is built in the

Romanesque style, with rounded arches, thick walls and few windows. Intricate sculptures peer out from every doorway and corner, depicting biblical scenes and fantastical visions of heaven and hell. The polished oak woodwork, kept in glowing cleanliness by Noilis, is also adorned with religious relief sculpture.

The altar is simple: two blocks of stone holding up a sheet of marble, over which is draped a cloth embroidered with words of praise for the divine. Behind that, beneath the crucifix, is a gold-plated tabernacle to hold the Host. The crucifix itself is of precious hardwood, with a porcelain figure actually attached thereto. The figure of Christ is delicate, almost transparent, glowing as though with perspiration from the candlelight. Details of hair, eyebrows, eyes, and crimson stigmata are painted on the porcelain. The eyes are particularly expressive, bearing a sort of quiet, patient hope; they

impart to the whole figure more contemplative wisdom than suffering.

While the visual presence of the church is stunning, there is an ominous undertone swelling, thanks to Tanchus' continuing ritual. A Perception roll of 9+ reveals a lingering scent of decay. The storyguide may, at his discretion and with die rolls, pass on further foreshadowing tidbits to appropriate party members. For instance, one character with the exceptional talent Premonitions might feel ill at ease; as might one who senses holiness/unholiness. There's not quite a negative aura, as such, but a growing sense of unease — of subtle wrongness in the church. A visionary might receive a vision — but it would be confusing, ambiguous, and not clearly interpretable, just disconcerting.

Tanchus encourages the characters to go to bed. He is pleased enough to keep vigil and pray for the soul of the departed — although any character who so insists may stay with him.

Once settled in for the vigil, Tanchus sprinkles holy water on the body. The “holy water” has in fact been fouled by the evil potion; a successful sense unholiness talent roll reveals that something is indeed amiss in the water's nature. A Perception roll of 12+ also reveals that the water in the aspersion has an unpleasant odor and, if one examines a droplet, sickly color. If asked about the water, Tanchus explains that “it is blessed only on special days, and so tends to become materially unwholesome after a time.” (An Int + Theology roll of 9+ informs a character that this is untrue.)

At sunrise Tanchus returns to the rectory to rest until noon, when the funeral will be held.

Characters may at some point try to summon and interrogate Noilis' spirit. This is risky business — as the storyguide should make sure the players understand. If they are caught, they would have diffi-

culty explaining themselves; disturbing the souls of the dead — not even yet buried! — is a serious matter, and would surely make the party appear as evil magicians. It is quite possible that the villagers would try to run them out of town, and Tanchus would not be too pleased with his guests. The whole process is also made more difficult because the corpse is in the church — which has a Divine aura of 5 (see the “Supernatural Auras” insert, pages 16-17).

But, as Noilis has not been given church burial, he is in fact susceptible to such spells as *Incantation of Summoning the Dead* (ReMe 25). Noilis' ghost is of minimal assistance. Noilis died believing everything wrong is his fault for dropping the body in the river rather than burying it properly. He does not even imagine that Tanchus was doing anything wrong (how could he, being Noilis' only friend in the world?). The wretched ghost whines, babbles, pleads for pity for having dropped the corpse — without explaining



The Adventure in Play

The events as described in this adventure, especially toward the end, should be treated as suggestions. They present a relatively narrow range of action — not because we think players are too stupid to try different things, but because there's no way to predict what players might do in an open-ended scenario! Therefore, this adventure tries to present information and ideas in a manner that will be enjoyable to read, and inspirational for the storyguide who runs her own adventure based on this text. We presume that the storyguide has the intelligence and creativity, and the good judgement, to bend things around for the sake of her own game.

How should she react when players set a lookout on Aymardo's tomb, for instance? Obviously, Noilis can't then push the headstone on the investigators. Perhaps he'll throw rocks instead — or try to sneak up behind the sentry and knock him out.



why he had the corpse in the first place — and begs that his summoner not tell Tanchus, for he fears he would suffer eternal shame and despair if that priest learned of his assistant's failure. Noilis will say nothing more, even under coercion. If the summoner begins to threaten to tell Tanchus after all, Noilis' ghost becomes more desperate in his whining — but the Storyguide should have some event intrude to prevent the party from garnering much more out of the ghost. Perhaps villagers come into church, expecting morning mass; or Father Tanchus comes through, having forgotten to do some thing or other. Characters may at this point have certain proof that

the corpse is from Vézay, and that Noilis was somehow wrapped up in the matter, but the accusing finger should not yet lie on Father Tanchus.

A Parody of Resurrection

The next day, Noilis is buried. The service is unremarkable, save one respect: Tanchus' mumbled liturgy omits any reference to Christ or the Trinity, in keeping

The Noilis Revenant

Characteristics: Cun +3, Per 0, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str +4, Sta +5, Dex -2, Qik +5

Infernal Might: 25

Size: 0

Personality Traits: Mindlessly Violent +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (Claw)	+16	+8	+5	+15	n/a

Soak: +12

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl (clawing) 10, Concentration (ignoring attacks) 2

Encumbrance: 0

Special Powers:

Scorching Heat of Hell (CrIg 25), 3 points: This magical power can cause the floor of the church (or other stone) to heat up. While the revenant prefers physical attacks, this power gives it a chance against wizards whose spells require concentration (for example, a Corpus magus casting *Lifting the Dangling Puppet*). The power requires the revenant's concentration to be maintained; if concentration is broken, the revenant may begin the power anew the next round of combat (at a cost of another three might points). The heat, the first round, inflicts a simple die +0 damage (ignore metal armor in soaking this dam-

age; sturdy boots offer +2 soak protection, however, lighter shoes or boots +1); then +1 damage, +2, and so forth on subsequent rounds. If the revenant's concentration is broken, and it is forced to re-cast the *Scorching Heat*, then the damage reverts to +0.

Description: The skin of Noilis has become tough and crusted, about as strong as hard leather armor. If wounded with edged weapons, the animated corpse spills black, stinking blood like that which defiles the altar (see "The Unholy Hour").

The Noilis Revenant is subject to Corpus magic in most cases, except that it cannot, like a simple zombie or skeleton, be put to rest by "Dust to Dust" (PeCo 15). It is, however, subject to "Demon's Eternal Oblivion" (PeVi Gen.).

Nota Bene: This infernal creature gains a bonus *on all rolls* equal to the Infernal Aura of the place in which it stands (even personality rolls — Infernal auras make it more mindlessly violent!). An area with a Divine Aura of any strength is warded against the revenant; it can only function in areas of Infernal, Magical or (uncomfortably) Faerie power, or in locales with no aura at all.

In the church after the third midnight, therefore, the revenant gains +6 on all rolls; this has not been included in the combat statistics above.

with his heresy. It takes a Perception roll of 6+ just to make out what the priest is saying, and an Int + Theology roll of 9+ to notice the change — and even then a character is more likely than not to suspect he or she misheard. Many villagers come to pay their respects, although they tell anyone who asks Noilis really had no friend but Tanchus. If characters have not yet met little *Martína*, they will on this occasion. She boldly strides up and asks if the strangers killed poor Noilis. Her mother hastens after to scold her and pull her away, apologizing profusely for the child's rudeness.

Apart from *Martína's* query, blame is not immediately laid on the characters — at least, not openly — but there is general mystification, and much talk of the event. No one especially liked Noilis, and his strange death only increases his bizarre reputation. Some people whisper that Noilis must have had something to do with the corpse found by the strangers — perhaps the misshapen monk was a secret diabolist! From there, rumors can go in many directions. Perhaps the “investigators” are themselves diabolists — the corpse was a communiqué, bidding them come to *Vézay* for some dire purpose. Did they quarrel with the monk, perhaps come to blows — and then the unfortunate end?

Player characters can't help but hear some whispers of the villagers' suspicions. Some of the speculation might jog their own imaginations as to what motivated the dead monk. If only to keep their reputations clear, let alone figure out what is going on, the characters should feel it best to stay another night.

After the funeral, Tanchus holds a simple wake in the churchyard, for which he produces a tankard of his finest wine to share with the villagers who were so kind as to come for Noilis' remembrance. Talk is subdued — and rumors rife. Tanchus, for his part, may become visibly

emotional when he speaks of his late assistant. Tired from his vigil, the fact of his closest friend's death at last strikes him with bitter finality. He especially mourns that “Noilis will not see his diligent efforts come to fruition.” Everyone presumes that Tanchus is speaking of the monk's work to repair and maintain the church and grounds; in particular, Noilis' latest project was the renovation of stained glass behind the altar, a piece that showed Christ raising up Lazarus from the dead.

Tanchus is quite willing to discuss religious beliefs (the topic might be brought up by the curious omissions in his liturgy), if he believes his interlocutors to be open-minded, or if any of them profess heretical sympathies or knowledge of ancient heresies (like Arianism or Gnosticism).

After people have drifted away and the wake has been cleaned up, Tanchus retires to the rectory to take care of administrative matters, such as noting Noilis' death in the church records and writing the bishop to request a new assistant or groundskeeper.

This second night, Infernal power takes control of the churchyard (see “Supernatural Auras”). Noilis' unblessed corpse — for Tanchus' ritual was indeed ineffectual, undermined by his heretical alterations — becomes animated at midnight by an unclean spirit; it arises as a revenant, an awful undead creature bent on destruction.

Play the chaos by ear. The revenant is mindlessly violent, and not intelligent as such — but cunning. It cannot enter the church proper, since that building remains in the sway of the Dominion. The guest building in which the characters reside is fair game, though! Tantalize the players with some combat and spell-casting, but don't go all the way. The cunning demon that animates Noilis' corpse was drawn here by Tanchus' ritual,





and it grasps that the ritual is not yet complete, for the St. Lazare's church remains as a beacon of the Divine. When the church's Dominion aura has fallen, as the demon expects it will, then there will be so much the more infernal power on which the revenant can feed. Therefore, when combat begins to go against the revenant, it flees. Because the night aura in Vézay is, at this point, infernal, the revenant is able to flee safely through the village. It hides itself in the woods during the day (when the Dominion causes it to go dormant), so that the living cannot destroy its corpse.

The Unholy Hour

Terrified by the appearance of the revenant, Tanchus is convinced that some evil power is hoping to thwart his completion of the "purification" ritual (which in fact *created* the revenant). To his mind, therefore, it is imperative that he continue his ritual, for protection against the monster.

The priest arises early on the characters' third day in Vézay, and immediately proceeds with his ritual, sprinkling the foul potion all over the church and grounds, and chanting the words he has memorized from the *Diabolopsuche*. The words seem nonsense, but sound subtly ominous. They are a conglomeration of bastardized Greek, Phoenician, Philistine and Persian words and grammar.

Tanchus is completely overt in his activity; if the characters have not caught a glimpse of it before, they do now. He is feverish in his desire to ward off the beast, and does not bother to hide his formerly covert project from anyone's eyes. If the characters have a comfortable rapport with the priest, he may even ask that they attend or assist in the ceremonies.

This is sure to lead to a full-fledged discussion of what Tanchus is doing. Be sure to review Tanchus' description if this occurs. Fill his speech with (mis)quotes of the great thinkers, and be fierce with his desire to refute, through "reason," points of view other than his own. He is vehement in his condemnation of the Christian faith, and revels in deconstructing the New Testament. If listeners seem receptive, he can go on almost interminably, and may try to recruit them to his cause. He may go so far as to show them his most precious possession — the *Diabolopsuche* itself.

Characters might not at first have realized the nature of the revenant — it takes a good, close look to realize it is Noilis' corpse walking around — and they could thus think it some sort of ghoul, the source of their corpse downriver.

Tanchus begs the party's aid, to defend St. Lazare if his holy unguent should fail to provide protection. The "holy unguent," of course, is nothing less than the evil potion made of the corpse — the potion that will at last bring St. Lazare into the grasp of Hell.

Whatever may happen in the course of the day (one would hope it involves the characters getting at least some idea of what's really going on), night is when Infernal power regains the churchyard, and the revenant returns. The revenant first stalks the village and graveyard, hoping to harass any lone persons, feinting attacks on the church wherein Tanchus prays feverishly for deliverance. Not until midnight will the undead assault the church proper or engage any opponent (save one obviously weaker) in serious battle.

At the stroke of the third midnight, Infernal power reaches its climax and overcomes the Divine aura of St. Lazare. Father Tanchus is praying feverishly at the altar and, if they have yielded to his entreaties, the player characters attend him nearby. In the silent tension, a drip

is heard — one drop, then another, drawing eyes to the altar. The porcelain figure of Christ has begun to bleed: red oozes from hands, feet and sides, and dribbles slowly from the mouth. A single sanguine tear traces its melancholy channel while the wooden cross, to which the figure is nailed, begins to smoke, then bursts into flame. The head of the figure cracks and falls to the floor, shattering, and deep red blood flows out — turning to a stinking black ooze. At last the remainder of the porcelain shatters, while the cross burns without ceasing.

Meanwhile, the Noilis Revenant waits at the door, until the Christ-figure has shattered, marking the sway of Infernal power, and allowing the revenant to burst in, strengthened more than ever by the new, intense diabolical aura.

The confrontation is a no-holds-barred, climactic struggle. Play it to the hilt, using every strength at the revenant's disposal as it assaults the party and priest. After all the suspense leading up to it, the characters should finally be able to *act*, to destroy the evil which threatens them.





Conclusion

When (or if) the revenant has been destroyed, the carnage in the church is somewhat calmed — although the cross continues to burn until dawn, when the Dominion regains the desecrated church; it then crumbles into gray ashes. Villagers, roused from their restless sleep (nightmares being one common minor effect of an Infernal aura) by the ruckus, cluster outside the churchyard fence, anxiously waiting to see what has happened. Explaining the truth to them is a delicate task. At dawn peace at last returns — villagers return to their homes to sleep, or must strike out into the fields to begin the day's work. In the church the noxious atmosphere of Hell is reduced to a sour, lingering odor of decay. In the light of day and Dominion, the remains of Noilis return to the monk's natural, pitiful appearance.

A monumental clean-up job is in order. At the least, poor Noilis is wanting for a proper burial, and St. Lazare's needs a good scrubbing. Even so, all of that will not wipe away the invisible stain of Tanchus' unholy ceremony.

What will the magi do about this "Jekyll & Hyde" plot of land — Dominion in daylight, Infernal at night? They might approach the ecclesiastical powers — perhaps a bishop, or even the pope — to find the appropriate people and process to overcome the Infernal aura with a stronger Dominion. This would be no easy diplomatic task for anyone, let alone magi.

The church and grounds may be left — perhaps sealed off — a new enigma in the locale, and the potential site for future adventures. What if a coven of diabolists decide to use it as the site for unholy rituals, in the darkness of the

new moon? If Vézay is left alone, it is likely to become something unwholesome — remember, even the town village itself falls under Infernal sway at night, and will until a stronger Dominion arises here. "Festival of the Damned," the second part of this book, offers one possible future for the St. Lazare church and grounds.

If Tanchus survived the night, his future is uncertain. The old man realized in a flash, as the crucifix burst before him, that he had perpetrated a most terrible evil. At the same time, he cannot rest content with a return to Christianity; the treachery of the *Diabolopsuche* has not sent him running back to mother Church, but rather plunged him into deeper uncertainty than ever. Furthermore, Tanchus expects — probably rightly — that the Church would give him nothing much more than a stake and pyre of faggots as just penance, to burn the sinful impurities (as well as his body) from his soul.

Wandering is the only avenue open to Tanchus, then: He sets out, in spite of his age (and perhaps the impossibility of the task), to find something certain, something indubitably true, somewhere in the wide world; he might find peace, or perhaps could be yet again encountered, even as a ghost, still searching... With but a handful of silver deniers, the clothing on his back, and sturdy staff, Tanchus takes his leave of the confused villagers and (if they will give him leave) the magi.

The characters are free to take what they will from amongst Tanchus' abandoned possessions. It includes a modest mundane library, with a few books about theology and philosophy. There is also, of course, the tangible root of evil here — the *Diabolopsuche*. Magi may wish to take custody of this book, or perhaps to destroy it, to keep it out of the wrong hands; certainly if it arrives in the hands of the Church it will find certain destruction.

The Διαβολοψυχη

The *Diabolopsuche* (Διαβολοψυχη) is an ancient book, written in Greek, allegedly authored by one Tharene of Tyre. The name comes from two Greek words: διαβολος (diabolos), meaning “devil” or “slanderer;” and ψυχη (psuche), a word usually translated as “mind,” “ghost,” “spirit,” “soul,” etc. Besides the one featured in this adventure, which was sold to the Christian priest Tanchus by Levi-Isaak (who himself bought it from a Moorish merchant in Barcelona), it is not known how many copies of the dire text exist.

The book is divided into two parts — theory and practice, as it were, for the first part is a diatribe against Christianity, and the second a collection of evil rituals to “purify” the faith.

The diatribe is a brilliant piece of slander. It purports that Christianity had an evil inception, that is begotten of the Devil. Persuasive exegetical arguments from scripture are presented. These arguments thrive on people’s ability to interpret a text (the Bible) in multiple ways, and to draw conclusions as much from what is not said as from what is. The arguments’ ultimate conclusion is that the whole beginning of Christianity is a lie imagined and perpetrated by a coven of diabolists (the “apostles”) who made up supernatural stories about a common, crucified criminal, as though he were the Jewish Messiah. While most Jews were wise to this fiction, the cult flourished among many Gentiles who, corrupted and driven to desperation by Roman debauchery, were ready to believe anything that might promise to improve their spiritually impoverished lives.

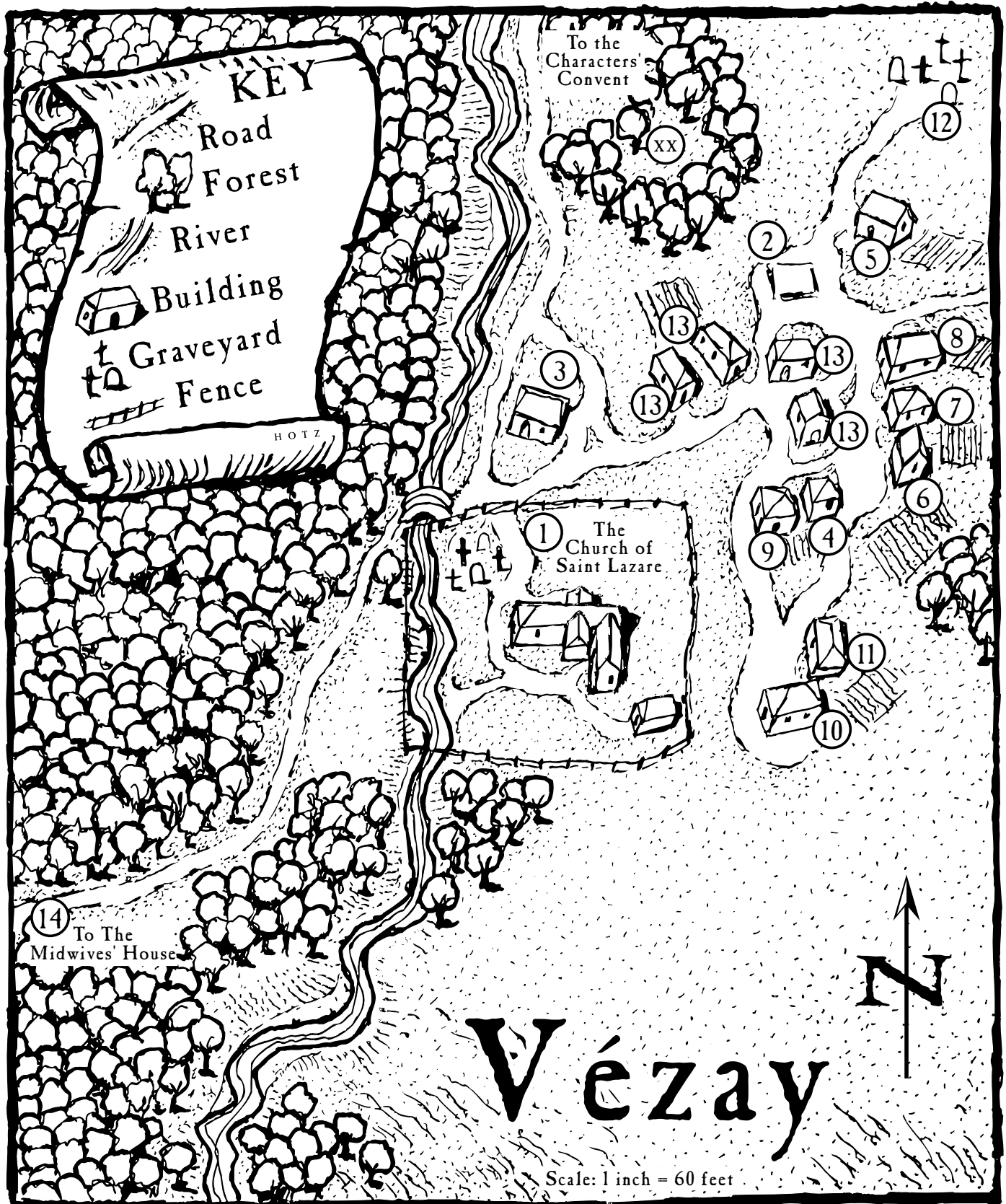
The second portion of the book gives the reader (presumably convinced by the arguments) something to do “to clean up our cities and provinces.” Instructions are given for how to “purify” a locale — especially shrines sacred to “the diabolical Christian fiends”. In fact, these instructions constitute an extended ritual for the establishment of an aura of Infernal power. The performer(s) of the ritual must gather twelve toads and a human corpse (as newly dead as possible). After speaking vile incantations

over these things, the toads are to be killed, and stewed together with choice portions of the corpse. The result is a potion which, if administered over a period of time to a building or plot of land, will establish an Infernal aura. We need not present the game details of the process, as no player character should desire to commit the heinous crime of carrying out the project the book describes; these sparse details should be enough to perturb casual readers of the Διαβολοψυχη, however, and inform them of its malignant nature.

The book’s contents should not be of much direct value to magi — the Code of Hermes, to say nothing of common sense, prohibits them from engaging in such activities as the book describes.

Nonetheless, the work has value to someone studying diabolism and the occult, provided they know how to approach the work. This assumes that the reader understands the essential falsehoods of the text, and is studying the text not just for what it says, but for the subtext — just as one might divine a certain sort of truth from propaganda when one understands it as such. The Storyguide might require an intelligence roll, or a teacher who would give the reader this “key” to the text. In a sense, the key would be to abstract the text-analyzing methodology of the *Diabolopsuche*’s first part, and turn it upon the book itself.

