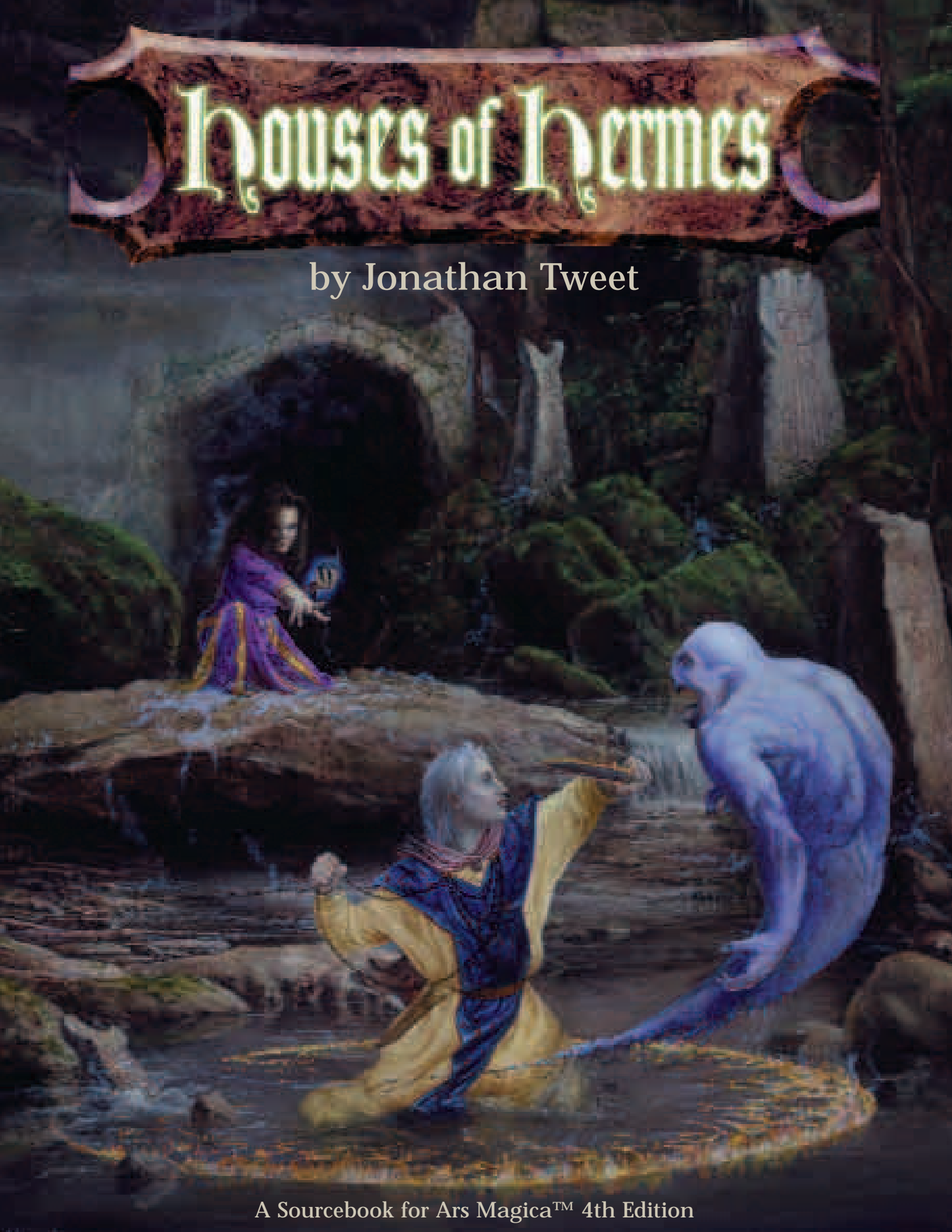


Houses of Hermes

by Jonathan Tweet



A Sourcebook for Ars Magica™ 4th Edition

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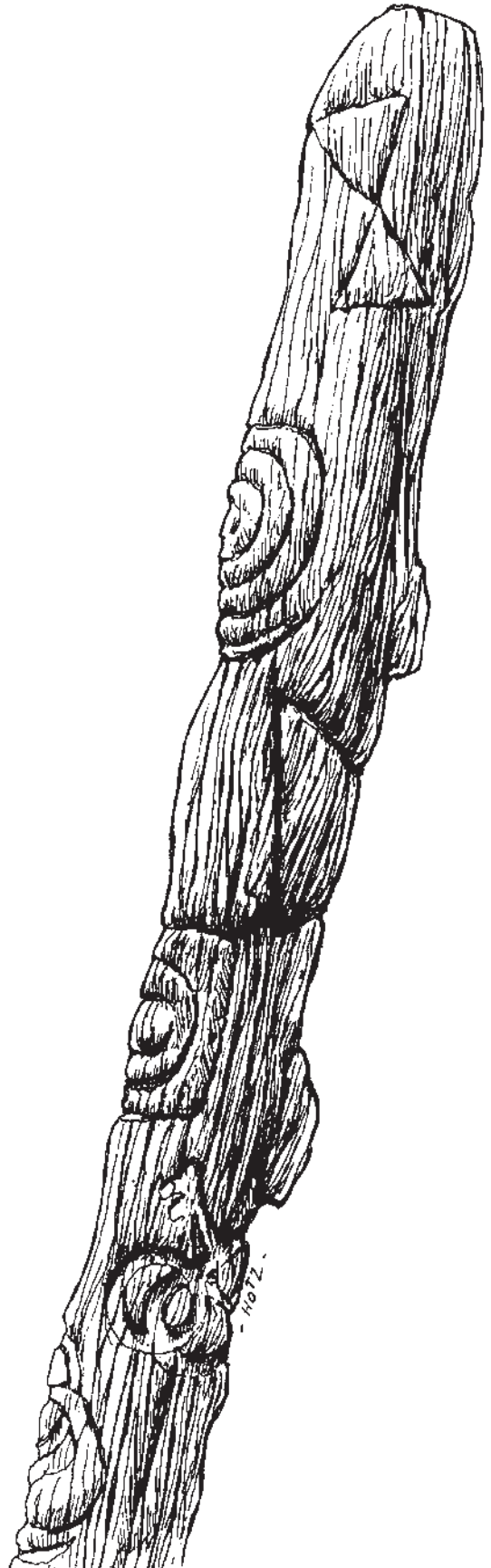
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The cover depicts Agnes Ex Miscellanea summoning a spirit against Rulia of House Flambeau.

Note changes to Latin in 4th edition:
Córporēm=Corpus
Imáginēm=Imáginem.



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*CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION*



"I, BONISAGUS, HEREBY SWEAR MY LIFELONG LOYALTY TO THE ORDER OF HERMES AND ITS MEMBERS.

"I WILL NOT DEPRIVE NOR ATTEMPT TO DEPRIVE ANY MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF HIS OR HER MAGICAL POWER. I WILL NOT SLAY NOR ATTEMPT TO SLAY ANY MEMBER OF THE ORDER, EXCEPT IN A JUSTLY EXECUTED WIZARD WAR. I UNDERSTAND THAT A WIZARD WAR IS AN OPEN CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO MAGI, WHO MAY SLAY EACH OTHER WITHOUT BREAKING THIS OATH, AND THAT SHOULD I BE SLAIN IN A WIZARD WAR, NO RETRIBUTION SHALL FALL ON THE MAGUS WHO SLAYS ME.

"I WILL ABIDE BY THE DECISIONS MADE BY FAIR VOTE AT TRIBUNAL. I WILL HAVE ONE VOTE AT TRIBUNAL, AND I WILL USE IT PRUDENTLY. I WILL RESPECT AS EQUAL THE VOTES OF ALL OTHERS AT TRIBUNAL.

"I WILL NOT ENDANGER THE ORDER THROUGH MY ACTIONS. I WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE AFFAIRS OF MUNDANES AND THEREBY BRING RUIN UPON MY SODALES. I WILL NOT DEAL WITH DEVILS, LEST I IMPERIL MY SOUL AND THE SOULS OF MY SODALES AS WELL. I WILL NOT MOLEST THE FAERIES, LEST THEIR VENGEANCE CATCH MY SODALES ALSO.

"I WILL NOT USE MAGIC TO SPY ON MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF HERMES.

"I WILL TRAIN APPRENTICES WHO WILL SWEAR TO THIS CODE, AND SHOULD ANY OF THEM TURN AGAINST THE ORDER AND MY SODALES, I WILL BE THE FIRST TO STRIKE THEM. NO APPRENTICE OF MINE SHALL BE CALLED MAGUS UNTIL HE OR SHE FIRST SWEARS TO UPHOLD THIS CODE.

"I SHALL FURTHER THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORDER AND SHARE WITH MY SODALES ALL THAT I FIND IN MY SEARCH FOR WISDOM AND POWER.

"I REQUEST THAT SHOULD I BREAK THIS OATH, I BE CAST OUT OF THE ORDER. IF I AM CAST OUT, I ASK MY SODALES TO FIND ME AND SLAY ME THAT MY LIFE MAY NOT CONTINUE IN DEGRADATION AND INFAMY.

"THE ENEMIES OF THE ORDER ARE MY ENEMIES. THE FRIENDS OF THE ORDER ARE MY FRIENDS. THE ALLIES OF THE ORDER ARE MY ALLIES. LET US WORK AS ONE AND GROW STRONG.

"THIS I HEREBY SWEAR ON THE THIRD DAY OF PISCES, IN THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTH YEAR OF ARIES. WOE TO THEM WHO TRY TO TEMPT ME TO BREAK THIS OATH AND WOE TO ME IF I FALL TO THE TEMPTATION."

—BONISAGUS, SPEAKING THE OATH OF THE ORDER IN A.D. 767. HE WAS THE FIRST MAGUS TO DO SO.

Houses of Hermes describes the twelve Houses (that is, magical lineages) that make up the Order of Hermes. These Houses provide more material for you to develop magi characters and their stories. *Houses of Hermes* serves both players and storyguides.

FOR PLAYERS

The material in this book can help you develop more-detailed characters and help you understand the Order of Hermes better. Here you will find history, politics, legends, secrets, and conflicts that your magi have inherited through their Houses.

Each House has a special feature for players: a sample magus who can serve as your character's former master. When you create a new magus character, you can choose one of these magi to be the wizard from whom your character learned magic. The master's philosophy, lifestyle, and theory of magic reflect on your character, and you can use the wizard presented here to help you develop ideas for your own magus.

Some of the material here is primarily for use by the storyguide, especially the saga and story ideas. Still, reading this material will not ruin the saga for you. Even if you're familiar with a saga idea that your storyguide is using, how that plot develops depends more on the storyguide than on the idea, so you won't "know too much."

FOR STORYGUIDES

Knowing the material in *Houses of Hermes* helps you run a saga that plays to the loyalties and attitudes of the players' magi. This material can bring the various groups of the Order and their respective histories to life.

Many Houses have secrets that they do not share with "outsiders." For instance, the Bjornaer magi do not tell others what they do at the Gathering of Twelve Years. Other Houses may even have secrets that are not mentioned in this material, because out-

siders don't even know these secrets exist. You can determine the nature of these secrets for your saga (though you may want to consult with the players who run magi from the respective Houses).

Especially important to you are the saga and story ideas that accompany each House. These are for you to use, reinterpret, or ignore as you see fit. Certain saga ideas reveal secret agendas or events. Be sure to keep in mind that these saga ideas are not official background; they are suggestions for things you can incorporate into your saga. For example, the saga idea for House Verditius specifies that the House has secretly been preparing for a

Magi of the Order of Hermes

ca. 1359 in the Age of Ariës (A.D. 1220)

House	Followers
Bjornaer	46
Bonisagus	29
Criamon	61
Ex Miscellanea	125*
Flambeau	79
Jerbiton	85**
Mercere	101†
Merinita	66
Quaesitor	51‡
Tremere	64
Tyталus	29
Verditius	62
Total	798

*Approximate

**Five of these are "Larta magi." See *House Jerbiton* for details.

†Sixteen of these are Gifted.

‡Not including twenty-three quaesitoris of other Houses

Remember, there's a difference between what you, the player, know from reading this book and what your magus knows. Many magi are poorly informed about their sodales in other Houses.

HOUSE FORMAT

The next twelve chapters each describe a House. Each chapter includes the following information:

Motto: The motto chosen by the founder.

Symbol: Likewise chosen by the founder. Magi traditionally mark their important belongings, such as grimoires, with these symbols.

History

The history of the House, from its founder to the present. Some Houses have gone through major changes in the 400 years that have passed since their founding.

Notable Magi

A few notes on important magi from the House's history.

Current Status

Membership: The number of magi in the House. Medium-size Houses have about fifty members.

Domus magna: The head covenant of the House and its location.

Primus: The current leader of the House.

Current concerns: What the House is doing currently. A description of the House as it is today, including the nature of its members, their customs, and their relation to the Order in general.

Magi

This section is for players who are developing magi of this particular House. Your magus need not conform in all areas. In fact, having a misfit magus can add interesting conflicts to your character's development.

Mentality

How you have been trained to think about yourself, magic, and the Order.

Priorities

What these magi hold to be valuable.

Outlook

How these magi tend to see magi of other Houses and other important groups, such as faeries or the Church. The opinions given here are extreme, and many magi have more moderate views, even if they are along similar lines. Despite their differences, magi of different Houses can get along because they have more in common with each other than with the non-magical population.

Intra-House Relations

How you get along, or are expected to get along, with others in your House.

Magic

The spells and kinds of magic that are common in the House.

The House in Play

Saga Idea

This is a single, big idea, something that could serve as the focal point of an entire saga or as a dramatic background against which your saga is played out. These are world-altering plots. These ideas represent what could happen, but they are not true unless the storyguide implements them. For instance, the saga idea for House Jerbiton posits that Primus Andru has engaged in secret negotiations with the pope. This detail is not an official part of Mythic Europe; it's described here in case the storyguide wants to make it part of the saga.

Story Ideas

Ideas for stories that involve the House.

There was once a thirteenth House in the Order, House Díedne. See *History of the Order*, Chapter Fourteen, for more information.

Each House is typically named for its founder. Since no one recorded exactly how the founders pronounced their names, and since they've all been dead for hundreds of years, the "true" pronunciation of the House names is sometimes in doubt.



The twelve existing Houses of the Order of Hermes embody various forms of knowledge and power.

Example Wizard

This section describes a particular magus of mid-level power. Each magus is powerful and old enough to have had a single apprentice. Your troupe can use these characters for any of several roles:

Pater/Mater: As a player, you can choose one of these magi as the master your character had as an apprentice. You can then design your character accordingly. Your character may be very much like the master or may be quite different, just as children can be similar to or different from their parents. You may change details that describe the magus to let you create the character you want. (For instance, a master must have an Art score at least as high as that of his or her apprentice. You may need to increase the pater's scores to let you have the score you want for your magus's Arts.)

Player character: The storyguide may have the players select from among these magi as their player characters. This method allows for a higher-level saga and for very quick character generation.

Non-player character: The storyguide can use the characters as non-player characters who may be more or less closely involved in the player characters' lives.

Model: The characters can serve as models for mid-power magi whom the storyguide designs.

Apprentice

This section describes how the character might train an apprentice. Depending on how the character is used, these details might apply to a current apprentice, to a player character's past, or to a non-player character's past.

Filius

Each character has a filius, who may be a player character. This section describes how this filius may relate to the character.

Story Idea

An idea for using this magus in a story.

HERMETIC GLOSSARY

The following are terms that magi use frequently when discussing Houses. Many of them are Latin words or phrases. Players can choose to use English equivalents for simplicity.

Amicus [AH-mee-koos]: "Friend." Used only among magi who have become particularly close. It is also sometimes used for Companions who are especially trusted by the magi. There are many magi who call no one "amicus." Plural is *amici* [AH-mee-kee].

Apprentice's gauntlet: An ordeal that an apprentice must survive or a test that one must pass to be accepted as a magus. Various Houses and individual masters define their gauntlets as they wish. Sometimes it is loosely interpreted as the rivalry and conflict among apprentices at a covenant, sometimes as the trials of apprenticeship in general.

Consors (KAHN-sors): "Cohort." A title sometimes used to indicate a non-wizard who holds a position of status and respect in a covenant. Plural is *consortes* [kahn-SOR-tays].

Domus magna [DOH-moos MAHG-nuh]: The head covenant and political center of a House, where the primus lives. Plural: *domi magnae* [DOH-mee MAHG-nye]. Note: "Domus" is an irregular feminine noun in Latin.

Exotic: Referring to magic that is non-Hermetic, as in "an exotic spell" or "an exotic wizard."

Filius [FEE-lee-oos]/**filia** [FEE-lee-uh]: "Son/daughter." The term designating one's former apprentice, now a magus. Any natural child a magus may have is referred to as a "vulgar" son or daughter. Plurals are *fili* [FEE-lee-ee], masculine, or *filiae* [FEE-lee-eye], feminine.

Follower: A member of a House. This term is used because the first magi in the Houses considered themselves followers of the founders rather than members of organizations.

Founder: One of the twelve original magi who swore to abide by the Code and there-

The pronunciations here follow classical rules. Magi in various parts of Mythic Europe, however, pronounce Latin differently, often following the habits of the local vulgar tongue.

by formed the Order of Hermes, plus Pralix, the founder of House Ex Miscellanea.

Hermetic name: The name given an apprentice upon becoming a magus. Most magi use the names their vulgar parents gave them only when traveling incognito.

House: All those wizards (followers) who claim descent from a single founder.

Master: The magus training an apprentice. After the apprentice becomes a magus, the former master is now called a *pater* or *mater*.

Mortal: A mundane.

Mundane: A human who lacks the Gift, the special ability to work magic. Most grogs and Companions are “mundanes,” as are the vast majority of persons in general.

Parens [PAH-rents]: “Parent.” One’s former master, either male or female. Plural is *parentes* [pah-REN-tays]. See **Pater/Mater**.

Pater [PAH-tare]/**mater** [MAH-tare]: “Father/Mother.” One’s former master, used once one becomes a magus. One’s natural parents are referred to as “vulgar.” Plurals are *patres* and *matres* [PAH-trays and MAH-trays]. When referring non-gender-specifically to a pater or mater, one uses the term *parens*. See **Parens**.

Primus [PREE-moos]/**Prima** [PREE-muh]: Short for “primus magus” (or “prima maga”), which is “the first magus.” A magus who is the head of a House. Each House has its own method for choosing its primus, though technically the acting primus has the full right to designate any member of the House as his or her successor. Plural is *primi* [PREE-mee], masculine, or *primae* [PREE-mye], feminine.

Renunciation: Being cast out from one’s House or from the Order. A magus renounced from his or her House must be adopted into another House within a year, or be expelled from the Order altogether. A magus renounced from the Order is no longer protected by the Code, and it is considered the duty of Hermetic magi to shun or even attack the outsider. A primus may renounce members from the House; only a tri-

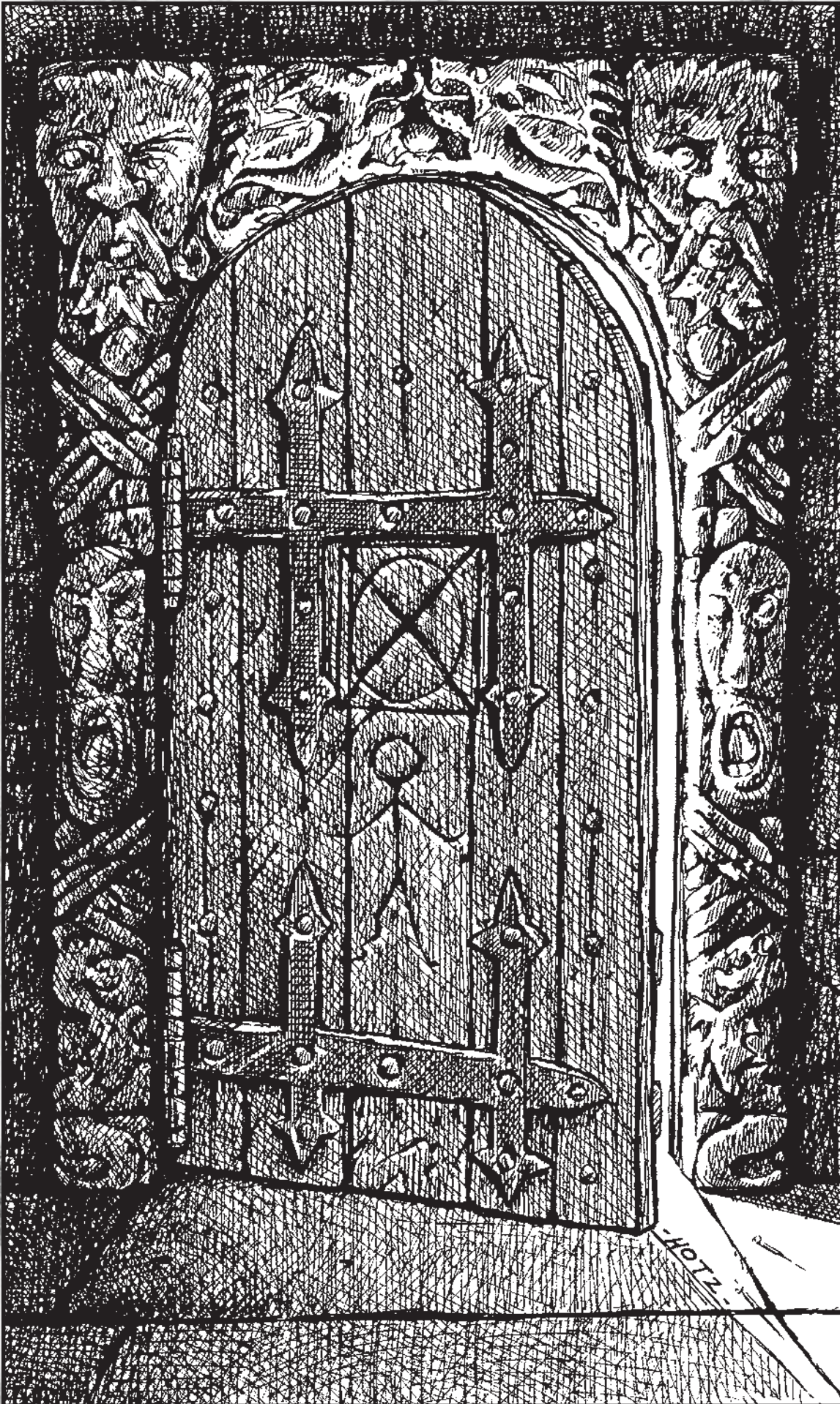
bunal may renounce a magus directly from the Order.

Salve sodale [SAHL-way soh-DAH-lay]: “Greetings, fellow member.” Traditional greeting between magi, never used for those outside the Order, not even amici. When greeting more than one magus, one uses the plural phrase “*Salvete sodalibus*.” [SAHL-way-tay soh-DAH-lee-boos]

Sanctum: The specially designated private chambers of a magus that, by Hermetic law, can be defended to the point of killing an intruder.

Sodalis [soh-DAH-leez]: “Comrade, fellow member of an organization.” A fellow member of the Order. Plural is *sodales*.

Vulgar: Not relating to the Order or to magical ways. For example, one’s “vulgar” name is the name one had before apprenticeship.



The circle-and-square symbol identifies the room behind this door as a wizard's sanctum. The symbol below identifies the sanctum's owner: in this case, Martin of Bonisagus.

CHAPTER TWO: HOUSE BJORNAER

Motto: *Potentia super ipso potentia
super aliis.* (Power over self is
power over others.)

Symbol: A cone viewed obliquely
from above

Bjornaer: BYORE-nayr

“JUST AS THE CONE CAN CAST ON THE WALL THE SHADOW OF A CIRCLE OR THE SHADOW OF A TRIANGLE, SO YOU CAN CAST ON THIS WORLD THE SHADOW OF A HUMAN OR THE SHADOW OF A HAWK OR THE SHADOW OF A HUNDRED THINGS. NOW YOU CAST THE SHADOW OF A MIGHTY WIZARD, BUT SOME DAY YOU SHALL CAST THE SHADOW OF A CORPSE.”

—BJORNAER, SPOKEN TO HER APPRENTICE

The other non-Roman, Diedne, founded the House that was destroyed in the Schism War. For more about House Diedne, see *History of the Order*.

Merinita is a House of magi who currently focus on the interests of faeries but whose founder specialized in magic of nature. See *House Merinita* for its history.

Some Hermetic scholars speculate that the shapeshifting tradition that Bjornaer forsook may be related to the *gruagachan* (GROO-uh-guhk-uhn), the shape-shifting wizards of Scotland.



Each Bjornaer magus is taught to take the form of an animal, known as the wizard's "heart-beast." Cultivating understanding of one's animal aspect is held as more important than learning Hermetic magic. Descended from a Germanic rather than Roman wizard, this House is held in contempt by some magi. Bjornaer magi tend to be too secretive and introspective to overcome this prejudice.

HISTORY

Bjornaer came from a prehistoric line of shapeshifting wizards, people whose only magic was the ability to take different shapes. She broke with her tradition to learn Hermetic magic and become part of the Order that was then forming. (The others in her original tradition considered her a traitor for "defecting" to the Order.)

Bjornaer studied with Merinita to learn Latin and the basics of Hermetic magic. It took her years, but she eventually became competent in Hermetic magic, except for Ignem. She never was able to produce more than a spark with magic (and many of her followers are deficient in fire magic even today). Once she had mastered Hermetic magic, she formed her own House.

Bjornaer was one of two House founders who was not from the Roman tradition of magic. Therefore, many of the other magi looked down on her and her powers. Bonisagus, however, wel-

comed her because her different approach to magic promised to teach him much. He knew that the more varied were the magicians from whom he learned, the more comprehensive would his magical theory eventually be.

When Quendalon and Myanar, the first two primi of House Merinita, fought for control of their House in A.D. 801 to 802, Bjornaer and her filii supported Myanar. Myanar was true to Merinita's nature-oriented magic, whereas Quendalon wanted to turn the House to faerie ways. When Quendalon won out and ousted Myanar and his supporters from the House, Bjornaer nominally adopted them into House Bjornaer. For the next century, therefore, there were magi who were not shapechangers in House Bjornaer, but this sub-lineage of magi has since died out. Some say their fate was the result of a curse put on them by Quendalon and his faerie allies.