To an appropriate reader, the work may be treated as a liber quaestionum (see *Ars Magica* 4th Ed., pp. 188-189) in Occult Lore with a Quality of 6 and a target level of 5. The low quality reflects the fact that the reader cannot take the text as its author has written it, but is trying to second-guess what is behind the author’s words. The target level represents a fairly advanced understanding of occult matters. Without such an understanding, a constructive reading of the text is extremely unlikely. Conversely, someone already more familiar with the topic will find the book does not explore new ground. (Remember that difference from the target score, whether above or below, reduces a liber quaestionum’s value to its reader.)



Part Two Festival of the Damned



by Jonathan Tweet



Chapter I

Introduction

You hold in your hands a story designed for *Ars Magica*[™]. Like the other stories Atlas Games publishes, its emphasis is on roleplaying and storytelling over combat. It takes place in *Mythic Europe*[™]; in fact, it is a sequel to the adventure “The Ghoul of St. Lazare,” though you can play it without having first run that story. Since roleplaying takes precedence over number-crunching, however, you may find the adventure suitable to whichever pseudo-medieval setting and mechanics system you prefer. Enjoy.

Time and Location

This story takes place in and around Vézay, a small village in the Languedoc (now southern France) during the early

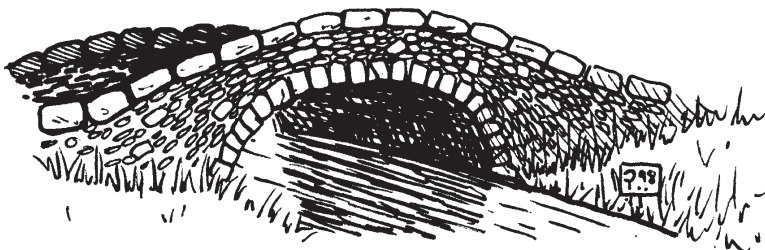
13th Century. If you prefer a different setting, change any details necessary to make the story fit your saga. The village is small and insignificant enough to be located in just about any inhabited area.

Vézay and What Has Gone Before

Vézay has already been discussed in “The Ghoul of St. Lazare,” Part One of this book. Ideally, you have played out that story recently, and this story follows what happened then. Here are a few notes, should the progress of your saga be slightly different.

If you haven't played “The Ghoul of St. Lazare” ...

Your best bet is to play through “The Ghoul of St. Lazare” — which is easy now that both of these scenarios are under one cover. Include details about the village, such as specific villagers, that are described here but are not found in the original “Ghoul.” (The corruption of villagers that the characters first get to know in “Ghoul” will be more ominous than the corruption of villagers who are new to them in this story.)



If you want to play this story without first playing “Ghoul,” assume that the following events have taken place:

Father Tanchus, the priest of the Church of St. Lazare, became heretical and unwittingly used a diabolic ritual to bring the church grounds and the surrounding area under infernal influence. Tanchus and his assistant, Noilis, were both killed, and the villagers now shun the church. These events took place within the last year, after the last Easter.

If you played “Ghoul,” but it ended differently from what one would expect...

Look over this story and see if the events in your saga still provide a suitable

prologue to this story. If not, find some way to change the state of the church and the village. As long as the church has fallen under demonic influence, this story fits the setting. If the characters actually prevented Father Tanchus from completing his infernal ritual, perhaps some other source of corruption has arisen, such as diabolists sent in from a nearby city to complete the ritual and desecrate the church.

If you played “Ghoul,” but game years have passed...

You need to explain, at least in your own mind, the delay between the Church’s desecration and the events in this story. Assume that from the time of “Ghoul,” several devils in Hell have been arguing





over who would claim control over the desecrated area, and only now have they finally agreed to let Escarus try his hand at using this area to Hell's advantage.

If you've played out further stories in Vézay and developed it...

If you've already detailed villagers, you have two choices: use the villagers described here in addition to those you've created, or adapt the existing villagers to the plot. The second option is the better one because players will have more emotional attachment to the fates of villagers they already know.

The Status of the Covenant

The story of "Ghoul" was probably the covenant's first significant contact with the village of Vézay, so it was also the villagers' first impression of the characters. Think about how the characters behaved and what the villagers probably think of them now. Did the characters obviously save the village from a heretic's demonic fumbling? Or did they seem to

cause the trouble that came to Vézay? Are the villagers thankful, angry, suspicious, in awe, or bewildered? No doubt at least a few villagers represent each possible response, with some distrusting the magi and others looking to them as benefactors, but what is the prevailing opinion in the Vézay about the nature of the magi?

When the characters come to Vézay again, base the villagers' reactions on how they feel about the characters. This story will be an opportunity for the characters to strengthen a good reputation or to rid themselves of a bad one.

Summary of Plot

The characters are invited to Vézay to celebrate Holy Week, and also to investigate diabolic activity. The "diabolic activity" they are investigating turns out to be a plot of revenge executed by a witch who is friendly to the women of Vézay. Her curses on three men are actually punishment for a rape they committed. The witch poses no threat to the village or the covenant.

The real danger comes from Escarus, Demon of the Seven Deadly Sins, as he plots to expand his power in this region. He has corrupted seven of the villagers, and each of these in turn tempts some of the characters during the week they stay in Vézay. Characters who fall prey to temptation must fight off demons who come for their souls on Saturday.

The threat of the demons and their temptations is linear. The temptations take place one at a time while the characters are interacting with the villagers and culminate on Saturday in a large battle. The investigation of the witches is non-linear. The characters can investigate at whatever speed they wish, and react however they wish when they dis-

Fine-Tuning the Plot

Before play begins, look over the characters that will participate. Look especially for flaws, such as weaknesses, obsessions, and fears. The plot is open-ended enough that you can easily insert events, villagers, visitors, and objects into the story that will directly involve the characters in interesting ways. For instance, if a character has a fear of cats, feel free to include a few cats wandering through the village. These additions need not be major plot deviations, but they will make the story more engaging for your particular group.

cover who is behind the magic in the village. There is no specific conclusion or resolution that the characters are “supposed” to reach in their dealings with the witch; how they handle what they learn is entirely up to them.

The introduction to the story begins on Palm Sunday, and the characters come to the village on Monday. The plot develops until the climax on the following Saturday, and Easter serves as the denouement.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 describe the linear plot; use them to pace the events in the story. Chapters 2 and 3 describe information that may come into play at any time in any order, depending on the actions of the characters.

The Theme of Sin

The theme of this story is sin and temptation. Modern sensibilities look at sin in a variety of ways and provide several explanations of its nature. This story, however, plays according to the medieval paradigm, and sin is portrayed accordingly.

One concept shown in the game is how sins interact and build on each other. For example, the wealth that Jaufré uses for his gluttonous feast also tempts Francisca’s greed. In addition, Jaufré’s excesses keep him from pleasing his wife, Alba, who must therefore look elsewhere for sexual satisfaction. Emphasize this concept by playing up the connections and rivalries among the corrupted villagers.

Sin also causes self-delusion. In the story, for instance, the characters meet Matieus, who honestly regards himself as the most pious man in the village. Actually, he is corrupted by pride and stands on the very threshold of Hell.

Another medieval concept about sin is that one can save oneself by turning away from it, especially by turning back

to God. While using religious terms and ideas to thwart sin might be uncomfortable for the characters (and, perhaps, the players), religious authority is the best way to help the corrupted ones turn from their sins and save themselves. Failure to repent, of course, brings infernal punishment. The corrupted villagers have special fates awaiting them if they cannot free themselves from sin, as described in Chapter 6.

Groups

The Villagers

These are the simple inhabitants of Vézay, torn between loyalty to the Church and gratitude (perhaps) to the magi who saved (?) their village from diabolists during “Ghoul.”

The Corrupted Ones

These are seven villagers who have been corrupted by Escarus, the Demon of the Seven Deadly Sins. They are superficially indistinguishable from the villagers, and the characters will not know that even some of the villagers have been corrupted until, perhaps, it is too late.

The Witches

These three women are the red herring, the supposed threat to the village that the characters pursue. They, too, are merely normal people at first glance.





Unknown to many of their neighbors, they practice an ancient religion handed down from mother to daughter since before the Romans conquered this land.

The Clergy

Father Durand and his two students have come to consecrate the new chapel being built in Vézay. Whether they become enemies or allies of the covenant depends on how the characters conduct themselves.

The Demons

Escarus, Demon of the Seven Deadly Sins, has won the right to use the desecrated church for his own ends. A well-spring of evil like this one is rare, and many other demons wanted it for their own, so Escarus only has it on the condition that he prove himself worthy of such a tool. So far, he has found seven villagers susceptible to his wiles, and they are nearly damned. The advent of the magi is an unexpected event, but he will use the opportunity to attempt to damn them as well. If he can successfully corrupt several villagers (and perhaps a few characters from the covenant), he will be granted the right to continue his machinations in this area. If the characters thwart him utterly, some other demon will be next in line to take control over this area.

Escarus commands various demons to do his bidding and only personally appears once in the story, if at all.

Explanatory Notes

Craft Skills

These Craft sub-skills supplement the ones provided by the *Ars Magica*™ rule-book. You may wish to make them available to players' characters as well as storyguide characters in your saga.

Craft—Animal Doctoring: Tending to sick animals. Sometimes related to human medicine, but not reliably so. Specialties: any particular animal (Int, Per)

Craft—Herbal Medicine: Finding, preparing, and administering herbs for medicinal purposes. When properly used, herbs can speed healing of broken bones, allay pain, break fevers, and so on. Specialties: any specific application. (Per, Int)

Craft—Midwifery: Caring for women's health in general, and births in particular. Includes care of infants. Specialties: infant maladies, women's ailments, childbirth. (Per, Int, Com)

Foreign Words

Almogáver: a mercenary fighting against the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula

the Reconquista: the ongoing war against the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, the Christian kingdoms have been slowly reclaiming land that the Moors took hundreds of years ago

Sieur: a lord or noble



Names

The historical evolution of surnames is seen in the names of Vézay's villagers. Most villagers have no surnames, having no need for them. A few who have taken on notable professions have gained surnames. The Midwife family, for example, has been serving as midwives for generations, so they effectively have "Midwife" as a surname. The same goes for Alphons Host. Jaufré the Almogáver, however, is the first mercenary in his

family, so the article "the" is still used in naming him. It is a "name" that is new to his generation and therefore hasn't quite stuck yet. If his son were to become an Almogáver, he might come to be known simply as "Constans Almogáver." If his son decides to have nothing to do with the mercenary life, the term "the Almogáver" will not be passed down to him.

The English terms for "host" and "midwife" are used to keep confusion to a minimum, but *almogáver* has no English equivalent, and is therefore not translated.



Chapter II

Vézay

This chapter describes the village of Vézay and its people. Through the week, the characters will likely diverge from the linear plot and wander a bit. Use the background information here to guide these parts of your game sessions.

Full descriptions of the villagers and visitors are given at the back of this chapter, as they might be encountered at any time during the week. The witches, however, are described separately in Chapter 3, “The Witches.”

Key to the Map

These are the locations shown on the map. If, in your previous exploration of Vézay, you have described things differently, make whatever changes you must in order to keep the saga consistent.

1. The Church of St. Lazare

Within the past year, this church was desecrated when the priest there, Father Tanchus, performed an unholy ritual (see “Ghoul”). The villagers now shun the

place, and the local bishop deconsecrated it when he heard about its fate. The deconsecration, of course, removed any holiness that may have remained in the church, and it is now a wellspring of infernal power, infecting the village as well.

The church is bounded on three sides by an iron fence and on the other side by a small river. Furthermore, an iron chain encircles the church. Where the original fence stands, the chain weaves through the bars, and on the open side of the church the chain is fastened to trees across the river, so that the chain forms an unbroken barrier around the evil place. Hanging from the chain at irregular intervals are wooden crosses, and at the gate of the fence hangs a large bronze cross with a small sliver of the True Cross embedded within it. The local clergy put up this chain to protect the village. While it does not provide a true barrier, the villagers hope that it will keep evil within the church’s borders. (Unfortunately, the sliver of the True Cross is a fake, and the chain has no real effect other than to hold the gate shut and to warn the unwary who might otherwise cross the river into the churchyard.)

Though the desecration took place within the last year, the grounds look as if they have been untouched for a decade. Weeds have choked the life out of the other plants in the yards, and the buildings look worn, stained, and tired with age.

The villagers have asked Sieur Támara, lord of these lands, to destroy the church, but razing a large stone structure takes more effort and time than he has been willing to devote to the project.

If any characters express interest in the church, the villagers warn them away. It is an evil place, they say, and they are right.

Characters that do explore the locale find nothing of value here. The roof has begun to fall in, littering the floor with trash. A thick layer of dust covers everything in the church. On the floor behind the altar is a rock-hard, black blob, the remains of the crucifix that once hung over that spot. What once were valuable books in the room to one side are now moldy garbage, and precious metals are now dust. The infernal forces have not been kind to this former House of God.

If the characters investigate the church after Monday night, they find in the dust the hoofprints of the imps who came to unbuild the chapel. The prints are small and hoofed. They form a path from the black blob behind the altar across the church to a window on the far side of the sanctuary. The hoofprints go both ways, as the imps return to the blob behind the altar to go back to Hell. With a Perception roll of 6+ the characters can find similar tracks in the weed-infested yard between the church and the fence.

2. The New Chapel

After the desecration of the Church of St. Lazare, the villagers were left without a church. The church was originally built with a sieur's (lord's) legacy, and there is no such source of funds with which to build a new one. The villagers, however, know that something is very wrong with the area around the old church, and they have been troubled with vivid nightmares. They have decid-

ed to build a small chapel, hoping that its presence will bring the power of God back into their forsaken village.

The chapel has been designed as a small, stone structure with a thatched roof — purely the bare minimum. It will have a bell, which has been purchased from Toulouse (or a city appropriate to your setting), and the villagers hope to build the chapel in time for the bell to ring on Easter morning.

Currently, all the building supplies are at the site of the new chapel, with the bronze bell sitting off to one side. The builders need to excavate and lay the foundation, build the walls, thatch and place the roof, and hang the bell.

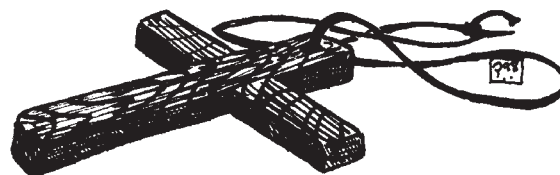
Father Durand has come to oversee construction of the chapel and to consecrate it when it is complete.



3. Alphons Host's House, the "Inn"

Alphons Host lives in this large house and hosts visitors to the village. In good weather, most visitors camp out in tents or under tarps in the field behind the house, though two rooms within are reserved for special guests. In bad weather, everyone crowds into these two rooms. People rarely visit the house, but Alphons also keeps a healthy supply of wine available, making the yard behind his house a happy gathering place for locals.

The characters stay here during the week, as do several folk from nearby homes who have come for the festivities and to help erect the chapel. Arnold (corrupted by Sloth) is among them.





4. Rostagnus, Willa, and Dominica's House

A two-story house holding a large family of clothiers. Rostagnus, the village elder, lives here. Willa also lives here with her family and will inherit it when Rostagnus dies, as he has no sons. She practically runs the household already.

Father Durand and his two students, Joans and Mauri, are staying in one of the upper rooms, and their three mules are tethered behind the house.

5. Carruga, Anna, & Mathilde's House

Carruga is ill, still under the influence of the cursed cloth of herbs in his pallet. His mother and sister play no role in the story, but characters might remember them from "Ghoul," in which they were recovering from the pox. (Misfortune seems to follow this family.)

6. Francisca and Peire's House

A modest hovel where Francisca and her family conduct a small business in leather-working.

Peire died about a month ago from fever. Peire's brother is now sleeping on Peire's mattress, and the cursed cloth is still in it. If the characters search the mattress, they may be surprised to find the cursed cloth still there; it has had no effect on Peire's younger brother (because he was not party to Alesta's rape).

Otherwise the house is modest, except that hidden within a large chest, beneath

clothes and personal effects, is a small locked chest with Francisca's hoard: 73 silver deniers, a small onyx gem (worth 17 d.), and a silver necklace with a topaz pendant (50 d.). She has been saving these coins and valuables for decades, gradually accumulating her treasure.

7. Bretmar and Berenger's House

Outside is a clutter of broken barrels, half-made wheels, and numerous carpentry tools. The interior contains more of the same, and a finely fashioned, large wooden cross. Otherwise this is a normal house. (Bretmar has put much time and effort into building the cross, and he will use it on Good Friday.)

8. Jaufré the Almogáver's House

This is the site of the huge feast on Maundy Thursday. It is a well-built house, whitewashed (a sign of comparative wealth). The structure is very solid, and even the basement walls and floor are lined with stone.

Jaufré returned from fighting the Moors twelve years ago with a large chest filled with treasure. Some of the villagers saw what he had, but he soon hired an engineer to build a secret hiding place in his basement, and no one but Jaufré has seen the treasure since. In his basement, one of the stone slabs at chest level in the wall is balanced on a pivot, so that one end can be pushed in, pushing the other end out into the room. Behind this "secret door" is a niche that contains Jaufré's treasure chest. The chest is locked, but can be broken open with persistent application of

brute force. Jaufré also keeps a smaller chest in his bedroom; it contains silver for immediate expenses, so he only needs to replenish his funds from the hidden chest once or twice a year.

Actually, Jaufré's fortune has run low over the years, and the extravagant feast he throws on Maunday Thursday is truly expensive. Now that Escarus has corrupted him, he has been spending more than usual on food and drink. At his increased rate of consumption, his treasure will last him only a few more years, if that.

Jaufré guesses that the ring, robe, and statuettes are magical, but he does not know what to do with them (and he's wrong about the statuettes). He would sell them if he knew what they are worth, but he's afraid of being cheated. He has essentially decided to leave them as heirlooms for Constans.

9. Matieus's House

Large and odiferous. The place is filled with bowls, herbs hanging to dry from the rafters, knives, cauterizing irons, bandages, and other implements of Matieus's trade. His aged mother lives here with him, but he has never started a family of his own.

10. Isarn's House

A small, dirty, messy hut. Isarn spends so little time here that he does not care about its appearance. Most villagers live with their families, but Isarn lives alone. He used to live in a nearby village, but a few years ago he had a violent fight with his father and moved to Vézay. He has lived alone ever since.

Jaufré's Treasure

Still remaining in Jaufré's treasure chest are large amounts of gold and silver coins (worth about 3000 deniers), as well as two ivory statuettes of Muslim warriors (worth about 150 d. each) and three rubies (worth 200 d., 250 d., & 700 d.). Note that to sell the statuettes and gems requires finding the right buyer and then haggling. They do not have a fixed value. Even the coins, which were minted by Muslims, are of different weights from common coins, and one will have to haggle to get the best price for them.

Jaufré has two magic items captured from Muslims in his stint as an *almogáver*. Both were originally designed in the "Orient" (modern-day Mideast) for use in those climes, and they are somewhat less effective in Europe. In addition, their non-Hermetic origin makes them difficult to investigate in the laboratory. Subtract 5 from any roll to investigate either of these items.

Ring of the Flying Sun

A copper ring inscribed on the inner surface with strange letters and symbols. Whoever wears this ring, holds it up in the sunlight, and says "Jumabim" can fly at speeds of up to fifty miles per hour. The user, however, can only fly when sunlight shines on him. If he flies under a cloud, he will lose altitude rapidly and then drop like a stone within thirty seconds. (A magus will need to investigate the item in order to divine its activating phrase.) (ReCo 30)

Robe of Comfort

This long, ornately embroidered black robe makes travelling easier. While wearing it, one loses no fatigue for travelling and remains cool even in high temperatures. (In the desert, the wearer need only drink normal amounts of water, a definite advantage for long journeys.) As a side effect, the robes also add +5 to the wearer's Soak rolls versus heat and fire damage. The robes, however, protect the wearer from rain, snow, and cold only as well as normal woolen robes would. (PeIg 10 for heat resistance, CrCo 15 for tireless travel)



11. Elena, Alesta, & Martina's House

Elena and her husband bake breads and other foods in the large ovens behind her house. This occupation brings in only a small income because most people simply bake their own breads. Much of their income is from festivals and the few travellers that happen by.

If the characters for any reason try to examine the house, the family becomes very defensive and demands to be left in peace. They are guarding a secret: They own a hand mill for grinding grain into flour. Possession of this device is a punishable crime because *Sieur Támíta* gets a cut of the local mill's profits; he wants to be sure that all his serfs have their grain

ground at the mill so his profits are maximized. This small hand mill makes an appreciable difference in the income of these bakers.

12. The Graveyard

The winter has taken its toll on the population of Vézay, and no new graves have been dug in the old, desecrated churchyard. The villagers, therefore, have begun a new graveyard here, blessed by *Father Durand*. Depending on how long has passed since "Ghoul," any number of graves could be here; figure about four per year. (Most are children's graves.) Most of these graves belong to people who lived nearby, but not in Vézay proper. *Peire's* grave, at the very least, is here.



13. House

Ad lib occupants.

14. The Midwives

The Midwives' house is in the woods away from the village. See Chapter 3, "The Witches."

Villagers

This section describes the villagers of Vézay and other people that may participate in the story. The Midwives, however, are described in Chapter 3, "The Witches."

In general, the villagers are simple, hard-working people who look to the church and their lord for glimpses of civilization. Vézay serves as a central meeting point for many rural families that work the surrounding countryside. The skilled artisans that work here would never survive on the business that Vézay alone brings them.

Children predominate. With the high mortality rate among the young, only families and villages that have lots of children survive. The following list contains few children because they are not important to the story, but the village itself contains many infants, toddlers, and youngsters. Be sure to mention them running around, helping with the work, following their parents, and so on. They are everywhere.

Some of the characters below have complete boxed statistics. For the others, just the unusual traits have been provided to set that character apart. For other statistics, use the blanket "Villager of Vézay" statistics provided on page 12.

Alba

Corrupted by Lust; Wife of Jaufré, Mother of Constans, Mistress of Garsinda

Alba was fifteen when she married Jaufré, who had just returned crippled from fighting the Moors. Moved by pity and duty, she married him, even though she secretly felt that her growing beauty was wasted on a cripple.

Ten years ago she bore Jaufré a son, Constans. It was a difficult birth, and only the help of Laura Midwife (the witch) saved mother and child. Alba bore a daughter a few years later, but the child died at a young age.

Over the years, Alba has maintained her beauty, accentuated by the fine textiles that she buys with what little of Jaufré's wealth she can wheedle from him. Now she looks on her husband's flabby form with disgust, and she desires a young, strong man in her bed, someone like Jaufré was when he marched off to war fifteen years ago.