During the Schism War, the followers of Bjornaer retreated to their domus magna, afraid that the Flambeau and Tremere magi would turn on them as well. Fear of and hatred toward non-Latin magi could have become directed at them if they had not kept out of the conflicts. Some thought they would side with House Diedne, but the two Houses had little in common, other than that their founders were not descended from the Roman tradition.

Over the centuries, House Bjornaer has become more accepted in the Order, and the members of the House have become more and more adept at standard Hermetic magic with each generation of apprentices. Some within the House, however, say that they have lost some of their shapechanging prowess over the years.

The loose, small organization of shapechangers from which Bjornaer learned her original magic still remains to this day. Its members regard magi of the Order in general, and of House Bjornaer in particular, as mortal enemies. Their ability to hide in their various shapes has made them particularly difficult to find and destroy, but they have never proved to be worse than an isolated threat.

NOTABLE MAGI OF BJORNAER

Bjornaer of the Many Shapes: She was poorly accepted in the Order because of her “barbarian” background. Her heart-beast was a bear.

Gettra: She was able to copy the forms of other people flawlessly and effortlessly. During the 12th century, she impersonated many magi around Europe and caused much confusion while pursuing still-unknown goals. She disappeared when her plot was discovered, so she has never been brought to Hermetic justice. Most think that she has since died, though she may be living to this day in some borrowed shape.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Forty-six.

Domus magna: Crintera, in the Rhine Tribunal. The covenant has few relations with the magi of the tribunal, since members of House Bjornaer prefer to live in wilder areas.

Prima: Falke. She recently became prima after the quaesitoris pressured the former primus, Urgen, to resign. (Urgen had been found to be coordinating covert campaigns against mundanes to prevent them from settling magical areas and encroaching on wizards’ lands. Falke prefers a strategy of isolation and patience.)

Current concerns: To regain the trust of the quaesitoris and others in the Order. This task is especially difficult because some believe that ex-Primus Urgen is stepping up his covert campaigns now that he is free of the responsibilities of leadership. Urgen, thanks to his advanced age, still commands a lot of respect within the House.

The emphasis that this House puts on self-control and self-transformation makes it less active in Hermetic politics than most other Houses. When its members do take stands at tribunal, it is generally to protect their rights from the infringement of others and to protect their wild lands.

Followers of Bjornaer often travel in the wilds to gain the isolation that aids their introspection and to find places to roam in beast form. Over the centuries they have had to move regularly to find uncut woods and uninhabited lands. Lately, many have traveled to the Hibernia and Loch Leglean Tribunals, others to the Novgorod Tribunal, and others to mountain ranges within heavily populated Europe.

In this House, younger magi are taught to respect older magi, even if the younger magi are more powerful. Followers of Bjornaer recognize that blatant, external power is not a worthy criterion for respect; older magi may well have learned much that is not readily apparent. Since a hierarchy based on age never changes, there is very little political intrigue within the House.

Followers of Bjornaer congregate every twelve years at Crintera for a secret meeting called the Gathering of Twelve Years, during which time they perform rituals associated with maintaining their lineage, remembering their ancestors, and solidifying the bonds within the House. It is generally believed that during the gathering, House Bjornaer uses ancient, exotic magic that Bjornaer kept secret and passed on only to her filii. This magic might have nothing to do with shapeshifting, and some say that House Bjornaer eschews politics because the House can curse and manipulate others in the Order through more subtle means: rituals performed at the gathering. If others from other Houses have learned anything concrete about this meeting, however, they’re not talking. The only thing that other magi know is that Bjornaer magi take this congregation very seriously indeed. When questioned about the meeting, Bjornaer magi deny nothing and affirm nothing.

Amici of Bjornaer magi are sometimes invited to the gathering, but they cannot participate. They must wait in the outer halls of the covenant during the rituals, and many of them serve as guards to protect House Bjornaer while the magi are occupied.

The line of shapeshifters from which Bjornaer broke away has been known to attempt to break into Crintera to disrupt the gathering.

“Falke” is German for “falcon,” the prima’s heart-beast. It is common, but not universal, for Bjornaer magi to take the names of their heart-beasts.

The Gathering of Twelve Years is one reason that Bjornaer magi have never been fully accepted in the Order. The secrecy surrounding the gathering raises the suspicions of other magi.

Amici (AH-mee-kee): Literally “friends.” The term is reserved for very close friends and can be applied to magi and non-magi alike.

Apprentices who have heart-beasts are made members of the House at the gathering and are thereafter considered magi within House Bjornaer, even if they have little or no ability to wield Hermetic magic. The Hermetic training that they lack is not seen as essential to being a wizard. To magi of other Houses, of course, these apprentices are not considered magi. Gaining a heart-beast is all that is required for membership, so this House has no apprentice's gauntlet.

Traditionally, no one may join House Bjornaer except through apprenticeship, because only in apprenticeship is one able to gain the heart-beast. One who has studied magic in another House loses the ability to manifest the shape of the heart-beast. Exceptions, however, have been made occasionally over the last few centuries. These magi without heart-beasts gain nominal membership, but they are never fully accepted in the House.

MAGI OF BJORNAER

Mentality of a Bjornaer Magus

You have been trained in magic to become more powerful, which means to project a more powerful shadow of your essential self onto this temporal world. Already your master has brought out of you your heart-beast. This shape is but another aspect of your essential nature, as much a part of you as your human form is.

Hermetic magic expands upon your natural ability to cast the shadow of man or beast upon the world. Your mighty founder, Bjornaer of the Many Shapes, came to the Order to learn other ways of magic. Because of the legacy of knowledge her decision has left you to draw on, you are much more powerful than the weak and limited shapeshifters descended from Bjornaer's less-farsighted contemporaries. The magic of the Order allows you to learn a repertoire of shapes that, while less essential than your heart-beast, expand the flexibility of your power.

You will learn other types of magic from your Hermetic roots as well. But never let these other types of magic lure

you away from your true calling, the shifting of shapes. If you find yourself tempted to use magic to do your work for you instead of using it to make you capable of doing it yourself, remember that you will only become weak and lazy, and as your so-called "power" grows, your will and heart will shrivel, until your magic takes you over and uses you for its own ends—or destroys you altogether.

Priorities

- 1) Increase your own power; especially, develop a repertoire of shapes.
- 2) Support House Bjornaer.
- 3) Protect wild lands.
- 4) Support the Order.

Outlook

- **Bonisagus:** Their magic is impersonal, but useful at times.
- **Criamon:** They have no control over the wisdom they seek, but at least they do seek wisdom and not just force.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** They, too, know ancient secrets; they never interfere with House Bjornaer.
- **Flambeau:** Children do play with fire, after all.
- **Jerbiton:** Their continued contact with the mundanes has sapped their strength.
- **Mercere:** Useful messengers.
- **Merinita:** Eternal thanks to her who taught us Hermetic magic; curses upon the traitor Quendalon and the impure House he spawned.
- **Quaesitoris:** They protect the integrity of our House and the privacy of our gathering; support them and their cause.
- **Tremere:** They have tried to learn our secrets, and they fail to recognize the seriousness of their transgressions; do not trust them.
- **Tyталus:** Always challenging, rarely learning.
- **Verditius:** They rely on their tools rather than on themselves; they are not true magi like the followers of Bjornaer.
- **Faeries:** Corrupt and dangerous manifestations of nature.
- **Nobles:** Boring and ugly.
- **The Church:** Boring and ugly.
- **Peasants:** Boring and ugly.
- **Exotic shapeshifters:** Simple, limited,



and brutal; envious of our knowledge.

- **Animals:** True embodiments of nature's grace.

Intra-House Relations

You are to respect your elders within the House and obey them, but they will rarely call upon you for aid. Remember that they want to help you better yourself, and tasks that they may expect of you will teach you important lessons.

Never forget the Gathering of Twelve Years, lest the House wane, and reveal its secrets to no one. Troubled times are in store for the Order, and House Bjornaer may have to take a new shape and survive on its own if the rest of the Order falls. The gathering will keep you and your fellows strong for whatever tribulations lie ahead.

Magic

Bjornaer magi excel at spells that change their shapes.

If Bjornaer magi are overcome by final Twilight, they most likely become their heart-beast, complete with the animal's intellect. The change is irrevocable. The form serves as a last refuge from the magic that would otherwise overwhelm a magus. The heart-beast left after a Bjornaer undergoes Twilight generally has a Magic Might of at least 30.

Form of the Avenging Beast (Muto Corpus 20)

Spell focus: Body part from the appropriate animal type (+2)

R: Self, D: Sun.

The shape of your heart-beast becomes more powerful and deadly. If you have a battle-worthy heart-beast, you receive +5 on all Attack and Damage rolls and +15 on Soak rolls. If the heart-beast is not battle-worthy, it gains a +3 Attack and +3 Damage and +10 on Soak. In addition, you receive no penalties from wounds or fatigue until you are unconscious, incapacitated, or dead. Your heart-beast becomes more ferocious, more fearsome, and larger, but also

The spell *Form of the Avenging Beast* gives Bjornaer magi an advantage when fighting exotic shapeshifters.

slightly distorted. Inert forms, like those of trees or rocks, become more threatening in appearance, but they gain no combat abilities.

HOUSE BJORNAER IN PLAY

Saga Idea

During the Gathering of Twelve Years, all the Bjornaer magi disappear. Their grogs and amici have been charged with guarding Crintera, so other magi who want to investigate have to face them down, as well as penetrate the domus magna's magical wards. Rumors abound as to what has happened. Perhaps something went terribly wrong with the ritual and the magi have been destroyed. This could be the final vengeance of the shapeshifters whom Bjornaer left. Others say that it is some trick of the Bjornaer magi. They might have transported themselves to a different time or place to end their constant conflicts with the mundanes of Europe. Maybe they have made contact with House Díedne and have gone off to live with the remnants of the outcast House. Alternately, this maneuver could be part of a new offensive. They may be invisible, disguised in benign shapes, or otherwise hidden throughout Europe, waiting to launch an assault against mundane civilization.

The disappearance of the Bjornaer magi causes turmoil. Worried magi of other Houses either start preparing for possible conflicts or launch dramatic investigations into the mystery. Power balances shift wherever powerful Bjornaer magi used to live. Rumors spread quickly throughout the Order, and fear causes fights to break out among the magi.

The role of the characters depends on their connection to House Bjornaer. They may be involved in power struggles as magi fill the vacuum left by their disappearing sodales. They may be tempted (or ordered) to violate the sancta of missing Bjornaer magi to look for clues as to the cause of the disappearance. They may have to travel far to track down clues or follow up on leads that they find.

If House Bjornaer does not reappear for a long period of time, the Order will settle back down to normal. But as the twelfth year approaches, the Order will again be alive with concern. The scheduled time for the next Gathering of Twelve Years may mean the return of House Bjornaer or the final execution of their secret plans. (The storyguide may even want to start the saga eleven years or so after the Bjornaer magi disappeared.)

Story Ideas

- Exotic shapeshifters set up a trap for a player-character Bjornaer magus. These shapeshifters survive by being hard to catch, so they set the trap in such a way that it is easy for them to escape if the Bjornaer character is not caught or killed.
- A player-character Bjornaer magus has to go to the Gathering of Twelve Years, and he invites a few trusted characters along. During the gathering, the non-Bjornaer player characters interact with non-Bjornaer characters from other covenants and discover that there is a spy in their midst. The characters must identify who the spy is to protect their own reputations and their friend's status within House Bjornaer.

CYGNA, FOLLOWER OF BJORNAER

Cygna is a tall, very slender woman with porcelain-delicate bones. (She's stronger than she looks, but that's not saying much.) Her long, nearly straight hair is black except for one pure white lock at the side of her face. Her ice-blue eyes look out from under long black lashes, set in a face as white as the feathers of her swan form. She dresses in practical peasant dress, though she ornaments her clothes with feathers.

Cygna, as her name suggests, has a swan heart-beast. Birds have a strange attraction for her magic, and they often fly toward her when she uses spells.

Cygna loves birds, but her blatant Gift drives them away. They often arrive when she uses magic, but then keep their distance from her. In addition, she is rather too clumsy to handle birds safely. Her love for that which she cannot have has marked her life.

Her frustration at not being able to touch birds is sometimes released as violence toward those who endanger animals, especially birds. She delights in turning those who torment animals into animals themselves. The impersonal attitude that many other Hermetic magi take to animals often makes her uncomfortable in their presence.

Fortunately, Cygna finds love and companionship among certain Bjornaer magi, especially one named Flinthoof. Flinthoof, whose heart-beast is a stallion, is her “mate.” They are spiritually committed to each other, though they spend more time traveling apart than settled together. While the two share physical affection, they’ve told no one whether they have consummated their bond “vulgarly.”

Cygna’s Apprentice

Cygna and Flinthoof teach the apprentice in tandem. Since Flinthoof wanders more than Cygna, however, Cygna has the greater influence on the apprentice.

They teach their apprentice to be sensitive to life’s drama. Their apprentice may become a keen reader of other people or may be naive about such matters as Hermetic politics, since political matters don’t concern Cygna and Flinthoof. Cygna and Flinthoof touch, hold, praise, and comfort the apprentice as loving parents might—this behavior is highly unusual in the Order.

The apprentice is taught to seek a “mate” after apprenticeship—another Bjornaer to share spiritual ties with, as Cygna and Flinthoof do with each other. The apprentice is told secrets relating to the mate, secrets that not even other Bjornaer magi know.

Neither Cygna nor Flinthoof would teach an apprentice destructive magic. They view using magic as a way to restore balance, to direct energy along positive paths, and to fulfill the dictates of fate.

Cygna’s Filius

The filius probably feels a kinship to Cygna and Flinthoof, who are more like parents and less like former teachers. But Cygna and Flinthoof are both wanderers at heart, so they are not likely to be a part of the filius’s everyday life (especially if he or she has picked up their wanderlust).

Cygna and Flinthoof will never abandon a filius, even if the filius distances him or herself from them. Their bond, they believe, is eternal, and deeper than any temporary differences or distances.

The filius has the duty to find a mate, though there’s little pressure to do so quickly. The filius may find the mate through a straightforward search or by serendipity. (No true magus would call the unexpected “coincidence.”)

The filius may also have developed a particular relation to the world’s drama. He or she may be a student of love, of loss, of loyalty, of grief, or of any other part of “the great myth of the world.” Alternately, he or she may not yet have found a calling.

Story Idea

Cygna or Flinthoof befriends a player character. What begins as friendship develops into romance, illicit and unprecedented. The intellectual magi of the player character’s covenant are poorly equipped to handle a matter of the heart in their midst, which makes the tension all the stranger when the betrayed mate comes around looking for vengeance. Can the magi learn anything from this confusing emotional exchange, or do they just hope to get everything back to normal?

Cynga, Follower of Bjornaer

Age: 53; Apparent Age: 40 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 3

Tall, slender, delicate woman, who has long black hair, with one white streak along the side of her head.

Characteristics

+2 Int (creative)	+3 Prs (dramatic)
+3 Per (insightful)	+1 Com (passionate)
-1 Str (delicate)	-2 Dex (clumsy)
-1 Stm (easily discouraged)	-2 Qik (languid)

Virtues & Flaws

Cyclic Magic, +2 (high tide)	Clumsy
Follower of Bjornaer	Sensitive (ugliness)
Intuition	Twilight Points
Side Effect (attracts birds)	Unc. Fear (enclosed spaces)
True Friend (Flinthoof)	Vow (vegetarian)
Well-Traveled	Weakness (dramatic effect)
Blatant Gift	

Personality Traits

+3 Dramatic	-3 Pragmatic	-2 Loud
+2 Sensitive	-2 Even-Tempered	

Reputation

None

Abilities

3 Acting	2 Charm	2 Leadership	5 Speak Latin
4 Animal Handling	3 Concentration	6 Magic Theory	4 Speak Own Language
3 Area Lore	2 Fantastic Beast Lore	3 Parma Magica	2 Storytelling
1 Athletics	3 Finesse	1 Penetration	5 Survival
3 Boating	3 Hermes History	3 Scribe Latin	4 Swim
2 Certámen	2 Hermes Lore	3 Self Bow	5 Will Over Form

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: - 2</i>
Hand	-2	-2	0	-1	Soak: - 1
Self Bow	n/a	+1	n/a	+8	Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

10 Cr	15 An	5 Ig
5 In	13 Aq	9 Im
12 Mu	10 Au	8 Me
7 Pe	9 Co	5 Te
6 Re	5 He	7 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
 Twilight Points: 2
 Effects of Twilight: None
 Wizard's Sigil: Sense of grace and beauty
 Heart-Beast: Swan (non-combat-worthy)

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+21/30) Curse of Circe	(+15/20) Sailor's Foretaste
(+22/30) Fog of Confusion	(+25/20) Soothe Pains of Beast
(+20/30) Mind of the Beast	(+27/20) Talons of the Wind
(+21/30) Mists of Change	(+20/20) Tongue of the Beasts
(+20/25) Clouds of Rain and Thunder	(+18/15) Call of Rushing Waters
(+17/25) Quiet the Raging Winds	(+27/15) Immaculate Beast
(+18/25) Voice of the Lake	(+15/15) True Sight of Air
(+15/20) Circling Winds of Prot.	(+21/10) Aura of Ennobled Presence
(+20/20) Gentle Beast	(+23/10) Lungs of the Fish
(+19/20) Phantasmal Animal	

Cygna



Cygna has a "mate," a Bjornaer magus named Flinthoof. They are bound spiritually, though they spend little time together.

CHAPTER THREE: HOUSE BONISAGUS

Motto: *Pertinatia sapientiaque ad cognitionem cursus sunt.* (Perseverance and wisdom are the keys to the beauty of knowledge.)

Symbol: Two keys, crossed

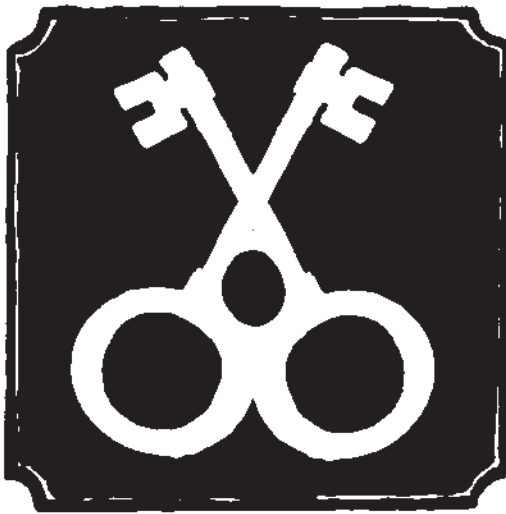
Bonisagus: BOH-nee-SAH-goos

“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I BRING YOU THE POTION THAT WILL CURE OUR WOUNDS. NO LONGER NEED WE CONSPIRE AGAINST EACH OTHER; NOW WE CAN COME TOGETHER ON THE COMMON GROUND I HAVE PROVIDED AND MAKE PEACE. MAY ALL OF YOU AND ALL YOUR FILII USE THIS KNOWLEDGE WISELY.”

—BONISAGUS, ANNOUNCING TO THE ASSEMBLED WIZARDS HIS INVENTION OF WHAT IS NOW CALLED HERMETIC MAGIC

“I CONCEDE TO BONISAGUS THE RIGHT TO TAKE MY APPRENTICE IF HE SHOULD FIND MY APPRENTICE VALUABLE TO HIM IN HIS STUDIES.”

—SWORN BY EACH FOUNDER AS PART OF THE CODE OF HERMES



House Bonisagus is small, but it is the most highly respected House in the Order because Bonisagus and his filia Trianoma were central to the founding of the Order. Most magi of Bonisagus are brilliant magical theorists and inventors. They are not given to adventurous lives, but find reward in inventing more and better spells and in improving the Order's understanding of magic in general. Other Bonisagus magi follow the example of Trianoma and lead political careers.

HISTORY

In the early 8th century, the maga Trianoma learned that Bonisagus was developing powerful magical skills, such as the *parma magica*, a magical technique previously unknown to wizardry. Trianoma saw the potential of Bonisagus's magic as the thing she needed to make real her burning dream: a union of wizards. Although she was already a wizard, Trianoma became Bonisagus's student, like an advanced apprentice, and then she discussed her plans with him. Bonisagus liked the idea of a union of wizards, since he was not fond of the warfare that often raged among magi in those days.

Trianoma solicited the aid of other wizards, who came to Bonisagus to share what they knew. Bonisagus had a reputation for being harmless and extremely honorable, so they trusted him with their secrets. Within several years, Bonisagus had used what he knew of the various forms of magic to produce a rough theory of magic in general. With only subtle modifications, this theory is the same one used in the 13th century to organize and understand Hermetic magic.

Many wizards had thought about forming an organization of some sort ever since

the fall of the cult of Hermes in Rome, but the magi had not been able to share their knowledge, because their approaches to magic were varied and because they did not trust each other. Now, Bonisagus's *parma magica* would allow unfriendly magi to meet each other with some assurance of safety, and his system of magical organization would allow all magi to share their knowledge and work together.

Because of Bonisagus's central role in the founding of the Order, his House is held in high esteem. Actually, it was Trianoma who provided the impetus to form the Order; Bonisagus was too passive to have formed the Order on his own. It was the dynamic combination of Trianoma, the dreamer and energetic schemer, and Bonisagus, the patient and brilliant mental engineer, that made the Order of Hermes possible.

Though Trianoma participated in and usually led the tribunals out of which arose the Order of Hermes, she does not have a House of her own. As a student of Bonisagus, she considered herself and her apprentices to be part of House Bonisagus.

NOTABLE MAGI OF BONISAGUS

Bonisagus: Developed Hermetic magic.

Trianoma: Coordinated the founding of the Order.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Twenty-nine.

Domus magna: Durenmar, in the Black Forest where the Order was founded. Because of this covenant's historical significance, many magi from other Houses live here, as well as followers of Bonisagus.

Prima: Murion, a conservative woman. The previous primus handpicked her as his successor because she shared his distaste for exotic magic. She enjoins the followers of Bonisagus to refine Hermetic theory rather than try to expand it to encompass other styles of magic.

Current concerns: The House is trying to maintain its status despite changes in the Order. Many magi are exploring new types of magical knowledge in which the Bonisagus magi are not experts. This new knowledge threatens the House's status.

Classic Puzzles in Magic Theory

There are certain feats that Hermetic magic cannot perform, and over the centuries, Bonisagus magi have attempted to develop magic that could do one or more of these tasks. The first magus to solve one of the puzzles below will be famous.

- Affect the lunar sphere or anything above it.
- Alter something's essential nature.
- Cure permanently without raw vis.
- Restore physical energy so that one can cast more spells.*
- Create true human life.
- Restore the dead to life.
- Halt or reverse aging.
- Reverse the effects of wizard's Twilight.
- Force truth from a demon or faerie.
- Counter divine power.

* House Merinita has a spell that does this, but only with faerie magic and only with the use of raw vis.

Bonisagus magi are the all-but-invisible backbone of the Order. Their magical explorations have benefited the entire Order, though individual magical theoreticians often enjoy little personal fame. A common attitude among Bonisagus magi is that the other magi are experimental testers for magical theories. Bonisagus magi develop new spells or magical techniques and share them with other magi. These other magi use them and report back on what worked best, giving the Bonisagus magi more information with which to define their theories. The Bonisagus magi see the others as doing "legwork," while the other magi see the Bonisagus magi as aiding their goals by doing the lab work.

Some magi in House Bonisagus are interested in politics, following the example of Trianoma. They are as active and visible in the Order as their more-academic fellows are quiet and secluded. Like the quaesitoris, these Bonisagus magi involve themselves in various disputes and developments, using their prestige and wisdom to keep the Order healthy and growing. Unlike the quaesitoris, they often take the initiative in pushing for changes or rulings. As the European population continues to grow, these magi find themselves trying more and more to settle conflicts between magi and mundanes.

Over the centuries, the inventions of House Bonisagus have become less imaginative and more derivative. The early years of the House saw the invention of certámen, improved longevity potions, techniques for making magic devices, the quantification of vis, and the development of many basic, important spells that are used almost without change in the 13th century. In the past century, however, the House has come up with little other than more powerful versions of existing spells and some very specific insights into magic theory. Some magi say that Bonisagus's theory of Hermetic magic is inherently limited and that House Bonisagus has taken this theory almost as far as it can go. The only possibility for true advance, they claim, is to change some basic assumptions of Hermetic theory, such as the divisions of Techniques and Forms. Such a large change, however, could disrupt the Order by releasing new and unpredictable magic into the world. Since no one knows what a new system of magic might be like, no one knows what effects it could have on the Order. For example, a new system of magic that could circumvent the parma magica could give its users great power over other magi and destroy trust within the Order. For this reason, some fear even research into such possibilities, but several magi within

House Bonisagus and several more in other Houses are searching avidly for some new way to understand and control magic.

House Bonisagus uses a formal examination as its apprentice's gauntlet. Prospective magi must answer questions developed by their masters and their masters' colleagues in the House. About one in ten apprentices fail this test once or twice before becoming magi.

One can gain entrance into House Bonisagus only by providing some important magical discovery or invention.

MAGI OF BONISAGUS

Mentality of a Bonisagus Magus

If you are one of the theoretical followers of Bonisagus, you may see yourself as bearing the heavy duty of improving the theory and practice of magic. Luckily, you have many resources at your disposal, such as the respect and aid of all other magi in the Order, the best magical training to be found in the world, and, of course, your own innate brilliance. You are sure that you understand magic better than just about anyone outside your House, and you expect magi to respect you appropriately.

If you are one of the politically involved followers of Bonisagus (effectively a "follower of Trianoma"), you may see yourself as bearing the duty of maintaining the Order that those of your House originally founded. Your excellent training and the respect others have for you are two of your biggest assets, but you still have to work hard to anticipate and control political changes within the Order.

Priorities of a Theoretical Bonisagus Magus

- 1) Further Hermetic knowledge.
- 2) Bring honor to House Bonisagus.
- 3) Achieve personal fame.