A very handsome and noble-looking man came to her recently and made her a



Alba

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +2, Com +2, Str 0, Sta +2, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 27

Size: 0

Confidence: 3

Virtues & Flaws: Freewoman +0, Venus' Blessing +1 (+3 to Presence & Communication rolls with men)

Personality Traits: Lustful +5

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (kick)	-2	-3	-3	+0	-1

Soak: +2

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Charm 4 (warriors), Guile 2 (Jaufré), Sing 3 (love songs)



deal: She would have the men of her choice for a hundred years and a day, in exchange for her soul. Thinking that at least this way she would have some men worthy of her before she died, she accepted.

The other men in the village interest her very little since they are generally simple folk, but the men from the covenant intrigue her. Perhaps, she thinks, these are the men she has been promised.

Alesta

Daughter of Elena, Sister of Martina, Rape Victim

Three weeks ago, Alesta was raped by three men of Vézay: Berenger, Peire, and Carruga. She has told her mother but no one else about this, and she thinks there is nothing to be done about it. Rather than face the humiliation of making the attack common knowledge, she has decided to forget about it as best she can.

Alesta

Age: 17

Personality Traits: Shy +2

Abilities: Craft—Baking 4 (desserts)

She does not know that, at her mother's request, Laura Midwife is even now exacting vengeance upon the three men.

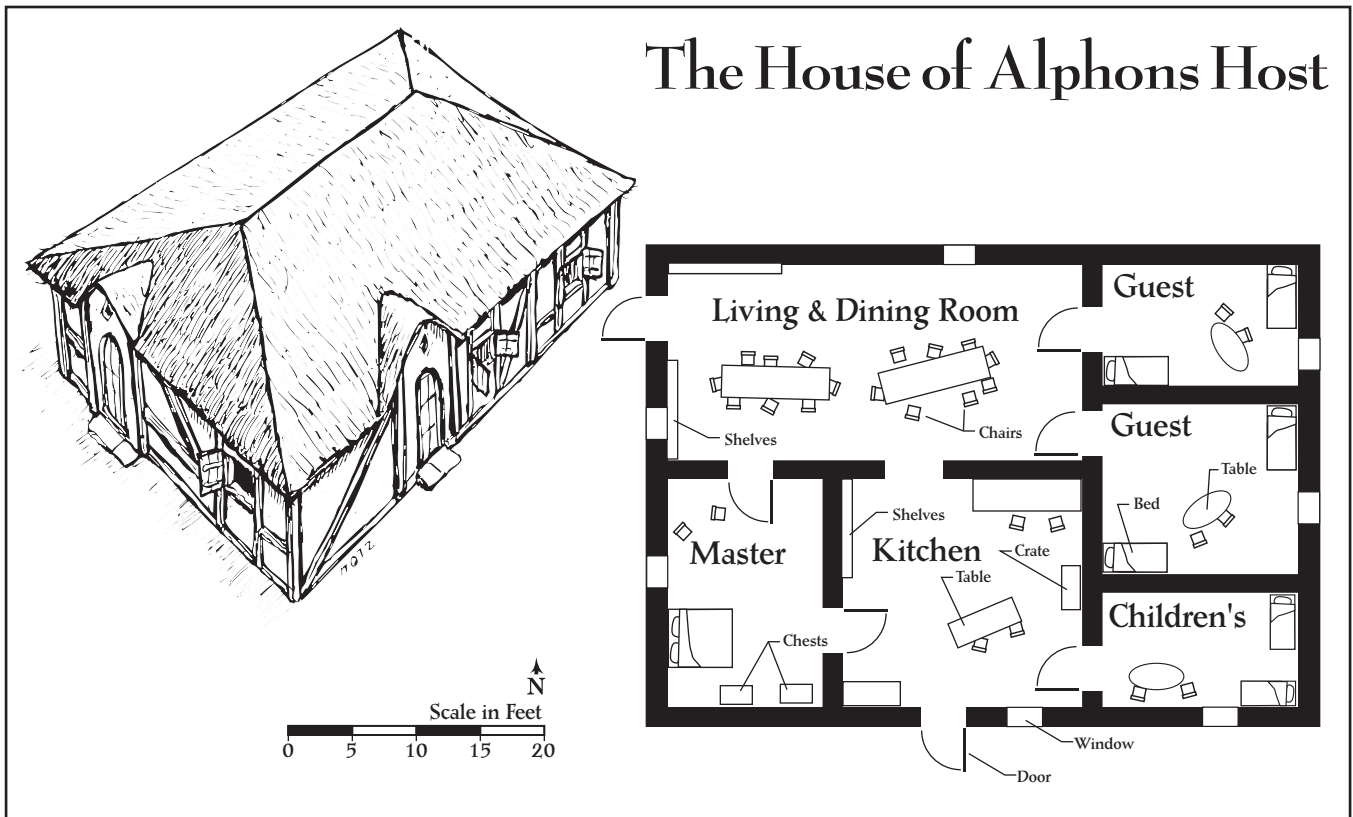
Alphons Host

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 38

Confidence: 2

Personality Traits: Likes Visitors +3, Fussy +2



Arnold

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre -3, Com 0, Str 0, Sta -3, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 31

Personality Traits: Lazy +4

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (kick)	-2	-3	-3	+0	-6

Soak: -3

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Craft—Farm Work 2 (appearing to work hard), Drinking 2 (belching loudly)



Alphons Host

Host to Visitors

Alphons and his family have a large house that accommodates those rare visitors who come to the village. By no means a professional inn, the place is more like a casual bed-and-breakfast. Alphons is a thin man, rather nervous, who runs around quite a bit when he has guests, always making sure that things are running smoothly.

Anna

Mother of Carruga & Mathilde

Anna had the pox during “The Ghoul of St. Lazare.” With the help of Laura, she and her daughter both recovered. She is distraught that illness has been plaguing her family, and she only

hopes that Carruga’s illness will get him to slow down and grow up. She thinks he’s too energetic and hot-blooded.

Arnold

Corrupted by Sloth

Arnold is a pudgy, disheveled bachelor, thirty-one years of age. He works as a farmhand outside of town, but his master has told him to help build the chapel in Vézay. He has always resented his lot in life, but has never taken it upon himself to do anything about it.

Unfortunately, it is exactly this kind of impotent desire that Hell looks for in mortals. A wealthy-looking young man came to Arnold a few weeks ago and offered him a deal: a work-free life for a hundred years and a day, in return for his soul. Arnold resisted the idea a bit, but soon gave in. He is wondering just when this work-free life will begin.

Anna

Age: 36

Personality Traits: Glum +1

Ability: Animal Handling 5
(Chickens)

Berartz

Son of Siewr Támita

A well-groomed lad proud of his father and curious about the lands he will



Berartz

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 9

Size: -1

Confidence: 2

Personality Traits: Curious +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl	-2	-3	-3	+0	-3
Short sword	+5	+3	+4	+2	+1

Soak: -1

Fatigue Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Ride 2 (perform tricks), Scribe Latin 1 (flowery signature), Single Weapon 1 (tournament contests)

one day inherit. He wears colorful silks and rides a horse decked with tassles.

Berenger

Betrothed to Dominica, son of Bretmar, raped Alesta

A ruddy, chubby, happy-go-lucky fellow who, until a few days ago, had been in bed with a fever that refused to break. He is proud of his father, happy about his impending marriage to Dominica, and optimistic about life. He is not, however, without his faults. Several months ago,

Berenger

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str -1, Sta -1, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 19

Personality Traits: Optimistic +2

Ability: Craft—Carpentry 3 (carving)

he and his best friends, Carruga and Peire, raped Alesta. For him, it was a spur-of-the-moment act, inspired by the pressure of his friends and a bellyful of wine. He was paying for his crime with the gradually worsening fever, but Dominica broke it when she found the cursed cloth under his bed. Now he has regained most of his strength, but he will be impotent for the rest of his life.

Bretmar

Age: 43

Confidence: 3

Personality Traits: Proud +5, Falsely Pious +3

Reputations: Pious 2, in Vézay

Soak: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Craft—Carpentry 5 (fine work), Guile 4 (subtle bragging)

Bretmar

Corrupted by Pride; Carpenter, Father of Berenger

A lean man who carries himself with an almost-hidden air of superiority, but

whose words are always humble. He is the carpenter in the village, and has developed quite a good business by offering better work than anyone else can do on their own. He believes that his son's illness was caused by God as a test of his piety, and that Berenger's fever broke because of his repeated prayers. (His act of piety is so convincing that he believes it himself.)

A few weeks ago a nobleman approached him while he was looking for good trees to cut in the forest. The nobleman commended him on his work, his piety, and his general superiority to the common person. Much pleased by the compliments, Bretmar didn't think too clearly when the stranger offered him a deal: the ability never to be bested, in exchange for his soul. Bretmar accepted, and now believes this fellow to have been an angel sent to reward him for his goodness.

Carruga

Son of Anna, Brother of Mathilde, Raped Alesta

A thin young man known for his rapid shifts of mood. He is currently ill with fever, the punishment for the rape of Alesta. Even if the fever is broken, he retains the diminished characteristics

Carruga

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str -3, Sta -4, Dex 0, Qik 0
Age: 20
Reputation: Moody 1, in Vézay
Abilities: Leadership 1 (intimidating young women)

shown above, and will never regain his masculine potency.

He was smitten with Alesta, who spurned him for being too foolish and inconstant. He and his friends had their revenge on her several months ago.

Constans

Son of Jaufré & Alba, Master of Garsinda

The son of Jaufré the Almogáver and Alba. He is a bright, restless, scrawny ten-year old who is at once intrigued and frightened by the magi and their strange companions. The characters may well see him repeatedly as he sneaks glances at them from behind houses, out of windows, and so forth.

Constans' father (corrupted by Gluttony) is very harsh with the boy. Jaufré feels that he has earned his treasure by fighting the Moors and paid for it



Constans

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre -2, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0
Age: 10
Size: -2
Confidence: 2
Personality Traits: Curious +2, Timid +1
Fatigue Levels: OK, -3, -5, Unc.
Body Levels: OK, -3, -5, Incap.
Abilities: Legerdemain 1 (filching food)



through loss of a leg. Giving much of this treasure to his son, or even paying for Constans to have enough to eat, strikes Jaufré as ridiculous. This is why Constans is as slim as his father is fat.

Constans serves his father dutifully and intends to fight the Moors when he comes of age. If both his mother and father are damned, he will be orphaned. If that happens, perhaps the magi can use a grog trainee, a laboratory assistant,

or just another hand around the covenant. They may want to adopt Constans into their community. (Perhaps he even has the touch of magic that it takes to be an apprentice.)

Daurostre the Troubadour

Visiting Troubadour

Daurostre the Troubadour

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +2, Com +3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 25

Size: 0

Confidence: 4

Personality Traits: Curious +2, Likes seducing young women +3

Weapon/Attack Init Atk Dfn Dam Fat

Brawl (knife) +4 +3 +4 +2 +2

Soak: +0

Abilities: Brawl 2 (dodging thrown vegetables), Charm 4 (young ladies), Guile 2 (manipulating nobles), Local Area Lore 4 (beautiful women), Play Lute 5 (dances), Sing 5 (love songs), Single Weapon 1 (shortsword)

Daurostre travels through the land telling stories, spreading news, singing songs, and playing his lute. He has made several trips to Toulouse, where the most popular dances and songs are being invented. He has come to Vézay because he has heard two things: that strange things are happening there, and that some fellow there has been buying loads of succulent foods for a feast. He wants to learn about the strange events and get his share of the succulent foods.

Daurostre dresses well and comports himself like a sophisticate, which isn't hard in a little backwater village like Vézay.

He knows the area well, is somewhat acquainted with Father Durand (and likes him), and perhaps has heard of the magi (depending on just how secretive they are).

found out that Berenger's "condition" is not improving.

Father Durand

New Priest of the Village, Superior of Joans & Mauri

Father Durand attends to the spiritual needs of many villages in Sieur Támara's lands, travelling from village to village performing the various sacraments without which the people's souls are in danger. He gets paid by the villagers for each service and makes a decent living, despite his practice of accepting less than standard fees when times are hard for the peasants.



Dominica

Invites the Covenant, Betrothed to Berenger, Niece of Willa, Grand-Niece of Rostagnus

A young, energetic woman skilled in needlework. At first, she is continually happy because her beloved is well again. Then the characters may notice that she sulks and acts irritable, once she has

Dominica

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre -1, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 15

Personality Traits: Takes initiative +2

Abilities: Tailoring 3 (fine detail), Storytelling 2 (children's tales)



Father Durand

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +1, Pre +1, Com +2, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 38

Size: 0

Faith Points: 1 (+1 for relic)

Personality Traits: Cares about peasants +3

Abilities: Artes Liberales 2 (religious interpretations), Charm 1 (during Mass), Church Lore 1 (corruption), Concentration 1 (meditation on own faults), Folk Ken 4 (common folk), Guile 1 (nobles), Intrigue 1 (diplomacy), Local Area Lore 3 (heretics), Occult Lore 2 (diabolism), Ride 2 (long journeys), Scribe Latin 5 (writing quickly), Speak Latin 4 (church rites), Theology 2 (heresies)

Actually, Father Durand is genuinely concerned with the well-being of “his” people (and he considers them more his than their Sieur’s). While not a proponent of impoverished clergy, as are many of the heretics in this area, he does work for the peasants’ benefit, not solely for his own. Had he greater ambitions, he could have used his intelligence to secure a more stable and profitable position within the Church.

Father Durand is practical in his attempts to help the people and keeps himself aware of what is happening in the area. Unless the characters have taken pains to conceal the identity and location of their covenant, he knows about them and wants to meet them. His goal is to

assure the safety of the people nearby, and he will adopt whatever style of interaction is necessary to do so. At first he is concerned with the need to make a show of force, while emphasizing his desire to tolerate them, provided they leave the common folk alone.

Father Durand wears a large, hollow, silver cross hanging around his neck. In a compartment within the cross are bone fragments of St. Benedict (+1 Faith Point).

Father Durand may become an important person in your saga as relations with the commoners, nobility, and Church develop. If you would rather introduce a clergyman of a different type, one more fitting to what you want in your saga, do so now. Re-write Father Durand to fit your needs.

Elena

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik -2

Age: 37

Size: +1

Virtues & Flaws: Obese -2 (-3 on Fat rolls)

Personality Traits: Protective +3

Weapon/Attack Init Atk Dfn Dam Fat

Brawl (kick/fist) -4 -3 -5 +1 -6

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Folk Ken 3 (Vézay)

Elena

Mother of Alesta & Martina

Three months ago Elena’s daughter Alesta was raped by three villagers. Because Alesta did not want to make the crime public, Elena went secretly to Laura Midwife for help. Laura assured her that vengeance would be hers, and now Peire is dead, Berenger is impotent, and Carruga is still feverish.

*Francisca***Characteristics:** Int 0, Per -1, Pre -1, Com 0, Str -3, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0**Age:** 44**Personality Traits:** Greedy +6, Watchful +3**Abilities:** Bargain 4 (leather goods), Craft—Evaluate Gems & Jewelry 3 (finding flaws), Craft—Evaluate Leather Goods 6 (finding flaws), Craft—Leatherworking 5 (imitate quality), Guile 3 (con)

Francisca

Corrupted by Greed; Mother of Peire (deceased)

Francisca is a widow who has maintained her husband's business as a leatherworker. (Her prices have increased considerably since her husband's death, a change that she attributes to the rising cost of her materials.)

Her son Peire died a month ago from the same fever that has afflicted Berenger and Carruga. She has two other living children, however, so she is not alone.

She vividly remembers Jaufré's treasure that she saw twelve years ago: the gold, silver, and gems especially. She also saw the statuettes, robe, and ring, and thinks they are magical. She covets the mundane treasure, but wouldn't risk the curses that might protect the treasure she thinks is enchanted.

*Garsinda***Characteristics:** Int -4, Per -2, Pre -4, Com -3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0**Age:** 31**Confidence:** 0**Personality Traits:** Meek +3**Virtues & Flaws:** Poor Intelligence, Poor Presence**Abilities:** Guile 1 (pretend helplessness)

Garsinda

Servant of Jaufré & family

The homely, feeble-minded servant of Jaufré's house. She was the servant of Jaufré's father in another village and came with Jaufré when, twelve years ago, he moved to Vézay with his young bride. Like Jaufré's son, Garsinda is thin from an





Isarn

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +2, Dex +3, Qik +2

Age: 19

Size: 0

Confidence: 2

Virtues & Flaws: Fr

Personality Traits: Wrathful +4, Respectful -1

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (dagger)	+7	+7	+7	+4	+5
Spear	+10	+7	+7	+4	+5
Short Bow	+6	+5	n/a	+4	+6

Soak: +3

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (dogs), Awareness 3 (in woods), Bow 4 (fleeing targets), Brawl 3 (fighting dirty), Charm -1, Hunt 3 (tracking in woods), Survival 1 (in woods), Single Weapon 3 (spear)

Equipment: Short Bow and arrows, Dagger, Short Spear, Fur Hauberk

Encumbrance: 0

underabundance of food. She mildly dislikes Jaufré, but has the patience of one who has never considered that her life could be any different.

She reacts to the characters with fear.

Hyllia Midwife

Daughter of Laura, Witch

See page 65.

Isarn

Corrupted by Wrath; Hunter

Isarn is a fiery young hunter of nineteen years. He ostensibly lives in Vézay, but travels often. He poaches regularly and is proud of his success at breaking the law. He is good-looking, with strong features and a powerful demeanor.

He has two hunting dogs, Jarl and Relan, whom he beats regularly. Use stats on page 259 of *Ars Magica* 4th ed., with +1 on all combat bonuses, for these dogs.

Recently Isarn was beaten by men of a local lord on suspicion of poaching. He wanted to kill them all, but he knew that he would die for such a deed. While Isarn stewed in his anger, a “brave knight” appeared to him and offered him the chance to strike out and kill anyone he wishes for a hundred years and a day, for a “small price.” Isarn agreed, and has already become more belligerent while waiting for the deal to be accomplished.

Jaufré the Almogáver

Corrupted by Gluttony; Husband of Alba, Father of Constans, Master of Garsinda

Jaufré was a stalwart young man who volunteered to fight the Moors when a

*Jaufré the Almogáver***Characteristics:** Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +1, Dex -4, Qik -5**Age:** 33**Size:** +1**Confidence:** 3**Virtues & Flaws:** Obese -1, Poor Dexterity -2, Feeble Quickness -4**Personality Traits:** Gluttonous +5, Selfish +2**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.**Body Levels:** OK, 0, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.**Abilities:** Bargain 3 (for food), Carouse (drinking large quantities), Storytelling 4 (the Reconquista)

party of almogáveres came through his village fifteen years ago. He fought well, but his right leg was badly burned when Moors defending their fortress poured burning oil on the attackers. The barbers had to remove the lower half of the leg to save Jaufré's life.

The attack on the fortress was Jaufré's last military engagement, but previous successes allowed him to bring home a small fortune. Alba, his betrothed, married him when he returned twelve years ago and moved to Vézay. Ten years ago she bore him a son, Constans.

Over years of eating and inactivity, Jaufré has become grossly fat. He has a crutch, but even with its help he has a hard time getting around, so he rarely walks unless assisted by his wife, son, or servant. He claims that his leg has gotten weaker, when mostly the problem is that his girth has gotten greater.

Jaufré feels he won his fortune through hard work, risk, and suffering. He is therefore loath to share it with Alba or Constans. Mostly, he uses it for meat, spices, wine, fine oils, and the occasional orange from Moorish lands to the south. Jaufré's fortune has dwindled. At Jaufré's current rate of consumption, it will be gone within a few years. Jaufré kept this terrible secret to himself and lived in fear

of the day when he would no longer be able to afford his fine meals.

But he no longer fears. A "friendly spirit" came to him one night and offered him the chance to feast for a hundred years and a day, for the small price of his soul. Jaufré gave up his hopes for Heaven, but as the "friendly spirit" explained it, only souls inhabit Heaven, and souls can't eat. Jaufré decided that a Heaven without feasts was not such a good place to spend eternity anyway.

Jaufré hosts a feast every year at Eastertime, and this one will be the biggest ever. It is untraditional to hold the feast during Holy Week instead of on Easter itself, but he decided he couldn't wait a few extra days. This feast is the Temptation of Gluttony.

*Joans***Characteristics:** Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex -3, Qik -2**Age:** 13**Personality Traits:** Admires Father Durand +3**Abilities:** Church Lore 2 (local saints), Folk Ken 1 (young people), Local Area Lore 2 (nobles), Occult Lore 1 (evil omens), Ride 1 (long journeys), Scribe Latin 1 (careful handwriting), Speak Latin 2 (ecclesiastical terms)



Joans

*Acolyte serving Father Durand,
Colleague of Mauri*

A clumsy lad who serves Father Durand faithfully and learns from him in expectation of one day having a similar position. His duties include all the minor tasks involved with Father Durand's position: packing, unpacking, running messages, washing clothes, and so on. Much to Joans' dismay, his voice occasionally cracks.

Juissinia Midwife

*Witch, Daughter of Laura
See page 65.*

Knights

Bodyguards for Sieur Támita & Berartz

These three knights will probably have walk-on roles, nothing more. They are loyal guardians of Sieur Támita, and always ready to defend him with their swords and lives.

Laura Midwife

*Witch, Mother of Hyllia & Juissinia
See page 64.*

Martina

Daughter of Elena, Sister of Alesta



Knights

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +1, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik +1

Age: Various

Confidence: 2

Personality Traits: Brave in Combat +4, Protective of Sieur Támita +3, Protective of Berartz +5

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (dagger)	+0	-1	+0	+4	-2
Sword & Shield	+0	+0	+6	+5	-2
—mounted*	+7	+7	+13	+5	+5
Lance & Shield*	+8	+11	+9	+7	+4
Heavy Crossbow	-12	-1	n/a	+12	-2

*These horseback statistics do not included bonuses for charging or attacks versus unmounted combatants

Soak: +13

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Awareness 2 (bodyguarding), Brawl 3 (pin limbs), Chirurgy 1 (staunch bleeding), Crossbow 3 (armored targets), Longshaft Weapon 3 (versus mounted opponents), Ride 4 (in battle), Shield & Weapon 3 (long sword and kite shield)

Equipment: Kite shield, long sword, dagger, full chain mail; two have lances and the other has a heavy crossbow

Encumbrance: -7.5 (0 when mounted)



A young, intensely curious and bold child whose frankness often embarrasses her mother. She probably met the characters during “Ghoul,” as the exhumed corpse of her late sister, H el ene, was discovered by the covenant.

Martina

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre +1, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 9

Size: -2

Confidence: 3

Personality Traits: Curious +2, Bold +3

Fatigue Levels: OK, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Guile -5

Mathilde

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta -1, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 15

Personality Traits: Meek & mild +3

Abilities: Guile 1 (false praise)

Mathilde

Daughter of Anna, Sister of Carruga

Having recovered from the pox (see “Ghoul”), she is now distraught at having her brother fall prey to a more serious illness. She is as meek and unassuming as her brother is (or was) boisterous.