Priorities of a Political Bonisagus Magus

- 1) Preserve the Order.
- 2) Bring Honor to House Bonisagus.
- 3) Achieve personal fame.

The Code of Hermes and House Bonisagus

The Code of Hermes included two rules regarding Bonisagus:

- Bonisagus could take any apprentice from any other magus and teach that apprentice as his own. This would assure that Bonisagus had excellent apprentices capable of following his genius.
- In exchange, Bonisagus would have to share all of his magical discoveries with all of the Order of Hermes.

The Peripheral Code also specifies that magi were to share their discoveries with Bonisagus, and if he asked for their knowledge, they were to give it to him unless they could convince the tribunal they needed to keep their knowledge secret.

In A.D. 812, these special rules were officially designated as applying to all those in House Bonisagus as well as to Bonisagus himself.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They keep their magic a secret; perhaps they should never have been allowed in the Order.
- **Criamon:** Undisciplined wizards lost in their own complex symbolism. Why don't they give up the symbolism and deal with magic as it is?
- **Ex Miscellanea:** Fools who don't recognize the usefulness of Hermetic magic.
- **Flambeau:** It's a shame that they put such a subtle art as magic to such base uses.
- **Jerbiton:** Reasonable fellows; their knowledge of philosophy is to be respected, though not as much as one respects knowledge of magic.
- **Mercere:** Valuable servants.
- **Merinita:** They might be able to bring new insights to Hermetic magic if they weren't so secretive and uncooperative.
- **Quaesitoris:** They protect our rights as the most important House in the Order and keep the other Houses from fighting too much.
- **Tremere:** As explorers of the possibilities of certámen, they are quite intelligent; politically, they can be unbearable.
- **Tyталus:** They're valuable because they test the limits of magic.
- **Verditius:** Their insights into the creation of magic devices are most valuable, but how can you take them seriously otherwise?
- **Demons:** Learning to control and manipulate demons and their magic would be an excellent challenge for the Order, but the Code forbids it. What a shame.
- **Faeries:** Faerie magic looks impressive because we don't understand it, but some day we will quantify it and control it as we've controlled elementals.
- **The Church:** Anything that interferes with magic is offensive, and what coherent understanding of magical power do they provide that could compete with the wisdom of Hermes?
- **The Nobility:** Who?
- **Peasants:** Who?

Intra-House Relations

Your status in the House depends entirely on your magical accomplishments. If you are a political magus, you are accepted but not much respected or honored. If you are a theoretical magus, you are judged by the inventions you produce. You will find intense competition with your fellows as they, too, attempt to produce the most exciting and useful inventions.

You will be renounced if you ever interfere seriously with the goals of the House. If you

simply fail to produce interesting inventions, you will be quickly forgotten, but not punished.

Magic

Your master encouraged you to learn spells related to your specialty so you would know everything you need to know about that kind of magic. Spells that deal with magic or other spells, such as *Scales of the Magical Weight*, are also necessary to being an efficient experimenter.

Twilight is more common than death in House Bonisagus.

HOUSE BONISAGUS IN PLAY

Saga Idea

A Bonisagus maga has developed an easy way to penetrate the parma magica, and she is frantically at work trying to develop an improved parma magica that resists the new technique. In the meantime, she has let no one know of her discovery. (In fact, this caution violates the Code, because Bonisagus magi are required to share their discoveries freely.)

Her secrecy is violated, however, and she learns that a Tremere magus is using her technique to spy on and manipulate other magi in the Order. Rumor of this technique spreads, tensions run high, suspicions grow, and danger is everywhere. Across the Order, all but the strongest bonds and allegiances become shaky, or fall apart altogether. The parma magica allowed the Order to form. Its defeat may spell the end of the Order.

Can the player characters protect themselves from this threat, forge alliances based on true trust, and help hold the Order together? Eventually, a dire choice must be made. Do those who want to protect the Order share the new knowledge with all magi so that all are on even ground? If they do, it could lead to anarchy. Or do the authorities suppress the knowledge, hoping to hold it back until a counter-technique is found? If so, those few who secretly know the secret have a telling advantage over their sodales. The fate of the Order hangs in the balance.

Story Ideas

- A Bonisagus magus offers young player characters a deal: personal instruction in

exchange for service. The young magi benefit from the knowledge and special techniques of the Bonisagus magus, who in turn uses them to test new spells, investigate magical phenomena, and so on.

- A political Bonisagus maga “drafts” the player characters for a sensitive mission. She gives them a false cover story about what they are doing; but in the course of the mission, plans go awry, and the characters discover that they are part of a much bigger plot. With powerful secrets dropped in their laps, they suddenly have clout beyond their years and experience. How do they use it?

MARTIN, FOLLOWER OF BONISAGUS

Martin’s whole demeanor is one of poor health. His skin is pale, his constitution poor, and his right leg twisted. At middle age, he moves about like an old man, though his fingers dance skillfully about his magical equipment. When he speaks to strangers, he asks them about their travels, and those who are subtle can detect his envy of their freedom. Martin dreams of travel and adventure, pleasures he is not fated for.

Hermetic magic is unable to heal his twisted leg; he was born with it, so it is part of his true nature. Privately, Martin believes that God gave him the lame leg as a personal challenge, to surpass Hermetic limits and heal himself. That is the challenge he has accepted for himself. Another defect that keeps Martin in his laboratory is his dependence on magical or faerie auras. Outside these areas, his magic abilities suffer terribly. Spells he can cast easily in a magical or faerie area fatigue him outside these lands. He tells himself that this restriction, too, is a God-given challenge and that perhaps he can develop a new type of magic that he can use anywhere. This goal, however, is much more daunting than healing himself.

Stuck in his covenant, Martin has become a notable magic theoretician. He’s known not only for mastering Hermetic theory but for exceeding its traditional bounds. His spontaneous spells stretch the laws of Bonisagus (though they don’t actually break them). For instance, he can, at will, cast a spontaneous spell that lasts a day and a night rather than just until sunrise or sunset. His formulaic spells, however, all follow standard Hermetic parameters.

The distrust of non-Hermetic magic in House Bonisagus makes Martin something of an outsider among his colleagues.

Martin’s Apprentice

Martin’s apprentice has an unusual magical ability or two. Martin has either selected a youngster with this ability or induced such an ability in the apprentice through unorthodox experiments. (Such experiments may have unexpected and even unfortunate effects.)

Martin encourages curiosity in his apprentice. He tells him or her stories of distant lands, strange magic, and marvelous adventures.

Since Martin is loath to leave his covenant, he has his apprentice run errands for him. He or she may even investigate unusual magical phenomena for him. Martin might assign him or her to venture into dangerous areas with full-fledged magi or even to lead grogs and Companions on such a mission him or herself.

Martin’s Filius

A filius of Martin is likely to have not only strong laboratory skills but also spells and skills useful to travel and investigation. After all, fifteen years of apprenticeship under Martin means running a lot of errands, some of them difficult or perilous.

Martin’s filius serves his needs, investigates mysteries, and possibly tests new spells. He can’t order him or her around as he can an apprentice, but he generously rewards those who help him, and he has the status in the Order to help a filius advance.

Martin may have special assignments for his filius. For instance, he may arrange for him or her to relocate to a distant land to study magic there and report back to him about anything of note.

Story Idea

Martin has finally developed formulaic spells that stretch Hermetic rules. He offers to teach them to player-character magi without compensation if they simply promise to use them and report back to him about any unexpected results. These spells may give the magi an unexpected edge, or they may have subtle drawbacks.

Sodales (soh-DAH-lays): “Colleagues.”

Martin, Follower of Bonisagus

Age: 50; Apparent Age: 37; Size: 0; Confidence: 3

Poor health, twisted right leg, pale skin.

Characteristics

+4 Int (new ideas)	-2 Prs (unhealthy)
+2 Per (details)	0 Com
0 Str	+1 Dex (agile fingers)
0 Stm	-2 Qik (lame)

Virtues & Flaws

Affinity (+2, semi-Hermetic magic)	Blatant Gift
Follows Bonisagus	Compulsion (curiosity)
Inventive Genius	Delet. Circumstances (when not in a magic or faerie aura, severe)
Magic Sensitivity	Lame
Fragile Constitution	

Personality Traits

+3 Dreamer	+1 Curious
+2 Energetic	-3 Brave
+2 Loyal	

Reputation

5 Lab Rat Bonisagus (Order)

Abilities

1 Alertness	2 Finesse	4 Magic Sensitivity	1 Scan
3 Certamen	1 Folk Ken	10 Magic Theory	5 Scribe Latin
3 Chirurgery	3 Hermes History	2 Meditation	1 Search
2 Concentration	3 Hermes Lore	2 Own Tribunal Lore	5 Speak Latin
1 Etiquette	1 Magical Affinity	3 Parma Magica	4 Speak Own Language

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Ist</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: 2</i>
Hand	-2	-2	0	0	Soak: 0
					Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

10 Cr	9 An	5 Ig
16 In	5 Aq	7 Im
7 Mu	5 Au	8 Me
7 Pe	12 Co	7 Te
9 Re	7 He	10 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 0
 Twilight Points: 5
 Effects of Twilight: Magic Sensitivity by smell
 Wizard's Sigil: The sound of a dragged foot

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+21/35) Seven-League Stride	(+26/20) Perceive Magical Scent	(+25/15) Whispering Winds
(+28/30) Eye of the Sage	(+15/20) Pilum of Fire	(+16/10) Alleviate the Serpent's Bite
(+26/30) Sense of Lingering Magic	(+19/20) Soothe Pains of Beast	(+17/10) CHANGE THE NATURE OF VIS
(+23/25) Converse w/Plants & Trees	(+25/20) Tongue of the Beasts	(+23/10) Eyes of the Eons
(+26/25) Invisible Eye Revealed	(+25/20) Tongue of the Birds	(+25/10) Investigate Air*
(+24/25) Posing the Silent Question	(+25/20) Tongue of the Fish	(+23/10) Investigate Plants*
(+23/25) Summon Distant Images	(+17/20) Wizard's Communion	(+15/10) Lamp Without Flame
(+24/25) Thoughts Within Babble	(+16/20) Wizard's Sidestep	(+26/10) SENSE THE NATURE OF VIS
(+21/25) Words of Flickering Flame	(+19/15) Chamber of Spring Br.	(+21/10) Subtle Taste Poison & Purity
(+22/20) Chirurgeon's Healing	(+19/15) Confound Connection	(+21/10) Tales of the Ashes
(+23/20) Ear for Distant Voice	(+17/15) Gather Essence of Beast	(+22/5) Charm Against Putrefaction
(+23/20) Eyes of the Past	(+23/15) Investigate Earth*	(+28/5) Physician's Eye
(+28/20) Inexorable Search	(+26/15) SCALES OF MAGICAL WT.	(+16/5) UNSEEN ARM
(+21/20) Lift the Dangling Puppet	(+28/15) Whispers Black Gate	(+26/5) Wizard's Subtle Touch

*This spell allows the caster to sense the properties of the named element or substance. The higher the level, the more information the spell provides.



Martin

Martin dreams of travel and adventure, but he rarely ventures outside his covenant.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOUSE CRIAMON

Motto: *Mundus internus mundus externus.* (The world within is the world without.)

Symbol: The symbol for infinity, within a circle, within a square. The square represents all the members of the House, the circle represents the central clutch, and the infinity symbol represents the current primus of the House.

Criamon: KREE-ah-mone

“WHEN MOLINAR ENTERED THE ROOM, OUR AWE WAS NOT CONTAINED. HIS WRINKLED VISAGE GAVE LIFE TO THE SYMBOLS ETCHED INTO HIS SKIN. HIS BRIGHT EYES SUMMED UP HIS TALE TO US, AND SOON HIS VOICE WOULD ALLOW US THE DETAILS. BOTH OF HIS HANDS FORMED THE SYMBOL OF VIM, AS DID OURS. HE SLOWLY DREW HIS FINGERTIPS TOGETHER, SYMBOLICALLY UNIFYING ALL MAGIC, AS DID WE. I COULD SEE THE MARKS OF TWILIGHT ON HIS PALMS: TWO ON HIS LEFT, ONE ON HIS RIGHT. THEN HE APPROACHED THE TABLE AROUND WHICH WE WERE STANDING, AND HE SAT DOWN. WE DID NOT, GIVING UP OUR OWN COMFORT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE HONOR OF HEARING HIS TALE.

“IT WAS A LONG WHILE BEFORE HE SPOKE.

“IT SEEMS THAT THE ORDER IS AS THE MOON: IT STARTED AS A SMALL CONSIDERATION, THEN IT WAXED, ENCOMPASSING ALL AROUND AND SHINING FORTH ONTO THE MORTAL WORLD. IT HAD A FACE; IT WAS ALIVE WITH PATTERNS, INDIVIDUALLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT WHEN IT WAS VIEWED AS A WHOLE, MY . . . IT WAS ASTOUNDING. NOW IT IS WANING; THE LIGHT IS WEAK, THE SCRIPT BEING MASKED IN DARKNESS. WHEN THE MOON CAN NO LONGER BE SEEN, ALL UPON IT WILL PERISH. WE CAN NO LONGER STAY ON THE MOON. WE MUST GO TO THE EARTH, WHERE WE WATCH THE PHASES OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES, AND WATCH AS THE SYMBOLS GROW AND DIE. TO BE AFAR, YET STILL SEE—THAT IS WIZARD’S TWILIGHT.’

“MOLINAR BREATHED SLOWLY FOR A MOMENT, THEN ROSE. HE SALUTED US AND WE HIM. MY ENVIOUS GAZE AT THE TWILIGHT MARKS WAS NOT UNNOTICED BY HIM. HIS EYES SPOKE TO ME: ‘WORRY NOT, YOUNG PRESÁGE. YOUR TWILIGHT WILL BE SOON.’ THIS FILLED MY HEART WITH EAGERNESS—I HAVE NOT YET EXPERIENCED TWILIGHT.

“HE LEFT US TO PONDER HIS WORDS. EVEN AS I WRITE THIS, MY TALENT FOR DARK PROPHECY HAS SET MY MIND REELING WITH THE IMAGES HE LEFT. I HAVEN’T YET THE ANSWER, BUT WHEN I DO, I WILL SEEK OUT MOLINAR, THE MAGUS OF THREE TWILIGHTS, AND HE WILL SPEAK TO ME AGAIN.”

—FROM *TALES OF AN ADEPT* BY PRESÁGE OF HOUSE CRIAMON



Undeniably the strangest of all the magi who founded the Order was Criamon. He considered magic a pathway to discovering the “Enigma.” From his writings, the Enigma sometimes seems like a universal principle, sometimes like a metaphor for human thought, and sometimes like a deity.

His followers in the Order all pursue knowledge of the Enigma, and to describe this search they have developed a philosophy that is incomprehensible to outsiders. They consider magi who are interested in power or mundane knowledge to be petty. They call using magic to gain mundane power “cutting butter with a broadsword.” As brilliant as they are, their discoveries are so obscure that they are rarely of interest to magi of other Houses. The arcane symbols they mark on their bodies add to their reputation of outlandishness within the Order.

The previous two primi of Criamon predicted climactic struggles within the Order some time in the 13th century, perhaps resulting in its destruction. The current prima says that the Order is about to “die,” though what this means admits some interpretation.

HISTORY

Criamon had little to do with the founding of the Order. He saw the Order as a positive step because once it was founded he would no longer fear the intrusions of other magi, and he was instrumental in getting the Code to recognize the importance of a magus’s privacy, something that Criamon magi guard jealously. Criamon was lost to the world some time in the 9th century, probably to wizard’s

Twilight; but the Criamon magi are not sharing the details of his passing, and many of them don’t know the details themselves.

Criamon’s successor as prima of the House was Juliasta, one of his filii. Intent on gathering new material for research, she broke the pattern of secrecy by traveling among the prominent covenants of the time and sharing information with the masters of various fields. She gave her House the broad base of knowledge that other Houses enjoy, but primi after her went back to Criamon’s secretive ways. Nevertheless, a minority of Criamon magi follow Juliasta’s example and seek to open the secrecy of this House.

Verderis, the third primus of the House, wrote *The Travels of Fedoso*, a long tale in simple verse that tells the story of a youth traveling about the land, encountering mystical obstacles and allies and eventually coming to rest on a mountaintop. It has been accepted as a classic in the Order, and many apprentices (including all those of Criamon) learn Latin by reading it. The tale is obviously allegorical, but what it represents is still a common topic of debate.

Some say that it represents the apprenticeship of a magus, the mountaintop being a symbol for magical mastery. Others say that the land through which Fedoso travels is his own mind. And still others say the story is a prophetic tale of the Order itself (it seems to have predicted both the diabolic infestation of House Tytalus and the Schism War, depending on how it is interpreted).

A few magi outside House Criamon shun *The Travels of Fedoso* and refuse to teach it to their apprentices, fearing that hidden symbolism might influence them without their knowledge. They say that the tale may have caused the Schism War and the diabolism in Tytalus instead of predicting them.

In the 11th century, Nuinsil of Criamon traveled among the Muslims in southern Iberia, northern Africa, and the lands to the east. Here he shared his wisdom with Sufis, scholars, and other wise men. Before this journey, the philosophies of the followers of Criamon had become stagnant; now, with the influx of new ideas, the followers of Criamon are once again involved in vital debates and explorations. Many Criamon magi travel to Muslim lands to speak with the wise there, hoping to learn more.

Several points in *The Travels of Fedoso* are open to interpretation and debate. Magi discuss them with their apprentices to exercise critical thought. The four classic questions, which even scholars disagree on, are:

Did Fedoso believe the demon, or just pretend to?

When Fedoso ate faeries’ bread, how did his appearance change?

What ghost haunted Fedoso as he traveled through the Iron Wood?

How long did Fedoso’s journey take?

NOTABLE MAGI OF CRIAMON

Criamon: An illusion-master, founder.

Juliasta: The first prima, who gathered magical information from other Houses.

Verderis: Third primus, author of *The Travels of Fedoso*.

Iamitu'krielle: A maga from the 9th century who disappeared but who reappears periodically, speaking strange prophecies—easily recognized by the ponderous bronze-headed staff she bears and the mark of infinity branded on her forehead.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Sixty-one.

Prima: La, an old woman, who moves about entirely by magic. She says the Order will die soon, but her symbol for the Order is an egg, and she is fond of saying, “The egg dies when the chick hatches.”

Domus magna: Cave of Twisting Shadows, in the Rhine Tribunal. Somewhere hidden in the Alps is a deep cave where Criamon lived and formed his central clutch. It remains the seat of power in House Criamon, where the prima lives and conducts research with the best minds in the House. It is filled with the ghosts of former Criamon magi, and the prima of the House can, at will, call any dead primus (except Criamon himself) and have the ghost possess her so that the former primus can cast spells, discuss philosophy and magic, and so on. If a primus is lost to Twilight, he or she cannot return as a ghost, so a primus nearing Twilight is ritually executed to assure that he or she remains in this world, at least as a ghost.

Current concerns: All Criamon magi are urged to be on guard for the big events soon to shake the Order and report them to the Cave of Twisting Shadows. From time to time a clutch or individual follower of Criamon may be given an obscure assignment related to the impending events.

Criamon magi are not much interested in sharing information with those outside their House. Indeed, even within the House these magi tend to follow private dreams and visions. As much as Criamon magi might protect them-

selves from peering eyes, their knowledge is of little interest to outsiders, even to other Criamon magi, because it is highly individualistic and filled with personal symbols and riddles.

Criamon magi do not seek power in its typical sense; rather, they seek the underlying meaning and nature of magic. To what precise end these secluded magi aim their arcane studies few understand, but occasionally they speak of coming to know the universe, of understanding the meaning of life, and of going beyond the limits imposed on them by their bodies and minds.

Power, in and of itself, is not important to them, whether it be magical or mundane. They treat it with the disdain with which most magi treat money. Power is useful because often wisdom is incorporated with it or because it can allow the magus to obtain more wisdom. The Criamon magi regard power for its own sake, however, to be even more ludicrous than sex, which they consider to be very ludicrous.

The secrecy of the House has led some to speculate that Criamon magi are diabolists, but proof of these allegations has not been found.

Criamon magi are easy to identify, because they are given permanent markings on their bodies when they become magi. Sometimes these markings designate the type of magic in which the magus is most gifted, and sometimes they refer to more obscure qualities; but they always use symbols foreign to the Order at large.

The apprentice's gauntlet consists of solving a difficult riddle to one's master's satisfaction.

Entrance to the House is gained only by those who solve several classic riddles, and few even try to gain entry in the first place.

MAGI OF CRIAMON

Mentality of a Criamon Magus

Your master has given you the greatest of gifts: magic. The only thing greater than magic is understanding, and that cannot be given. That you must seek. Magic is your best tool for carrying out your search. While mortals are trapped by their limited bodies, their weak eyes, and their stunted minds, you are free to overcome all your limits. Magic is not petty; use it not for petty ends.

“Give three accurate and contradictory interpretations of House Criamon's symbol.”

—a sample apprentice's gauntlet

You have been taught to use magic as a means to wisdom. Be sensitive to everything that is happening around you, for you never know what messages are carried on spring breezes, whispered in travelers' inns, or formed in the clouds above. While others are seeking power, seek something deeper: understanding.

You no doubt have some peculiar view of the world, a way of seeing shared only by your master and a few other Criamon magi, if by anyone else at all. Follow your dreams and ideas, for they will be a surer guide than any words given you as advice.

Priorities

- 1) Seek personal wisdom.
- 2) Seek wisdom for your clutch.
- 3) Seek wisdom for your House.
- 4) Aid the Order.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They take their magic to heart, but they do not let it take them beyond.
- **Bonisagus:** Brilliant shipwrights, pathetic sailors.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** Delightful variety.
- **Flambeau:** Hot fingers and cool minds.
- **Jerbiton:** They are incredibly foolish; they harken to the noises of the mundanes.
- **Mercere:** Poor, stunted magi; how poignant that they are around those who can study the Enigma but are denied the ability themselves.
- **Merinita:** If any House knows something we do not, it may be this House.
- **Quaesitoris:** Servants we've hired to protect our privacy.
- **Tremere:** They yap about who is above and who is below; they neglect what is within.
- **Tytalus:** They could be wise if they could defeat themselves.
- **Verditius:** Their hearts are in their magic, rather than the reverse.
- **The Church:** Those who speak speak foolishness. Those who listen hear the Enigma.
- **Nobility:** Petty, petty, petty.
- **Commoners:** Who?
- **Faeries:** Perhaps they are magi who entered the Enigma ages ago.
- **Demons:** They have been denied access to Truth and, out of envy, they try to deceive us and keep us from discovering the Enigma.

Intra-House Relations

Be ready to serve your fellows in the House and, even if you do not understand what is required of you, carry out your orders and pay

attention. Your parents will call on you frequently, as you will some day call on your own filii. Age and seniority signify wisdom; obey your elders.

If you have left your clutch, you must use your time away from other followers of Criamon wisely. Your job is to find ideas, thoughts, and experiences, and to carry them some day back to your clutch. Experiment, explore, experience.

Most Criamon magi stick close to their clutches, working with the same magi for decades, though some move about to other clutches where they could learn or teach more. Young Criamon magi are especially likely to leave their clutches and go out into the world. They live and work in covenants with non-Criamon magi and try to learn about the world. The theory is that by gaining real-life experience, they will have a richer life of research when, in their later years, they join a clutch and spend their time steeped in the mysteries of magic.

Riddles and Markings

Each Criamon magus is given a riddle or saying from his or her parents to contemplate and study. When the filius solves the riddle, the pater gives him or her a new one. Most of these sayings are invented by the parents for the individual student, but some are classics given to many students. A magus typically spends one to seven years on a given riddle, but Criamon magi who are outside of their clutch may take longer. Those magi whose parents have died may get riddles to study from the primus.

As a Criamon magus, you have been given a riddle (which either the GM, you the player, or some other player must invent). Part of your goal is to understand this saying. Unlike standard riddles, these sayings defy verbal explanation. You convince your parents that you understand the riddle by demonstrating that you have truly taken its meaning to heart, though you won't be able to explain with words what the riddle means, especially not to someone else who understands it. Solving a riddle requires a combination of thought, feeling, and real-life experience. Criamon magi often look to the world around them for clues about their inner life and their riddles. (Storyguides should include events in their stories that might relate to the riddles of

Example Criamon riddles:

Make the sky green.
Turn each Art inside out.
Trust yourself last.
It comforts with pain.

"Hungry thriving, thirsty dying"—this is one riddle used to teach an apprentice the magical Arts. Remember, a verbal answer to the riddle is no answer at all.

Criamon player characters.) When you think you understand your riddle, you may approach your parens with the answer. If your parens accepts your solution, he or she will give you another riddle. (Solving the riddle should be roleplayed out in the way in which you are most comfortable.)

These puzzle-sayings are integral to Criamon apprenticeship, and a standard saying is used to teach each Art. When an apprentice solves a saying, the master puts a mark on his or her body as a symbol for having passed one stage in mental and magical development, so every Criamon magus has at least sixteen marks: one for each Art learned, plus another for the riddle solved in becoming a magus. A parens continues to mark a filius for puzzles solved as a magus.

For every puzzle-saying solved, a character gains 1 experience point in Enigmatic Wisdom. (The fifteen introductory sayings that an apprentice learns magic from do not count, because they teach magic, not wisdom. The puzzle solved to become a magus is already part of your Enigmatic Wisdom score.)

A master also puts marks on the apprentice's face during the ritual that transforms the apprentice into a magus. These marks are usually personal symbols relating to the apprentice's specialties in magic or philosophy.

Magic

Followers of Criamon prefer spells of Imáginem, Intéllego, and Mentem. Anything that allows them to learn more, speak with spirits, divine the past, or control their own minds is seen as valuable.

Because of their intense association with magic, Criamon magi are much more likely than other magi to suffer wizard's Twilight. Through their knowledge, however, they are sometimes able to turn this threatening experience into a chance to grow.

The Sign of Unfolding Wisdom (Muto Corpus 10)

Spell Focus: Having undergone Twilight in the last week (+7)

R: Touch, D: Spec.

The caster's finger becomes capable of drawing an indelible mark on another's (or one's own) body. The spell permits the drawing of one symbol, which might be very large or very complex and can be of



“Great chains of iron bind mortals to this small, dull world, and all but the most fortunate few content themselves with what pitiful freedom these chains permit them. The Gift, which allows you to work magic, is the strength and will to strain these chains to their limit and to break them. Already you have broken seven of the smaller chains, and even though the heaviest ones are as strong as ever, you count yourself as free as the wind and powerful as the sea. But in years to come you will burst bond after bond, and with each success you will move farther and farther from this world of matter to which you are now shackled. Finally, one day, if your destiny plays itself out, you shall sunder the final chain and travel without hindrance wheresoever you will, leaving your amici and sodales behind. We who follow Criamon will nod with understanding, while those of lesser wisdom will weep at the sight of shattered links of iron.”

—Verderis of Criamon, explaining Twilight to his apprentice

many different, vivid colors. Criamon masters and parentes use it on their apprentices and filii to symbolize achievement of wisdom.

Waking Dream (Intéllego Mentem 15)

Spell Focus: A mirror (+1)

R: Reach, D: Sun., Ritual, Req: Creo, Imáginem

This spell looks into the target's mind and creates phantasms to represent the thoughts, fears, desires, and so forth found within. One after another, phantasms form, taking their shape from the mind of the spell's target. A rational target produces realistic images, while a dreamy target produces fantastic, symbolic, and abstract images. Visionaries may produce prophetic images. The more concerns one has, the greater the number of phantasms that appear.

Seeing your thoughts as phantasms, you have the chance to confront and possibly overcome them. You must interact with the phantasm in a way appropriate to it; if successful, you overcome it, understand it, accept it, or do whatever is appropriate. In game terms you must make a Personality Trait roll against the phantasm, and the phantasm rolls with a bonus equal to another Personality Trait or some number set according to the gravity of the phantasm. Once a roll is made, either successfully or unsuccessfully, the phantasm disappears, and the character can face another. A successful confrontation changes the mind of the dreamer accordingly, such as freeing him or her from a fear or obsession. An unsuccessful confrontation may well worsen the situation. (Some Personality Traits are nearly impossible to overcome, including most that are serious enough to be regarded as Flaws.) This experience must be thoroughly roleplayed, not merely roll-played.

Exempli Gratia

Visorn undergoes the *Waking Dream* in an effort to confront the fear he has of a faerie lord. The image of the faerie lord appears looming over Visorn, and a host of smaller concerns gathers around him. Visorn gathers his resolve and yells at the faerie phantasm, trying to demonstrate his bravery. The player rolls Visorn's +2 Brave + 3 Cnf against a roll of a die +9 (set high because the faerie lord had given Visorn a supernatural fright when last they met). Visorn fails the roll and the phantasm vanishes, but Visorn's master says that, by viewing the *Waking Dream*, he has discerned that Visorn should travel to the faerie hills of Uzby, there to learn more about why the faerie lord frightens him so.

Anyone experienced with this spell (or with interpreting dreams) might be able to interpret the phantasms, while the target might be at a loss to understand what the symbolic images stand for. Within House Criamon, this ritual is used in trials to determine the inner nature of the magi in question.

There is no Muto requisite for the spell, because the dreamer's mind is changed through the normal "magic" of the mind, not through Hermetic magic.

The Enigma's Gift (Creo Vim 30)

Spell Focus: Anything left behind by a magus who disappeared in Twilight (+3)

R: Touch, D: Inst.

Causes the target to undergo a wizard's Twilight. To cast it, you must simultaneously make a stress roll on Enigmatic Wisdom of 6+ or you, instead of the target, suffer Twilight. The spell is sometimes used as a punishment, and if the victim survives, he or she is deemed worthy and no longer guilty of past transgressions.

Criamon magi interpret their use of Creo Vim spells, which are very rare, to be evidence that they know more about magic than other Houses do.

HOUSE CRIAMON IN PLAY

Saga Idea

The player characters, unknown to all, are each magically linked to certain characters in *The Travels of Fedoso*. *The Travels of Fedoso* predicts their fates, and strange things happen in their lives, reflecting "fictitious" events. These events can involve mysterious strangers, weird transformations, magical phenomena, and odder things.

By realizing their link to *The Travels of Fedoso*, the characters can find out something about their fates, their powers, and their weaknesses. (The storyguide may have the players determine what they find in *The Travels of Fedoso*, in order to give them the power to shape their characters' fates, or he or she can determine what they find.)

For example, a player's character may be linked to a character in *The Travels of Fedoso* who kills her father and accidentally helps a demon escape destruction. The player's character is fated to kill someone who is linked to the character of the father and to aid the person linked to the figure of the demon, but who these people are remains unknown.

Another player's character may be linked to a character in *The Travels of Fedoso* who is a mighty warrior. Even if the player's character had few combat abilities, this connection may turn him or her into a warrior. Or perhaps the warrior abilities function only when the player's character is undertaking actions linked to those in *The Travels of Fedoso*.

The actions of the characters in *The Travels of Fedoso* lead to a culmination of some kind: perhaps a confrontation with Fedoso, a climactic battle whose resolution remains unclear, or a key role in the conclusion of *The Travels of Fedoso*. The players' characters may be eager to approach the culmination or wary of it, and other magi who find out about the players' characters' "true identities" may aid or oppose them.

Even after the players' characters determine their respective roles in *The Travels of Fedoso*, a mystery remains: Who is Fedoso? Another person? The Order? Criamon?

Linking Companions and grogs to characters in *The Travels of Fedoso* can give them unprecedented importance and clout in the Order. Likewise, young magi may find they have unexpected sway thanks to their role in fulfilling the prophecies. The power shifts that result will make good roleplaying.

Story Ideas

- A Criamon magus pays the characters to consult a strange oracle or a *weird*, giving them directions, and perhaps the key, necessary to gain access to the oracle's wisdom. In addition to asking the obscure questions suggested by the Criamon magus, the characters can ask a few of their own.
- Iamitu'krielle comes to the covenant and gives a warning of impending doom, then disappears. The characters must decipher the symbolism she used, to understand her warning and save themselves. They have to refer to *The Travels of Fedoso* and journey to a magical place to get the answers.

CONQUER, FOLLOWER OF CRIAMON

Conquer is one of the few elder magi who looks at least as old as he is. He is gnarled, wrinkled, and shriveled, and terse in his speech. He moves about in an ornate, metal chair that he has enchanted to carry him, and

his movements are slow, deliberate, and infrequent. Arcane markings decorate his face, hands, and legs (as well, no doubt, as other parts of his body that his robes cover).

Conquer is in constant pain as a result of Twilight, but he regards the pain as a gift. The pain increases as he moves, and he finds relief only in sleep and trance. "I'm more aware of each movement than a dancer is," he says. "A servant with a gentle master will never seek freedom" is another favored saying of his.

Despite his disturbing appearance, Conquer enjoys the esteem of his sodales, especially those in House Criamon.

Conquer possesses a long-legged iron chair that, guided by the silent direction of his will, has the ability to walk about on its articulated legs as quickly as a man walks. He can make this chair walk as often as he likes and for as long as he likes. It may walk up and down steps and across rough terrain without threat of falling, but does so very slowly. It can carry his weight, but little more without being seriously slowed. The chair is also under the effects of a spell that prevents it from being disenchanting or otherwise affected by magic.

Conquer's Apprentice

Conquer puts his apprentice through trials in which he or she is deprived of faculties. For instance, he may force his apprentice to wear a blindfold while learning *Intéllego*, or tie the apprentice to a chair and leave food out of reach when he or she is learning *Rego*. Depending on the apprentice's personality and maturity and on the difficulty of the current trial, he or she may hate Conquer or respect him deeply.

Conquer's Filius

Like Conquer, a filius might have a weakness or handicap. For instance, the magus may be voluntarily deaf or lame. In a more extreme case, Conquer might have inflicted a character with a permanent Flaw, which is meant to help the filius pursue the Enigma even as it hinders in other endeavors.

A rebellious filius might reject Conquer's philosophy and revel in things physical and sensual. Or the filius might pursue pain and difficulty out of a shallow desire to emulate Conquer rather than for deeper and more authentic reasons.

Weird: A woman who prophesies, or who possesses other attributes of the Fates.

Magical abilities of Conquer's chair:

Movement: ReTe 30, unlimited use, works for Conquer alone, affects only the chair.

Control: InMe 15, constant use, works for him alone, circumvents his *parma magica*.

Magical protection: ReVi 60, affects only the chair. This spell gives it a +60 Magic Resistance that must be overcome by the caster's Penetration.

Conquer, Follower of Criamon

Age: 61; Apparent Age: 61; Size: -1; Confidence: 4

Gnarled, wrinkled, shriveled small man in an ornate metal chair. Arcane markings on his face, hands, and legs.

Characteristics

+3 Int (clear-thinking)	-2 Prs (pain-wracked)
+3 Per (discerning)	-2 Com (uncomm.)
-3 Str (feeble)	-1 Dex (arthritic)
+4 Stm (incredible will)	-1 Qik (arthritic)

Virtues & Flaws

Book Learner	Enfeebled
Hermetic Prestige	No Familiar
Affinity (pain)	
Side Effect (all near feel pain linked to spell level)	
Strong-Willed	
Strong Writer	

Personality Traits

+4 Brave	+1 Stubborn
+2 Considerate	-1 Gentle
+2 Harsh	

Reputation

2 Cruel (Order of Hermes)
2 Manipulator (home covenant)
3 Wise (House Criamon)

Abilities

3 Alertness	2 Folk Ken	7 Magic Theory	3 Scribe Greek
3 Certámen	2 Guile	2 Meditation	5 Scribe Latin
2 Church Lore	3 Hermes History	2 Occult Lore	2 Search
6 Concentration	2 Hermes Lore	7 Parma Magica	3 Speak Arabic
2 Debate	2 Hermetic Law	2 Penetration	3 Speak Greek
4 Enigmatic Wisdom	4 Humanities	2 Pretend	6 Speak Latin
2 Faerie Lore	3 Intrigue	2 Scan	4 Speak Vulgar
2 Fantastic Beast Lore	2 Legend Lore	3 Scribe Arabic	2 Subterfuge
2 Finesse	5 Magical Affinity (pain)		

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: 0</i>
Hand	-1	-1	+1	-3	Soak: +3
					Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

9 Cr	10 An	11 Ig
11 In	9 Aq	9 Im
12 Mu	10 Au	15 Me
13 Pe	14 Co	7 Te
8 Re	6 He	12 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
 Twilight Points: 9
 Effects of Twilight: Increased understanding (may write to 4/5 Co); pain (see text)
 Wizard's Sigil: A faint dimming of nearby lights

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+20/30) Enchant. of Scrying Pool	(+27/15) Enchant. of Detach.	(+22/10) Parching Wind
(+23/25) Curse of the Desert	(+18/15) Panic Eleph. Mouse	(+25/10) Rev. Flaws of Mortal Flesh
(+24/25) Weight of 1,000 Hells	(+18/15) Viper's Gaze	(+21/10) Shiver of the Lycanthrope
(+21/20) Talons of the Winds	(+25/15) WHISPERS BLACK GATE	(+25/10) Sight of the True Form
(+22/15) Awake Slumbering Corpse	(+27/15) Wound That Weeps	(+26/5) Evil Eye
(+27/15) Confound the Connection	(+23/10) AGONY OF BEAST	(+27/5) Invocation of Weariness
(+27/15) DUST TO DUST	(+27/10) GRIP OF CHOK. HAND	(+25/5) Physician's Eye

Magic Items

Chair: Long-legged iron chair, can walk with the speed and skill of a man. Works for Conquer only. See text and sidebar, previous page, for details.



Conquer is in constant pain, so he moves about in his magic chair. He uses pain to understand the Enigma. The markings on his skin indicate which enigmatic riddles he has solved.



**CHAPTER FIVE:
HOUSE EX MISCELLANEA**



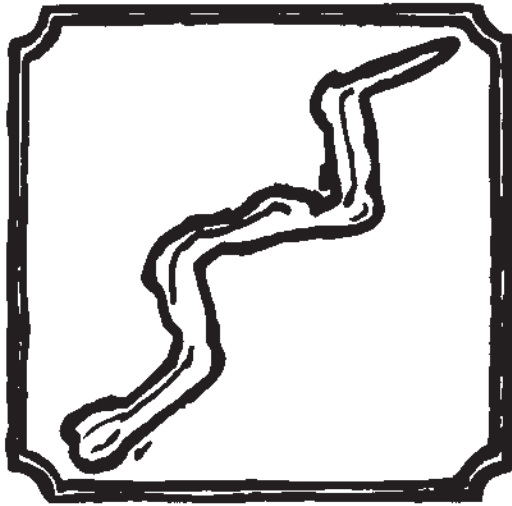
Motto: *Multitudo totum componet.*
(A whole is composed of many parts.)

Symbol: A crooked staff

Ex Miscellanea: EKS mis-kel-LAH-nay-ah. Since mastery of Latin is rare in this House, its name enjoys several alternate pronunciations.

“WE ARE WIZARDS. IF WE MUST
BE KNOWN AS HERMETIC
MAGI TO PRACTICE IN PEACE,
SO BE IT. IN TRUTH, WE SHALL
REMAIN AS WE ALWAYS WERE;
IT IS THEY WHO WILL CHANGE
BECAUSE OF US.”

—MELMERIS, SECOND PRIMUS OF HOUSE EX
MISCELLANEA



This large and diverse House is strongest in the British Isles, where it began. Most of the Ex Miscellanea magi mix Hermetic magic with their own exotic traditions. Exotic wizards who join the Order usually join Ex Miscellanea, which welcomes all who wish to come. Once in the Order, these magi are protected by the Code of Hermes, have access to Hermetic magic, and, in Ex Miscellanea, are free to follow their own traditions.

HISTORY

Ex Miscellanea owes its existence to an enemy of the Order, the dread wizard Dav'nalleous. His magic was based on blood and sacrifices, and gave him access to magic unknown to the Order of Hermes. He fought against the Order because it would restrict him and his bloody ways, but, outnumbered, he eventually had to flee to Scotland, where the Order had no members. Unwilling to leave such a threat to brood and grow, the Order dispatched Pralix, a senior filia of Tytalus, to deal with the menace. The wizards provided her with ample supplies of raw vis, and Verditius gave her the fabled Robes of Dusty Dawn to help her in her battle.

When Pralix arrived in Scotland, she led a force of Hermetic magi and half a hundred grogs. In the first battle with Dav'nalleous, however, her force was decimated. Unwilling to face Dav'nalleous

alone, she banded the local wizards together so they could fight him with a united front. It was hard work bringing together individualistic wizards, but she offered to teach them the *parma magica*, which was often inducement enough to get a given wizard to join her cause.

From the summer of 814 to the spring of 816, these wizards hunted Dav'nalleous down and finally destroyed him in the forest of Cad Gadu (or so they they thought, but as it turned out, many years later they found they had been mistaken). Pralix now found herself the leader of many wizards throughout the British Isles, many of whom were less than partial to the rigid Order of Hermes. Instead of returning to her House and Order, she declared herself independent, and christened her group the "Order of Miscellany." Some say that, true to her training under Tytalus, she hoped to create an Order that would be a perpetual rival of the Order of Hermes.

When Pralix's victory turned into the Order's defeat, the remaining members of the Order considered their options. Flambeau's House was ready to give battle in grand style, but the Tytalus prima, Hariste, had been a fellow apprentice with Pralix, and she argued against such a move. In the end, Trianoma, the force behind the original formation of the Order, traveled to Wales to negotiate with Pralix. They agreed that the organization of British wizards was a good thing, as was an Order that encompassed as many magi as possible. Finally Pralix won the admittance of Miscellany as a House with equal rights in the Order of Hermes, even though most of its wizards were of a power and philosophy not matching the standards set by the Latin-descended magi who founded the Order. She called her organization the House Ex Miscellanea.

Ex Miscellanea has remained a House mostly for magi of diverse and unorthodox backgrounds, a loose gathering of hedge wizards, druids, witches, seers, and so forth. They have adapted their magic to Hermetic ways to gain access to the spells of the Hermetic magi, but by and large they have retained a more spiritual outlook through the centuries.

Each primus Ex Miscellanea inherits the Robes of Dusty Dawn, a symbol of connection to Pralix. This is one of very few traditions of this House.

Dav'nalleous is the inaccurate but traditional transliteration of the name Damhan-allaidh (DAH-vahn-AHL-li), which is Scots Gaelic for "Spider."

Many of the members simply joined the Order or remain in it to have access to Hermetic magic and to keep themselves from being attacked by Hermetic magi. Their hearts remain in their respective traditions or beliefs, rather than with the Order as a whole. Many magi feel little connection even to the House itself, or to its members other than their masters and apprentices.

During the Schism War, this House tried its best to keep out of conflicts, to avoid the violence aimed at non-Latin wizards.

This House remains strongest in the British Isles, where Latin ways have never taken a strong hold, but its members are found throughout Europe as well. They are especially common on the outskirts of Europe—in the Novgorod Tribunal, for instance—where they can contact wizards of other traditions and offer them membership in the House.

Other magi in the Order look down on the members of House Ex Miscellanea, whose magic is generally weaker than that of more orthodox Hermetic magi. Power aside, the Ex Miscellanea magi get a bad reputation from their uncivilized ways. Some of them can't even read and write Latin. But if diversity is a strength, Ex Miscellanea is strong indeed.

NOTABLE MAGI EX

MISCELLANEA

Pralix: Founder of House Ex Miscellanea. The only founder of a House who was not also an original founder of the Order.

Firento: The primus who, in the 10th century, tried to bring the House together and get the members to accept more Hermetic magic and traditions. This campaign came to an abrupt end when he was slain while on a quest for the Spinning Pearls. It is now generally recognized that his murder was actually an assassination by members of his own House.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: One hundred and twenty-five (approximately).

Domus magna: Cad Gadu, in the Stonehenge Tribunal. Since it is unimportant even to members of the House, it has little influence.

Prima: Immanola, a crippled woman who is renowned for her patience and longevity. She wears the Robes of Dusty Dawn.

Current concerns: Immanola has read the signs, and she prophesies that the Order will fall or be severely shaken. In years past, she prepared members of the House to come to the British Isles, where they would isolate themselves from the rest of the Order. She hoped that these preparations would save her people when disaster came to the Order. Decades later, however, disaster still has not struck, and Immanola's reputation and clout have waned.

This House is spread out mostly on the outskirts of the Order, where its members need not bother with either mundane society nor Hermetic politics. Even within the House, members often have little to do with each other. The only true loyalties these magi have, if any, are to discrete traditions of magic within the House. For instance, House Ex Miscellanea has a line of witches within it, and these witches are loyal to each other while being largely indifferent to their House and Order.

Despite the unorthodoxy of Ex Miscellanea, few magi of other Houses fear it as a possible source of dissension. The House itself is too loosely organized to present a united effort in any task, and many regard its individual members as capable only of weak magic.

Masters set whatever apprentice's gauntlets they wish.

Entrance is granted to any who swear allegiance to the House and are not obviously dangerous.

A more detailed history of the war against Dav'nalleous and the formation of House Ex Miscellanea can be found in *Lion of the North*, the first *Ars Magica* book from Wizards of the Coast.

Some magi accuse House Ex Miscellanea of intentionally misrepresenting its membership. Some say they exaggerate their numbers to increase the House's influence, while others say they underreport their membership to get outsiders to underestimate their true power.

The Name “Ex Miscellanea”

The name of this House represents Pralix’s sense of humor: it means “out of hash.” Since “Ex” is a preposition, one rarely uses another preposition in front of it. For instance, a member is called “a magus Ex Miscellanea” (“a wizard out of hash”), not “a magus of Ex Miscellanea” (“a wizard of out of hash”). Many of the House’s members do not speak Latin well enough to know exactly what their name means. Perhaps that was Pralix’s joke on them and on herself.

Members of the House never call themselves “followers.” For one thing, the name of their House is not the name of their founder, so they couldn’t use the phrase “followers of Ex Miscellanea.” More importantly, these magi do not consider themselves to be related to their founder, Pralix. They follow their own masters and their own, unique lineages of magic. That they are members of a House founded by Pralix is a matter of convenience.

When creating a magus Ex Miscellanea, feel free to invent a new tradition to which the character belongs.

MAGI EX MISCELLANEA

Within the House there are several discrete traditions of magic, as well as many small clusters of like-minded magi and dozens of completely individualistic wizards who share little in common with other magi. To describe the “average magus Ex Miscellanea,” therefore, is impossible. Instead, here are a few notes for Ex Miscellanea magi in general and then more details for three major lines of magic within the House.

Magi Ex Miscellanea in General

Mentality of a Magus Ex Miscellanea

You regard your personal traditions and interests as paramount. The affairs of other magi are not of your

concern. At best, they will leave you alone, since at least nominally you are a member of the Order.

Priorities of a Magus Ex Miscellanea

- 1) Follow your own tradition or interests.
- 2) Preserve the rights and independence of the House.

Outlook

- **Quaesitoris:** Meddlesome fools.
- **Other Hermetic magi:** If they leave you alone, you’re happy.
- **Nobles, the Church, commoners:** Opinions vary.

Intra-House Relations

House Ex Miscellanea provides you a place in the Order and thereby gives you the protection of the Code. In turn, your primus may occasionally ask something of you, but not much. You need not deal with your sodales, other than the magi in your line of magic.

Virtues and Flaws

As per individual or tradition; nothing is typical.

Abilities

Many of these magi have low scores in Magic Theory, Speak Latin, Scribe Latin, Hermes History, and Hermes Lore. Many of them, however, have vast knowledge of exotic lore.

Magic

As per individual or tradition; no spells are typical.

Spirit Masters

These magi are adept at controlling magical creatures, such as ghosts, elementals, faeries, and even demons. They

have gathered strange secrets from ghosts and spirits over the years and have become mysterious and weird. They are obsessed with power and often try to dominate beings that are beyond them. Other magi generally suspect them of diabolism, and not without some cause.

Mentality of a Spirit Master

Your master learned dark secrets from long conversations with the dead and with magical beings, and he or she shared this secret knowledge with you. Your goal is to gain power over other creatures and gain more knowledge from them.

Priorities of a Spirit Master

- 1) Gain personal power.
- 2) Preserve the memories and traditions of one's forebears.

Outlook

- **Other Hermetic magi:** Few of them know what true power is.
- **The Church:** They wield power over the weak.
- **Mundane society:** The mundanes are blind, deaf, and dumb.
- **Faeries:** Marvelous creatures, but slippery servants.
- **Demons:** Just one more will to bend to one's own.

Intra-lineage Relations

Beware the other spirit masters, for they recognize the value of your secrets, and they covet them.

Magic

These magi specialize in spells to summon, control, and ward off ghosts, faeries, and elementals. As Hermetic magi, they are forbidden to deal with demons, but many believe them to give little thought to the Code.

Occasionally rumors have surfaced that the spirit masters are after ancient secrets that demons, faeries, elementals, and ancient ghosts may possess. Perhaps they seek the secret of immortality or the power to become free-willed, eternal spirit creatures.

All spirit masters have the Virtue of Affinity with Spirit Creatures. This Affinity gives the character an Ability that affects all spells that directly involve elementals, ghosts, faeries, demons, and other creatures that are somehow spiritual in nature.

Hermetic Witches

Bonisagus pared magic down to its barest, most functional common elements. The witches of House Ex Miscellanea, however, hail from an ancient tradition for which the heart is as important as the head. They bring passion to the cold and calculated Hermetic magic.

There are thirteen Hermetic witches, including apprentices, at any given time. When one member is lost, a newcomer is accepted into "the Grove." Usually the newcomer is an apprentice, but sometimes he or she is a mature witch from outside the Order. (Witches practicing more traditional magic are more common than Hermetic witches, and the two groups get along well.) Most Hermetic witches are women, because the Grove was closed to men until A.D. 1156, the year that the Grove decided to accept men.

Witches practice a sensual magic that includes drumming, dancing, sex, song, herbs, flowers, candles, wands, chalices, ecstatic ritual, and wild animism. Their magic and rituals follow the natural cycles of the earth, and the "quarter days" (solstices and equinoxes) are magical for them.

Mentality of a Hermetic Witch

Magic is the power of life, and you honor life and revel in it through your magic.

The term "witch" applies equally to men and women. The term "warlock" means "oath-breaker" and is an insult.

Hermetic witches incorporate age-old practices into their rites. The Grove consists of thirteen members.

Illus. © 1994 Susan Van Camp



Priorities of a Hermetic Witch

- 1) Honor and serve the forces of nature.
- 2) Increase one's own wisdom and power.

Outlook

- **Other Hermetic Magi:** All head and no heart.
- **Faeries:** Good people of the woods.
- **Demons:** Abominations.
- **The Church:** Cut off from the energy of the world.
- **Nobles:** Those who lead the people are blessed; those who steal from them are accursed.
- **Commoners:** Their lot is the proper concern of us all.

Intra-lineage Relations

You know the other twelve Hermetic witches and have conducted rituals with them. They help you and teach you as you help and teach them. You may have traveled far from your fellow witches, but you are still considered part of the Grove.

Magic

Hermetic witches have learned standard Hermetic techniques, but their powers are affected by their naturalistic background.

All Hermetic witches have the following Virtues and Flaws:

Cyclic Magic. (Bonuses and penalties based on cycles of nature. Cycles that correspond to the lunar cycle are common, as are those based on the turn of the seasons.)

Bonus with Potions, +1. Bonus of +5 on all rolls to make potions.

Slow Spontaneous Magic, -2. To cast a spontaneous spell, a witch must spend one minute for every potential level of the spell. The roll is made normally, but the level of the spontaneous spell is limited to the number of minutes spent in preparation. Preparation includes such activities as burning herbs, chanting, making repetitive and rhythmic motions, sprinkling special dusts, and so on. A witch without

the proper paraphernalia cannot cast spontaneous spells.

Some Hermetic witches are Hermetic in name only, having been trained in magic under traditional witches. These witches use a different system of magic from that used by Hermetic magi.