Matieus

Characteristics: Int +1, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0
Age: 43
Personality Traits: Envious +5
Abilities: Chirurgy 5 (stitching cuts), Craft—Animal Doctoring 4 (swine), Craft—Herbal Medicine 4 (cleansing poultices), Folk Ken 2 (dealing with the ill), Guile 3 (gaining trust)

Matieus

Corrupted by Envy; Healer

A pudgy, balding, bearded man who always seems to be in a bad mood. His voice, however, is pleasant. In fact, it is slick and insinuating. Matieus serves as the “doctor” in this village and for those who live nearby, but he only treats animals and men. Laura Midwife treats the women and infants, and he envies her superior skill. In fact, he envies just about any valuable trait or possession that other people have. His self-centeredness has rewarded him with a lonely life with no wife or children.

Recently, while hunting the woods for herbs, Matieus met a grumpy old fellow much like himself who made him a deal. Matieus would have the power to see to it that his own possessions and traits were better than those of anyone else around for a hundred years and a day, in exchange for his soul. Matieus agreed, and now waits for the day when he will have the nicest things in sight.

Matieus was tending Berenger, and Dominica came to him when she found the cursed cloth under his bed, so Matieus knows about the magic at work in the village, and that the characters have come, at least in part, to find out what’s going on.

Mauri

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre -1, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0
Age: 15
Personality Traits: Friendly +2
Abilities: Church Lore 2 (priests’ secrets), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Guile 2 (gather information), Local Area Lore 3 (peasant leaders), Scribe Latin 2 (improvise spelling), Speak Latin 2 (Mass)

Mauri

Acolyte serving Father Durand, Colleague of Joans

The pudgy, quick-witted student of Father Durand. He serves Father Durand as an acolyte while learning both practical and academic matters from him.

Father Durand uses Mauri as a gatherer of information (“spy,” if you must use that term). Of course, Father Durand uses the information gathered to benefit his people, but he is not fool enough to think that good intentions allow one to do everything aboveboard. During the week, Mauri chats with the villagers, and possibly with the characters from the covenant, to gather the information that will help Father Durand determine the nature of the characters.

Peire

Dead; Son of Francisca, Raped Alesta

The villagers are loath to speak critically of the dead, but some may say that Peire was a wild fellow. It was his idea to rape Alesta, and he who persuaded Carruga and Berenger to join in. He died a month ago from fever, at age 23.

Sieur Jacmars Támara

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +4, Com +3, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 42

Confidence: 5

Virtues & Flaws: Great Presence +2, Landed Knight +5

Reputation: Good ruler 2 (in his lands)

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (dagger)	+1	+0	+1	+3	-1
Sword & Shield	+0	+0	+6	+4	-2
—mounted*	+8	+8	+14	+4	+6

*Does not included bonuses for charging or mounted versus unmounted combatants

Soak: +12

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl 5 (dagger), Church Lore 2 (corruption), Folk Ken 3 (nobility), Intrigue 3 (fellow lords), Leadership 6 (troops), Local Area Lore 4 (peasants' leaders), Ride 6 (in battle), Scribe Latin 3 (official pronouncements), Shield & Weapon 5 (on horseback), Speak Latin 3 (ecclesiastical terms)

Equipment: Full chain armor, long sword, kite shield, dagger, warhorse

Encumbrance: -7.5 (0 when mounted)



Rostagnus

Elder of Vézay, Father of Willa, Grand-Uncle of Dominica

An old man, bordering on senility and deafness. His eyes, however, are still clear. He is the nominal leader of the village, but more and more he has come to rely on Willa for her help in making decisions.

they pay taxes to him). Does he know about the covenant, or is it secret? If this is the characters' first encounter with their lord, they will have the chance to make a good impression (and the risk of making a very bad one).

Like Father Durand, Sieur Támara may become an important person in your

Sieur Jacmars Támara

Sieur of the Land, Father of Berartz

The lord of the land, a man first of war and secondly of politics. He is a stern figure with a neatly trimmed black beard and dark eyes.

He will no doubt take interest in the characters. For your saga, decide if the covenant is on his land (and whether

Rostagnus

Characteristics: Int -1, Per -2, Pre 0, Com -3, Str -5, Sta -4, Dex -2, Qik -5

Age: 75

Confidence: 3

Decrepitude Points: 3

Flaw: Poor Hearing (-3 on rolls)

Personality Traits: Good-natured +3

Abilities: Craft—Tailoring 7 (directing others), Folk Ken 7 (peasants), Leadership 3 (peasants), Local Area Lore 6 (family troubles)

saga. If you prefer a different type of lord for your saga, re-write *Sieur Támara* to suit your needs.

Willa

Daughter of Rostagnus, Aunt of Dominica

Willa is a worn, tough-looking woman who has ruled her family for years and has recently taken on much of the

Willa

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +1, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Age: 48

Confidence: 4

Personality Traits: Practical +3

Abilities: Awareness 1 (body language), Folk Ken 5 (peasants),

Guile 1 (pretending authority),

Leadership 4 (Vézay), Tailoring 6

(directing others)



practical rule of Vézay. As her honored father sinks deeper into decrepitude, the weight of leadership has increasingly fallen upon her. Now she often tells people “R o s t a g n u s says...” when in fact she is taking her own initiative. Since few people can get Rostagnus to understand what they are saying to him, there is little way to verify exactly what he said anyway.

In addition to supporting Rostagnus in his task of speaking for and heading the village, she supports him physically when he moves about.

JM
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Chapter III

The Witches

Three witches live near Vézay, a mother and her two daughters. They practice an ancient form of worship and magic, devoted entirely to the protection and support of womankind. Their rituals and powers were taught to them by their mothers, who were taught by their mothers before them. Perhaps, in the distant past, the religion from which these traditions are derived was part of a more holistic practice, supporting men as well as women, but only the female half of these practices has survived near Vézay.

The Midwife family sees their role and their powers as entirely personal. The powers are, to them, family secrets; their role as helpers and protectors of the area's women is taken as a personal obligation. They have no knowledge of any greater tradition of witchcraft, and no concern for it.

The family has always consisted only of women. When a Midwife knows that it is time to conceive and continue the line, she performs a ritual they call "Summoning the Dagger" (see below).

Position in Vézay

The family has lived near the village for generations, performing services as midwives, doctors, counselors, and magi-

cal protectors. The powers of these women has been an open secret among the women in the area around Vézay, though no one has ever known exactly what the family could or could not do. When a girl became a woman, she was told the secret of the family of witches. Through their constant assistance to the people of the area, the family has been informally given the name "Midwife."

Thirty-five years ago, however, Aymardo Lazare de Vézay died with no heir and willed that his personal fortune be used to erect a church in the village. (This is the small church that, most likely, was corrupted by Father Tanchus in "The Ghoul of St. Lazare.") Once the church was built, the little village came to the attention of the local clergy. When Father Tanchus was assigned to be the first permanent priest in the village, his presence intimidated the Midwives. Laura's mother, Eulalia, told the women of the village not to share their secret with their daughters. The Midwives, however, have continued to help mothers with their ailments and pains, secretly using their magic to make life better for the women of the village.

Now, after twenty years under Father Tanchus, the young women of the village do not know that they have magical protectors watching over them, and many of these young woman are actually suspicious of the Midwives, as are the men of





Vézay. The older women, however, remain loyal to the witches, and some of them rest easier now that Father Tanchus is gone. Perhaps they will some day soon be able to return to their old ways and share the secrets of the Midwife family with their daughters and granddaughters.

The Midwives do not tend to men or boys, though they do tend to male babies until they are weaned. Their exclusiveness has raised some resentment among men in the village, especially the healer, Matieus.

Current Activities

In addition to their normal healing roles, the Midwives have taken to themselves a new task: avenging a gang rape. Three weeks ago, a maiden named Alesta was returning alone from a visit to her sister's house in another village. She lost her way and wound up walking at night, which she had not planned to do. Three young men from Vézay, drunk and wandering through the night, ran across her and raped her. These men were Berenger, Carruga, and Peire.

Though she knows these men, she has not come to Rostagnus for justice, fearing to make her shame public. She did, however, confide in her mother, Elena. Elena, in turn, told Laura Midwife. Alesta does not know about the Midwives' powers and does not connect the rape with the magical revenge currently underway.

Laura placed a cursed cloth in the bed of each of the three men so that they fell into deep fever. Peire has already died from the fever, but Berenger recovered when his betrothed, Dominica, took the cursed cloth from his mattress. While he

has recovered his strength, however, Berenger will never recover his "masculine capability." Carruga is still under the curse. If the curse is allowed to run its course, it will damage him in direct proportion to how evil his thoughts toward women are, possibly killing him yet. Even if the curse is lifted on Monday, the cloth has permanently weakened him and robbed him of his potency. (Peire was the worst of the bunch, which is why he died so quickly.)

The Midwives' House

Deep in the woods several miles west of Vézay is the home of the Midwives, an ancient, wooden cabin whose walls are now covered with moss and clinging vines. All around the house is a garden overgrown with a variety of vines, blossoms, stalks, and leaves. This garden provides the Midwives with their most basic herbs. For the more arcane herbs, they must hunt in the wild. Surrounding the garden is a wooden fence, also covered with vines that sprout a bewildering assortment of flowers. A gate in the fence opens to a path leading to the front door, and likewise a smaller path leads from the rear door to the rear gate. Smoke issues from the hole in the roof over the fire pit at all times, as Laura is always brewing some potion or another.

Amazingly old, dense, and covered with plants, the walls of the cabin can withstand quite a bit of punishment before catching flame or falling in. The windows and doors, however, are not nearly as strong, and anyone attempting to force entry would be well-advised to focus on these weak spots.

The Cursed Cloth

The cursed cloth that Dominica brings to the covenant is about one foot square. The tan fabric has been died grayish, and on the center of the cloth is a crescent within a square, drawn with red wax. Several drops of dark liquid (blood) dot the surface. (This is Alesta's blood, which Laura drew while pretending to "assuage her wounded heart." The blood directs the curse toward Alesta's attackers.) Finally, small sprigs of herbs are in the cloth, which has been tied into a loose knot. Until the knot is loosed, the cloth looks like a simple knot of grayish material.

Later in the story, the characters may find similar cloths in the mattresses of Carruga and the late Peire.

Below are guidelines for what the characters may learn from examining the cloth. Your players may invent other avenues of investigation, in which case you may ad lib the results or make life easy on yourself by declaring that Laura Midwife's magic is too unusual for them to make much sense of it.

Regarding the herbs: An Int + Occult Lore roll of 8+ or an InHe spell of level 10+ lets a character recognize them as baneful. If the Int + Occult Lore roll is 12+ or the InHe spell is level 15+, the character recognizes that they are inimical to men only. An Int + Magic Theory roll of 15+ reveals that these plants have no known use in Hermetic magic.

Regarding the square & crescent symbol: An Int + Occult Lore roll of 6+ reveals that the moon is a potent magical symbol because it incorporates change (the moon's phases) and constancy (the regularity of these changes). A roll of 9+ reveals that the moon is magically associated with women. A roll of 12+ reveals that the square is a symbol for the earth. A roll of 15+ reveals that

the moon & earth symbol represents calling down the female power of the moon onto the earth, though this power can be used for good or ill. (Make one Occult Lore roll and provide all the information gained, according to the roll made. Don't make four separate rolls for the four pieces of information.)

An Int + Iberia Lore roll of 9+ lets a character know that the crescent is a religious symbol used by the Moors. (While true, this fact is useless to the story.)

Regarding the blood: First, an InCo 5+ spell, a Per + Medicine roll of 4+, or a Chirurgy + Per roll of 6+ identifies the drops as blood. An Occult Lore roll of 7+ reveals that blood is usually used for personal attacks, aimed at specific people, rather than for general ones. A roll of 8+ reveals that diabolists commonly use blood in their rituals. (This fact, while true, may be misleading, since the cloths have no connection to diabolism.)

A level 25 InCo spell allows an image of the person from whom the blood comes (Alesta), but the magus will have to see her to recognize her and know that it is her blood. The spell will not tell the caster where or who she is.

Regarding the whole combination of cloth, blood, and symbol: An Int + Magic Theory roll of 5+ lets a character recognize that these are not Hermetic symbols. An Int + Occult Lore roll of 9+ reveals that, while these symbols are not commonly employed by diabolists, demons have been known to corrupt magical powers to diabolic ends. (Another misleading fact.)

An InVi spell Level 5+ reveals that the cloths are magical, and a Level 10+ spell reveals that the vis in them has already been directed to a specific end, and is therefore not raw vis.



Inside are several small rooms. The walls are covered with herbs and certain animal parts drying in the smoky air, and an iron cauldron bubbles almost unceasingly in the fireplace.

Within the fence, the magic aura is 1.

Investigating the Fevers

There are various clues the characters can gather as they try to determine what has caused the fever in the three men. Ultimately, they should suspect the Midwife family because they are the only people in the area that seem capable of using herbs (and possibly magic) to such good effect. Once the characters have solved the mystery, they have to decide how to deal with what they know. Do they interfere with what is, on one level, a form of justice? How do they act toward non-Hermetic wizards in their area? For her part, Laura has no intention of joining the Order, even House Ex Miscellenea. According to Hermetic practice, therefore, she is a threat to the Order.

These are a few actions the characters might take in investigating the cause of the fevers, and what might result from these actions:

Talk to Matieus: He tells the characters that the fever has not responded to any of his treatments. He doesn't know anything about the cloths. He can tell the characters that the three young men were friends, and that they fell ill at roughly the same time. Matieus has never seen a fever like this before.

Search Peire's and Carruga's Beds: Both have the same kind of cloth bundle that Dominica originally brought to the covenant on Palm Sunday. Once the bundle is removed from Carruga's bed, he

recovers from the fever within the day, but he will never regain his full strength. One of Peire's brothers now sleeps in his bed, and the bundle there has had no effect on the young man.

Inquire as to the Three Men's Activities: General opinion has it that the three were boisterous, but not cruel or evil. "You know how young men are." Characters might find out that Berenger has a betrothed (Dominica); that Carruga was smitten with Alesta, but spurned; and that Peire had no betrothed.

Ask Villagers about Diabolists: The villagers don't know anything about such people in their area, other than Father Tanchus. Some women know about the Midwife family, but they're not talking.

Ask About the Midwives: The older women keep their secret and merely say that the Midwives are valuable people to have around, that many people in the village owe their lives to them, either women who've been tended and cured, or men who would have died as infants without their care. The men, suspicious of those who don't deal with them, might have darker opinions of the Midwives, but none would think to accuse them of witchcraft.

Older women only tell characters where the Midwives live if they have some legitimate reason to speak with them. At least one of the older women will try to get word to the Midwives if the characters ask too many questions about them.

Observe Berenger & Carruga: Once free of fever, Carruga proves himself to be something of a boor, making obscene comments to young women, perhaps even Alesta or Hyllia. Berenger is happy to be relatively well again, but Dominica's joy turns to disappointment when she discovers that "one particular symptom" continues even after the fever ends.

Visit the Midwives: Laura is very cautious and tries to present the image of a helpful, simple woman. If any of the characters mistreat the Midwives and the

villagers learn of it, the older women in Vézay (and neighboring areas) immediately turn against them. Even if the older women present no vocal or public opposition, each can influence the attitude of her family, so the characters may well wind up friendless in this area.

Once the characters visit the Midwives, Laura will be on guard against their investigations.

Spying on the Midwives: The characters might hear the voice of an old woman (Eulalia) instructing the two daughter in herbal medicine, or even in magic. The characters might also encounter a daughter in the woods gathering herbs, some of which are magically potent.

Talking to Juissinia: Her hatred of men is apparent, and might draw attention to the family.

Talking to Hyllia: She is closed-mouth about her activities and suspicious

of strangers. Characters may notice that she doesn't look much like her sister.

Using Mind-Reading Spells: Used on the right people, these spells could crack the mystery wide open. Manipulate the situation so that using such unobtrusive means is not practical or fruitful until late in the week.

Confronting Laura: She first tries to persuade the characters to leave well enough alone and forget everything they have learned. It is not their business, she insists, and they do not know enough to make an informed decision about the cursed cloths. If pressed, she explains exactly what happened and then expects the characters to stop interfering altogether. She now intends to get the cursed cloth bags back into the beds of Carruga and Berenger, since the characters will no doubt have rescued Carruga just as Dominica has saved her betrothed.





Attack the Midwives: No doubt out-classed and outnumbered, the Midwives call up mists in an attempt to escape. There are several other villagers in the area where they are known and welcome, and the Midwives flee to one of these villages to take refuge. The women there, naturally, do their best to hide and protect their protectors from the “devil-worshipping wizards.”

Pacing the Mystery of the Witches

Ideally, the characters should dabble and investigate for a few days before discovering the secret behind the little cloths filled with herbs, but they should figure it out before the climax on Saturday. To keep the investigation going at the right pace, use clues.

Too Slow

If the characters are moving too slow, give constructive clues, such as:

- Elena, pretending to be happy about Berenger’s recovery, comes to Matieus to ask how he cured him. Any characters looking on can see that she isn’t as happy as she claims to be.
- Matieus complains about or disparages the Midwives.
- Characters overhear Mauri reporting to Father Durand that a family of witches lives in the woods nearby. (Use this clue only if the players are desperate.)

- Characters overhear Alesta confessing to Father Durand that she prayed for evil to befall Carruga, Peire, and Berenger because they raped her. Now she feels responsible for their fevers. (Again, only if the characters need a lot of help.)

The Right Pace

If the characters are moving fast enough, give them “null clues.” A null clue is a fact that is very unlikely to help solve the mystery, but something that will make sense once the mystery is solved. For example:

- Elena, pretending to be happy about Berenger’s recovery, comes to Matieus to ask how he cured him. Her act is good enough that no one thinks anything of her questions.
- The characters learn that Berenger is impotent.
- Characters see Alesta avoiding Carruga and Berenger when they happen to meet.
- Hyllia and Juissinia apparently have different fathers, but there are no men at all in the Midwife family.

Too Fast

If the characters are moving too fast, throw them red herrings or distract them with other concerns, such as:

- Someone tells the characters that they think Matieus might be behind the illnesses, trying to drum up business.
- A young woman is overheard saying that Peire deserved what he got. Before he raped Alesta, he had been harassing and intimidating this other woman. The characters will want to

find out more, but she has no connection to the cloths.

Also, you can make certain clues easy or hard to pick up depending on how fast the characters are moving through the mystery. You might, for instance, require a Per + Folk Ken roll of 6+ to realize that Hyllia and Juissinia don't look alike, or you can give the information away to anyone who sees them both. Or characters who spy on the Midwives' house may hear incriminating words, or hear nothing at all. These details are left for you to determine so you can pace the story as you see fit.

The Witches

Eulalia

Though she died twelve years ago, Eulalia is still present, in ghost form, at the Midwife home. She must continue in her duties until Hyllia or Juissinia bears a daughter. Without a grandmother in the family, the magic would no longer work



Eulalia Midwife

Since she is immaterial, weapons and physical magic have no effect on her. PeMe spells or other magical attacks may damage her, represented by loss of Magic Points. At 0 Magic Points, she dissipates, only to return when she regains her strength.

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +4, Pre +1, Com +2, other characteristics not applicable

Magic Might: 35

Age: 61 (Apparent Age: 45)

Size: 0

Confidence: 4

Abilities (*can teach them but not use them physically*): Craft—Midwifery 7 (curing fevers), Craft—Herbal Medicine 6 (soothing pains), Craft—Sewing 5 (intricate designs)

Magic Powers:

Curse of Manhood, PeCo 20, 3 points +1 per additional target/round: Causes great pain in any masculine body parts: groin, bearded face, hairy chest. Also, hands used for any “masculine” art (such as smithing or war) also suffer pain. A scholar would even feel pain in the eyes (used for reading). Each affected character must make a Stamina roll, from which he must subtract the attribute most closely associated with his masculine role in life (perhaps Intelligence for a magus or scholar, Strength for a grog, Perception for a hunter, for example). On the other hand, more

“androgynous” men (e.g. those that nurture and protect, or live their lives “intuitively” rather than “rationally”) receive a +3 on the roll. Finally, any male with a “True Love” is not affected at all because he has harmoniously united his masculinity with a woman’s femininity.

Roll	Effect
Botch	Lose 1 fatigue level per round until unconscious
to 2	Incapacitated
3 to 5	–5 on rolls, must make appropriate personality roll of 6+ or flee
6 to 8	–3 on rolls
9 to 11	–1 on rolls
12+	no effect

She can use this power on as many men as there are in her presence simultaneously, and may continue it unabated for as long as she expends the needed points each round.

Summoning the Dagger, ReMe 35, 5 points: In a long ritual cast under the full moon, this power draws a man seemingly at random from the nearby countryside. In a trance, he comes to the caster of the ritual and conceives a child with the chosen woman. Still in a trance, he returns, and has no memory of the experience in the morning. The child conceived is always a girl, and always has the Gift. This is how the Midwife family maintains itself without men in it, and why Hyllia and Juissinia don't look much alike (as they have different fathers).

Laura Midwife

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre +3, Com +2, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Magic Might: 25

Age: 40

Confidence: 4

Virtues & Flaws: Empathy +1

Personality Traits: Willful +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist)	+3	+2	+2	+0	+2
Sickle	+4	+5	+3	+6	+3

Soak: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl 2 (escaping combat), Charm 3 (girls), Chirurgy 4 (breaks & sprains), Craft—Sewing 4 (intricate designs), Empathy 4 (sick women), Folk Ken 3 (mothers), Guile 2 (husbands), Craft—Herbal Medicine 4 (magic herbs), Craft—Midwifery 5 (births), Sing 2 (lullabies), Single Weapon 2 (sickle)

Equipment: Sickle, pouch of herbs

Encumbrance: 0

Magic Powers:

Curse of Manhood, PeCo 20, 3 points +1 per additional target per round — As Eulalia's power (see page 63).

Mists of the Wood, CrAu 10, 1 point per round — Creates a thick, silver mist that enshrouds her. Each round that she continues the power, the mist grows in size. In one round, she is obscured. In three rounds, a room can be completely filled with mist. In ten rounds, her house can be completely enshrouded in mist. In twenty rounds, the mist reaches beyond her house's fence and into the woods.

Awaken the Slumbering Herb, MuHe 20, 3 points — Brings out the latent magical power in an herb that would otherwise have no magical power, or only minor power at most. She must be familiar with the herb and know what power she is awakening.