Beast Mages

These wizards center their magic around animals.

Mentality of a Beast Mage

Animals are strong and powerful. By working with them, commanding them, and even becoming like them, you can share in their power and beauty.

Priorities

- 1) Be strong.
- 2) Protect the good and natural from the twisted and evil.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** Potential comrades.
- **Other Hermetic magi:** Disinterest.
- **Mundanes:** Contempt.

Intra-lineage Relations

Beast mages establish a “pecking order” within their lineage. There are few enough beast mages that they all know each other, and every beast mage is part of the pecking order.

Magic

Beast mages use animal magic. Many of them are good at transforming people (including themselves) into animals. All beast mages have the following Virtues:

Affinity with Animál, +3.

Bonus with Familiars, +1. You get +10 points when determining the strength of the three cords for your familiar.

HOUSE EX MISCELLANEA IN PLAY

Saga Idea

The shapeshifters of the lineage that has been the perennial enemy of House Bjornaer join House Ex Miscellanea en masse. These new members of the Order alter the politics of the Order in several ways. First, they increase House Ex Miscellanea’s membership from about 125 to over 150. Their extra votes carry a lot of weight, especially in areas where they are concentrated or where powers are evenly balanced.

What do the shapeshifters want? They claim they simply want to be part of the Order rather than hiding from it, but the Bjornaer magi are sure that their apparent goodwill is a ruse. Perhaps the shapeshifters intend to defeat House Bjornaer violently, or perhaps they intend to defeat it politically, even if such a victory would take time to achieve. Finally, they may actually want nothing more than the safety and knowledge that comes with being Hermetic wizards.

How does House Bjornaer react to this threat? Within months of their joining, the shapeshifters will have learned the parma magica and will be more powerful than ever. Can House Bjornaer afford to wait for that day, or do they force a confrontation immediately? Do they drum up support from their sodales, or do they retreat to their places of safety?

How do the other Houses react to the new members? The shapeshifters may be able to win alliances with other Houses, especially Tylalus, Flambeau, and Merinita, if they have something to offer. Maybe their votes will be enough to win them some sort of alliance. On the other hand, House Flambeau may have a hard time recognizing these newcomers as authentic magi. Just as they turned on House Díedne 200 years ago, they may turn on the shapeshifters, given a little provocation.

Have all the members of the tradition joined, as they claim? It could be that

others of them are secretly lurking on the Order's fringes, operating covertly while their public comrades draw the magi's attention. Since the shapeshifters can use each other's shapes, it can be nearly impossible to keep track of them reliably.

Ultimately, the fate of the shapeshifters may depend on the others in House Ex Miscellanea. Do the other magi Ex Miscellanea support and protect the newcomers? After all, the infusion of new magi makes their House stronger, and many are bound to protect the privacy of the new members on the principle that magi Ex Miscellanea are to be left alone. The beast mages may even find that they have important secrets to trade with the shapeshifters. Or do the other magi reject the newcomers, who threaten to draw unwanted attention to House Ex Miscellanea? As much as the magi Ex Miscellanea want to be left alone, the arrival of the shapeshifters may force them into the political arena.

Player characters may be called on to spy on the shapeshifters, fight them, oppose them politically, or trick them by feigning friendship. In addition to protecting the Order, certain player characters may wish to take advantage of the opportunity to learn something from the mysterious shapeshifters. With the troupe's approval, a player might even be able to play a shapeshifter (whose magic would be entirely different from Hermetic magic).

Story Ideas

- The characters meet a wise and powerful exotic magus. He is afraid of them because even if they cannot defeat him personally, they might reveal him to Hermetic magi who would hunt him down and kill him. He has knowledge that can benefit them (perhaps in some specific crisis), but he won't share it, because he thinks they will use it against him. The characters must arrange for him to join House Ex Miscellanea so that he can feel safe. This feat requires a careful treatment, because he is afraid he is walking into

a trap. How can the characters convince him to go to the prima and apply for membership?

- A group of shapeshifting enemies of House Bjornaer have joined House Ex Miscellanea to gain Hermetic protection. They intend to assassinate certain Bjornaer magi and then flee. The characters cannot attack the magi until they have revealed this plot and called a Wizards' March.

AGNES, MAGA EX MISCELLANEA

Agnes is a middle-aged woman with a frightening, though sometimes captivating, demeanor. She has brown hair, usually unkempt, and a round face. Her accent marks her as hailing from England, but she is so secretive that those around her rarely hear her talk. She wears robes embroidered with arcane symbols intelligible only to her fellow spirit masters.

Actually, Agnes isn't Agnes at all. About twenty years ago, a young spirit master named Agnes accidentally raised the spirit of a powerful spirit master from the 10th century. The spirit possessed Agnes, assumed her identity, and moved to mainland Europe to avoid being discovered by those who knew the real Agnes.

This wizard's true name is Mella. In the 10th century, she consulted with Tytalus magi who were dabbling in diabolism, and involved herself in their studies. When quaesitoris discovered the diabolists, Mella fled. To escape Hell's grasp, she sealed her own spirit away in a magic amulet. There she remained until Agnes accidentally released her. Mella survived the imprisonment rather well, but her most powerful secrets have been forgotten. She cannot now duplicate some of the magic she performed in the 10th century.

"Agnes" guards her true identity carefully. While a centuries-old charge of diabolism might not hold up at tribunal, Mella has broken the Code by possessing

Agnes, a fellow Hermetic maga, and thus would be punished for that if exposed.

Agnes had five invisible spirits in thrall, which are now under the control of Mella, and they can perform magical acts at “Agnes’s” word. They always accompany her. All but one demonstrate no will or even sentience. They could be faeries or ghosts that have been stripped of identity and will, reduced to mere mechanisms, or they might be unformed spirits of some kind. These spirits are products of secret magic of the spirit masters, and they were gifts to Agnes from her master. She does not know herself how to create or bind such spirits.

Mella’s magic is very highly specialized. She studied at a time when the spirit masters had just been admitted into House Ex Miscellanea, and her grasp of Hermetic principles was weak. Her power over spirits, however, is the sort of thing that Hermetic magic doesn’t easily match.

Agnes’s five spirits are:

Crush (Spirit Might 20). It can destroy an item, as per *Fist of Shattering* (PeTe 5). Cost: 4 Might.

Harp (Spirit Might 15). It plays eerie and beautiful songs (Play Harp 10). Cost: 1 Might per hour.

Dancer (Spirit Might 10). It can pick up and move a small item, as per *Unseen Arm* (ReTe 5). Dancer occasionally moves things about without being told, demonstrating vestigial, idiot will. Cost: 1 Might.

Gape (Spirit Might 10). It manifests as a hellish, unnatural howl. Cost: 1 Might per round.

Wisp (Spirit Might 5). It manifests as small, floating globes of light. The light is multicolored, shifting through hues uncontrollably, but always nearly white. Cost: 1 Might per hour.

Agnes’s Apprentice

Agnes’s apprentice receives poor training in Hermetic politics and other stan-

dard Hermetic topics. Even the apprentice’s magical abilities may suffer (as simulated by the Flaw Poor Formulaic Magic).

Agnes may view the apprentice as one more thrall, like the spirits she commands. Alternately, the apprentice may prove to be her one true companion, the only person she can really trust in this strange world. If so, she and her apprentice may be very close.

Agnes’s Filius

Agnes’s filius may or may not know of her true identity (Mella). If her filius does, she incorporates him or her into her plans. She may, for example, send her filius back to Britain to explore places she knows from the 10th century. These are places that she does not dare explore herself, because she is afraid that magi there will realize that she’s really Mella. If the filius doesn’t know Agnes’s secret, she may be willing to manipulate or even sacrifice the filius for her plans, rather than making him or her a part of them.

Agnes may have provided her filius with one of her thrall spirits (treat as a +1 Virtue).

Story Idea

Strange spirits have been haunting Agnes. Are they ghosts of people she destroyed in the 10th century, faeries who seek vengeance for her holding “stripped” faeries in thrall (if that’s indeed what they are), demons pursuing her to punish her for her diabolic dabbling, or spirits sent by an enemy spirit master? Agnes enlists the aid of the player characters to help protect her. The payment she offers includes one of her thrall spirits.

Did Mella really destroy Agnes? It may be that Agnes’s mind was destroyed by other spirits or spells and that Mella simply inhabited an otherwise dead or mindless body. In this case, she isn’t guilty of killing a sodalis.

Though Agnes’s spirits are invisible, they become visible when she uses magic (because of her “warped magic”). They appear as translucent, distorted forms.

Agnes, Maga Ex Miscellanea

Age: 37; Apparent Age: 37; Size: 0; Confidence: 4

Middle-aged woman, unkempt brown hair, round face, strange accent.

Characteristics

+4 Int (wise)	+2 Prs (frightening)
-1 Per (distracted)	-2 Com (quiet voice)
-1 Str (tired)	-1 Dex (careless)
+2 Stm (sturdy)	+1 Qik (always in a hurry)

Virtues & Flaws

Affinity w/ Spirits	Blatant Gift
Cyclic Magic, (+1) (winter solstice)	Dark Secret (see text)
Pers. Vis Source (Me from spirits)	Discredited Lineage
Premonition	Disfigured
Second Sight	Poor Form. Magic (-2 pen.)
Sense Holiness & Unholiness	Warped Magic (thrall spirits become visible)
	Wild Magic

Personality Traits

+3 Secretive	+1 Cruel
+3 Unfriendly (England)	

Reputation

1 Suspected of Diabolism (quaesitoris)
--

Abilities

3 Alertness	1 Hermes History	6 Occult Lore	7 Second Sight
1 Certámen	1 Hermes Lore	2 Parma Magica	7 Sense Holy & Unholy
5 Concentration	4 Intimidation	1 Penetration	3 Speak Latin
3 England Lore	6 Legend Lore	5 Premonitions	5 Speak Own
4 Fantastic Beast Lore	8 Magical Aff.: Spirits	2 Scribe Latin	3 Survival
2 Folk Ken	3 Magic Theory		

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: +1</i>
Hand	+1	-1	0	-1	Soak: +2
					Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

5 Cr	6 An	5 Ig
5 In	5 Aq	5 Im
5 Mu	6 Au	14 Me
5 Pe	5 Co	5 Te
13 Re	6 He	12 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
 Twilight Points: 7
 Effects of Twilight: Spirits in area attracted to her
 Wizard's Sigil: An eerie silence about her spells

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+36/45) Coerce Spirits of the Night	(+26/30) Ward vs. Water Faeries	(+11/10) Agony of the Beast
(+28/40) Lay to Rest Haunting Spirit	(+27/30) Ward vs. Wood Faeries	(+9/10) Intuition of the Forest
(+36/40) Ring of Warding vs. Spirits	(+19/25) Bless. of Child. Bliss	(+11/10) Stench of the 20 Corpses
(+33/30) Circular Ward vs. Demons	(+36/25) Incant. of Summ. Dead	(+11/5) Air's Ghostly Form
(+25/30) Demon's Eternal Oblivion	(+19/25) Mastering Unruly Beast	(+10/5) Evil Eye
(+27/30) Ward vs. Air Faeries	(+36/25) Summ. Haunting Spirit	(+10/5) Moonbeam
(+26/30) Ward vs. Earth Faeries		

Spirits (for more information, see text)

Name	Spirit Might	Abilities, Powers & Cost
Crush	20	<i>Fist of Shattering</i> (PeTe 5), 4 Might.
Harp	15	Play Harp 10, 1 Might per hour.
Dancer	10	<i>Unseen Arm</i> (ReTe 5), 1 Might.
Gape	10	Hellish howl, 1 Might per round.
Wisp	5	Floating globes of light, 1 Might per hour.



Agnes

danforth 94.

Agnes summons a ghost to interrogate it.



CHAPTER SIX:
HOUSE FLAMBEAU



Motto: *Ad mortem incurrite.* (Unto death we charge.)

Symbol: An hourglass. Enough time can destroy anything. Followers of Flambeau admire that. Most Flambeau magi wear this insignia somewhere on their bodies.

Flambeau: flahm-BOH. French for “torch.”

“WHEN PROMETHEUS GAVE GIFTS TO HUMANS, WHAT WAS HIS GREATEST GIFT?”

“FIRE!”

“WHAT TOOL DID FLAMBEAU TEACH US TO USE?”

“FIRE!”

“WHEN THE PHYSICIAN SEES AN OPEN WOUND FILLED WITH PUS, WHAT DOES HE USE TO CLEANSE THE WOUND AND SAVE THE PATIENT’S LIFE?”

“FIRE!”

“WHO IS THE PUS THAT POISONS THE ORDER OF HERMES?”

“LLEWELLYN THE ACCURSED!”

“WHAT IS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE LIES AND DECEIT THAT LLEWELLYN HAS BROUGHT TO OUR ORDER?”

“FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!”

—THE PRIMUS ENTISIMON, RALLYING THE FOLLOWERS OF FLAMBEAU FOR A WIZARDS’ MARCH AGAINST HOUSE DIEDNE DURING THE SCHISM WAR



Many followers of Flambeau revel in the violent use of fire. Some of them also enjoy the use of the more “subtle” destruction magic (Perdo). Over the years, the quaesitoris have taught this House to turn its destructiveness toward the Order’s enemies, but the Flambeau magi still get carried away from time to time and attack personal enemies in society and within the Order. The magi of other Houses frequently hold them in disdain, seeing them as immature and violent. For the most part, Flambeau magi do little to better their reputation.

HISTORY

The wizard Flambeau was born a noble in Iberia. At that time, the Moors were sweeping north from Africa conquering Christian lands, and Flambeau’s family lost battle after battle. Flambeau’s master took him from this violent area and taught him magic. Both of them then fought with the nobility against the Moors. Flambeau’s master had been an expert in the Art of destruction. For a time, Flambeau followed this example but soon found other methods of fighting that were more to his taste. He began to study fire magic and soon mastered it. His fighting was flexible and brilliant: he could alternately provide an excellent distraction with a dazzling column of flame or silently remove his opponents and their steeds without a sound.

When Flambeau’s master was slain by Moorish wizards, however, Flambeau fled north across the Pyrenees, which the Moors never crossed in force. (The battles in Iberia between Christians and Moors continued, and only in the past few centuries have the

Christians begun to push the Moors back.) Once away from the battles with the Moors, Flambeau turned his magical prowess and taste for combat against other wizards. (His deadly attacks were one reason that other magi were eager to form an alliance of mutual protection with him.) When Trianoma first talked to him about helping to form the Order of Hermes, he was skeptical. He did not want to swear to a Code that would restrict his freedom. As it seemed more and more likely, however, that the Order would indeed be formed, with or without him, Flambeau’s attitude changed. He first thought he could form the Order into a united military organization so that he would not have to face the defeat that his master suffered. He joined the Order on the condition that he (and other magi) have the right to use violence when necessary. This demand led to the development of the Wizard War.

Meanwhile, Flambeau’s first apprentice, Apromor, had matured to become a full archmage. He saw the good in his master’s teaching, but much preferred the subtlety that the Art of destruction offered. Since then, the magi of Flambeau have generally followed one of these two paths: fire or destruction—different means to a common end. Two distinct personalities have emerged as well, with the fire wizards tending to be volatile and courageous, and the destruction wizards more persevering and vengeful. Fire is still the preferred Art of the majority of Flambeau’s followers, and it is an affinity for fire for which the House is best known.

During the chaos of the early 11th century, Flambeau magi were chief perpetrators of wanton violence. When the quaesitoris renounced House Díedne, the Flambeau magi turned their destructive power on the doomed House. This war cost House Flambeau nearly half its number, and the House still claims that the Order owes them honor for sacrificing so much for its sake. In any event, House Flambeau’s losses became a basis for the Order’s preventing other Houses from pursuing vengeance against the Flambeau magi who had committed such violence during the years of anarchy.

Some outside the House believe that the Schism War provided the Order with a benefit that is often overlooked. The Flambeau magi who died in the Schism War tended to be the more hotheaded and violent. The Schism War

may have culled the more antisocial magi from the House, leaving belligerent but tolerable survivors to carry on a tamer lineage.

NOTABLE MAGI OF HOUSE FLAMBEAU

Flambeau: Master of fire magic.

Apromor: Flambeau's filius, master of destruction magic.

Iarna: A mighty Flambeau who swore to fight until the last Diedne magus was slain. She disappeared in the Schism War, and some believe that she will reappear and fight on if House Diedne ever returns to challenge the Order.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Seventy-nine.

Domus magna: Doissetep, a covenant in the Provençal Tribunal renowned for its size and its schemes. By tradition, the domus magna is the covenant where the primus lives, and Primus Tertious lives at Doissetep. The previous primus, Vancasitum, lived in Val-Negra, which should have been the domus magna. Instead, however, Tertious won that privilege for Doissetep. He then inherited the status of primus on Vancasitum's death, and Doissetep is considered the domus magna in accordance with tradition. Some suspect that Doissetep will attempt to maintain its status as domus magna when Tertious dies, even if the new primus lives elsewhere.

Primus: Tertious, an old and crafty master of destruction magic. He is a pontifex in Doissetep, a rank that denotes years of extraordinary service to the covenant. Some suggest he's more devoted to his covenant than to his House.

Current concerns: Tertious is consolidating his power in House Flambeau through shows of political force and generosity. For now, anyway, he supports other Flambeau magi rather than directing or commanding them. If he is true to his training at Doissetep, however, he has ulterior motives at which none can guess.

Imagine a bunch of assassins sitting around debating the relative benefits of the

battle ax and the poisoned dagger, and you have House Flambeau. Its members are very informal, but their gatherings always include "shop talk." The competition in this House is incredible; the Flambeau magi strive mostly to see who can invent the spell that is the mightiest, that does the most damage, that has the greatest range of effect, or that is otherwise outstanding. The magus who invented the spell *Treading the Ashen Path*, for example, won a prize from his primus for it. (Unfortunately, he was driven mad when the faeries whose forest on which he demonstrated it caught him a few months later.) In addition to a competition for spells, Flambeau also have informal contests to see who can get the best familiar. The current champion is the maga Urmnia, who traveled to a distant land and returned with a monkey, an agile and highly intelligent familiar who helps her with laboratory work.

Flambeau magi are not known for studious habits, but they seem to keep up with knowledge of their Arts just as well as their sodales do. They are energetic and ambitious, seeming youthful (or immature) to more stolid magi. They are also known for augmenting their spells with generous amounts of raw vis—a favorite, albeit dangerous, tactic of some of the more unbalanced magi of this House. Followers of Flambeau are not known for longevity. Despite appearances, however, these magi are not stupid. They are intelligent, but they are so active that their mental powers are often not readily in evidence.

House Flambeau is politically powerful, perhaps due simply to the loud voices of its members. Under a good leader, Flambeau magi can present a united front (being well-acquainted with the tactics of warfare), and some have even proven capable orators (to the surprise of many). They are, though, looked down upon by most of the other magi of the Order because of their excitability and relative lack of sophistication.

They try to keep passable relations with the other Houses, but they are not always successful. One of the tenets of the Order is that no magus take action that could cause the Order serious trouble. Followers of Flambeau, on the other hand, usually feel that, as magi, they ought to do whatever they please.

The followers of Flambeau are the enforcers of the Order: not by official appointment—it's



During the Schism War, nearly half the members of House Flambeau fell in conflict with the Druid magi of House Diedne. However, even those who succumbed often managed to give as good as they got.

just that they feel that they are more suited to the role than anyone else. When a Wizards' March is called, for instance, they are usually the first ones there and, more often than not, the ones who slay the renegade magus. Members of this House look for fights, and when they can't find them in the Order, they'll look to the common world. They have often fought magi of another, more mysterious Order to the north, called the Order of Odin by Hermetic scholars. Some of them also take part in mundane battles that they happen across, participating more for sport than to back either side over the other. Some have ventured on the Crusades, and several are fighting the Moors in Iberia.

The apprentice's gauntlet usually consists of getting from one location to another with no supplies, provisions, or equipment. Typically, apprentices have to travel to the current Flambeau council, wherever it is being held, and, as a result, are inducted immediately upon passing the gauntlet. Most apprentices have to pass through the Dominion, though they sometimes have to maneuver through faerie forests or other supernatural obstacles as well. Flambeau apprentices generally have the strength to survive the gauntlet, but the area through which they travel is not always so lucky.

A magus of another House can join House Flambeau only by defeating seven Flambeau champions. Certámen is accepted as a legitimate contest, at least against some of the champions. The last magus to gain entry was an air magus who beat his opponents with bolts of lightning.

MAGI OF HOUSE FLAMBEAU

Mentality of a Flambeau Magus

You have been given great power in the Art of fire, destruction, or both. If you do not use this power for your own advantage, you are a fool or a weakling. There are many in the world who are afraid of power, yours or their own. They will try to keep you from using the power that it is your right to use.

Priorities

- 1) Acquire power and renown.
- 2) Bring glory to House Flambeau.
- 3) Defend the Order from enemies within and without.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** Stupid little beasts can't use fire.
- **Bonisagus:** As long as they keep figuring out better spells, they're all right.
- **Criamon:** Are they for real?
- **Ex Miscellanea:** Do we really need them in the Order? They're not real magi.
- **Jerbiton:** Why do they waste so much time with mortals? Are they intimidated by powerful magi?
- **Mercere:** They don't hassle us, and we like that.
- **Merinita:** The only good faerie is a char-coaled faerie.
- **Quaesitoris:** They're always on our backs. Can we help it if we're capable of torching just about everyone else, wizard and mortal alike?
- **Tremere:** Why do they always like to settle differences with certámen? Are they too weak or scared to have a real duel?
- **Tytalus:** Hurrah for those who enjoy a good fight!
- **Verditius:** They sell us magic devices so we don't have to waste our time learning less-important Arts and spells.
- **Demons:** They're afraid of us and rightly so.
- **Faeries:** The only good faerie is a char-coaled faerie.
- **The Church:** They have some real power but apparently don't know how to exploit it.
- **Nobles:** They are lucky they usually stay out of our way.
- **Commoners:** Unworthy opponents.

Intra-House Relations

You can rely on others in your House. They're the only ones who really understand you and your use of power. You'll compete with them to invent the best spells, get the best familiar, and do the most damage to your enemies; but it's all friendly competition. You can still depend on them to help you out when you need battle allies. You, in turn, are expected to help them out when they call on you. There isn't much of a hierarchy within the House, but you know better than to bother those who are more powerful than you. Sure, you can resist their *Pila of Fire*, but how about your laboratory and your books?

Councils of House Flambeau meet at irregular intervals. At each council, all magi decide when and where they'll meet again; there is no standard. Likewise, the site changes accordingly. The meeting normally occurs in a very desolate spot, where

the magi can blast and destroy to their hearts' content (which takes quite a while) in a contest to see who has concocted the most-destructive spells. The most honored wizards are those who are perceived to be the most dangerous and powerful, and are afforded respect accordingly. It is at these councils, rather than tribunals, that apprentices are usually inducted.

Magic

Flambeau magi primarily use fire spells and use destruction spells secondarily. Spells that are flashy or impressive are particularly popular.

The Test of Flames (Creo Ignem 20)

Spell Focus: A ruby (+2)
R: Special, D: Conc.

Flames two paces high leap up from the ground, completely filling a circle three paces in radius with you at the center. The flames dance and crackle, making for an impressive show, but they only do +8 damage per round. Each round, each person in the circle (including the caster) must make a Magic Resistance roll against the spell or take the damage. The caster rerolls the Penetration total for the spell every round (like a roll to cast the spell, but with Penetration as a bonus). One can also avoid damage through use of counterspells.

Followers of Flambeau use this spell as a test. The caster and whoever else is being tested stay within the circle, without *parmae magicae*, for as long as they can. The last one to leave the circle is the winner of the contest. If anyone falls to the ground and is unable to get away from the flames, etiquette suggests that the casting magus stop the spell.

This spell is also known as *Inirelte's Certámen*, after the magus who developed it as a substitute for standard *certámen*.

HOUSE FLAMBEAU IN PLAY

Saga Idea

The player characters discover a slowly growing, subtle threat to the Order of

Hermes. More powerful magi in the area underestimate the enemies, fall under their sway, or secretly ally with them for private gain. Great danger threatens unless the player characters can find brave, powerful, unselfish magi to aid them, and the magi of House Flambeau are a possible source of aid. The player characters must travel from covenant to covenant convincing the Flambeau magi that the danger is real and immediate. Even getting the attention and respect of these magi may prove difficult and dangerous. Meanwhile, the enemies of the Order attempt to silence the player characters in subtle attacks that seem like accidents or random encounters. The player characters may finally need to bring their petition before Primus Tertious in Doissetep or before the Flambeau magi gathered at their fiery council. If the player characters can direct the might of House Flambeau against the enemies, the Order is saved.

Story Ideas

- A belligerent Flambeau magus comes to the characters to request their assistance in attacking the Moors in Iberia. He talks of grand battles, freedom to do as one pleases, endless adventures, the camaraderie of warfare, and the joy of it all. If they join him, he leads them on grand adventures indeed, burning Moorish cities and facing down the Moors' cavalry on the battlefield.
- A Flambeau apprentice is in the area going through the apprentice's gauntlet and causing great destruction. The local knights are out looking for him, and the player characters step in to calm things down. The locals, possibly encouraged by the player characters' enemies, blame the covenant for the damage.

RULIA, FOLLOWER OF FLAMBEAU

Rulia looks remarkably indistinct. She has the graying hair, wrinkles, and eyesight of an old woman, but she has the ruddy complexion, the strength, and the agility of a young woman. Her face is unremarkable, not so much plain as simply forgettable. She dresses in plain clothes: utili-

tarian robes when among magi, a simple dress when “in the world.” The overall impression she makes is that of an easily ignored woman of indeterminate age. But when she speaks, the strength of her spirit shines out from its modest vessel.

Rulia has forged a reputation for herself in the Order of being an enforcer of the Code. Her sense of honor and her ability to punish magi who defy the Code has earned her the respect of the quaesitoris. Their respect is all the greater because her House is typically characterized as populated with wild, uncontrollable magi who stretch the limits of the Code themselves. But power uncontrolled is something that Rulia does not abide. She is a steadying influence among some of the more wild members of her House. As her reputation as an enforcer and protector grows, so does her influence in the House.

Rulia has two magic items:

The Oathbreaker’s Demise: A single-edged short sword enchanted to be continuously razor sharp. Anyone touched by the blade is struck by the spell *The Wound that Weeps*. In addition, the sword has the ability to render useless a limb it strikes (usable three times per day, D: Sun.). Rulia named this sword after taking it from the body of a magus who broke the Code of Hermes.

Chain of Defense: A chain of iron, twenty paces long. All who touch it gain the benefit of Rulia’s parma magica, as long as she touches it as well. The protection offered is not diminished by the number of people protected. The chain also acts as an arcane connection to Rulia.

Rulia’s Apprentice

Rulia trains her apprentice first as a guard and second as magus. After all, one can learn the skills necessary to be a useful guard more quickly than one can learn to be a useful wizard. Her apprentice learns to use a simple weapon, such as a short sword, and to act cautiously. He or she then uses these skills to accompany Rulia as she travels.

Secondarily she trains him or her to work fire magic. The apprentice learns subsidiary Arts only after demonstrating the skill to use fire magic effectively in a dangerous situation.

Her apprentice accompanies her when she seeks out and faces danger. When younger, he or she carries goods, sets and breaks camp, cooks, and keeps watch. When older, the apprentice uses his or her abilities to work side-by-side with Rulia. She is canny enough not to take the apprentice into dangers that are likely to be beyond him or her; but many of her missions are simple investigations, and her apprentice gains valuable experience by participating.

Rulia’s Filius

Her filius is skilled with fire magic, as well as skilled in the basics of abilities related to staying safe in dangerous areas (guarding, scanning, fighting, running, etc.).

Rulia may arrange to position her filius in a strategically significant position somewhere in Europe. Here he or she is to stand guard and share Rulia’s self-appointed task of protecting the Order.

Her filius may be more temperamental than she. If so, Rulia tries to work with her filius and keep him or her from disrupting the Order, for there is little that makes her more angry than power out of control. With her reputation on the line, Rulia may be much harsher with an out-of-line filius than she would be with any other offender.

Rulia strikes a limb on any successful attack in which the Attack roll exceeds the target’s Defense roll by an odd number. Determine randomly which limb is struck. The limb is rendered useless even if Rulia does no damage.

Rulia, Follower of Flambeau

Age: 55; Apparent Age: 40 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 5
 Graying hair, wrinkles, ruddy complexion, plain clothing; forgettable.

Characteristics

+2 Int (level-headed)	-1 Prs (forgettable)
-1 Per (unheeding)	0 Com
+2 Str (able body)	+2 Dex (steady hand)
0 Stm	-1 Qik (slow reflexes)

Virtues & Flaws

Enduring Const.	Compulsion (fairness)
Good Armaments	Delet. Circumstances
Hermetic Prestige	(-5 w/out 2 magi in
Magical Affinity (Ig)	near range)
Obsessed (prot. of Order)	Overconfident

Personality Traits

+2 Brave	-2 Companionable
+2 Honorable	-1 Friendly
+2 Strict	-1 Happy
+1 Compulsive	

Reputation

2 Honorable Defender of the Code (tribunal)

Abilities

3 Alertness	3 Dodge	7 Magic Theory	3 Short Sword Parry
3 Area Lore	3 Finesse	5 Parma Magica	5 Speak Latin
3 Athletics	3 Hermes History	3 Penetration	4 Speak Vulgar
5 Certámen	3 Hermes Lore	1 Ride	5 Survival
3 Chirurgery	4 Hermetic Law	3 Scribe Latin	1 Swim
3 Concentration	3 Intrigue	3 Short Sword Attack	5 Target Shield Parry
3 Dagger Attack	5 Magical Affinity (Ig)		

Combat Information

Weapon	1st	Atk	Parry	Dam	Dodge: +1
Hand	-2	+1	0	+2	Soak: 0
Dagger	+2	+9	+3	+7	Encumbrance: 1
Short Sword	+3	+9	+5	+9	
Target Shield	+4	+3	+7	0	

Techniques and Forms

7 Cr	5 An	*15 Ig
7 In	5 Aq	7 Im
6 Mu	6 Au	12 Me
5 Pe	5 Co	5 Te
10 Re	6 He	6 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
 Twilight Points: 0
 Effects of Twilight: None
 Wizard's Sigil: The faint trill of a flute on the wind

* Score includes Affinity.

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+21/25) Aegis of the Hearth	(+22/20) Pilum of Fire	(+12/10) Bind Wound
(+25/25) Ward vs. Heat and Flames	(+22/20) Test of Flames	(+16/10) Jupiter's Resounding Blow
(+16/20) Circling Winds of Prot.	(+16/15) Broom of the Winds	(+16/10) Repel the Wooden Shafts
(+21/20) Circ. Ward vs. Demons	(+15/15) Gift of the Frog's Legs	(+15/10) Rise of the Feathery Body
(+15/20) Gentle Beast	(+25/15) Leap of the Fire	(+19/5) Snap of Awakening
(+15/20) Lift the Dangling Puppet		

Magic Devices

The Oathbreaker's Demise: An enchanted short sword. Any touched by blade struck by *The Wound that Weeps*. Sword may also render useless any limb struck—usable 3 times/day.

Chain of Defense: Chain of iron, twenty paces long. All touching it get full benefit of Rulia's parma magica as long as she touches it as well.

Rulía



Rulía uses *The Test of Flames* to try the mettle and ability of those she investigates. She carries an enchanted short sword and chain.



**CHAPTER SEVEN:
HOUSE JERBITON**



Motto: *Ars vitam inlustrat.* (Art illuminates life.)

Symbol: A tower flying a pennant

Jerbiton: YARE-bih-tahn

“CAN WE TRUST THE POWER OF MAGIC TO MINDS THAT ARE SHUT OFF FROM PHILOSOPHY, MUSIC, SCULPTURE, DRAMA, COMEDY, AND THE FINER PURSUITS OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT?”

—JERBITON, TALKING TO HIS FOLLOWERS



Jerbiton magi are involved in society in many ways. Some actually visit with notable mortals, though they often hide their status as wizards when doing so. Others are artists, philosophers, poets, and so on. Magi of other Houses often turn to Jerbiton magi to resolve their disputes with mortals, though many of these same magi regard the members of Jerbiton as only “half-magi” because they haven’t given up their ties to the world.

HISTORY

Jerbiton was a noble by birth, a member of an old Roman patrician family that had survived into the Dark Ages. His family cultivated in him a fine taste for music and other arts, so he felt isolated and distraught when a wizard took him from home and made him an apprentice. Once a full wizard and free to travel on his own, Jerbiton spent his years visiting city after city, steeping himself in what arts he could find in that dark time. When he heard that an order of wizards was forming, he was very excited, because he thought that only by cooperating in peace could the magi themselves develop traditions of art and philosophy.

When the Order was formed, however, Jerbiton saw that the other magi were interested in neither the art of the mundanes nor development of their own artistic traditions. His fellow founders, by and large, were too interested in power or arcane mysteries to concern themselves with beauty. Jerbiton became disgusted

with the other magi, and he taught his followers that they were more “noble” than their sodales.

Over the centuries, House Jerbiton has swung back and forth in its loyalties, which are divided between the Order and society. Sometimes its members have seen themselves as wizards who appreciate society, sometimes as mundane citizens who are also wizards. During most of the 10th century, for example, Primus Pietre encouraged the Jerbiton magi to isolate themselves from the Order. It rarely participated in tribunals, and its members generally lived among the mundanes as much as possible.

During the Schism War, the magi of House Jerbiton concerned themselves mostly with defending society and themselves from the growing chaos. They were dismayed at the destruction of an entire House, but they did not miss House Diedne when it was gone. The Druid-descended magi of that House had always been a bit wild for Jerbiton tastes.

In the 12th century, Jerbiton magi served regularly as ambassadors for magi who wished to negotiate with mundane nobles. During this period, they styled themselves as wizards who had the added advantage of familiarity with mundane art; and they allied themselves closely with others in the Order. In the last few decades, however, they have clearly drifted back towards society once more. As troubles come within the Order and between the Order and society, the followers of Jerbiton are finding it more rewarding to live among the mundanes than to involve themselves continually in the problems of other magi. Many would be willing to forsake the Order altogether if they would not then be renounced, and probably killed, by remaining Hermetic magi.

NOTABLE MAGI OF HOUSE

JERBITON

Jerbiton: A lover of art and philosophy.

Larta: In the 11th century, she passed her apprentice’s gauntlet even though she had no magical ability. (Who cheat-

Jerbiton resented his master and never spoke of him, so his identity remains unknown. His master could well have also been the master of another founder, in which case House Jerbiton may have a hidden magical connection to another House.

A Companion may take the +3 Virtue “Larta Magus,” meaning that the character is a non-magical Jerbiton magus. The character may have Arcane and Formal Knowledges, and will have a sigil with which to vote in tribunal, the protection of the Code, and other recognition as a magus. Only someone with exceptional scholarly or artistic endowments will be accepted as a “Larta magus.”

ed on her behalf remains a mystery.) When her lack of magical ability was discovered, her status as a maga was upheld at tribunal. Her entry established the tradition of “Larta magi”—exceptional people who are allowed entry into House Jerbiton even though they are not magi. Her reputation as a brilliant musician has been overshadowed by her status as a legal precedent.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Eighty-five (including five Larta magi).

Domus magna: Valnastium, in the Rhine Tribunal. Valnastium is a center of vast knowledge regarding the mortal world and its history. Interested magi travel from all across Europe to visit its mundane library, and mundane scholars also are found consulting the tomes there.

Primus: Andru, a seventy-eight-year-old man who has held the position of primus for thirty years. His contacts with the mundane world are thought to be extensive, though many are secret.

Current concerns: Members of the House are deeply involved in society, exchanging knowledge and art with any who will deal with them. They secretly patronize the arts and have gone so far as to intervene directly in situations where the arts are threatened. For example, they are protecting troubadours in Languedoc, where the Believers (Cathar heretics) are suffering persecution. They are also trying to preserve knowledge and art in Muslim Iberia, where Christian armies are driving the more sophisticated Moors further and further south.

Many Jerbiton magi are artists of some kind. Some integrate their magic into their artistic pursuits, but most say that true art must come from the human heart and that the intervention of magic ruins it. Magic may make art more flashy, they say, but it's also less human and therefore less artistically true.

Some followers of Jerbiton infiltrate society, posing as beggars, merchants, advisers, and such to learn more about

political events within society. They regard themselves as secret ambassadors, though others simply see them as spies. While Jerbiton magi often exceed the bounds of the Code of Hermes by their actions in society, so many other magi depend on them for information, advice, and aid that it is rare for a Jerbiton to be penalized for intervening in the mundane world.

Jerbiton magi often travel in society without their *parmae magicae* so that they can relish all about them fully. The *parma magica* hampers all magic, even the “normal” kind of magic to be found in a song or statue. If they used their *parmae*, they would not be able to appreciate the very things for which they visit cities.

The apprentice's gauntlet is a test of magical competence and scholarly knowledge. The scholarly portion of the test can be quite rigorous, so apprentices study hard for it. Those who fail (and about one in six do) can try again the next year.

Entrance is granted to magi who can pass the standard apprentice's gauntlet and who do not have a history of causing problems in the Order or in society. Many older magi who have wearied of adventure join House Jerbiton to enjoy the pleasures of society in their old age.

MAGI OF JERBITON

Mentality of a Jerbiton Magus

Your mind and spirit are more important than anything else. You have been taught magic and politics to give your mind power. You have been taught art to give your spirit guidance. Look about you at the other magi in the Order, locked away in their foul-smelling laboratories, letting their minds shrink and harden. No beauty comes into their lives, and their spirits starve. Can you call them human if their most human aspect has been enfeebled? And yet these wizards have great power over others. Is it good that such beings as they should have this power?

You, too, have power, but you have art to illuminate your life and guide your way.

A sample question from the apprentice's gauntlet:

“Define Aristotle's Golden Mean, and illustrate the concept with one anecdote from Hermetic history and another from mundane history.”

Questions about Greek philosophy are popular because Jerbiton magi are intrigued by Greek texts recently provided by Moorish scholars.

There are truths that cannot be put into words. The singer or the dancer can give you more clues to these truths than can any dusty tome.

Other wizards cut themselves off from human life. How can you explain to them the beauty of a peasant picking olives, a merchant driving his mule along a dusty road, a knight riding by with his men-at-arms following respectfully, or even a robed priest striding down the steps of a cathedral? To cut oneself off from other people is to cut oneself off from oneself.

You still see the beauty to be found in the world of people. As long as you can see that beauty, your mind will be free and your heart true. Do not let magic tempt you away from what you know to be beautiful.

Priorities

- 1) To appreciate art and beauty.
- 2) To create art.
- 3) To protect society from the Order.
- 4) To preserve the Order.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** These primitive brutes have no place in a civilized Order. Perhaps non-Roman wizards shouldn't have been allowed in the Order in the first place.
- **Bonisagus:** The pursuit of magic has sucked away their life and spirit; let that be a lesson to all.
- **Criamon:** They are to be praised for seeking wisdom, but their mental games are foolishness. Great artists and writers give clearer insights into eternal mysteries than riddles do.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** More non-Roman wizards from barbaric lands. As long as they keep to themselves, they're not a big problem.
- **Flambeau:** Mature power and infantile minds. They are what all wizards will become if they do not let art and humanity into their lives.
- **Mercere:** Most are not cursed with the temptation of magic, so they have retained their blessed humanity.
- **Merinita:** They have given up their humanity to the impostor Quendalon. The faerie songs and dances in which these magi delight are not true art, because they are not human. What can a human learn



Jerbiton magi often serve as negotiators and peacemakers when the Order has to deal with the mundane world.

from a faerie about humanity?

- **Quaesitoris:** Magi of other Houses desperately need these wise judges to hold them back from excess, but the quaesitoris should leave us and our dealings with society alone. If anything, our work with society will be the salvation of the Order, not its downfall.
- **Tremere:** Their need for hierarchy at least makes them predictable and avoidable.
- **Tytalus:** They skirmish with nobles and taunt priests. They do not realize that life is not a game
- **Verditius:** They are, unfortunately, as caught up in magic as magi who actually cast spells.
- **Demons:** They warp the human spirit. They must be watched for and fought when they manifest.
- **Faeries:** Childish beings not worthy of serious study.
- **Nobles:** Some of them may be haughty, but they produce the only people of grace and eloquence in the world. Since they are above the common people in status and ability, they have the freedom to pursue philosophy and the arts.
- **The Church:** Almost all art comes from the Church, including architecture, song, painting, and sculpture. In addition, many monks are fine scholars and excellent conversationalists. Priests aren't always amenable to meeting magi, but they too have their place.
- **Commoners:** By supporting their betters in the Church and the nobility, they serve all humanity.
- **Moors:** These highly civilized people are teaching us many things about medicine, astrology, and philosophy. Unfortunately, it seems that the Christians are returning the favor by teaching them lessons in conquest.

Intra-House Relations

You are generally free to do as you please regarding other members of the House, though you must respect the territories of others. The magi of the Barcelona covenant, for instance, are protective of the city, and when visiting Barcelona, you must follow their dictates. You can trust them to act for the benefit of society and the Order, even if it means controlling your actions.

You are encouraged to travel and to visit with other magi of the House to learn from

them and see what the world has to offer.

If your primus demands it, you are to follow orders. Being a wizard demands discipline, and if he requires you to use that discipline for the benefit of the House, the Order, or society, you are to comply.

Magic

Jerbiton magi prefer subtle spells that they can use in cities without others noticing, especially mental spells. Some use spells to augment their artistic creations, but most prefer to work with mundane tools to avoid separating themselves too much from their art.

The Communion of Peace (Rego Mentem 30)

Spell Focus: An olive branch (+2)

R: Reach, D: Perm., Ritual

This spell enchants some medium such as wine, meat, or candles. Those who then share the medium (for example, drink the wine, breathe the smoke from the candles) are then affected by the spell. They become slow to anger and willing to listen to those whose opinions differ. Add or subtract up to 3 points from rolls regarding agreeable communication, anger, intimidation, and so on, always adjusting a roll so that peaceful interaction is more likely. Strong prejudices or convictions, extenuating circumstances, or powerful motivations will cancel the effects of this spell on the individuals who have them. One casting of the spell enchants enough substance to affect six people. Reduce the effect if more than six people are affected, or if not all the substance is used. Never increase the effect, even if fewer than six people share the communion.

Jerbiton magi often use this spell to facilitate dialogues between hostile people or just to make parties more pleasant.

The “reach” range means you must have the substance to be enchanted at hand, and the “permanent” duration means the substance remains enchanted until used.

HOUSE JERBITON IN PLAY

Idea

Primus Andru is in an ideal position to

negotiate with Pope Honorius III. In his earlier years, Primus Andru pursued his agenda with vigor. Now he is ready to reap the rewards of his secret negotiations. In addition, his age is an advantage. At seventy-eight (apparently much younger), he has spent enough time in mortal society to gain the respect of mundane authorities, but not so much time that others perceive him to be keeping supernaturally young (which he is). In ten years he will lose this advantage, as it becomes obvious to mortal authorities that he is aging very slowly; and the stigma of magic (not to mention envy) will undercut his position. He must act now.

He wants the Order of Hermes to gain official sanction from the pope as a religious order. This move would have its problems. For one thing, the Order would have to be legally split between male magi ("monks") and female magi ("nuns"), and it would be under nominal control of the pope. On the other hand, an alliance with the Church would end the constant conflict between magus and mundane. In Andru's vision, the magic of the Order will finally be free to benefit humanity, and the learning and art of the Church will be free to benefit and guide the magi.

Naturally, such a goal is not without its opponents, so Andru has not announced his vision to the Order; nor will he do so until the time is right. He is prepared to face the threat of another Schism War to see his vision realized, and he acknowledges that only some Houses may consent to the plan; but he is not willing to have his goal held back by magi whom he sees as shortsighted.

Ideally, he would like to see a friendly break between the magi who wish to join the Church and those who wish instead to remain outside society. A peaceful split, however, would merely delay the inevitable bloody conflicts that will arise when the magi are divided into two camps.

Andru's vision may prove to be an impossible dream that only throws the Order into chaos, or it may be the insight of genius and saves the Order from eventual conflict with the Church. It could start as the fond dream of a few and spread through the Order, or Andru might already have a number of powerful converts throughout

the House.

Negotiators, orators, spies, assassins, and guards will all find their services called upon by each side. Well-meaning player characters may take part in the struggle on either side, and the covenant may even be split. The characters will have to face the special pain that accompanies a bitter struggle between visions, a pain that would not be found in a clear-cut battle between good and evil.

Story Ideas

- The characters come to a new city where a particular beggar continually spies on them. They eventually catch her and try to find out why she has been watching them, and she reveals herself to be a powerful Jerbiton maga. She has been watching them to be sure that they do not cause trouble in "her" city. And now that they know who she is, she has a favor to ask. . . .
- A Jerbiton character sees that a local Flambeau magus and a belligerent baron may soon come to violence. The character has to step in to stop the imminent battle. What special deals would entice the two opponents to make peace?

ANDREAS, FOLLOWER OF JERBITON

Andreas is thin and unassuming, but his ready smile and friendly banter win him admiration. His brown hair is worn long in noble fashion. His face is soft and pale. He wears fashionable clothes, even at tribunal, but they hang loosely on his thin limbs. He talks willingly with strangers, though he's more concerned with a person's ideas than with people themselves.

Andreas is a devotee of arts and letters. He's been known to discuss philosophy, history, and theology with monks and rabbis. He also supports the arts, hiring jongleurs to perform and commissioning works of art for the covenant. Unlike his fellows in Jerbiton, however, Andreas secretly takes an extra step to support the arts: assassination.

Andreas has murdered over a dozen peo-

In 1209, the Church co-opted a different sort of opponent, Francis of Assisi. By turning Francis's grass-roots movement into a recognized order, Pope Innocent III adeptly handled the conflict between the Church's traditions and Francis's radical philosophy of peace and poverty. If Andru's plan is to succeed, he must convince the Pope that recognizing the Order of Hermes as a monastic order would likewise reduce conflict and benefit both sides.

ple who have stood in the way of philosophy and the arts. These include clergy who have opposed certain artists or arts in general, lords who have demanded submission from freethinkers, and wealthy people whose influence threatened to corrupt art and knowledge. Andreas has traveled far to find his victims, and he acts slowly. His victims are therefore separated by distance and time, so no one has drawn a connection among them. Andreas is also careful either to make the murders seem mundane or to disguise them as disappearances. (His spell *Ashes to Ashes* neatly disposes of corpses.) Though he could use powerful, lethal magic like *Clenching Grasp of the Crushed Heart*, he prefers subtler spells that he can cast without words, and cast even in the Dominion.

To Andreas, God is the All-knowing Mind, and people become like God to extent that they share His knowledge. Magic is the set of rules that God used to create and run the Universe. People who obstruct the divine imperative to gain and spread knowledge are like specious steps in a logical proof, and they are to be removed for the sake of the whole. He regards his campaign of assassination as a divine task.

Andreas has one magic device, the Swan's Fall. It is a woman's fan made of a black swan's feathers. Andreas has enchanted it to cast *Wings of the Soaring Wind* once per day. He keeps it as a last route of escape should one of his plots fail. If asked, he says he keeps it in memory of lost love.

Andreas's Apprentice

Andreas teaches his apprentices to seek truth, which can be found in the magical laboratory and in ancient texts of wisdom. He acknowledges that truth is larger than any mortal mind can conceive, so he is open to whatever specialization his apprentice might favor. Any magical specialty is worthy, Andreas says, provided the apprentice pursues it honorably.

Andreas teaches his apprentice his view of God and knowledge, and he makes his apprentice party to his assassinations if he or she seems amenable. He does not expect him or her, however, to help him directly. His missions are too sensitive to trust to an apprentice.

Andreas's Filius

Andreas's filius may not know of his assassinations. If the filius does, he or she must choose whether to be part of Andreas's campaign. Andreas would welcome a partner, but the filius can also be valuable simply as an observer.

The filius is probably well-trained in classical knowledge and an appreciation of the arts, but otherwise his or her abilities may cover any area.

Story Idea

A noble or churchman allied with the covenant comes under Andreas's measured gaze. Andreas visits the covenant to find out more about the potential target, though he pretends to visit for a very different reason. He finds the subject wanting and conducts the assassination. Can the player characters find out who is responsible? Andreas may be forced to frame an innocent party, even a magus in the covenant, if the player characters get too close to the truth. And if they find out who killed the victim, what do they do with the information?

Andreas, Follower of Jerbiton

Age: 52; Apparent Age: 40 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 5; Decrepitude: 2
Thin build; short and unevenly cut brown hair; soft, pale face; wears fashionable clothing that hangs loose on him.

Characteristics

+3 Int (shrewd)	+2 Prs (genial)
-1 Per (distracted)	0 Com
-3 Str (scrawny)	+1 Dex (agile)
0 Stm	-2 Qik (ungainly)

Virtues & Flaws

Affinity w/ Form.	Obsessed
Spells	Overconfident
Gentle Gift	Restriction
Inventive Genius	(when touched by moonlight)
Strong Personality	Strong-Willed

Personality Traits

+5 Charming	+1 Brave
+2 Dangerous	0 Religious
+2 Witty	-4 Forgiving

Reputation

None

Abilities

3 Affinity	3 Concentration	3 Forgery	4 Parma Magica
3 Alertness	3 Dagger Attack	3 Guile	2 Penetration
3 Certámen	2 Disguise	2 Hermes History	4 Scribe Latin
3 Charm	3 Dodge	2 Hermes Lore	5 Speak Latin
3 Church Knowledge	2 Etiquette	3 Humanities	5 Speak Vulgar
2 Church Lore	3 Finesse	6 Magic Theory	2 Stealth

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: +1</i>
Hand	-2	+1	0	-3	Soak: 0
Dagger	+2	+8	+1	+2	Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

5 Cr	7 An	6 Ig
10 In	6 Aq	7 Im
7 Mu	5 Au	7 Me
12 Pe	12 Co	7 Te
6 Re	6 He	10 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
Twilight Points: 7
Effects of Twilight: Deluded into thinking that his assassinations are divinely inspired
Wizard's Sigil: Artistry in spellcasting—finely done

Spells Known: (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+25/20) Inexorable Search	(+18/15) Whispering Winds	(+13/5) AIR'S GHOSTLY FORM
(+19/20) Open Intangible Tunnel	(+25/15) Whispers Black Gate	(+20/5) Charm vs. Putrefaction
(+25/20) Wind of Mundane Silence	(+17/10) Eyes of the Cat	(+15/5) Cloak of the Duck's Feathers
(+16/15) Call to Slumber	(+27/10) Grip of Chok. Hand	(+21/5) Curse of the Rotted Wood
(+16/15) Captive Voice	(+21/10) Rise of Feathery Body	(+22/5) Evil Eye
(+27/15) Confound the Connection	(+16/10) Show Flames & Smoke	(+27/5) Invocation of Weariness
(+22/15) Disguise the New Visage	(+19/10) Sub. Taste Pois. & Pur.	(+25/5) Physician's Eye
(+27/15) DUST TO DUST	(+20/10) Thief of Stolen Breath	(+21/5) Quench the Rippling Flames
(+19/15) Hunt for the Wild Herb	(+16/10) Trackless Step	(+21/5) SPASMS UNCONTROLLED HAND
(+22/15) Invis. of Standing Wizard	(+21/10) Winter's Icy Touch	(+19/5) Touch of the Pearls
(+23/15) Invisible Eye Revealed		

Magic Items

The Swan's Fall: A woman's fan of black swan's feathers. Enchanted with *Wings of the Soaring Wind*—usable once per day.