Song of Comfort, CrCo (or CrMe) 5, 1 point per minute — Soothes physical or emotional pain for one person for the duration of the song. Used in treating wounds, comforting the distressed, and easing childbirth.

Summoning the Dagger, ReMe 35, 5 points — As Eulalia's power (see page 63).

or be transmitted as it traditionally has been. Once Laura herself is a grandmother, Eulalia will be able to rest in peace.

Eulalia's grave is in the woods near the village. Since she was not buried by Church ceremony, she can stay on the earth, and her magical connection to the earth has also kept her out of Hell's grasp.

Since she cannot show herself in public, she devotes herself exclusively to teaching her granddaughters and defending the home.

Laura

She is the woman who most often sees to those in childbirth, the sick, and the hurting. She talks to men if she has to, but does not consider their words important.

Hyllia

A slim, young woman with long, black hair and a thin, quiet face. She has begun taking on some of her mother's duties, especially caring for infants.

Juissinia

A slightly pudgy girl with brown hair and a round face. Still too young to be responsible for the health of women and children, Juissinia spends her time gathering herbs for her mother and learning her skills from Eulalia. She has not yet learned any magic powers.

Hyllia Midwife

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +2, Com +1, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Magic Might: 15

Age: 19

Confidence: 2

Virtues & Flaws: Empathy +1

Personality Traits: Talkative -3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist)	+3	+2	+2	+0	+2
Sickle	+3	+4	+2	+6	+1

Soak: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Brawl 2 (escaping), Charm 1 (grandmothers), Chirurgy 2 (cuts), Craft—Sewing 2 (precision), Empathy 3 (maidens), Folk Ken 1 (children), Craft—Herbal Medicine 3 (pain-killing herbs), Craft—Midwifery 3 (infant care), Sing 1 (lullabies), Single Weapon 1 (sickle)

Equipment: Sickle

Encumbrance: 0

Magic Powers:

Mists of the Wood, CrAu 10, 1 point/round — As Laura's power (described on page 64). If two people use this power at once, the mist grows twice as fast.

Song of Comfort, CrCo (or CrMe) 5, 1 point per minute — As Laura's power (see page 64).

Juissinia Midwife

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre -2, Com -1, Str -4, Sta -1, Dex -2, Qik 0

Magic Might: 10

Age: 14

Size: -1

Confidence: 2

Virtues & Flaws: Empathy +1

Personality Traits: Hates Men +3, Quiet +1

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist)	-2	-5	-3	-5	-4
Sickle	+1	-2	-2	+1	-4

Soak: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Unc.

Body Levels: OK, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Abilities: Empathy 2 (her family), Folk Ken -1, Herbal Medicine 2 (spotting herbs), Sewing 2 (mending), Sing 2 (songs of the wood)

Equipment: Sickle, pouch for gathering herbs in the wild

Encumbrance: 0





Chapter IV

Temptations

This chapter covers the progress of the temptations that confront the characters as they stay the week in Vézay, including other activities tied into the timeline. It covers Palm Sunday (when Dominica invites the characters to the village) through Friday night. Saturday and Easter Sunday are covered in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Palm Sunday

Dominica comes to the covenant, bearing an invitation from Rostagnus. She hopes that the magi can help her village against the threat of diabolism.

Background

Dominica is betrothed to Berenger, who, for the last two months, has suffered from a severe fever. Last week Dominica was nursing Berenger in his sickbed when she found a cloth tied in a knot, buried deep in the straw of his mattress. Berenger didn't know how it got there, and Dominica took it home with her out of curiosity. When Berenger became well the next day, she suspected that the cloth was some sort of evil charm. She took it

and her story to Matieus, the doctor of the village, and with him, she decided to consult the magi. Matieus suggested to Rostagnus, the village elder, that the village formally invite the members of the covenant to the festivities of Holy Week, but neither Dominica nor Matieus have told anyone else about the cloths.

Dominica and Matieus suspect that the man who had died of fever (Peire) and the one who continues to be ill (Carruga) may have been sickened by similar charms, but they are afraid to endanger themselves by searching for more cloths. They hope the magi can do this dangerous work for them.

Dominica is half correct in her suspicions. First, she is right that the cloth was causing her betrothed to suffer fever. But it is witchcraft, not diabolism, that is the problem, and Berenger is suffering revenge for a rape he committed three months ago. Berenger is not the victim of evil but the perpetrator of evil suffering his punishment.

Interacting with Characters

Dominica comes to the covenant on Palm Sunday, trusting that the Mass in which she has just partaken will protect her

Chance Encounters

Whenever characters wander through the village, they run across villagers engaged in various activities. Whether these encounters turn into full-fledged roleplaying events or merely foreshadow things to come is up to them. Use whichever encounter described below seems appropriate to move the plot along and develop the villagers. The name of the character being developed is followed by a “key phrase” to describe him.

Jaufré (Gluttony) & Alba (Lust) — Jaufré, sitting on a stout stool, and Alba are outside his house looking over foodstuffs that a merchant has just brought to town on his mule. The food may be wine, olive oil, meat, poultry, salt, flour, or even rare oranges from the distant south. All is of exceptional quality, and Jaufré is sampling or evaluating it before paying the merchant. Unnoticed by Jaufré, Alba is flirting with the merchant.

Constans (Jaufré & Alba’s son) — Constans is begging for leftovers from Francisca, who has just made a pie. Francisca says, “Go beg at your own kitchen. Your father’s scraps would certainly feed three skinny boys like yourself.”

Francisca (Greed) — Francisca and several other women are bargaining with a traveling merchant who is selling cloths, scarves, and stockings from a pack he carried into town on his back. Francisca is haggling with him over a silk scarf, offering five deniers while the merchant demands twenty. She haggles for quite a while, torn between greed for her silver and greed for the merchant’s scarf.

Bretmar (Pride) — Bretmar is talking with Rostagnus about how work is going on the chapel. “We’re doing a fine job.” He has no dirt on his clothes because he has been “directing and supervising,” not working himself.

Arnold (Sloth) — He is resting in the shade out of sight of the workers. If asked, he says he needs to retain his strength so as to do more work later when the others tire themselves out. “They’re working so furiously, it’s obvious they have no sense of pacing themselves.”

Bretmar (Pride) & Arnold (Sloth) — Bretmar is castigating Arnold for not working hard enough. While Bretmar lectures condescendingly and Arnold hangs his head and rolls his eyes, the other villagers keep working steadily on the chapel.

Isarn (Wrath) — Characters meet him walking with his dogs, kicking and berating them when they stray.

Matieus (Envy) — He is seen bandaging a man who cut himself while working, saying: “I wonder why the Midwife won’t tend wounds like this; I guess her skills fail when she has to deal with real ailments.” (Actually, he knows she’s better than he is, and resents it.)

Laura (the Witch) — Coming to visit an ailing old woman, carrying a burlap bag of herbs to make into a tea.

Mauri (acolyte) — He is chatting pleasantly with some of the villagers. Characters skilled at subterfuge might recognize that he is gathering hints about what the characters have been up to, what the villagers know about them, what weaknesses they may have, and so on.

Daurostre (troubador) & Alesta (rape victim) — Daurostre is intrigued by the one young woman in the village who seems immune to his charms. He is talking to her, trying to win her favor, and she just wishes he would go away. Finally she walks away in a rush, leaving Daurostre a bit put out.

from evil magic. She is dressed in a dark blue dress and carries a small cloth bag.

When she encounters someone from the covenant (such as a guard or an apprentice drawing water), she says, “Good day to you. I am Dominica of

Vézay, and I have come to bring an invitation to the magi. May I speak with one of them?” She insists on speaking to a magus directly, saying she is under orders from Rostagnus to offer the invitation to a wizard personally.



When she gains admittance to the presence of a magus or the convened council, she says:

“I bring greetings to you from Rostagnus, the elder of Vézay. He wishes to invite you to our humble village during this week of celebration so that we may all become better acquainted. If you honor us with your presence, we will share with you the joy of our festivities, as thanks for your help when our village was troubled with heresy and devilry. Will you come?”

Note that even if the villagers believe that the characters didn’t really help the village during “Ghoul,” Dominica compliments them with this invitation. If they accept, she then tells them the real reason she is there. If they decline, she attempts to persuade them by telling them of the apparent danger to the village. In either case, she says.

“Once again we need your assistance against Satan and his minions. We know you’ve helped us before; may I ask for help a second time?”

In response to any questions, she gives the magi the following details:

- She dumps the cursed cloth out of her bag (refusing to touch it herself). The magi can examine it if they wish.
- Her betrothed, Berenger, had been down with fever for two months. Recently she found the cloth in his mattress, and when she removed it, he regained his health the next day. Another villager, Carruga, also has the fever, and a third, Peire, has already died of it. She has not searched their mattresses for fear of evil curses.
- Only she and the healer, Matieus, know about the cloth. The other villagers believe that the characters are merely coming to join in the festivities of Holy Week.
- The former Church of St. Lazare is now an evil place, and the villagers

have been suffering from nightmares and poor spirits. The cursed cloth is probably the doing of diabolists active somewhere in the area.

If the characters are reluctant to investigate, remind them that, unchecked, diabolists could become dangerous enough to threaten the covenant itself. Nipping a coven in the bud is the best and safest way to deal with the problem.

Once she has been told that someone will come to Vézay, she says it would be best if they arrived the following morning so they would have time to meet people before the festivities of the evening.

Monday

The characters arrive and meet people of the village. The villagers dig the chapel’s foundations. Sieur Támara comes to see the progress on the chapel, leading to the Temptation of Envy. At night, imps fill in the foundation.

Arrival

As the characters approach Vézay along the trail, they no doubt attract a good deal of attention. Villagers begin appearing singly at first, and then in small groups to see their strange guests. A large number of scruffy children peer out from behind the adults. Describe in detail those villagers to which you want to draw attention, such as Isarn and his dogs. Describe the chapel site, which at this point is merely a few large piles of stones. If the characters arrive between noon and dusk, several men are digging a shallow, wide hole (the foundation) between the piles of rocks.

After a small crowd has gathered to see the newcomers, Alphons Host steps forth, welcomes them to the village, and shows them where they will be staying. Rostagnus, helped along by Willa, doesn't arrive until a bit later, as he is slow on his feet.

If the characters arrive in the morning, Rostagnus thanks them for coming and tells them they can join in the construction of the chapel any time. A few men have already begun to gather at the chapel site. Dominica didn't mention the chapel to the characters and didn't intend for them to help build it, but Rostagnus has a hard time keeping such details straight. He expects them to help, and mis-remembers that this was one of the important reasons why the characters have come. (Try to get some of the characters to help in the building, as it will aid in roleplaying the story. If a sense of helpfulness is not apparent, point out that helping with the chapel will improve the impression that the villagers have of the covenant.)

If the characters arrive between noon and dusk, several men are already working, and Rostagnus expects them to join in. If they arrive after dusk, festivities are already underway.

At the first opportunity, Rostagnus introduces the guests to the villagers.

While the characters are mingling, eating, working, or whatever, Matieus introduces himself and talks to them privately about the cursed cloth that Dominica found. He tries to make a very good impression on the characters. This is a set-up for the Temptation of Envy, on Monday afternoon.

Sieur Támita

In the afternoon, Sieur Jacmars Támita arrives, riding with three knights and his son, Berartz. He has come to see

Role-Playing the Temptations

Central to the role-playing of this story are the seven temptations that the characters will face. Here are some tips on using them effectively in your game.

- Change the temptations in any way that you think will make them more effective. If you can imagine a temptation that would really entice certain characters and you can fit it into the plot, do so.
- Try to tempt the players. Don't just present the situations neutrally; play the devil's advocate. Get the *players* emotionally involved in the temptations.
- Don't turn temptations into mere die rolls against personality traits. If a player allows his character to be corrupted, let it be a free-will act on the player's part (so as to indict the *player* somewhat in the sin).
- Focus on flaws that the characters have, such a compulsion to prove oneself, hatred of nobility, or a weakness for good food. In modern thought, alcoholism is an unfortunate disease, but in medieval thought, drinking too much is a moral weakness and a sin. The same holds true for other flaws. Stick to this medieval interpretation of human weakness. Don't go easy on the characters because "their flaws made them do it." As they will find out in this story, their flaws can endanger their very souls.
- Be open to other opportunities for the corrupted ones to tempt the characters. If a situation arises, go with it. Anyone whom Isarn tempts to wrath, for example, is corrupted, whether it is in the fight described for Tuesday or in any other event.
- The characters also have the opportunity to save the corrupted villagers. There are no set words the characters must say to accomplish this. Roleplay the interactions between the corrupted villagers and characters, use Communication and personality rolls if you wish, and let the characters try any response to temptation that they think of.



the site of the new chapel and to inspire awe in his people. With their horses decked in colored cloth, their fine armaments, and their well-fed countenances, these nobles present an impressive image, especially against the impoverished background of Vézay. Emphasize their wealth to prepare for the Temptation of Envy.

First, Sieur Támita greets the villagers, especially Rostagnus, and tells them he has come to see the chapel they are building. Alphons Host takes the five horses to a stable, where they are groomed, fed, and watered.

Always accompanied by his bodyguards and son, Sieur Támita looks over the site of the new church and publicly announces his pleasure at its imminent erection. He then tours the village, talking with people, patting children on the head, and generally attempting to build his reputation as a good ruler.

If the characters stand out in any way, Sieur Támita takes notice of them and asks them who they are. (In the simple village of Vézay, the characters are almost bound to stand out.) This encounter may be a tricky one for them to handle, as they are not likely to be under his rule. Their independence makes them dangerous in his eyes. They might try to hide their identity, but someone in the village (perhaps Father Durand) is likely to tell Sieur Támita the truth.

If anyone asks about razing the corrupted church, he says his engineers are seiging a Moorish city in Iberia to the south, but that when they return, he will see to the church's destruction. Actually, only the dramatic events of this story will make razing the church a priority to Sieur Támita.

Anyone who threatens Sieur Támita faces four well-armed and well-trained



Nightmares

Since the village is in an infernal area, the dreams of the villagers are often terrifying nightmares. The characters may suffer nightmares as well when they sleep in the village. Nightmares help build an atmosphere of danger and evil. Characters who have been corrupted are especially likely to dream about being taken down into Hell for their sins. Since nightmares have little or no effect on the progress of the plot, use them for pacing. If you want to move quickly, skip them or make them brief. If you want a more leisurely pace, they are appropriate filler. Finally, if one of your players isn't involved in much of the action, role-playing out a nightmare that his character has can give that player the attention needed to keep him interested.

For added effect, make the first nightmare indistinguishable from reality. The first nightmare in the story might proceed like this:

First, decide which character is having the nightmare. If any other characters are on watch, have them make Perception rolls, but not notice anything. (There's nothing to notice, of course, as all the action is in a dream, but having guards "miss" Perception rolls will make the nightmare more believable.)

Tell the dreamer he wakes up in the middle of the night hearing someone softly calling his name over and over again. If the character tries to wake the other characters, they cannot be woken. The guards, if any, have fallen asleep. If the character investigates the voice calling his name, he finds an imp that says, **"How nice it is to have a slave that comes when he's called."** At that point, other imps come from the dark-

ness to surround the character, mob him, and carry him helpless to the desecrated church. There he finds Escarus on a throne of bones overseeing a huge group of grotesque demons. Escarus says, **"Ah, an eighth soul for my collection,"** at which point the floor opens under the character. Helpless, the character falls down a narrow, winding shaft whose walls are the bodies of disgusting demons. The demons pull, kick, and push the character downward, toward a red light and ever-increasing heat. Then one of the demons grabs the character and shakes him.

Now quickly switch "point of view" and tell the other characters that they wake up in the middle of the night because the dreaming character is screaming in his sleep. To them, everything is normal, the guards are awake, and there are no imps to be seen. The nightmare ends when one of the other characters shakes the dreamer awake. If the dreamer had grabbed onto the demon shaking him in the nightmare, he grabs onto the character who wakes him just before actually waking up.

During the dream, have players make rolls to see whether their characters wake up, whether the guards have fallen asleep, whether the dreamer can fight off the imps, and so forth. Of course, you are in complete control of these events, and the rolls are merely faked to fool the players. And change the course of the dream in any way you see fit to maintain its illusion of reality or to heighten its horror.

Subsequent dreams will have to begin more realistically to fool the players. You can also give up on tricking them any longer, and merely describe the nightmares they have.





warriors. Anyone who threatens Berartz faces four *enraged*, well-armed, well-trained warriors. In addition, any violence against Sieur Támita or those with him raises the ire of the villagers.

The villagers watch the characters to see how they act toward Sieur Támita, and how he receives them. If the two parties are amicable to each other, the villagers think well of the characters.

When Sieur Támita nears the end of his short visit, Father Durand asks to speak with him in private. During this meeting, Father Durand tells Sieur Támita what he knows (and what Mauri has gathered) about the characters. He suggests that the two of them put on a little act, with Sieur Támita pretending to be enraged at the presence of magi in his area and Father Durand apparently encouraging restraint, for the sake of

bystanders who might be hurt in a fight. With these adopted roles, Sieur Támita may be able to cow the characters into behaving themselves, while Father Durand will set himself up as the one to whom the characters must turn for help in dealing with the nobles.

If this scheme doesn't fit your concept of your saga, change it. Remember, you and your players are going to live with results of this encounter, so make it fit your saga.

Rest and Party

As the sun sets, the women and children of Vézay begin setting up trestle tables and benches in the sward behind Alphons' house. The men, meanwhile, lay up their spades, ending the day's work. By now the chapel foundation has been dug, but no work has started on the chapel walls or floor. Once the tables are ready, everyone in the village gathers there. Be sure to describe specific characters you want the characters to notice, such as Isarn or Father Durand. Describe those you intend to use soon in play, or those that the characters have not yet met. The characters have some time to approach and talk to villagers, or perhaps curious villagers (such as Martina) approach them.

When people have found their places, Rostagnus makes a short speech welcoming the characters and congratulating everyone on the work done so far on the chapel. Rostagnus is approaching senility, so go ahead and use his speech for comic relief, if you wish. His speech might include rambling reminiscences of childhood that take him far from his point, only to be brought back to the present by Willa's prodding. If, however, you are instilling a relentless atmosphere of decay and evil, keep the speech humorless.

The Temptation of Envy

During Sieur Támita's visit, Matieus comes to some of the characters and talks to them secretly. He envies the fine trappings, expensive clothes, and lordly status of Sieur Támita. He first complains about the undeserved wealth and good fortune of Sieur Támita. He then proposes that they help him put Sieur Támita in his place. He has some herbs that they could put in his horse's oats, that will cause the horse to sicken as it is carrying Sieur Támita back to his castle. He needs the characters' to sneak in and put the herbs in the horse's oats while he distracts those who are nearby. (He will accept a change in plans, with him actually poisoning the horse and the characters distracting others.) The horse is in a stable near Alphons Host's house, and it would be relatively easy to distract the groom.

Matieus is saved if the characters point out that everyone has a place in life, and the honorable person makes the best of their role, rather than envying that of others.

Player-Characters are corrupted if they help Matieus with his scheme.

After the speech, Father Durand offers a short blessing, and the meal is on. Food is not plentiful, but the fare is at least tasty and wholesome: smoked meats (a small amount), wine, fresh bread, a bit of fish, stewed vegetables, and so on.

Once the meal is over, the villagers move the tables out of the way to form a square for dancing. Daurostre plays his lute and sings while the villagers dance. This time is opportune for characters to mingle, gather information, sneak off for surreptitious activities, and the like. If your players enjoy romance, the wine, music, moonlight, and air of festivity set the mood very nicely.

At about ten in the evening, the party slows down and eventually ends. The villagers have to get to bed early in order to work on the chapel in the morning.

Have the characters decide how to spend the night. Encourage them to feel safe so that they don't set a watch. Their setting a watch alters the progression of the story a bit, but not too much to worry about. Alphons has space for up to four people in two rooms; others will have to sleep in tents in the yard.

The Demons Arrive

Late that night, after midnight, several imps, sent by Escarus, appear in the church, sneak to the chapel site, and put the dirt back in the foundation that was dug during the day. Unless the characters have taken specific precautions to guard the site, the imps accomplish their mission.

If the characters have guards or other means of discovering the demonic activity, the imps flee back to the church and disappear at the first sign of confrontation. They were not ready for a fight, and they report to Escarus on the interference of the characters. See descriptions of the imps on pages 75-76.

Tuesday

In the morning, the work on the chapel has been undone by demons.

Isarn challenges a character to a fight, the Temptation of Wrath.

In the evening, the characters can stand watch over the chapel and fight the imps that want to unbuild it.

Tuesday Morning (if the chapel was not guarded)

Tuesday morning finds the village in confusion. Someone has hauled the dirt back to the chapel site and filled in the hole dug Monday, undoing a full day's work. The villagers are afraid because it is such a strange event. Who would have done this? Perhaps, they think, magic was involved. Some of the suspicion falls on the characters. If the characters have not been helping to build the chapel, a friendly villager suggests that maybe they should start now, to prove their good will.

Father Durand questions the characters about how they spent the night and whether they know anything about what happened.

Unless the characters propose it first, Willa prods Rostagnus into suggesting that someone stand watch during the night. Father Durand says he will spend the night in prayer, hoping thereby to protect the construction of the chapel (and he might do just that, since he has True Faith). Some of the villagers weakly mumble that they might be able to guard the chapel, but they are afraid of what they might find. If the characters want to make good names for themselves and clear their names of any wrongdoing, they can do so by volunteering to watch the site at night.



The Temptation of Wrath

Some time during the day, perhaps before the villagers are sure how to protect their new chapel from the imps, Isarn challenges a character to a fight.

On some imagined or exaggerated pretense, Isarn begins insulting the characters, saying they have brought ill times to the village and they should go back to their covenant and never return. Finally, he provokes a fight, saying, "Come now, I'll show you what a good Christian man can do against the likes of you. Who among you is man enough to fight me?" At that, he puts up his fists, preparing for a brawl. He ignores the demands of other villagers that he behave himself and leave the village's guests alone.

Focus Isarn's taunt on any character in the group who is likely to respond, perhaps using choice insults. (No doubt there's a player who is proud of his character's combat ability and eager to show off.) Make it clear that the other villagers are upset with Isarn and would not necessarily hold it against the characters if they put him back in his place. Point out that Isarn doesn't look particularly tough. (If the characters are a typical group, there is at least one warrior who should be able to take him out easily.) Make it easy for the fight to start; force the players to hold themselves back to avoid the fight.

If the characters intend to fight Isarn unfairly, such as by ganging up on him or using weapons, he taunts them and tries to shame them into fighting fair. If the characters beat Isarn using unfair tactics, the villagers look on the characters as dangerous and dishonest. If they actually kill him, the villagers are shocked and dismayed. Rostagnus may well rescind his invitation and tell them to leave the village.