Andreas shares his thoughts on philosophy and theology, as well as his wine, with tolerant monks.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HOUSE MERCERE

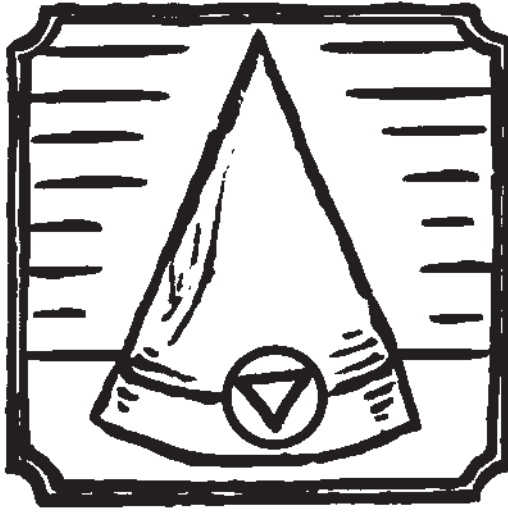
Motto: *Ordinem servire unum sustenere.*
(To serve the order and keep it one.)

Symbol: A pointed, red cap with a band around the base and a triangle on the band

Mercere: mare-KAY-ray; also “mare-SARE,” a pronunciation that follows vulgar habits rather than classical ones.

“THIS ENTIRE ORDER STANDS ON THE BRINK OF DISSOLUTION, AND ONLY ONE FORCE HOLDS IT TOGETHER. WE DO. HOW QUICKLY THE HOUSES AND WIZARDS HAVE FALLEN INTO SUSPICION, COMPETITION, AND VENGEFULNESS! HOW QUICKLY WOULD THEY FALL UPON EACH OTHER OUT OF FEAR AND CONFUSION IF WE DID NOT BRING WORD BACK AND FORTH. FEAR FEEDS ON IGNORANCE. WE BRING WORD FROM MAGUS TO MAGUS SO THAT THEY CAN FEEL SAFE, SO THEY CAN KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING AND WHERE. WE ARE THE SALVATION OF THE ORDER.”

—THE PRIMUS ALDICO, ADDRESSING HIS HOUSE AFTER THREE REDCAPS WERE SLAIN IN THE SCHISM WAR



This is the House of Redcaps, the messengers of the Order. The Mercere are best known for carrying messages from covenant to covenant and tribunal to tribunal, but they also compile histories and descriptions of the areas in which they travel. Many magi underestimate them because they seem to be mere servants, but those who watch them closely see that they can exercise a good deal of initiative in deciding just how, when, and to whom they deliver their messages.

HISTORY

The wizard Mercere was enthusiastic about the Order and visited many wizards to invite them to join. He was renowned for his power to transform things, and he taught Bonisagus much of this magic. Several years after the founding of the Order, however, an experiment of his went awry, and he lost all his magic power. Bonisagus tried for years to restore the Gift to Mercere, but to no avail. Still excited about the new and growing Order, Mercere decided to do what he could to aid it. He began working with Guernicus, founder of the quaestoris, to carry messages between magi. He soon began working on his own and taking "apprentices" to teach them to carry on after him.

Mercere had trained two apprentices before losing his Gift, and they remained in his House and taught magical apprentices of their own. Though they make up a minority in the House, these magical followers of Mercere are very important, because they create magical items for use by the Redcaps. Over the years they have lost the special secrets of Mercere's transformation magic. If they have any specialty, it is with body magic, which they use to protect and heal the Redcaps.

In the first two centuries of the Order, House Mercere accepted a subservient role in the

Order and had little direct influence or initiative. During the confusion of the Schism War, however, its members became highly valuable brokers of information, and they used this power to manipulate the battles and help restore peace to the Order. Ever since, they have been more conscious of their power, more willing to use it, and more skilled at doing so.

NOTABLE MAGI OF HOUSE MERCERE

Mercere: A transformation master who lost his Gift and became a messenger within the Order.

Aldico: The primus during the Schism War, he turned House Mercere into a powerful political force.

Belin: A loyal, devoted, hardworking Redcap of the 9th century. She always got the message through, never shirked her duty, and put the interests of the Order first. Legends of her adventures have multiplied over the years, promoting her to almost mythical status. Magi and Redcaps use her example as an ideal for Redcaps and for people in general. Of a disloyal grog, one might say, "He's no Belin."

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: One hundred and one, of whom sixteen are Gifted.

Domus magna: Harco, in the Roman Tribunal. The Redcaps have become quite caught up in the mercantile competition among the Roman covenants. This covenant holds the most complete geographic library in Christian Europe, filled with practical information gained from firsthand experience.

Primus: Mihalyi, a middle-aged man. As a young Redcap, he was captured and ill-treated by a baron, and he still harbors a deep resentment toward the nobility.

Current concerns: To bring news to those in the Order who strive for unity and peace and to bring less news to those who might use it for their own benefit and to the Order's detriment.

Redcaps are officially considered magi. They have sigils and may vote at tribunal. Usually, however, they abstain out of deference to Gifted magi. Redcaps enjoy all the protections of the Code.

A typical Redcap travels about a specific area, bringing messages from covenant to covenant. The Redcap travels to a covenant, brings all news that he or she has, and then stays as long as he or she is welcome and cares to rest. Covenants that want to slow the spread of news to other covenants may offer luxurious accommodations to induce Redcaps to stay longer and thus deliver messages to other covenants later. Three nights of lodging is customary: one to rest, one to feast and enjoy the covenant's hospitality, and one to recover from the previous night's hospitality before taking to the road once more. Many Redcaps share important but unofficial news during this time, so those who treat them poorly might not hear all that is to be heard.

Though Redcaps are bound to deliver all messages that magi give them, they do have some control over who learns what and how. Unless they are carrying urgent messages, they can decide in what order to visit the covenants in their areas, thus letting some learn of news later than others. (They are, however, required to visit all covenants. They cannot simply cease bringing messages to a certain covenant.) They also decide in what order to deliver messages and how to do so at any given covenant. They can present news that they feel is important with drama, demanding to speak before a council of magi. If they want certain news to be disregarded, they can simply slip it in among a list of official announcements while speaking with a single magus, hoping that the listener will neglect to share it with others in the covenant. Messages can also be delivered in writing or speech, and those that a Redcap wants forgotten will be given only aloud. Redcaps have been known to lose messages, become "indefinitely delayed" by weather or other difficulties, or even to invent false messages when they feel the need. Lying in the pursuit of his or her duties, however, can get a Redcap demoted to the status of scribe, and repeated or serious offenses can result in renunciation.

In addition to delivering messages, a Redcap watches the land and its people for important events. When their messages are not urgent, they can spend weeks just wandering the countryside, getting a feel for the people and trying to find out what might be of interest to the Order.

In some lands, followers of Mercere wear the distinctive red caps with blue triangles that give them their name. People recognize them as "wizards" because of these caps and therefore let them pass unmolested. It is the duty of all magi to punish visibly any who do attack or hinder a Redcap, and the Redcaps have let this be known in these lands. (In addition, Redcaps are typically quite capable of handling attackers them-

selves.) In other lands, however, such as where the Church and nobility are stronger, wearing their caps would only reveal the actions of magi and invite trouble from those who would challenge the Order. Here, the Redcaps pose as wanderers or pilgrims, or avoid cities and towns altogether.

Scribes are members of the House who are no longer fit to travel. They compile and copy the information that Redcaps have gathered.

Those followers of Mercere who use magic are called "Gifted" to distinguish them from non-magical Redcaps. They spend most of their time in laboratories, crafting magic items to protect the Redcaps on their journeys and brewing longevity potions for them. The House has a rule, however, that each fit member must serve as a Redcap for one year out of each decade. These wizards must periodically get out of their towers and travel the lands, though they are often given assignments in safe territories. Some Gifted followers of Mercere serve regularly as messengers, usually because they prefer the rigors and rewards of travel to an easy life in a covenant.

Some Redcaps ride horses, some ride mules, and some walk. The choice depends on terrain and on personal preference.

Redcaps occasionally serve as guides for magi, but they will not go out of their way to do so unless the mission is important to the Order.

The apprentice's gauntlet consists of finding one's way through foreign and possibly hostile territory and delivering a memorized message.

Entrance is granted to magi who can pass the standard apprentice's gauntlet.

MAGI OF MERCERE

Mentality of a Mercere Magus

You are more than just a messenger for wizards; you are a guardian whose keen senses recognize important events, and you relay the knowledge to those who most need to know. Your vigilance and perseverance help keep the Order strong and healthy.

You will meet many magi whose desire for personal gain shortens their sight and threatens others in the Order. Do not oppose these magi directly, but for the good of the Order you must see to it that their plans are thwart-

A Redcap can require that a covenant make a copy of any written message so that the Redcap can carry it to the next covenant.

Notes on Redcaps

Redcaps often learn secrets about magi and covenants that they do not share with others outside their House. Anyone using magic to read a Redcap's mind could learn a fair bit about other magi in the area, but doing so has been defined as spying with magic and is considered a serious breach of the Code of Hermes.

Notes on Mercere Characters

You can run a Redcap either as a Companion or as a magus. (The "Companion" or "magus" distinction is a matter of game mechanics. In either case, a Redcap is recognized as a Hermetic magus who has sworn to uphold the Code, whether or not the Redcap is Gifted.) Though most Redcaps travel continually, a Redcap character can be a member of a covenant. You would be assigned as a scout and guide for the covenant, as well as a messenger for a small area nearby. Your long-term goal is to learn about the area by working with the covenant, and when you are experienced, you will assume more regular Redcap duties. All Redcaps are nominally members of individual covenants, though they typically spend little time there.

A Gifted Mercere could also be a player character, especially one who is a bit more independent and mobile than most.

In either case, be aware that a follower of Mercere will have many responsibilities outside of the covenant. The possibilities for political stories are good, but adventuring may be limited.

ed. Make sure that other magi know of their folly, and let them confront the wrongdoers.

Like all others in this House, you have a wanderlust that keeps you from being happy staying in one place. Even Gifted followers of Mercere often travel to various covenants rather than stay perpetually at one.

Ideally, you will be quiet and contemplative, like Belin. You will watch, listen, learn, and tell, rather than involve yourself directly in the affairs of the world and the Order.

Priorities

- 1) Promote harmony within the Order.
- 2) Maintain the integrity of House Mercere.
- 3) Guard your personal integrity.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They keep to themselves and cause little trouble.
- **Bonisagus:** Their political action combined with Mercere's holds the Order together.
- **Criamon:** Separatist and secretive, but at least they don't bother other magi.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** They have little to do with other magi, and that brings them under suspicion. They would be the first to turn against the Order in a crisis.
- **Flambeau:** Their uncontrolled energy and violence disturb the Order.
- **Jerbiton:** Their skill at politics is vital to the survival of the Order.
- **Merinita:** Their faerie ways make them unpredictable and possibly a source of dissension.
- **Quaesitoris:** Without them, the Order would fall apart. Be sure that they know everything of importance.
- **Tremere:** Though they vie for power, at least they do so within strict limits of behavior. They can be respected for their faithfulness to the Code.
- **Tyталus:** Troublemakers. Their games could bring ruin to the Order.
- **Verditius:** They offer vital services to other Houses and try to keep the peace. More magi should be like them.
- **Demons:** A dire threat to the Order's integrity. Be alert to their machinations.
- **Nobles:** One can negotiate with them, sometimes.
- **The Church:** Difficult to negotiate with. They are the cause of most of the Order's problems with society.
- **Commoners:** Though they are weak, they are numerous and therefore dangerous. Be sensitive to their moods.

Intra-House Relations

House Mercere is well-organized, and you have a place in that organization. Carry out the duties that are assigned to you. If you do well, you will rise in the ranks and become responsible for more and more territory. Share everything with fellows of your House so that they can do a better job. Never hide your failures from your superiors, or your troubles will only increase.

As you prove your value to the House and to the Order, and as you assume more dangerous responsibilities, you will be given magic devices to help you. Most of them are designed to protect you on your journeys through hostile lands.

Magic

Redcaps generally carry a few magical devices to help them in their work. Common spells mimicked by these devices are *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch*, *Disguise of the New Visage*, *Leap of Homecoming*, *Veil of Invisibility*, *Image from the Wizard Torn*, *Posing the Silent Question*, and *Trackless Step*, as well as the *parma magica*.

Gifted followers of Mercere specialize in making magic devices for Redcaps. House Mercere also buys special magical devices from Verditius magi.

HOUSE MERCERE IN PLAY

Saga Idea

The senior scribe of the library at Harco wishes to update the geographical records. She assigns a Redcap to visit various places around Europe and beyond, and she employs the player characters to accompany her. The characters move from location to location, cataloguing covenants, places of mystery, centers of vulgar power, etc. Each new place faces the characters with new challenges and new opportunities.

Story Ideas

- A Redcap is missing, and the characters must find out what has happened to her. Has there been foul play, and if so, is it part of a larger plot?
- A Redcap brings news of strange events (magical or political) happening nearby. He requests that the characters accompany him to investigate so that he can make a full report to Mihalyi.

ENOMIL, FOLLOWER OF MERCERE

Thin, weathered, and wrinkled, Enomil comes across as frail, but she has a heart that pushes her on and a body that endures. Her curly, gray hair is usually wrapped in a kerchief. Her typical outfit consists of sturdy boots, a linen dress, gloves, a walking stick, a rucksack, several belt pouches, and, of course, her red cap. Enomil's manner, speech, and stride all convey a devotion to her station.

Her devotion, unusual even by Mercere standards, stems from an event early in her career as a Redcap. She was delivering a message for her mater, and the route took her through the village where she was born. She visited her family to tell them of her wonderful new life. Sadly, her family had suffered bitterly over the years and did not want anything to do with Enomil and her new life, and they cast her out of their home and into the night. Enomil, badly shaken and heartsick, wandered off her route for days, wondering how she could have been so foolish as to think they would accept her back. She cursed herself for believing that her family had ever cared about her, ashamed to admit how much she had cared for them in spite of everything. When she finally regained her wits and returned to her path to deliver the message from her mater, she arrived to find the keep she'd been bound for smoldering and ransacked and the person for whom the message was intended lying dead in his nightclothes. Upon opening the message, she read the words, "They threaten to take matters into their own hands. You must meet with them before the new moon."

Haunted both by her failure to deliver her message and by her divided loyalties, Enomil threw herself into service to the Order as restitution. She intended to show her loyalty to the Order and especially to House Mercere.

Enomil has magical abilities (something atypical for a Redcap), but recently she has taken a vow to stop using her magic for seven years. Just as Mercere lost his magic and became a messenger, so Enomil plans to give up her magic. Recapitulating the life of the founder may have any number of magical effects. It could give her greater insight into being a messenger, or it could somehow bless her endeavors. It might even connect her with Mercere somehow, forging a magical link into the past. It could, for example, reveal to her Mercere's secrets of transformation, which were lost to the Order when Mercere lost his power. A symbolic, ritual act such as Enomil's vow is

beyond the scope of Hermetic magic, and its results cannot be predicted by Hermetic theory.

Enomil has a ring enchanted with a *Leap of Homecoming* to her mater's private chambers, given to her by her mater when she passed her gauntlet. She also carries a *Veil of Invisibility* in powder form.

Enomil's Apprentice

She is training her apprentice as a non-magical messenger, even though he or she is Gifted. In six years, when she starts using magic again, Enomil will start training him or her in magical ways, but until then the apprentice is forbidden to learn about magic or even to use any native magic talent he or she may have. What effect this unorthodox strategy will have on the youth and what effect participating in Enomil's vow will have cannot be known. No magus, however, would intervene: Enomil's vow identifies her through the Law of Similarity to the founder Mercere, and her actions, though unusual, are not to be opposed lightly.

Enomil's Filius

Enomil's filius trained under her when she was still using magic, so his or her training was rather orthodox. The filius likely shares her devotion to the duties of a Redcap.

Enomil's vow is getting her attention and respect in the Order, especially in House Mercere. Her filius may feel pressure to follow in her footsteps. Even if the filius doesn't feel this pressure, he or she has the hard task of living up to others' expectations. Enomil is well regarded, and having a mater with such a good reputation can be a boon or a burden. The filius may feel the need to do something that marks him or her as his or her own person to get out from under the shadow of such a famous mater.

Story Idea

Faeries capture Enomil (who could escape if she used her magic). The player characters are in a position to rescue her by competing in a variety of challenges with the faeries. This abduction and these challenges somehow recapitulate events in Mercere's life. Learning of Mercere's life prepares the magi for the challenges that await them. Also, if Enomil must use her magic (as she might, if doing so will save endangered player characters), her mythic quest is forfeit and she has to start her vow over again.

Enomil, Follower of Mercere

Age: 56; Apparent Age: 45 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 4; Decrepitude: 1
Thin with a weathered, wrinkled appearance; curly gray hair in kerchief; traveler's clothes and a red cap.

Characteristics

+1 Int (visionary)
-1 Per (preoccupied)
-2 Str (frail)
+1 Stm (enduring)

+1 Prs (confident stride)
+2 Com (precise)
-1 Dex (trembling hands)
-1 Qik (slow reflexes)

Virtues & Flaws

Gentle Gift
House Mercere
Strong Writer
Well-Traveled
Dark Secret (-1, see text)
Driving Goal
Flawed Parma (Mu at 1/2)
Vow (-3, travel w/o magic)

Personality Traits

+3 Devoted
+2 Brave
+2 Selfish

+1 Kind
-1 Forthright

Reputation

None

Abilities

3 Alertness
4 Area Lore
5 Brawl
4 Chirurgery
3 Diplomacy
6 Dodge

4 Evaluate Documents
2 Folk Ken
4 Hermes History
2 Hermes Law
6 Hermes Lore
3 Intimidation

3 Legend Lore
7 Magic Theory
4 Parma Magica
6 Quarterstaff Attack
5 Quarterstaff Parry
4 Ride

6 Scribe Latin
6 Speak Latin
5 Speak Vulgar
2 Stealth
3 Survival
2 Swim

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	
Hand	+4	+4	0	+3	Dodge: +5
Quarterstaff	+10	+7	+11	+8	Soak: +1 Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

10 Cr	6 An	6 Ig
5 In	5 Aq	8 Im
8 Mu	5 Au	7 Me
6 Pe	9 Co	5 Te
7 Re	5 He	6 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: -1
Twilight Points: 0
Effects of Twilight: None
Wizard's Sigil: A sense of mourning and loss

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+18/35) Leap of Homecoming	(+18/20) Gift of Vigor	(+14/10) Sight Transp. Motive
(+16/30) Veil of Invisibility	(+16/20) Inexorable Search	(+15/10) Trackless Step
(+14/25) Pose the Silent Question	(+19/15) Disguise New Visage	(+14/5) Cloak of Duck's Feathers
(+21/20) Chirurgeon's Healing	(+16/10) Sight of True Form	(+16/5) Invocation of Weariness
(+14/20) Frst. Breath of Spkn. Lie		

Special Items

Enchanted ring with *Leap of Homecoming*

Potion (powdered form) of *Veil of Invisibility*

Enomil



Enomil, a Gifted follower of Mercere, has sworn off magic for seven years in order to recapitulate Mercere's experience. Magical, symbolic feats such as these operate beyond the rules of Hermetic magic, so the effects are unpredictable.

CHAPTER NINE: HOUSE MERINITA

Motto: *Natura veritas unica.* (Nature is the only truth.)

Symbol: A stylized oak within a circle

Merinita: mare-ih-NEE-tah

“THERE IS A MAGIC THAT PREDATES US, THAT UNDERLIES OUR SPELLS AND THEORIES. THE GENTLE FOLK OF THE WOODS KNOW THIS MAGIC BETTER THAN WE CAN DREAM, AND WITH PATIENCE AND SKILL WE MAY YET PERSUADE THEM TO SHARE THEIR SECRETS WITH US.”

—QUENDALON, THE FIRST PRIMUS OF MERINITA

“DEATH TO THE TRAITOR! DEATH TO THE IMPOSTOR!
DEATH TO THE CHANGELING!”

—MYANAR, THE SECOND PRIMUS OF MERINITA, SPEAKING OF QUENDALON



Followers of Merinita are closely connected to faeries and faerie magic. They are given to asking riddles, wandering under the full moon, playing strange tunes on lutes, and wearing brightly colored clothes. Though these frivolous activities do not win them respect from the staid magi of other Houses, the magi of Merinita do have impressive control over faerie magic, something other magi lack.

HISTORY

In the 8th century, Merinita was something of a legend and a mystery. She traveled alone through the wilderness, somehow communing with the spirit of the wilds. She was recognized as the greatest of all nature magi of the age, perhaps any age.

Trianoma spent a full year tracking her down to invite her to help found the Order. For reasons still unclear, she came out of the wilds to become a member of the Order. After founding her House and seeing the Order into its first years of stability, however, she returned to her journeys through the wilds of this world. She had the power to take the shapes of various animals, and before she left she hinted that she was on the verge of discovering what she called "the mystery of the eternal spirit of the wilds." Some claim to have seen her as recently as 1158, and many believe that she has become one with the wilderness, taking on whatever shapes suit her ends. The "eternal spirit of the wilds" may well have given her a kind of immortality.

In the absence of their founder, the House turned to its first primus, Quendalon. He believed that the essence of nature magic was to be found among the faeries. After many

explorations of the faerie world, Quendalon finally entered a deep faerie forest in 799, leaving his successor, Myanar, in charge. After months had passed, House Merinita gave him up for lost, but he returned two years later. However, he was changed. He had rubies for eyes, and he said that though it seemed to him he had been gone but two days, in that time he had gained power to see deeper mysteries that would transform the Order and all the human world. Myanar, in turn, claimed that he was not Quendalon at all, but a faerie changeling, an impostor. After a protracted political and magical battle, the magus who called himself Quendalon regained control of the House and ousted Myanar and his supporters. The outcasts were adopted nominally into House Bjornaer; but most had trouble adapting to Bjornaer magic, and their lineage soon died out.

Quendalon turned his House to faerie ways, which are the ways of the House to the present day. As it turned out, his faerie insights did not blend well with Hermetic magic, and the other Houses rejected the teachings that he thought would revolutionize the Order. He did, however, manage to find a way to combine Hermetic and faerie magic with some success.

In 807, when Tytalus apparently lost his challenge to the faerie queen, Quendalon ridiculed him and those in House Tytalus, creating ill feelings between the Houses that have been passed down to this day. It seems, however, that Quendalon was not mocking Tytalus's ambitious attempt to challenge the queen, but rather found it amusing that his followers thought that his end was tragic. Perhaps Quendalon knew what happened to him. If he did, he never told anyone outside his House. The possibility that the followers of Quendalon know what happened and refuse to tell the followers of Tytalus only aggravates the ill feelings between the two Houses.

Over the centuries, House Merinita has felt the advance of civilization more and more painfully. They have seen one faerie forest after another fall to the twin powers of church bells and iron axes. Though they have occasionally joined faeries in protecting their homes, they have never formed a unified force. Some within the House are now suggesting more concerted action against an expanding mundane population.

During the Schism War of the 10th century, House Merinita defended several Diedne magi. The Merinita magi were wise enough, however, not to involve themselves completely. When House Diedne was destroyed, the entire Order

(with the possible exception of House Flambeau) was eager for peace, and there were no official retributions against House Merinita for the aid they offered House Díedne.

In the 12th century, Mendalus, a powerful magus of Merinita, proclaimed that Quendalon did a disservice to the House and to the Order in general by not following the wise path of Merinita. He sought to reconstruct some of the knowledge of that path from Merinita's limited writings and from those writings of the Merinita magi who were renounced by Quendalon. Several in the House have taken up this pursuit of wilderness magic, but the vast majority still focus on faeries, not on nature in general.

House Merinita, probably because of its connection to faeries, has enjoyed a notable absence of diabolist corruption.

NOTABLE MAGI OF MERINITA

Merinita: A famed nature maga who may still be living in the wilderness.

Quendalon: The first primus, possibly a faerie changeling. He turned the focus of the House to faeries.

Mendalus: A 12th-century magus who rediscovered the writings of Merinita and her faithful followers.

Zurenziale: A magus of the 12th century who one day, without warning, simply disappeared. By examining his laboratory and his

private writings, others in the House realized he was not a human but an elf. Why he came to the world of humans to learn Hermetic magic is still unknown.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Sixty-six.

Domus magna: Irencillia, in the Rhine Tribunal. This covenant, hidden deep in faerie woods, was founded when this area was wild and uncivilized. Since then, the area around Irencillia has become more settled and civilized, and House Merinita has become more popular in distant lands far from human crowds. Irencillia has little to do with the politics of the area or of the tribunal as a whole, preferring seclusion above all.

Primus: Handri, a secretive man who shares his concerns and plans with only his most trusted advisors. Whereas his predecessor had encouraged political dialog with the primi of other Houses, Handri has turned his attentions to the faeries, conducting long private diplomatic missions into faerie areas. Rumors suggest that he has even met with survivors of House Díedne.

Current concerns: Publicly, their goal is to protect faerie areas, but outsiders suspect they have other, secret motives as well. They may, for example, be establishing good ties with the faeries so that they can one day slip away into Arcadia.

Those who distrust the faeries distrust House Merinita as well. Perhaps this House is secret-

To this day, the magi of House Merinita wonder whether it really was Quendalon himself who returned, but it is a moot point: they have his legacy, whoever he may have been, and they have put it to good use.



An apprentice encounters faeries as her apprentice's gauntlet.

ly giving Hermetic secrets to the faeries, who will one day revenge themselves on the magi, or so the suspicious suggest. Faeries may well have reason to want revenge, since the magi have been known to raid faerie areas for the magic to be found there.

As an apprentice's gauntlet, masters often take apprentices into faerie woods to see if they can be accepted by the faeries there, or at least survive them.

Entrance requirements are strict. A magus must pass a series of magical and illusory tests, as well as be accepted by a group of faeries chosen by the testers.

MAGI OF HOUSE MERINITA

Mentality of a Merinita Magus

There are mysteries beyond mortal ken, and they have been opened to you. As long as you remain recognizably human, you will never be able to comprehend the mysteries of the faeries completely; but you will be able to catch glimpses of their eternal, unspeakable beauty, and you will share in their might.

Now that you know the mysteries that faeries offer, you recognize all mundane pursuits as petty. Human beauty, human strength, and human wisdom are all colorless shadows of the beauty, strength, and wisdom to be found in Arcadia.