Isarn's statistics and description are found on page 50.

Isarn is saved if the characters talk him out of it and make friends with him.

A character is corrupted if he fights Isarn with any kind of malice. If he is merely doing his job, that's not grounds for corruption. If the character, however, really wants to hurt Isarn, he is corrupted. (Have Isarn reel or fall when defeated, allowing the character to strike a really damaging blow to finish him off. Such unnecessary violence is proof positive of corruption.) Other characters who don't fight Isarn but still show hatred or vengefulness toward him are corrupted as well.

Note: This temptation could be very nasty indeed, as it is likely to incapacitate a tough warrior against the Demons of Wrath on Saturday — not a good turn of events for the characters.

Once some solution has been agreed upon, the villagers resume work, albeit with an air of defeat.

If characters investigate the desecrated church, they find the footprints left by the imps. They might also be able to find footprints near the chapel site and follow them back to the church (Perception + Awareness roll of 9+ to find the prints, Perception + Hunt of 9+ to follow them).

Tuesday Morning (if the characters routed the imps)

If they haven't done so yet, the characters can let the villagers know about the imps' invasion of the village. Some are skeptical, Father Durand presses for details, and an air of foreboding makes the villagers solemn for the rest of the day, as they resume work on the chapel.

Tuesday Evening

The villagers hold a common meal and a dance again, just as they did Monday night. Once again, this is an ideal time for roleplaying and subterfuge.

The Imps Attack

Escarus has assigned imps to halt the construction of the chapel. They arrive every night to pull down what has been put up. Escarus doesn't much care about the chapel, since he has greater plans, but he has enough resources to devote a few imps to slowing the process down. He would like to see Vézay's Easter celebrated without a chapel.

On Monday, most likely, the imps met no resistance. On Tuesday, they are likely to be surprised by characters guarding the site. They fight until the melee turns in favor of the characters.

If you want a bigger fight, have the imps return on Wednesday night with reinforcements, perhaps a big warrior-demon or two.

Encounter Set-Up: Nine imps (or some other number better suited to your

group) take physical form in the middle of the night in the Church of St. Lazare. Silently, and under their *Cloaks of Darkness*, they scramble over the fence (not wishing to cross running water) and move to the small wooded area marked XX on the map of Vézay (page 28). From here they would normally march right to the site, but they see the defenders and pause. They decide to make noises in the woods, hoping to draw the defenders over to investigate. They break branches, screech a bit, stomp on the ground and so on. An Imp of Wrath dissolves its body and takes spirit form to fly over to the characters. There it uses the *Demon's Touch* to inspire wrath, bravery or curiosity in the characters. (Note that these imps cannot re-form their bodies once they've taken spirit form, so only eight imps attack the characters.) Once combat starts, the imp in spirit form uses its



Escarus' Imps

Characteristics: Int -2, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta +1, Dex 0, Qik +1

Infernal Might: 13

Size: -2

Personality Traits: Calculating +3

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Claw	+4	+6	+7	+8	n/a

Soak: +7*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Brawl 3 (mobbing individuals), Stealth 3 (moving quietly)

Vis: Each imp's blood is worth 2 pawns of Mentem vis.

Spirit Form Power:

Demon's Touch, 1 point — Alters any die roll by 3 points. Since these are Escarus' imps, each is related to one of the Seven Deadly Sins and can manipulate relevant rolls by 5 points. (For example, an Imp of Sloth could cause a -5 penalty on fatigue rolls.) Technique and form appropriate to the effect attempted, such as PeCo to penalize a fatigue roll.

Physical Form Power:

Cloak of Darkness, PeIg 15, 1 point — Dulls light within a yard of the imp, creating a circle of almost pitch darkness. Has no effect on sunlight. People fighting in this light are at -3 on Initiative and Attack rolls, -1 on Defense rolls, with an extra botch roll. Lasts ten rounds. Magic can illumine the area only if the evel exceeds 15 + Infernal Aura.

Physical Form:

These imps are human-like, four feet tall, with beak-like mouths, scaly skin, and large claws. They have tiny wings that only work in areas with Infernal Auras of 7+. An imp can dissolve its body and take spirit form, but it must concentrate undisturbed to do so. It cannot take or return to physical form without being forced to do so by a summoning diabolist, superior demon, or other means.

Demon Touch to help his kin by penalizing the characters' rolls.

If the characters investigate, the imps back into the woods to try to lure the characters in, where they intend to attack. In the woods, the characters get

a total -4 penalty on Attack rolls (for woods and *Cloak of Darkness*), two extra botch dice, -1 on Defense, and -3 on Initiative. If the characters do not venture into the woods, the imps wait until the characters drop their guard a bit and try a frontal assault. Out in the open, the characters still suffer from the *Cloaks of Darkness* (-3 on Initiative and Attack rolls, -1 on Defense rolls, extra botch die.)

Remember that the Infernal Aura is 1 (see 98 for Mystic Auras in Vézay).

Once the fight starts, roll for Father Durand's miracle. Remember that he is either praying in his room or helping the characters stand guard. He has 1 Faith point; his relic gives him +1; and the need to build the church gives him another +1. Add these bonuses to a quality die to generate a miracle roll. A roll of 12 banishes the imp in spirit form (which becomes visible as it screams and dissipates). A roll of 20 floods the area in divine light, banishing the *Cloaks of Darkness*. A roll of 50 or so calls down shafts of fire and smoke that blast the imps to cinders and leave the characters untouched. You may also determine other miracles as you see fit.

If the characters aren't cautious, this battle could massacre them. If the situation looks bad for them, you may decrease the number of imps, have villagers come to help the characters, or have Father Durand's miracle succeed automatically.

The imps fight until the battle is clearly against them and then flee back to the church, where their physical forms disappear and their spirits return to Hell to tell Escarus what has happened.

The fight is bound to wake some villagers (and to alert those who have been lying in bed too worried to sleep). Once the fight is obviously over, assorted villagers come to see what has happened. Father Durand remains in prayer, but Joans and Mauri come to see the results of

the encounter. A successful defense of the chapel site makes the villagers friendly to the covenant for a long time, and Father Durand begins to trust the characters a bit more.

Wednesday

Arnold encourages characters to avoid work, the Temptation of Sloth.

Constans invites the characters to his father's feast the next day.

If any imps remain, they return tonight.

Wednesday Morning

In the morning, work resumes on the chapel, laying the stones for the floor and walls. The villagers have renewed energy, knowing that their work is now safe from infernal predations.

Invitation to the Feast

Jaufré's son, Constans, strolls up to the characters and says, "Excuse me, good sirs. Am I interrupting? Have I leave to speak?" If encouraged, he continues. Otherwise he mutters apologies and walks away, only to approach later



Guarding the Chapel Site

The characters can come up with several ideas for guarding the site. The most straightforward is simply to wait there and fight whatever shows, but they may come up with more elaborate tactics.

- **Get Reinforcements** — If the covenant is nearby, the characters may return to get reinforcements. Remember that some grogs must be left to guard the place, and many companions and grogs may be busy with their various tasks, but some reinforcements are probably available. In fact, if noncombatant characters are in the group, their players may take the roles of combatant reinforcements for the night's encounter, allowing them to get in on the action. If the characters gather a large group, feel free to reinforce the imps (or let the characters win the battle easily, as reward for their resourcefulness). If the group is so large that a round-by-round combat would be unmanageable, you may assume that the characters fight off the demons with only minor wounds. You might decide to play out the first few rounds of combat and then describe the battle in general terms from there.
- **Insist that Durand Join Them** — He may do so, to impress the characters with his courage and resolve, though he insists on physical protection, as he is no warrior. He tries to call for a miracle to ward off or destroy the imps.
- **Pressure Villagers to Guard as Well** — Several men allow themselves to be put into combat, but they need weapons of some kind. (By law, the serfs do not possess military weapons, giving the nobles a monopoly on military power.) Players of noncombatant characters can run these villagers. Unfortunately, they are likely to flee or get seriously hurt in the fight.
- **Ignore the Problem** — Doing so may raise the resentment of the villagers, but the imps are not really the characters' problem, are they? That night, the villagers make an ineffectual stand against the demons, ending in a rout. Eventually, a message is sent to Sieur Támita, who sends knights to defend the village.
- **Ambush the Imps** — If the characters know that the imps come from the church, they can wait for them there. This tactic gives them an element of surprise, but probably means fighting them where the Infernal aura is strong.



again and again, until he can extend his father's invitation.

Once given leave to speak, Constans says, "My father, Jaufré the *Almogáver*, wishes to invite you and all your company to a feast of grand proportions tomorrow evening. There will be wine and meat aplenty, so keep your bellies hungry. The feast begins tomorrow at sundown, at my father's humble home, and he wishes very much for me to be able to bring word back to him that you have accepted the offer." (To impress the strangers, Constans has invented this speech and rehearsed it a hundred times.) He waits for the characters to respond. If they are not interested, he asks them again, almost pleading and making his lines up as he goes. If they finally convince him they will not come, he asks if even one or two of them would like to come so that at least some new faces will be at the table. It takes quite a bit of persistence to say no to the child.

If any of the characters agree to come, he yells, "Hurray," turns, and runs back to

tell his father. (He forgets any façade of formality at this point.) Constans also assumes that the characters know where Jaufré's house is, since practically everyone else he has ever met (i.e. everyone in the village) knows. In his limited experience, not knowing where his father's house is would be like not knowing from which direction the sun rises.

Wednesday Evening

A communal meal and dance are held once again, just as before.

Return of the Imps

If any imps survived last night's fight, they return for another assault. If your players like big fights, throw in reinforcements, such as warrior-demons or other fiends. (If you don't care for another fight at all, let the night pass without incident.)

Once again, Father Durand holds a vigil, praying in his room at Rostagnus' house. Roll for his miracle.

The Temptation of Sloth

As the characters are helping to lay the stones for the chapel floor and walls, Arnold gets some of them to "help" him gather some more water from the river for the mortar. While they are away from the workers and out of sight on the other side of the trees, he tries to entice them to relax rather than get the water. He might say, "You folks worked real hard last night, and you're knocking yourselves out. Here, I've got some wine stored in these bushes; let's take a break. You deserve it." He concocts the plan of saying that the buckets were broken, and that they had to mend them before returning, thus explaining the delay.

Arnold is saved if the characters convince him to get back to work and do his share.

The characters are corrupted if they join him in taking a secret break.

Maunday Thursday

Jaufré's feast, the Temptation of Gluttony.

Alba tries to seduce a character, the Temptation of Lust.

Thursday Daytime

The villagers continue work on the chapel, putting the thatched roof on by sundown.

Jaufré's Feast

When the characters arrive at Jaufré's house, they find firepits roaring, people bantering, and Jaufré's harried maidservant, Garsinda, serving wine to guests. Constans is nowhere to be seen; he spends the evening cleaning dishes as Garsinda brings them back to the scullery. Jaufré will give him some of the scraps when the feast is done, if there are any. Jaufré freely admits his son's duties for the night to any who think to ask.

The characters are first greeted by Bretmar, who is the master of the ceremony. Around his neck he wears a huge wooden key to symbolize his position. He greets the characters heartily, calls over someone to bring them wine, and directs them to Jaufré's table. Bretmar appears very happy to be in charge of things.

Jaufré is sitting at the head of a large table near his house, his crutch leaning against the edge of the table. He makes a great fuss over the characters, calling them over to him in a loud voice. "Come here, come this way my friends. I tell you I was quite pleased when little Constans told me you had accepted my invitation. Welcome, welcome, come here where I can see all of you."

He greets them, chats with them, learns their names, and so forth. He adds:

"Forgive me for not standing to greet you, but my one leg has been getting weaker and weaker as the years have gone by. Come, won't you sit with me here at this table? You are guests of honor here. I've been giving a feast like this every Easter for years, but I've never had guests as peculiar as you. These seats here on my left, they are for you. And Father [turns to Father Durand], I'd be pleased if you and your boys would sit here on my right when the feast begins. Very well?" If the characters have really won the hearts of the villagers, such as by losing one of

their number to the imps, Jaufré may seat them on his right, with Father Durand on his left.

The feast has not yet begun, so the characters have some time to mingle and talk to villagers. Ad lib this as long as the characters have something to do. These are some events that might take place before the feast proper:

Hyllia, the daughter of Laura, offers the characters wine and small pieces of cheese. Jaufré has hired her to help serve at the feast, since poor Garsinda isn't able to handle all the responsibility. Isarn (or one of the other rowdy, young males of the village) teases her: "Hey, Hyllia. What were you doing wandering out in the woods in the middle of the night last week? Yeah, I saw you. Who were you meeting out there? Next time you want to meet a man, just let me know and I'll show you what real men are made of." Hyllia ignores Isarn and his snickering



Temptation of Gluttony

Once the baked apples are eaten, Garsinda comes to Jaufré and says that there is still food left over. Jaufré orders it brought to his table. She brings out whichever foods the characters have found most appetizing, perhaps the chicken or the pork ribs, plus a few scraps from each course.

Looking over the food, an already stuffed Jaufré announces: "Well, it would be a shame to see this food go to waste, and I might not be able to eat it all by myself. Which of you virile young folk will help me with it?" He wants the characters to help him eat what's left, though they are undoubtedly full already.

Jaufré is saved if the characters talk him into letting villagers at other tables share in this food, rather than eating it himself. They might appeal to his need to be a generous host or remind him of the Christian injunction to share what one has with others.

The characters are corrupted if, after their host's example, they share in this excessive eating.



buddies. (This encounter should at least draw some attention to Hyllia. She was out gathering magical herbs and denies that she was out in the woods at night. Isarn saw her while he was out walking to calm his temper.)

Francisca (corrupted by Greed) talks to the characters. Among other things, she says, “If only poor Hyllia had a father, she wouldn’t be waiting on other people now.” She also says things like, “You folk must have lavish feasts like this one every night of the year, you’re so wealthy. In your eyes, Jaufré must look like a fool, pretending to be a man of fortune,” or “My, that’s fine cloth you’re wearing. How much does that cost?” or “They say that stingy old Jaufré has a fortune to last seven lifetimes hidden in that house. He doesn’t deserve it though; look at how he treats his own household.”

Bretmar (corrupted by Pride) comes by to assure himself that the characters are having a good time. He thumps them on the back and laughs, acting as if they were his guests, not Jaufré’s.

Alba (corrupted by Lust) welcomes the characters warmly and scopes them out. She flirts with any men who seem receptive. Use this encounter to find out which character is likely to succumb to Alba’s wiles. Be sure to describe her beauty in sensual detail.

Various villagers chatting and agreeing with each other that, by the looks of things, this feast will be Jaufré’s most extravagant one to date.

At last, the feast begins. Everyone in the village is here, seated at various tables spread out on the sward. The characters takes their places at Jaufré’s table, and Bretmar rings a huge bell to announce the beginning of the feast.



The Temptation of Lust

Alba approaches one of the men from the covenant with whom she was successfully flirting and suggests that they walk off their meal in the pleasant night air. She then leads him into the woods and attempts to seduce him, using whatever words she thinks will appeal. (“My husband was once a virile young warrior, like yourself. But look at him now. Don’t you think a woman like me deserves better than him?” or “This little village has no one educated and refined like you. I’ve been waiting for years for someone like you to come to me. Don’t look down on me for it, please, but I can’t hold myself back.”) If the fellow succumbs, he finds Alba to be a mighty passionate and satisfying lover.

Whether or not she is successful with her first target, she approaches the other men in the group one at a time until they have all left the site of the feast.

Alba is saved if she is successfully admonished to be chaste and faithful to her husband.

Characters are corrupted if they commit adultery with her.

First, Father Durand gives a short blessing.

Then, Alba comes out of the house with an ornate, ceramic salt-shaker in the shape of a three-foot high dragon. She presents it to Jaufré and takes her seat at a table with other women. Jaufré passes the salt-shaker around his table for all to

admire, and for them to pour some salt into little bowls set at their places.

Once everyone at Jaufré’s table has taken some of the salt, Elena comes out of the house carrying a large loaf of bread in a cloth apron. The loaf, dyed with rose petals, is a deep red in color. She sets it in front of Jaufré and pulls a large knife from her belt. Very carefully, she slices the upper crust off the bread and hands it to the most honored guests. These guests split the crust among them to eat with the first course. (This custom originated our phrase “the upper crust.”)

With these formalities accomplished, the following courses are served:

- 1) Bread & cheeses
- 2) Stewed, heavily spiced vegetables
- 3) Meat pies. (Jaufré’s pie has a live bird baked into it, which he cuts free before the feasters eat.)
- 4) Roast beef in gravy
- 5) Honey-glazed chicken
- 6) Pork ribs in red pepper sauce
- 7) Baked apples in cinnamon sauce

Wine flows freely throughout the meal.

Traditionally, music and other performances fill space between the courses, but Jaufré has no patience for distractions, and his feasts consist of little but eating.

If the characters look to the tables where others sit, they see that the other villagers are given decidedly inferior and smaller portions of each course.

After the feast, Daurostre plays on his lute and sings, but few have the energy to dance. The villagers stay to chat



The Temptation of Avarice

Francisca comes to the characters to speak with them secretly. She explains that she needs their help, and that she can help them, too. She proposes that they help her rob Jaufré of his marvelous treasure. She points out that he is wasting it on expensive wine and food while his poor son barely has enough to eat, whereas she presents herself as a hard-working widow who has lost first her husband and now her grown son, Peire. Her argument is that she needs the money more than he does, and he doesn't deserve it. Furthermore, she says that he has several magic items that he doesn't know what to do with: two white statuettes, a copper ring, and some black robes. (Rumor has it that the treasure contains Moorish magic, but no one knows for sure. Francisca has convinced herself that the items are magical so that she can strike a better deal with the characters. She happens to be right about the ring and robe, but not about the statuettes.)

If the characters balk at impoverishing Jaufré, she suggests that they just steal his magic things, which he isn't using anyway. Then they could pay her for helping them get the magic items, whatever they think they are worth.

If asked why she needs their help, she says she would steal the items herself, but she's not strong enough. And she needs someone she can trust to help her. Anyone in the village who helped her might let the truth slip out some time in the future, so she needs the help of outsiders.

Through snooping around, she has learned that the chest is hidden in Jaufré's cellar, but she won't reveal this until the characters actually promise to help.

Francisca is saved if the characters persuade her to give up her schemes on Jaufré's treasure, possibly telling her that he deserves it because he fought for it and lost his leg for it.

The characters are corrupted if they try to get the treasure. Actually stealing the treasure takes some work and planning, but it should be feasible, especially while all the villagers are at Mass in the afternoon. Jaufré won't even miss the treasure until, some days from now, he tries to take more silver from the chest (assuming he isn't transformed into a fiend in the meantime).

and digest, while the characters can roam at will.

Good Friday

Solemnity marks this day, as Father Durand consecrates the chapel and holds the first Mass there.

Francisca asks the characters to help her rob Jaufré of his treasure, the Temptation of Avarice.

That night demons revel in the desecrated church, the Temptation of Pride.

The Preparations

Villagers clean up the area around the chapel, preparing for the Mass. During this time, Father Durand hears confessions in his room in Rostagnus' house, cleansing the villagers' souls before they partake of the Eucharist. After the communal noon meal, Father Durand and his acolytes consecrate the church in a long, Latin ritual. The villagers remain outside the chapel, gossiping, resting from last night's excesses, and looking admiringly at their new chapel.

The Mass

Three hours before sunset, Father Durand goes to the chapel for prayer. Two hours before sunset, the villagers begin to congregate in the chapel. Many of them walk to the far end of the village and then walk on their knees to the chapel, expressing their penance for sins and sharing in the suffering of their Lord. Chief among them is Bretmar, who drags his finely constructed, heavy wooden cross over his shoulder and wears rags in a blatant display of his superior "piety." His knees are bloody and dirty by the time he arrives at the chapel.

The Temptation of Pride

Soon after the sun has set, a storm rolls in. The tarps that Alphons Host has provided keep most of the people dry, but most return to their homes anyway. Father Durand, Alphons, Bretmar, and a few others remain.

Soon, noise is heard in the desecrated church. At first the people hear voices, and then strange singing, eerie flutes, crude drums, and raucous dancing. Occasionally, above the sound of the revel, the villagers hear a clamor of voices proclaiming, **“The King is dead! Long live the King! The King is dead! Long live the King!”**

The villagers look concerned, but none call attention to it at first. If the characters say nothing, Bretmar stands up. Still wearing rags, his knees bloody and dirty, he is quite a sight. He proclaims that it is an insult against all that true believers hold dear for anyone, even Satan himself, to find joy on this night. He challenges all present to go with him and oust the revelers from the church. (In case this isn't obvious to you, such an attempt would be a *bad* idea.)

The other villagers are afraid to go. Father Durand says, **“Let the devils play. Their joys will come to an end soon enough.”**

Bretmar then turns to the characters and challenges them, mocking them that they should be afraid when he is not. Try to bruise the characters' pride, so they will want to go, just to show Bretmar that they are brave, too. (And try to bruise the *players'* pride as well. Get them emotionally involved in the decision.)

Bretmar is saved if the characters tell him not to concern himself with the devils and to trust that God, soon enough, will right all wrongs and put the devils in their rightful place. In other words, he should be humble in the face of greater powers (God's and Satan's).

The characters are corrupted if they accompany Bretmar to prove their valor, power, bravery, etc. If they accompany Bretmar solely for neutral reasons, such as on orders from higher-ranking characters, then they are not corrupted.

If the characters enter the church, they see at least a hundred grotesque demons of all descriptions throwing an extravagant party. Seated on a throne of bones on the altar is Escarus himself, presiding over the revelry. As befitting Hell's apparent victory, he wears the visage of Pride (see Escarus' description). Describe the party in whatever bizarre and repulsive detail that you think is appropriate for your players. Remember that these are all devils of Escarus, and so the Seven Deadly Sins are all being pursued with delight and abandon. When the mortals enter, the devils stop partying and turn to see the newcomers. Escarus accepts them warmly and invites them to join in the victory celebration.

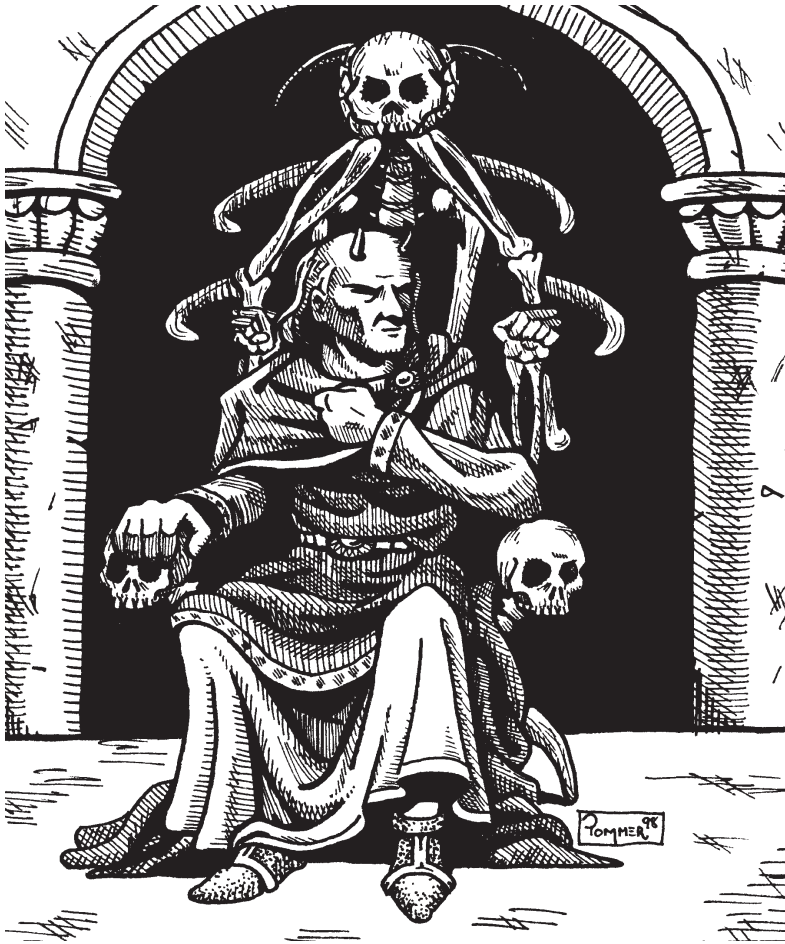
Every year, on the anniversary of the Crucifixion, cosmic history repeats itself and the devils believe they have defeated God. And every year, at Easter, their revels end with bitter disappointment. Though Escarus has seen this happen more than a thousand times, he is still bound by the same delusions he had in the short time between the actual Crucifixion and the Resurrection. For now, these devils are certain that they are really victorious, and that now they will rule all Creation, with Satan as the new King of Heaven and Earth.

Escarus commends the characters for coming over to the winning side, though maybe a bit late. He assures them that there will be a place for them in the new order if they spare no time and ally themselves with the victors. He treats them with what he considers to be mercy. Finally, he tells Bretmar, **“Aren't you glad now, Bretmar, that you chose the winning side. Come to me. A place has been reserved for you and your six friends.”**

Bretmar does not understand and protests loudly, to which Escarus replies, **“Very well, we can wait. Your place is reserved.”**

If the characters question Escarus, he explains the motive for the party, but he refuses to explain his intentions for Bretmar, or who

(continued on next page)



At least one villager asks the characters if they will attend the Mass. Doing so would win them some favorable regard from Father Durand and the villagers, but the Mass has been known to have strange and disconcerting effects on magi. In any event, it would be seen as a terrible offense for an unrepentant wizard to take the Blood and Body of Christ, so the characters may want to limit themselves simply to attending but not partaking of the Eucharist. Father Durand only allows a character to partake in the Eucharist if he first confesses his sins and shows true penance.

The Mass is long and solemn, with the villagers standing throughout. Most of it is in Latin, though at one point Daurostre sings a song in the vulgar speech, accompanied by Joans singing in Latin. (This practice of singing in two languages at once is common, and sometimes the song in the native language is as profane as the Latin hymn is holy.)

After the Mass, reserved festivities fill the night, mostly a chance for the people to rest, talk, and feel good about the chapel they have built.

(*TEMPTATION OF PRIDE, continued from previous page*)

Bretmar's "six friends" are. "All will be revealed soon enough. Now that victory is ours, much that was hidden shall be seen."

If the characters try to tell Escarus that his "victory" is doomed to sudden reversal, he believes none of it. He cannot believe it; such belief is not in his nature.

If the characters attack, the devils swarm on them, capture them, and bind them. Damage done to any devils quickly heals, as the Infernal Aura of this place is incredibly high (7, to be exact). The devils then return to their festivities until morning, teasing, tormenting, and enjoying the captives. The devils only harm the characters who really make a nuisance of themselves. Be as cruel or restrained as you wish. If your

characters might be powerful enough to stand against this group, you can play out the battle, but characters strong enough to defeat this group are too strong to be playing in this story. Characters that powerful should be out massacring dragons, raiding Arcadia, and looting Doissetep's libraries instead.

If the characters flee, Escarus laughs and calls after them, "Satan is now Lord of the World. You may run, but there is no place to hide."

Bretmar, if questioned, claims innocence. He truly regards himself as quite pious, no doubt one of God's favored, and he reminds the characters of his extreme piety, as proved by his dragging the large cross to Mass on his knees. Even magical, mental questioning finds out nothing because Bretmar's soul has been corrupted by Hell, and truth is mixing indistinguishably with lies in his mind.

Escarus, Demon of the Seven Deadly Sins

Characteristics: Int +3, Per +4, Pre depends on current “visage” (see below; it ranges from -6 to +6), Com +3, Str +8, Sta +12, Dex +1, Qik +2

Infernal Might: 90

Size: 0

Personality Traits: Lustful +9, Wrathful +9, Greedy +9, Lazy +9, Envious +9, Proud +9, Gluttonous +9

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Strike	+7	+6	+7	+13†	n/a
Immobilize	+7	††	††	††	n/a

†His strike does normal damage, not brawling damage.

††An opponent is immobilized if Escarus’s immobilize roll of stress die + 13 is higher than the defender’s Strength + Brawl Defense Roll + 5.

Soak: +18†††

†††Escarus is immune to normal damage. Holy weapons and magic with a Penetration roll of 91+ can damage him.

Body Levels: OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Brawl 3 (mobbing individuals), Stealth 3 (moving quietly)

Vis: His horns are each worth 45 pawns of Vim vis.

Spirit Form Power:

Touch of Churning Passion, MuMe 60, 15 points — Fills the target with an uncontrollable passion relating to any one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The target can resist with an appropriate personality roll of 21+. Use a Gentle roll, for example, to resist uncontrollable wrath.

Physical Form:

Escarus’ forms shifts gradually among seven types, each representing one of the Seven Deadly Sins. His general form is that of a thin, balding man with small horns growing from his forehead. He wears elaborate robes, a cape, a belt with a glittering buckle, and sequined shoes.

Visage *Features*

Envy Narrow eyes, twisted smirk

Wrath Fangs & claws, horns grow huge and sharp

Sloth Flabby, drowsy

Gluttony Grotesquely fat

Lust Slick, extremely handsome, with a disturbing leer

Greed Hunched, wide eyes

Pride Straight, haughty, good-looking

Physical Form Power:

Consuming Inferno of Sin, PeCo 30, 5 points: Turns the burning desire of sin into a physical heat that burns the target from within, centered on the heart. With each use of this power, he focuses on a specific sin, such as lust or greed. (It does not work on sloth or gluttony because these desires do not “burn” within the human soul.) The character must make a personality roll to determine how much damage the power does. To keep from being burned by lust, one must make a Chaste roll, while a Humble roll will protect against burning pride, and so forth. If the victim has a score in the sin being targeted, this number is subtracted from the resistance roll. A Violent +2, for example, means a -2 penalty on the resistance roll. Armor does not count on the soak roll for this damage.

Personality Roll

botch

2 or less

3 - 5

6 - 8

9 - 11

12+

Damage

utterly consumed in flame

+25

+20

+15

+5

none

Description:

Escarus uses the Seven Deadly Sins to corrupt people and steal their souls. Mostly he works through his underlings, as he spends almost all his time satisfying his own hideous desires or expanding his power within the shifting hierarchy of Hell. He disdains direct conflict with mortals, feeling himself above such concerns.

As befitting a demon of his stature, Escarus has many more powers than those listed here.



Chapter V

Easter Sunday

Escarus' demons attack on Saturday night, and attempt to carry off those characters who gave in to temptation during the week. The dawn of Easter Sunday reveals the corrupted villagers for what they now are — diabolical fiends.

plenty of free time to finish business with the witches.

Dusk

The Day

With dawn Saturday, the revel in the desecrated church ceases. Within an hour, villagers leave their homes and gather in public places. They are weary and worried after a night of especially disturbing dreams. If the characters ventured into the church, the villagers ask what happened there and look to Father Durand for encouragement.

At noon, the villagers bring out their foods for another communal meal. Talk is subdued, but at least the villagers feel good about having completed the chapel.

In the afternoon, Father Durand holds a service in the chapel, but with no Eucharist. In commemoration of Christ's descent into Hell, Eucharist is not celebrated on this day of the year.

Bring the mystery of the cursed cloths to an end during the day if you can manage it, so the night's climax will truly be climactic, with little remaining for the denouement. The characters have

Infernal Aura is 2 in the village on Saturday (see page 100).

As sunset approaches, the villagers gather for another meal in the field behind Alphons' house. Once the sun has set, however, tragedy strikes.

A deep rumbling begins underfoot, first felt, and then heard. As the villagers look about in fear, a large pit opens up in the ground, flames shoot into the air, and demons (see below) begin to climb out.

Each round, a new type of demon climbs out of the pit, in the order in which they are described below. (Skip any demon who represents a sin to which no characters have succumbed.) These are the Demons of the Seven Deadly Sins, and they are after those whom the corrupted ones have successfully tempted. For each character that fell to temptation, one demon of that type emerges and pursues those characters. For example, if three characters joined in Francisca's attempt to rob Jaufré, then three Demons of Greed emerge to pursue these characters, but if no one was tempted to envy by Matieus, no Demons of Envy appear.

Note that this battle could be extremely difficult or very easy depending on how well the characters resisted temptation. Ideally, the battle should be somewhat balanced, but if the characters were easy to tempt, they'll pay for it, and if they were virtuous, they'll have an easy time of it. Feel free to fudge the results of the combat to keep this climax interesting, but don't fudge so much that the characters' virtues or failings become irrelevant.

If you need to make the demons more dangerous, simply have all of them emerge at once, or in two groups per round.

If the characters have withstood temptation exceptionally well, then assume that the corrupted ones have successfully tempted villagers. For example, if you really like the Demons of Lust, but no characters fell for Alba's wiles, then assume that some other villager has fallen, or maybe even one of Father Durand's acolytes. That way you can use these demons in the combat, though they won't pursue characters.

When the demons climb out into the open air, the villagers scatter, many of them running into the chapel, others into their homes. Some are so terrified that they fall in helpless fear. Children run screaming at random and slow down the escape of adults who carry them or pull them along.

The demons of each type pursue those who were tempted by that sin. For example, the Demons of Wrath attack anyone who fought wrathfully with Isarn. In addition, *the attacks of anyone who has succumbed to temptation have no effect on demons of that type.* It doesn't matter whether the attacks are magical or physical. When a character attacks a demon that is immune to him, the demon may say, "**Foolish mortal, with [insert sin] in your heart, you cannot harm a demon of [insert sin].**" The characters will have to cooperate to protect each other from the devils. The devils attempt to drag or lure

their victims into the pit. They prefer to capture mortals alive, and have little need to kill the victims, but they do so if it expedites the process.

Having characters helpless to fight certain demons should just force the characters to cooperate, but it might spell their doom. It is unlikely that any single temptation has corrupted everyone. It is unlikely that *everyone*, for example, beat up on Isarn. But if all or almost all the characters have fallen to a single temptation, they will be helpless against one type of demon. You have two choices: wipe out the sinful characters, or allow characters to harm the demons no matter what sins they've committed. If you go easy on the characters this way, make up for it by having the demons climb more quickly out of the pit.



Demons of Envy

Infernal Might: 15

Size: 0

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Spear	+7	+5	+6	+8	n/a

Soak: +7*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Taunt, MuMe 15, 1 point — The demon taunts a corrupted victim by saying something that would make the character envious, such as “**I’m stronger than you are, you shriveled weakling,**” or “**I’m more beautiful than you are, you hideous hag.**” The taunted character must make a Perception roll of 7+ to recognize the absurdity of the comment; otherwise he angrily chases the Demon of Envy, who flees back into the pit. Each round the victim can attempt the Perception roll again, but each failure means one more round of travel toward the pit. Unless restrained, a character could simply walk straight into the pit. (Subtract the character’s Envious score, if any, from the Perception roll.)

Physical Form:

Demons of Envy look like hunched, sneering goblins with long, needle-sharp spears. Their short legs carry them at surprising speed.

Demons of Wrath

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +7, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Infernal Might: 13

Size: +1

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Claw	+9	+9	+5	+11†	n/a

†Once clawed, a corrupted victim is held and dragged to the pit. Other characters are clawed but not grabbed.

Once a corrupted victim is clawed, he must roll Str + Size + Brawl vs. your roll of +8 (demon's Str + Size) each round. Every failed roll leads the character closer to the pit and eventually over the edge.

Soak: +13*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Blow of Hatred, PeCo 15, 3 points — Allows the demon to throw an incredible punch at anyone it hates, such as someone who has wounded it or is seriously blocking its progress. Add +1 to the normal Attack roll and +5 to the Damage roll.

Physical Form:

These demons are large, muscular gargoyles covered with spikes, spines, horns, fangs, claws, and bony ridges.

Each demon has a way of bringing the tempted characters into the pit. In each case, the victim has a chance to resist, and friends can intervene. First, determine how close the character is to the pit, and translate that into the number of failed rolls that will bring the character to the edge of the pit. It only takes one roll if the character is near the pit, but anyone who has retreated is two to four "rolls" away. It then takes an extra failed roll to get the character into the pit itself. (These rolls are described along with the particular demons in their insert boxes.)

For example, if a character fell to the temptation of wrath, then a Demon of Wrath comes after him. He retreats a bit when the pit opens, but then stays to see what is happening. Once the Demon of Wrath has grabbed a hold of him, it takes two failed rolls to get him to the edge of the pit and a third for him to be dragged in altogether.

Most demons lure their victims to the pit with magic, not force. Those corrupted characters who have fallen under these demons' sway and are heading toward the pit need to be physically restrained by their friends.

Demons of Sloth

Infernal Might: 9

Size: 0

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl†	-3	n/a	+1	n/a	n/a

†Defense only

Soak: +9*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Powers:

Call of Rest, ReMe 15, 1 point — The demon says to a corrupted character, "**Come to your final rest, [Name]. Lay down your weary soul once and for all.**" The corrupted target must make a Strength roll of 8+ each round or head

toward the pit. (Subtract the character's Lazy score, if any, from the Strength roll.)

Gaze of Fatigue, PeCo 15, 1 point — The target of the gaze must make a Stamina roll of 12+ or lose a Fatigue level. If the roll is 3 or less, the target loses two Fatigue levels. A corrupted character who falls unconscious continues to walk in a trance to the pit, with no chance to resist.

Aura of Laziness, PeCo 15, no cost — All those who direct any kind of attack at a Demon of Sloth must make a fatigue roll immediately.

Physical Form:

Demons of Sloth are soft and stoop-shouldered, with dog-like heads. Their gaze, however, can cause exhaustion. They stumble slowly in pursuit of their targets, as if in a daze.



Demons of Gluttony

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +4, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Infernal Might: 12

Size: +2

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Knife†	+3	+4††	+0	+8	n/a

†Two knives; even if one is being used to snare a character corrupted by Gluttony, the other is still free for use in attacking or snaring a second corrupted character.

††On a successful hit to a corrupted character, whether or not the knife does damage, it has snared the character. Each round thereafter, the character must make a Str + Size + Brawl roll vs. your die + 6 (demon's Str + Size). Each failure brings the character closer to the pit.

Soak: +15*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0/0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incap.

Infernal Power:

Curse of the Vine, MuMe 15, no cost — Every round that a character attacks a Demon of Gluttony, he must make a Stamina + Carouse roll to resist the effects of sudden drunkenness. These effects last only the current round.

Stm + Carouse Roll

Effect

botch	pass out, come to next round
to 2	-5 on rolls, 3 extra botch dice
3-5	-3 on rolls, 2 extra botch dice
6-8	-1 on rolls, 1 extra botch die
9+	no effect

Physical Form:

Demons of Gluttony are ponderous, rotund creatures, much like grossly obese people. They fight poorly, armed only with knives (which they also use for feasting); but they are very strong and tough.

Demons of Lust

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +7, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Infernal Might: 17

Size: +2

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl†	+0	n/a	+5	n/a	n/a

†Defense only

Soak: +6*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Call of Burning Desire, ReMe 15, 1 point — The Demon of Lust calls out to its target, “**Come along with me, [Name], that we may share the embrace of flames forever.**” Thereafter the character must make a Perception roll of 9+ each

round to avoid approaching the demon and leaping into the pit. (Subtract Lustful score, if any, from the Perception roll.)

Charm of Comeliness, ReMe 15, no cost — Any mortal that tries to attack a Demon of Lust of the opposite gender must make a Stamina roll of 7+ or hold back in awe of the demon’s beauty. Attackers must make this roll every round they wish to attack.

Physical Form:

Demons of Lust are called incubi (males) and succubi (female). In each case, they appear as beautiful, young people with shapely, naked bodies. They are inept in combat, but do have magical powers they can use to protect themselves. These Demons have come for those corrupted by Alba, so, unless Alba managed to corrupt a woman, they are all succubi (female).

Demons of Pride

Infernal Might: 22

Size: 0

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Sword	+6	+7	+5	+10	n/a

Soak: +12*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Command, ReMe 15, 2 points — The demon issues a command to the tempted victim, such as “**Get in that pit, you wretch!**” Each command moves the character toward the pit and then over the edge. The victim can resist a command with an Intelligence roll of 9+. The Demon of Pride must issue the command every round to keep the corrupted character moving. Even while fighting other characters, the Demon of Pride can issue these commands.

Physical Form:

Demons of Pride appear as well-dressed, armored nobles. They fight with swords.

The demons attack and even kill other mortals that oppose them, but they do not throw them into the pit.

Once a character enters the pit, his soul is eternally lost and damned to Hell. Sorry.

After the Fight

The fiery pit closes itself up once the demons have all been defeated or the corrupted characters have been pulled to their dooms. The villagers return timidly from their hiding places to find out what has happened. They decide to hold a vigil that night to remain alert for Hell’s attacks and to comfort the characters for any members they may have lost. The characters may sleep if they wish, and the villagers watch over them if they do. They keep reminding each other that in only hours Easter will dawn and everything will be well again.

The villagers and characters arise on Sunday, hopeful that their troubles are over. In the morning, with the peal of the new church bell, the seven corrupted

ones flee in terrible pain, cursed to roam the world causing evil.

End of the Vigil

As the eastern sky turns from black to gray, Father Durand rises from his knees and tells the villagers that he will prepare the Mass, and that all should come to the chapel at dawn. He takes his two students with him to the chapel. As the sky continues to lighten, the villagers rise, waken those who have fallen into slumber, stretch their cold joints, and walk with increasing enthusiasm to the chapel. The first rays of dawn shoot through the trees, falling on the village and promising good things to come. Some villagers expect the characters to join them at the chapel, but don't press the issue if the characters want to hold back.

Curse of the Fiends

As the villagers form a loose mob ranging from the field where they kept the vigil to the chapel, Father Durand rings the chapel bell. At its first toll, seven voices howl in unison: the voices of the seven corrupted villagers. The sound is, literally, hellish. Instantly, Matieus, Isarn, Arnold, Jaufré, Alba, Francisca, and Bretmar take their fiendish forms and flee in pain in seven different directions. If any of the corrupted villagers were saved by the actions of the characters, they do not suffer this curse; their contracts with Escarus are broken.

If the characters give chase, determine randomly which of the seven was closest to them. If the characters are spread out, determine this for each smaller group or individual. Generally, unless the characters use special effort, they should not be able to catch any of the



Demons of Greed

Infernal Might: 14

Size: +2

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Braw; †	+0	n/a	+3	n/a	n/a

†Defense only

Soak: +8*

*Completely immune to fire.

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Call of Relentless Greed, ReMe 15, 2 points — When one of these devils confronts a character that has been tempted by greed, it shows the victim a gem and returns to the pit. Each round the victim must make a Perception roll of 9+ or move toward and eventually into the pit. (Subtract Greed score, if any, from the roll.)

Gem of Avarice, ReMe 15, 1 point per character affected — The devil throws a gem from its sack, and everyone in the immediate area must make a Stamina roll of 5+ to resist running to grab it. Once a character has the gem, he or she must make a Stamina roll of 6+ to keep from compulsively running off with it to hide it. If more than one character wants the same gem, they may fight over it. Once a character stashes a gem or becomes unable to get one, he returns to normal action. Note that even if several Demons of Greed toss down gems, each character need only roll once to resist going for them.

Physical Form:

Demons of Greed are gnomish creatures that carry bags of coins and jewels. They can use these precious treasures to lure or distract mortals.



fiends. The characters are probably wounded, doubtless fatigued, and certainly taken by surprise. The fiends, on the other hand, run with infernal speed and endurance, a tireless pace they maintain until they leave the Dominion and can rest. (Furthermore, this is the denouement of the story, and catching the fiends does not move the plot along.)

If any of the corrupted ones have been killed, they rise from the dead to fulfill their contracts with Escarus.

Fiends of the Seven Deadly Sins

Those corrupted villagers who were not saved by the characters' actions become fiends that roam the world for a hundred years and a day. Each person is transformed into an infernal being. While in the Dominion, they appear normal, but outside the Dominion, each takes on a special visage, complete with the powers granted them by Escarus as part of the deal. Below are descriptions of each fiend, along with the name that may be ascribed to them as stories about them circulate. (If the characters invent names of their own, these names might come into use instead.)

If you wish, ignore the further fates of these fiends. Assume they wander through the land leading terrible lives and spreading their anguish to others. But using them again would provide a satisfying sense of connection among the stories in your saga. With each description is a story idea of how the fiend could be used in a later story.

They prefer to roam in lands where the Dominion is weak. An area with Dominion during the day and none at night is ideal because they can pass as normal while the sun shines and work their evil by moonlight. They may become beggars, imposter monks, tinkers, or other roles that allow them to travel without suspicion.

A fiend regains all spent might points at midnight of each night.

Alter or increase the powers of these fiends in any way you wish to improve the stories in which you use them.

Finally, remember that each of the corrupted villagers was promised a hundred years and a day of power before finally giving up their souls. If any of these fiends are killed, they spend several years in Hell, but then return again, perhaps to a different area. They can be thwarted or imprisoned, but never destroyed.

Alba, "the Seductress" (Lust)

Outside the Dominion, Alba becomes enticingly beautiful. The greater the Infernal Aura, the more beautiful she becomes. Nothing in her appearance betrays an infernal nature, and she can live easily in human society (until caught at her acts).

She might join a diabolist coven and be the means by which they sacrifice their victims, but if so she will soon use her wiles on coven members and be cast out.

Story Idea

A nearby noble has a new mistress and spy: Alba. She performs her assassinations and reconnaissance with great skill, and is currently intriguing against a

The Seductress

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +6†, Com +2, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

†Add the Infernal aura of the area (if any) to her Presence, and subtract the Divine aura from it.

Infernal Might: 20

Size: 0

Virtues & Flaws: Succubus' Blessing (+3 Pre and Com rolls with men)

Personality Trait: Lustful +8

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist/kick)	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2

Soak: +6

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Charm 4 (warriors), Guile 2 (wives), Sing 3 (love songs)

Infernal Power:

Embrace of Weakness, PeCo 30, 6 points — When anyone with whom she is having sex reaches climax, he suffers terrible weakness. He must make a Stamina roll on the chart below. Subtract the Infernal aura of the area from the roll. In addition, Alba may increase her efforts during love-making, expend more might points,

and produce a more powerful Embrace. Subtract 1 from the victim's roll for every extra point she expends in using the Embrace.

Roll	Effect
up to 0	Dead from exhaustion
1 to 2	-1 to Strength and Stamina permanently, 1Decrepitude point, unconscious
3 to 5	unconscious, roll for aging as if one year had passed
6 to 8	-3 fatigue levels
9 to 11	-1 fatigue level
12+	no effect

Gaze of Desire, CrMe 20, 3 points — Fills the heart of a man with desire and admiration for her. She must look into his eyes to use this power. The charmed man will not attack her and will probably even defend her from others. Depend on roleplaying and circumstances to determine the extent to which the man defends her. For instance, he might kill strangers that are attacking her, but only protest if his friends press an attack. A Stamina roll of 12+ allows one to resist (subtract Infernal aura from the roll). The effects last until the character is out of Alba's presence.

noble, covenant, or other group that is friendly to your covenant. The characters must both thwart her and reveal the enemy noble's cooperation with Satan.

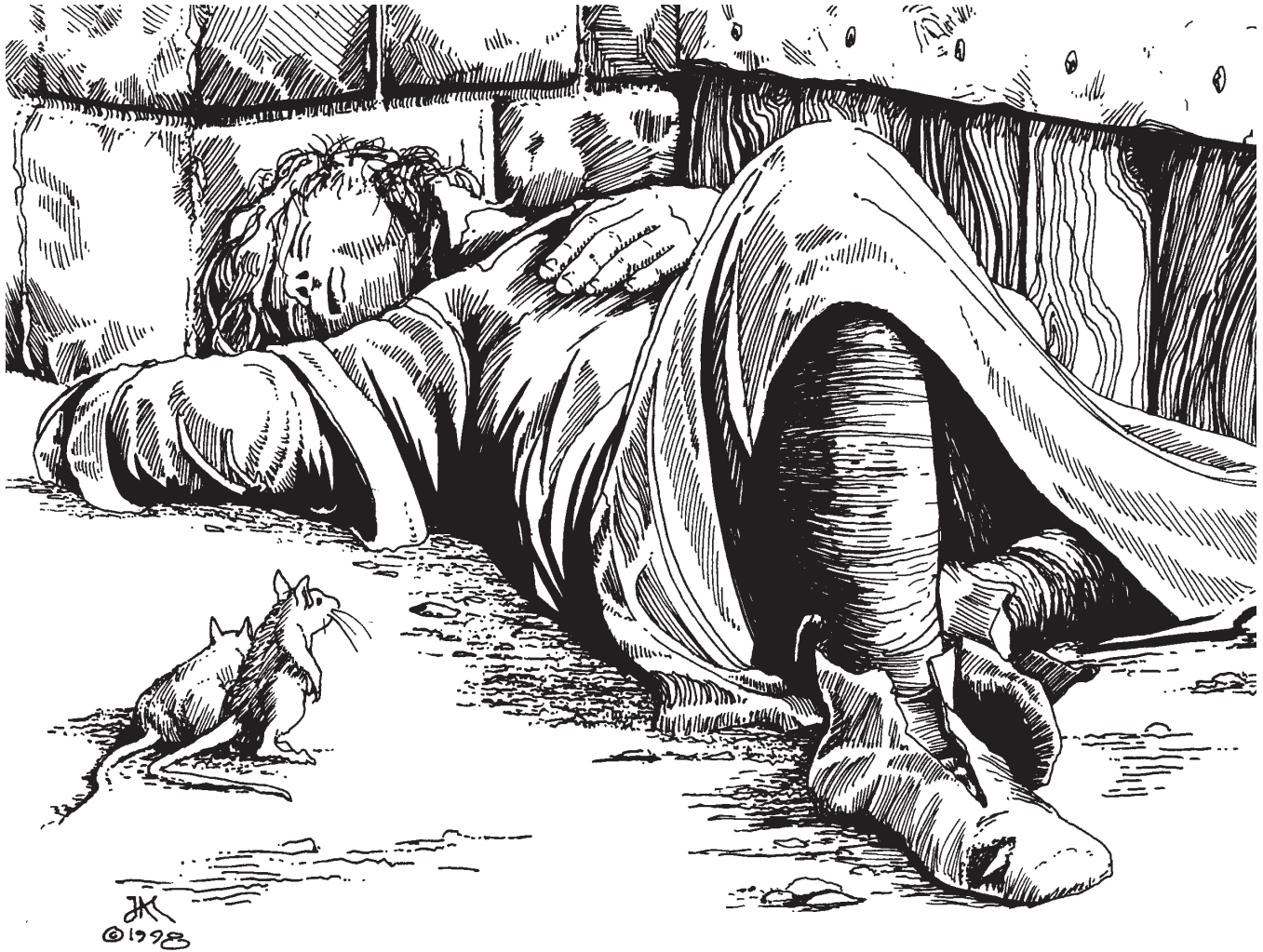
Arnold, "the Weary One" (Sloth)

Arnold's fiendish form is normal, but almost always sleeping. While awake, he is sloppily dressed, stooped, and bleary-eyed. Under the Dominion, he works (if he must) or begs, and when or where the Dominion fades, he falls asleep. He can wake up, and takes some action in order to find food and drink, but outside of the

Dominion he spends at least twenty hours a day soundly asleep. (In a town where the Dominion covers only the day, he finds a safe place to sleep at dusk so as not to be found during the night.) He has no fiendish motive; he simply wants to rest.

Story Idea

Arnold has found refuge in a quiet little town (now a *very* quiet little town). The characters go there to follow up some unrelated mystery or task, only to find everyone too lazy, tired, and bored to help them in their investigations. To get the help they need, they must find the cause of this weariness, but laziness begins creeping over them as well.



The Weary One

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre -2, Com 0, Str 0, Sta -5, Dex 0, Qik 0

Infernal Might: 14

Size: 0

Personality Trait: Lazy +8

Weapon/Attacks	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist/kick)	+0	+0	-2	+0	-8

Soak: +4

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Carouse 2 (belching loudly), Craft—
Begging 1 (patiently waiting)

Infernal Power:

Pall of Weariness, PeCo 30, 6 points — Causes everyone in a village, neighborhood, castle,

covenant, or other community to become weary and lazy. Guards snooze at their posts, servants fail to come when called, books become too difficult to read, and so forth. Each hour, everyone in the area must make a Stamina roll of 9+ to avoid or shake off the weariness.

Futility of Exertion, PeCo 10, no cost (automatic) — Anyone who acts against Arnold must make a fatigue roll for every action taken (every attack, every spell cast, every tirade, etc.). A roll of 5 or less means the character loses a Fatigue level.

Sleep's Inexorable Call, PeCo 30, 6 points — Causes all in his presence to fall asleep unless they can make Stamina rolls of 9+.

The Victor

Infernal Might: 30

His characteristics and abilities depend on the use of his infernal powers.

Personality Trait: Proud +8

Infernal Power:

Dark Blessing of Superiority, MuMe or MuCo 70, 5 points — Bretmar can say that he is the best at some trait, skill, contest, etc. (“I am the mightiest warrior in the world,” or “Women adore me over every other man,” or “I am the best liar under the sun.” etc.) Effectively, this brag become true until he chooses some other realm of utter superiority. To play this out, assume he can beat anyone in his chosen field of superiority.

One limit to this power is that he can only be the best at one thing at a

time. When he is a mighty warrior, he is not wise enough to foresee a trap. When he is a brilliant diplomat, his physical powers are no greater than a mortal’s.

To fight him, the characters will have to use cunning, because he can even declare, “I am the most powerful wizard in the world.” They might gain divine aid, trick him into entering the Dominion, or (best yet) use his power against him. They could, for example, entice him to say “I am the most compassionate man in the world.” If he ever says, “I am the wisest man in the world,” he realizes that his hundred and one years of power are petty compensation for the suffering he shall undergo for all eternity once Escarus claims his soul, and he falls into utter, helpless despair.



Bretmar, "the Victor" (Pride)

Bretmar’s form is normal, but his abilities are truly amazing. He finds whatever kind of life he chooses to make for himself, but irate locals usually wind up running him out of town. Note that his infernal power only works outside the Dominion.

Story Idea

Bretmar sets himself up as the leader of a band of thieves. With his ever-changing skills, he turns the raggedy band into a major power in the area. By the time they threaten the covenant itself, they have acquired fine weaponry, powerful allies, and the unofficial sanction of Sieur Támita. After fighting their way through the well-armed bandits, the

characters have to face Bretmar himself, whom power alone cannot vanquish.

Francisca, "the Shadow Thief" (Greed)

Her fiendish form is dark and shadowy, even in strong light. Her eyes shine out of her shaded face, to see what is not hers. Her hands are large, with long, grasping fingers, to filch what is not hers. She sneaks around at night, stealing valuables and caching them in secret places. Once hidden, the stolen objects rust, decay, mold, or otherwise degrade within a few days to weeks, depending on the item. (Remember, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume...”)

The Shadow Thief

Characteristics: Int -2, Per +2, Pre 0, Com 0, Str 0, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik 0

Infernal Might: 24

Size: -1

Personality Trait: Greedy +8

Weapon/Attacks

	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist/kick)	+0	+0	+7	+0	+2

Soak: +4

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Alertness 5 (at night), Brawl 5 (escaping combat), Search 7 (gems), Stealth 9† (hide in shadows)

†Add the area's Infernal Aura because she becomes more shadowy when in an evil place.

Infernal Power:

Hunting the Precious Treasure, InTe 25, 3 points — This power gives Francisca an intuitive sense of the location of the most valuable item nearby. She uses it to steal the best hidden treasures.

the characters. When she finds them, she steals valuables from them, perhaps that wand that a magus has spent the last three years enchanting. Then it's a race to find Francisca and the stolen items before they, too, decay.

Characters can probably trap her if they use something very valuable as bait.

Isarn, "the Blood Fiend" (Wrath)

Isarn turns into a red-eyed fiend with wild, raging hair, protruding fangs, and large, black claws. In the Dominion he lives as an ill-tempered wanderer, but outside of the Dominion, he is a murderous fiend. He retains his hunting weapons, though now he freely uses them against human prey.

Story Idea

The characters discover a cache of Francisca's, which consists of a few recently stolen items in a pile of (once valuable) garbage. If they disturb anything, Francisca finds out when she returns with the latest finds and follows

Story Idea

Isarn, somehow believing that the characters have caused his fate, finds their covenant and begins ambushing grogs and covenfolk as they stray outside the safety of the covenant's walls.

The Blood Fiend

Characteristics: Int -1, Per +1, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +6, Sta +7, Dex +4, Qik +3

Infernal Might: 27

Size: 0

Personality Trait: Wrathful +7, Respectful -3

Weapon/Attacks

	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (dagger/claw)	+11	+11	+11	+9†	n/a
Brawl (bite)	+12	+11	+9	+6†	n/a
Spear	+11	+13	+7	+12†	n/a
Short Bow	+7	+5	n/a	+10†	n/a

†See *Blow of Vengeance*, below

Soak: +15

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Abilities: Alertness 3 (ambushes), Bows 4

(attacking children), Brawl 6 (biting ears),

Longshaft Weapon 3 (charging), Survival 1

(wastelands), Tracking 3 (hunters)

Equipment: short bow and arrows, long spear, fur hauberk, dagger

Encumbrance: 0

Infernal Power:

Blow of Vengeance, PeCo 15, 2 points — When Isarn is wounded, he can let forth a chilling howl and use this power, which allows him +1 Attack and +5 Damage against the one who hit him, but only on the following round.

Perhaps he is smart enough to avoid large groups, but perhaps his wrath overcomes him, and he attacks unwisely.

Or he follows the characters on one of their journeys, murdering people wherever they go and drawing suspicion on them. Once they find out who they're dealing with, he begins attacking them by surprise, preferably one at a time, as they look for him or try to head home.

Jaufré, "the Hopping Gobbler" (Gluttony)

In his fiendish form, Jaufré's belly and mouth grow to incredible proportions, and he gains the strength to hop on his one good leg as fast as a two-legged person can run. He gorges himself on whatever food is available. He ruins feasts, festivals, and parties, swallowing all the food present and taking bites out of those who get in his way. He can easily consume a hundred pounds of food and a dozen gallons of drink in a day.

Story Idea

A village that provides the covenant with food is in trouble because their seed grains have been devoured by Jaufré. No one dares to bring food to the area until the Hopping Gobbler is gone.

Matieus, "the Despoiler" (Envy)

Matieus's fiendish form has large, red eyes, all the better to see the good fortune of others and to envy it. In his normal form, he travels the land eyeing what he would like to have, and when outside the Dominion, he destroys whatever he envies.

The Hopping Gobbler

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +4, Sta +4, Dex -1, Qik -2

Infernal Might: 16

Size: +1

Personality Trait: Gluttonous +7, Selfish +4

Weapon/Attacks

	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Bite	+1	+2	+0	+9†	n/a

†On any bite that does at least two Body levels of damage, assume that Jaufré has actually bitten off and gobbled down some part of the victim's body. If the target is small, such as a familiar cat, the target may be swallowed whole.

Soak: +4

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

The Despoiler

Infernal Might: 18

Size: 0

Personality Trait: Envious +7

Weapon/Attacks

	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (fist)	+1	+0	+0	+0	n/a

Soak: +4

Body Levels: OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Infernal Power:

Despoil, PeTe (or other form) 30, 4 points — This power destroys something that Matieus envies, such as a jewel, a beautiful voice, a strong arm, or the love of a good woman (but not True Love). He must see the victim and say "I envy your [insert object/trait]" so that the victim can hear. The object or trait is then destroyed. The effect is "instant" (as per the spell duration); the damage can be healed through magic, but not simply dispelled. Handle this trait differently depending on what is attacked. For example, a +3 Presence would become -3; a strong horse would weaken and sicken; a talent for poetry would become a complete inability to compose or memorize verse. The target gets a characteristic or skill roll to resist, but the roll must be 18+ to prevent the curse. For example, a character could attempt a Strength roll to prevent his Str from being despoiled, or a Communication + Sing roll to protect a beautiful singing voice.



For Nasty Storyguides Only...

Individually, the fiends are relatively weak, but imagine the fun you could have if Escarus organized them into an elite, infernal team to work his schemes. Though often chaotic, hard to control, and resistant to working together, the team would have the range of powers to excel on both the tactical and diplomatic levels.

Story Idea

Escarus puts Matieus under the control of a local diabolist coven and uses

him to plot against the covenant. The covenant's enemies begin losing their precious possessions and traits, perhaps even the power of magic. The diabolists notify the magi of the covenant with anonymous messages that say, for example, "A favor done for you, in regards to your enemy, Duke D'Marol, — an ally." Soon, of course, the diabolists begin asking for anonymous favors in return, and the Quaesitores begin investigating why the covenant's enemies in the Order are suffering strange afflictions.

Aftermath for Vézay

Most likely, some of the villagers have turned into fiends, and in a village of forty-five, even a few missing will be missed by all. Matieus will be sorely missed because without him there is no one skilled enough to take care of men's injuries and ailments, not to mention those of animals. Jaufré and Alba will be missed mostly because of the color they added to the village; the villagers used to look at Jaufré as a local hero.

Father Durand does what he can to encourage people from nearby villages to move to Vézay. Children of large families would be especially interested, because they are likely to inherit little land or wealth. Unlike the North, where eldest sons inherit everything, the custom of Languedoc is for surviving sons to divide their father's property equally.

For his part, *Sieur Támita* is impressed enough by these events to send his engineers to raze the desecrated church, but it's up to you to decide just how much good this act accomplishes.



Reference



Villager Checklist

This list summarizes the names and identities of the villagers who play parts in Part 2, “Festival of the Damned.” Use it to keep track of the people as play progresses. First is given the name, then a physical description, and finally the role played in the story. (F = female, M = male, followed by the character’s age.)

- Alba** — F 27, beautiful, gazes admiringly at good-looking men. Corrupted by Lust, wife of Jaufré, mother of Constans, mistress of Garsinda.
- Alesta** — F 17, shy, looks at the ground. Daughter of Elena, raped by Berenger, Carruga, & Peire.
- Alphons Host** — M 38, thin and nervous. Hosts the characters.
- Anna** — F 36, pock-marked face. Mother of Carruga and Mathilde.
- Arnold** — M 31, sloppy, stooped. Corrupted by Sloth.
- Berartz** — M 9, curious. Son of Sieur Támita.
- Berenger** — M 24, pale. Betrothed to Dominica, son of Bretmar, raped Alesta.

- Bretmar** — M 33, haughty. Corrupted by Pride, father of Berenger.
- Carruga** — M 20, thin, pale, weak. Raped Alesta, son of Anna, sister of Mathilde.
- Constans** — M 10, thin, energetic, well-spoken. Son of Jaufré and Alba, master of Garsinda.
- Daurostre the Troubadour** — M 25, thin, stylishly dressed. Knows the area well.
- Dominica** — F 15, energetic. Invites the Covenant, betrothed to Berenger, niece of Willa, grand-niece of Rostagnus.
- Father Durand** — M 38, firm, intelligent. New priest of Vézay, superior of Joans and Mauri.
- Elena** — F 37, fat, quiet. Mother of Alesta, requested Laura’s help in vengeance against the Berenger, Carruga, and Peire.
- Francisca** — F 44, watchful. Corrupted by Greed. Mother of Peire (deceased).
- Garsinda** — F 31, homely, feeble-minded, fears strangers. Servant of Jaufré & family.
- Hyllia Midwife** — F 19, willowy, taciturn. Daughter of Laura, witch.
- Isarn** — M 19, good-looking, powerful. Corrupted by Wrath, has two dogs: Jarl and Relan.



Jaufré the Almogáver — M 33, grossly fat, missing lower half of right leg. Corrupted by Gluttony, husband of Alba, father of Constans, master of Garsinda.

Joans — M 13, cracking voice. Acolyte serving Father Durand, colleague of Mauri.

Juissinia Midwife — F 14, plain, quiet. Daughter of Laura, witch.

Knights — M 19, protective. Bodyguard for Sieur Támita and Berartz.

Laura Midwife — F 40, healthy, strong-willed. Witch, mother of Hyllia & Juissinia.

Martina — F 9, disheveled, curious, bold, out-spoken. Daughter of Elena, sister of Alesta, sister of the late Hélene (see “Ghoul”).

Mathilde — F 15, pock-marked. Daughter of Anna, sister of Carruga.

Matieus — M 43, balding, bearded, grumpy. Corrupted by Envy, healer.

Mauri — M 15, pudgy. Acolyte serving Father Durand, colleague of Joans.

Peire — M 23, dead. Son of Francisca, raped Alesta, killed by fever a month ago.

Rostagnus — M 75, decrepit, hard of hearing, talkative. Village elder, father of Willa.

Sieur Támita — M 42, proud, wealthily adorned. Sieur (Lord) of the local area, father of Berartz.

Willa — F 48, worn & tough. Daughter of, assistant to (& often interpreter for) Rostagnus.

Mystic Auras

The aura in Vézay changes during this week because of the holy nature of this week and the corruption of the Church of St. Lazare. Since Holy Week recapitulates the death and resurrection of Christ, holy and infernal power increase and decrease accordingly. As the sun sets on Good Friday, the Dominion weakens across the world, and infernal powers grow. No Mass is held on Saturday. Not until Sunday morning does the Dominion return in force.

Day	Village	Churchyard	Church of St. Lazare
Normal day	Infernal 1	Infernal 2	Infernal 4
Normal night	Infernal 1	Infernal 4	Infernal 6
Friday day†	Dominion 1	Infernal 2	Infernal 4
Friday night	Infernal 2	Infernal 5	Infernal 7
Saturday	Infernal 2	Infernal 3	Infernal 5
Saturday night	Infernal 2	Infernal 5	Infernal 7
Easter day	Dominion 3	Infernal 1	Infernal 2

†Once the new chapel is consecrated.

People from "Ghoul"

These people are not in this story, but they were involved in "Ghoul." They are listed here for easy reference. Ages are as they were in Ghoul, and may be adjusted, depending on when you run "Festival."

Hélène — F 15, dead. Girl killed by the pox, her corpse mutilated in Father Tanchus' diabolic ritual. Daughter of Elena, sister of Alesta, sister of Martina.

Brother Noilis — M 37, Assistant curé of Father Tanchus. He died and was reanimated as a monster in "Ghoul."

Father Tanchus — M 52, Heretical priest of the church who unintentionally cursed it with a diabolical ritual. Now dead or wandering afar.



"Festival of the Damned" Timeline

Palm Sunday

Dominica comes to the characters to ask for their help against diabolists.

Monday

The characters arrive and meet people of the village. Work on the chapel begins.

Sieur Támita comes to see the progress on the chapel, the Temptation of Envy.

That night, imps fill in the foundation.

Tuesday

In the morning, villagers find that the work on the chapel has been undone by demons.

Isarn challenges a character to a fight, the Temptation of Wrath.

In the evening, the characters can stand watch over the chapel and fight the imps that come to unbuild it.

Wednesday

Arnold tries to entice characters to avoid work, the Temptation of Sloth.

Constans invites the characters to his father's feast the next day.

If any imps remain, they return tonight.

Thursday

The chapel is finished.

Jaufré's feast, the Temptation of Gluttony.

Alba tries to seduce at least one character, the Temptation of Lust.

Good Friday

Father Durand consecrates the chapel and holds the first Mass.

Francisca asks characters to help her rob Jaufré, the Temptation of Avarice.

Demons celebrate the Crucifixion in the Church of St. Lazare, the Temptation of Pride.

Saturday

Demons attack and attempt to carry off those who gave in to temptation. Climactic battle.

The villagers hold a vigil at night.

Easter Sunday

The seven corrupted ones turn into fiends and flee at the sound of the Easter morning chapel bell.