Priorities

- 1) Explore faeries and their world.
- 2) Protect faeries from the predations of magus and mundane alike.
- 3) Preserve House Merinita.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They recognize the strength to be found in the wilderness, but they do not see the glory of faeries. Perhaps fear blinds them.
- **Bonisagus:** Their failed attempts to mimic faerie magic prove the faeries have access to something beyond human understanding.
- **Criamon:** They run circles in their minds looking for that which the faeries hold out to us.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** They have not been sucked into the temptation of civilized luxury. They are diverse and strong.

- **Flambeau:** Though their flames have sometimes burned the faerie trees, they can be allies against the haughty mundanes.
- **Jerbiton:** They are friends of the mundanes, who are enemies of the Order and of the fey.
- **Mercere:** We have little use for news of the outside world.
- **Quaesitoris:** They may be useful for those who value politics, but we have no need for them.
- **Tremere:** They have no appreciation for anything other than their own power.
- **Tytalus:** They amuse themselves with children's games. Their founder was at least more ambitious.
- **Verditius:** Mechanical magic can never match the experience of faerie mysteries.
- **Faeries:** The most glorious beings on the earth.
- **Demons:** We lust for none of their dark power.
- **Nobles:** Their craving for land has cleared far too many faerie forests already; they must be stopped.
- **The Church:** Its incomprehensible dogma, clamorous bells, disgusting cathedrals, and twisted attitudes toward life make it the vilest of human creations.
- **Commoners:** They retain enough natural simplicity to enjoy music, dance, and food. They are closer to faeries than other mundanes. If only they would toss their iron into the sea, they might be able to make peace with superior races.

Intra-House Relations

Your sodales in House Merinita have taken anarchy to such an extreme that even anarchy is not a dependable rule. Like the faeries from which they learn, your fellows are sometimes secretive, sometimes random, sometimes dominating. Occasionally leaders rise who try to gain the support of others for their causes. If others follow them, these magi become leaders. If others ignore them, the would-be leaders give up. Some Merinita magi revere the primus as an envoy from the faerie queen, while others do not even know his name.

The House has no expectations of how you are to act toward your parens. Perhaps you are following your parens even though you are a magus; perhaps you are now on your own. Even if your parens expects continued service, it will not be a disgrace in the House if you neglect your duties, only a personal affront to your parens.

The faeries touch different magi in different ways. House Merinita accepts this fact and

Arcadia is the land of the faeries, consisting of six different lands: Somniare, Atlantium, Antrum, Caelum, Barathrum, and Tartarus.

relishes the diversity it produces. You are on your own to find your way through this ever-changing House, just as you are on your own in encountering the world of the faeries.

Magic

Merinita magi use a broad range of spells, including those dealing with illusions, the mind, and all aspects of nature. They prefer transformations above all.

Wizard's Twilight can strike you hard. It could release faerie power beyond your control and warp you mentally or physically. If you can control the experience, however, you may well gain new insights into faeries and their nature.

The following are some of the faerie spells that House Merinita has developed by combining faerie magic with Hermetic theory. You need a score in Faerie Magic to learn or cast these spells, and your score counts as a bonus when casting them. When using these spells, you get a bonus or penalty according to the effect that the local aura has on faeries, not on Hermetic magic. Thus, if you are in a Dominion with a strength of 4, you will receive -8 on rolls related to these spells. All of these spells, because they incorporate faerie elements, are unpredictable. The descriptions given describe what these spells usually do, but sometimes they take on lives of their own and have different effects.

None of these spells is exactly duplicable through standard Hermetic magic, and any close approximations would be at least 5 levels higher (that is, more difficult, without being more effective).

All of these spells have limited durations, and none can be extended by raw vis. Repeated use of faerie spells on individuals can cause permanent damage of the strangest type, so use these spells sparingly.

Like the faerie powers they copy, these spells do not excel at immediate damage capability. *Mask of the Beast*, for example, does little to stop an enemy warrior. For better effect, cast it on the leader of an attacking mercenary band while he addresses his troops. Like *Tongues of Ancient Ages*, this spell works best as part of a campaign, striking at morale, rather than helping in a battle by striking at the bodies of the attackers.

Merinita magi can create magic devices that copy faerie spells. When they do so, they can add their Faerie Magic scores to their Lab totals.

Breath of Invigoration (Creo Corpus 15)

Spell Focus: A hot coal (+1)

R: Reach, D: Inst., Faerie

You breathe on the target, who then makes a stress Stm roll. If the roll is 3+, the target regains a lost Fatigue level. If the roll is 9+, he or she regains two levels. You cannot use this spell on yourself. Unlike any other standard Hermetic spells, this spell requires a pawn of raw vis to be effective. This is the only Hermetic spell that effectively restores lost Fatigue.

The Feast of Delights (Muto Imáginem 20)

Spell Focus: A morsel of faerie food (+3)

R: Spec., D: Spec., Faerie

While you cast this spell, you walk around the perimeter of the area to be affected. You can affect a circle up to twenty paces across. You can only cast this spell as the sun is setting or afterwards, and it lasts until dawn. All sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch sensations within the circle are altered. Some become stronger, some weaker. Some change into something slightly different, so that colors can shift randomly. Sometimes sensations change entirely, so that wine can taste blue and music sound hot. In addition, lively illusions appear at random, such as faces on trees speaking nonsense riddles or sprites dancing on tables. The minds of the participants are not affected directly, but spending a few hours in an affected area can stir even the most stolid into appreciation and wonder.

Saying a prayer within the circle dispels the enchantment.

Among other reasons, it is because of parties held under the effects of this spell that the magi of Merinita find the mundane world boring.

Mask of the Beast (Muto Corpus 25)

Spell Focus: A bit of fur or skin from the appropriate animal type (+2)

R: Near, D: Sun., Animál, Faerie

The target's head turns into that of an appropriate animal. The type of animal depends on the personality of the target and the circumstances. For example, a brave warrior might get a lion's head, a scholar might get the head of an owl, and someone deceiving you could have his or her head turned into that of a serpent. The new head is human-sized or larger. The target does not feel the transformation happen and can only directly perceive it by touch or by seeing a reflection. Things worn on the head, such as a helmet, adapt to the shape and size of the new head. (If this were a stan-

Faerie Magic is a +1 Virtue much like an Affinity with faeries. Most Merinita magi have this Virtue, which confers an Ability with the same name. The character must purchase a score in the Ability separately.

dard Hermetic spell, it would have casting requisites to match the headgear that it transforms, but it's a faerie spell, so it does not have these requisites.)

Gaze of the Thousand Pinches (Perdo Corpus 5)

Spell Focus: A small pinching creature, like a beetle (+1)

R: Near, D: Conc., Faerie

As long as you watch the target and maintain concentration, the target feels one pinch each second in a random part of the body. Each round, you roll a stress die to determine the severity of the pinches, and the target makes a Stm + Concentration roll. If you beat the target's roll, it cannot maintain its composure, because of the pain and distraction.

Tongues of Ancient Ages (Muto Herbam 45)

Spell Focus: A sprig of mistletoe (+2)

R: Spec., D: Spec., Faerie

This spell awakens plants, giving them the intelligence, capacity for speech, and limited mobility of the limbs that they had in ages past when the faeries ruled the world. If cast with an Animál requisite, the spell also grants intelligence and speech to animals. It covers an entire natural area, such as a valley, hill, or copse, or five miles square, whichever is smaller.

The animals and plants are not under your control; they are free to do and say as they please. In general, however, they seek vengeance against humans, who usually have enslaved, slaughtered, felled, or hunted them. (Dogs are a notable exception, generally remaining loyal to their masters.)

A spell like this is more effective as an attack on the morale of a community than as a military maneuver, but it can have tactical usefulness as well. For instance, you can use it to coordinate a defense of an area and use the plants and animals as spies. (They are not likely, however, to be well-disciplined agents.)

The Weakling's Revenge (Muto Corpus 20)

Spell Focus: A silvered mirror (+1)

R: Near, D: Sun., Faerie

You reverse the target's strengths and weaknesses, making the beautiful ugly, the dim bright, and the clumsy fleet of foot. Reverse the positive and negative signs for the target's characteristics for the duration of the spell. Flaws remain, so that someone with poor hearing will still hear poorly, but any Virtues or Flaws that affect a characteristic directly

(such as "Stocky") are reversed along with the characteristics. Size is not affected.

If this spell is cast on non-humans, the characteristics rise or fall by as many points as they differ from the average for that type of creature. For instance, suppose you cast the spell on an ogre with Str +6. If the storyguide determines that the average Str for an ogre of his type is +4, then he is 2 points higher than "normal" and this spell causes his Str to drop to 2 points below his average—in other words, to +2. If the average ogre of his type had +7 Str (that is, if he were a weak ogre, as ogres go), then his Str would go up to +8.

Awaken the Mirror's Self (Muto Mentem 25)

Spell Focus: A bronze mirror (+1)

R: Near, D: Sun., Faerie

The target's Personality Traits reverse, negative traits becoming positive and positive ones becoming negative. The target may resist with a stress roll of 15+; use his or her highest Personality Trait as a bonus. You can end the spell by speaking the target's name to the target. Confidence is not affected.

The Faeries' Touch (Muto Mentem 20)

Spell Focus: A drop of wine (+2)

R: Eye, D: Sun., Faerie

The target's emotions, memories, and subjective feelings vary at random over the course of this spell, sometimes growing out of proportion and other times shrinking to almost nothing. This spell affects one's sense of time, significance, safety, self-worth, etc. It also can call up vivid memories from the past. To others, the target looks highly confused, but the target generally feels entirely lucid, if not inspired and wise.

HOUSE MERINITA IN PLAY

Saga Idea

The previous primus, Vinaria, was deeply concerned about the loss of faerie areas and other magical lands. She held long councils with primi of Houses Ex Miscellanea, Flambeau, Tremere, and Tytalus. She even tried to gain an audience with Urgan, then primus of Bjornaer, despite the animosity between their Houses, but he rebuffed her.

Then Vinaria disappeared, into "faerie Twilight," the Merinita magi said. Actually, she is working behind the scenes, perhaps with the

silent support of the primi whom she found cooperative. If she has designs, they concern halting the expansion of mundane civilization.

Some say that Urgen, former primus of Bjornaer, is doing much the same thing. Perhaps the two Houses have found common cause and have healed the hostility that used to separate them. Or perhaps they operate independently, or even in competition.

Player characters learn more about these events as faerie activities that at first seem random start to fall into a pattern. As the characters learn more, which side do they take? What if they learn that even House Díedne is involved in these schemes? Spies, guards, warriors, and diplomats will all find their abilities taxed in the widening conflict.

Such a confrontation could result in the fall of House Merinita or its long-awaited reconquest by those who follow Merinita's path instead of Quendalon's.

Story Ideas

- A promising apprentice of a character has faerie blood, and Merinita magi scheme to gain the apprentice for their own.
- Merinita herself is spotted somewhere, and Merinita magi organize or fund a search for her. Those who follow faeries' ways may try to sabotage the mission, while those who follow Mendalus's example hope to learn important secrets from their founder.

RETONI, FOLLOWER OF MERINITA

Magi often mistake Retoni for an entertainer, and he usually doesn't mind the error. He is fat, and fond of brightly colored clothes, so he can seem comical. But his clear voice, confident demeanor, wry humor, and some intangible quality always win him a good impression. And when those virtues are insufficient, he plays his flute and wins friends that way.

Retoni composes melodies on his flute that, in his words, "code experience into music" or "replicate the underlying music of an event." Apparently he can capture the essence of an event by composing a melody about it, but only when he actually experiences or witnesses the event. When he later plays his melodies, the essence of the recorded events comes forth and affects those around him. The simplest effects

are emotional. For instance, a melody composed at a wedding promotes feelings of love and commitment. His powers, however, apply to more physical endeavors as well. A melody he composed when several Albigenses ambushed and killed crusading mercenaries in Provençal, for instance, can boost the chances of victory in battle, especially a battle fought against crusaders. (Retoni was on the side of the Albigenses. If he'd been on the side of the mercenaries, his melody would bring sorrow and loss.)

In order to record more and better events, Retoni travels widely. He has found his way into faerie celebrations, bloody battlefields, noble courts, plague-ridden lands, and many other areas. (The one type of experience he has been unable to replicate with his music is that of the divine glory one can feel in a cathedral.)

Retoni's Apprentice

Retoni makes sure that his apprentice develops one (and probably only one) performing art, such as singing, playing an instrument, acting, juggling, etc. Retoni does not actually teach techniques; rather, he guides the apprentice in developing his or her own unique style. (Innovators are more likely to be mocked than applauded in mundane culture, so his apprentice may find that outsiders fail to appreciate his or her abilities.)

The apprentice accompanies Retoni as a near equal on his travels, not as a servant. Retoni is casual about studies, but he makes sure that the apprentice learns what he or she needs to know.

Retoni will have the apprentice perform for an audience of faeries as his or her apprentice's gauntlet.

Filius

Once his apprentice passes the gauntlet, Retoni expects the apprentice to go his or her own way and follow his or her own goals.

The filius certainly has a performing ability of some kind, but it may be that he or she never really had much talent for it.

Story Idea

Retoni wanders to the troupe's covenant to look into some interesting events that he's heard about. He composes a new song to commemorate the event, and he may be able to draw songs from his repertoire to help the player characters deal with their current problems.

Retoni's special musical skill is represented by a Virtue called "Mystic Musician," in which he has a score as with an Ability. It costs +2, like Enchanting Music. Its precise effects are up to the storyguide. Note that Retoni doesn't know the limits of his abilities himself.

Retoni, Follower of Merinita

Age: 39; Apparent Age: 35 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 3
 Fat; wears bright clothing; almost-comical appearance; carries a flute.

Characteristics

+2 Int (clever)
 0 Per
 -2 Str (weak)
 0 Stm

+2 Prs (confident)
 +1 Com (clear voice)
 -1 Dex (graceless)
 -2 Qik (overweight)

Virtues & Flaws

Enchanted Music
 Faerie Magic
 Free Expression
 Subtle Magic
 Well-Traveled

Life-Linked Magic
 Overconfident
 Slow Caster
 Weakness (poets & storytellers)

Personality Traits

+2 Flighty
 +1 Charming

-3 Practical
 0 Gullible

Reputation

None

Abilities

2 Certámen
 4 Charisma
 4 Craft Musical Inst.
 3 Dodge
 6 Faerie Lore
 3 Faerie Magic

3 Finesse
 2 Hermes History
 2 Hermes Lore
 5 Magic Theory
 4 Mystic Musician
 3 Parma Magica

5 Penetration
 5 Play Flute
 4 Quarterstaff Attack
 3 Quarterstaff Parry
 2 Scan

3 Scribe Latin
 7 Sing
 5 Speak Latin
 4 Speak Own
 5 Storytelling

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: +1</i>
Hand	-2	-1	0	-2	Soak: 0
Quarter Staff	+7	+5	+9	+6	Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

10 Cr	5 An	5 Ig
5 In	5 Aq	7 Im
8 Mu	5 Au	12 Me
5 Pe	7 Co	5 Te
5 Re	5 He	6 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 1
 Twilight Points: 1
 Effects of Twilight: None
 Wizard's Sigil: The faint trill of a flute on the wind

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+29/25) Awaken the Mirror's Self	(+16/20) Perceive Magical Scent	(+14/20) Wizard's Sidestep
(+24/25) Mask of the Beast	(+18/20) Shroud Magic	(+22/15) Breath of Invigoration
(+24/20) Emotion of Rev. Intentions	(+14/20) Waiting Spell	(+19/10) Notes of Delightful Sound
(+29/20) Faerie's Touch	(+24/20) Weakling's Revenge	(+21/5) Gaze of 1,000 Pinches
(+24/20) Feast of Delights		

Retoní



Retoni can compose melodies that capture the essence of an event, such as a love affair or a massacre.

CHAPTER TEN: HOUSE QUAESITOR

Motto: *Lex super voluntate.* (The law above the will.)

Symbol: The scales of justice

Quaesitor: KWY-see-tore. The House's official name is House Guernicus, but almost everyone calls it "the House of quaesitoris" or "House Quaesitor." "Quaesitor" means "judge" in Latin (plural: quaesitoris). Actually, the quaesitoris are not judges, in that they do not usually make rulings. Rather, they record and enforce decisions made by magi voting at tribunals.

“IF WE ARE TO HAVE AN ORDER TO REGULATE AND COMMAND OUR BEHAVIOR, LET THERE BE NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, LET THERE BE NO WEAKNESS IN THE LAW, LET THERE BE NO EXCEPTIONS FOR THOSE WHO FEEL THEY ARE ABOVE THE CODE. IF WE ARE TO HAVE AN ORDER OF HERMES, I WILL GIVE IT ORDER OF LAW.”

—GUERNICUS, FOUNDER OF THE HOUSE, AT THE FIRST TRIBUNAL



The quaesitoris are the judges of the Order, those who travel from place to place overseeing tribunals, investigating covenants' actions, and reminding magi of their pledge to uphold the Code of Hermes. Most magi find them intrusive, but without their disciplined adherence to the Code and the Peripheral Code, the Order would have fallen apart years ago. They have uncovered the roots of Hermetic magic in Rome and in ancient Egypt, which gives them a strength of tradition, and access to powerful, secret rituals, which they guard in their domus magna.

Duties and Powers of a Quaesitor

A quaesitor must be present at a tribunal for its decisions to be legally binding. The quaesitor may not vote but is responsible for judging the validity and legality of the decisions made. If more than one quaesitor is present, the senior quaesitor has all the power to make decisions, and the junior quaesitoris are relegated to the status of consultants. A quaesitor may overrule any vote by the tribunal if it goes against the Code of Hermes or the Peripheral Code. If the voting magi flout the Code or the Peripheral Code, a quaesitor may declare the entire tribunal invalid.

Quaesitoris also have the right to investigate problems and to interrogate the magi and others involved. Refusing to cooperate with an investigation is a punishable offense, with the severity of the punishment to be decided on in tribunal on the basis of the severity of the actions.

A quaesitor does not have much immediate power if other magi decide to ignore him

or her, but the quaesitor can call down severe repercussions on those who do not follow his or her rulings. The quaesitoris can call special tribunals at which they vote and at which other magi may come only as non-voting witnesses. Anyone causing so much trouble that a quaesitoris' tribunal becomes necessary is likely to suffer unpleasant consequences. A quaesitoris' tribunal has authority to overrule any standard tribunal.

The quaesitoris have a team of magi, many of its members from House Flambeau, that they can call on in need. These powerful wizards enforce the law when the orders of the quaesitoris are not followed.

HISTORY

When the Order was being founded, the magus Guernicus showed great skepticism that magi could work together and would allow themselves to be governed by the Code. He estimated the life span of the Order would be "three score and ten years—or a bit longer thanks to the potions of longevity." Trianoma, the energetic maga behind the movement to form the Order, finally grew weary of Guernicus's skepticism and asked him what provisions the Order would have to make to survive. Guernicus said the Order would need a magus whose sole duty would be to police the other wizards, to keep peace, and to enforce the Code. At Trianoma's suggestion, Guernicus took this role.

Guernicus was a gadfly in his role as judge, and many accused him of looking for disputes in an effort to prove that the Order could not stand. It was thanks to his fierce challenges and insistence on regulation, however, that the Peripheral Code was formed, and it has provided the magi with a firm, practical base of rules ever since.

As Guernicus's apprentices began to assume their duties, magi of other Houses complained that they had no say in the enforcement of the Code. They wanted members of their House to have some of the powers that the quaesitoris had. Guernicus met with the founders and primi of the Houses, and they reached an agreement. Guernicus would grant quaesitor status to magi from other Houses, in addition to training his own apprentices. At first these quaesitoris were seen as representatives of their Houses, but over the years the quaesitoris have been careful to select magi who are objective rather than partisan. After the intense training

that these new quaesitoris receive, few of them are partial to their own Houses. In fact, many even rule unfairly against members of their Houses to show that they are not bound by old loyalties. It is said that the last person one wants as a quaesitor is a quaesitor from one's own House. Every House has at least one quaesitor at all times.

Guernicus's successors were more optimistic than he, and they judged the Order without his apparent hostility. Still, Guernicus's precedent has guided the quaesitoris, making the House at times more adversarial than cooperative.

Late in the 9th century the primus Fenicil realized that the newly created Order had little tradition on which to base itself and that this lack of foundation made its rules seem arbitrary and thus not worthy of a wizard's respect. He launched a decades-long campaign of searching what records remained of Roman wizardry to find a deeper foundation for the Order. This search led him back to the Cult of Thoth and the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. Basing his arguments on this history, Fenicil declared the Order of Hermes to be a temporary manifestation of an eternal organization and its laws to be likewise based on ancient history, not merely on recent need for expedience. Strict adherence to the letter of the law was Fenicil's mandate to his House and the Order.

Besides discovering evidence of previous magical orders, Fenicil found ancient rituals of great power. Magic rituals from Egypt and Rome depended on a large and devoted following, not on the power of individuals. As such, they can only be performed by groups of people committed to a single cause. Thanks to this research, the quaesitoris have powerful, secret spells that cannot be cast by non-quaesitoris, unless a group of them were somehow connected to each other and shared a powerful goal.

In the 10th century, a few magi discovered documents that seemed to be written by Guernicus. Found at the covenant of Duresca in Iberia, they came to be known as the "Duresca Scrolls." They described a secret agenda of the quaesitoris, essentially a plan to dominate first the Order and then the world. These scrolls caused quite a stir in the Order, but they were officially declared fraudulent and destroyed. (Of course, quaesitoris presided over the tribunal that ruled on their authenticity.) A few secret copies of the documents remain, but the quaesitoris have little patience with anyone who brings up the Duresca Scrolls.

Later in the 10th century, the quaesitoris avidly pursued the execution of the diabolic followers of Tytalus. With the execution of these criminals, attention was turned away from the Duresca Scrolls.

During the Schism War, House Quaesitor was in turmoil. The quaesitoris almost completely lost their control and authority as skirmishes among magi evolved into outright battles. Then, as House Tremere prepared itself for all-out war, the quaesitoris made a fateful decision. They fell in with House Tremere and supported the destruction of House Diedne. After the last Diedne magus was hunted down and slain, the quaesitoris had regained their position of power. In fact, they now had shown to what extremes they would go to maintain order, and they pointed out that they could have ended the war earlier if they had had more authority. Ever since the Schism War, the quaesitoris have enjoyed greater power than before.

For two hundred years, the quaesitoris followed Fenicil's precedent of basing judgments on strict interpretations of the law, and adopted his assumption that anything more flexible would defeat the purpose of the law itself. Then in 1148 a well-respected quaesitor, Simprim, began openly opposing this policy, stating that a law or tradition incapable of change is a burden on the Order rather than a blessing. Many quaesitoris, mostly younger ones, have come to agree with Simprim. With this split of opinion, the Traditionalists and the Transitionalists were formed. The Traditionalists hold that the law is more important than individual magi and that the magi must learn to adapt themselves to it. Only through such discipline, they claim, will the Order hold together. The Transitionalists, however, see the well-being of individual magi as the foremost concern, with the law aiding them and changing to fit changing times. They are led by Ornel, filius of the late Simprim.

The Traditionalists and Transitionalists disagree, for example, about how to deal with the growth of the mundane population. The Traditionalists want to keep a pure separation between mundanes and magi, whereas the Transitionalists are lenient about magi who attempt to reach some kind of compromise with the mundanes. Over this topic, the debates are particularly heated. The Transitionalists say that the Traditionalists offer no new ideas to help the Order deal with this new problem, only an outdated Code. The Traditionalists respond by saying that the Transitionalists offer nothing either, except criticism of a Code that was designed by

magi with better minds and more noble spirits than they will ever have.

When the last primus, Arliandus, died, the Traditionalists lost a good deal of power and clout. He had led the Traditionalist faction, a role now filled by his filius Jart. The current prima was thought to be a neutral in the debate, but more and more quaesitoris are suspecting that she has Transitionalist sympathies. And, as Arliandus used to say, "If you're not a Traditionalist, you're a blasted Transitionalist."

NOTABLE MAGI OF HOUSE QUAESITOR

Guernicus: A skeptic who took the role of quaesitor because he did not think the Order would survive without someone playing that role. The House's founder.

Fenicil: The primus who first started researching the ancient roots of magic, the one who eventually provided the quaesitoris with the powerful rituals they now use to help enforce the law.

Simprim: Originator of the Transitionalists.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Fifty-one, plus twenty-three quaesitoris belonging to other Houses.

Domus magna: Magvillus, in the Roman Tribunal. This highly secretive covenant has nothing to do with local activities, except through normal legal channels. No one other than quaesitoris are allowed in, and the inner buildings are only for those quaesitoris who do not belong to another House.

Prima: Bilera, who is thought to have secret Transitionalist sympathies.

Current concerns: To manage changes in the Order so that minimum damage is done to the Order and its magi.

The quaesitoris are trying to deal with two struggles: the internal split between Traditionalists and the Transitionalists, and the growing conflict between magi and mortals. Throughout these difficulties, they retain their dignity and composure.

The apprentice's gauntlet is a grueling oral examination on knowledge of Hermetic law.

Magi may not join House Quaesitor, though they can apply to hold quaesitor status. House Guernicus tests the applicant's knowledge of the Peripheral Code and reviews his or her record. If both are exemplary, the applicant may be granted the title and status of quaesitor while retaining membership in his or her own House. (The title of quaesitor does not pass to one's filii unless the parens is actually in House Guernicus.)

MAGI OF HOUSE QUAESITOR

Mentality of a Quaesitor

You are a member of an ancient institution of learning, wisdom, and power. Your history goes far back to the ancient Orient and beyond. Your role in this marvelous Order is a special one: that of judge. You have been found worthy to judge the wisest and mightiest of humans, and that is a high honor. You still must prove yourself worthy, wise, prudent, careful, and intelligent, however, before you can be allowed to share the greater mysteries at the center of your House. Someday, if you are found worthy, you will know what only the best quaesitoris know and perform rituals of great power. For now, use your wisdom to hold the Order together through these dangerous times.

Priorities

- 1) Be faithful to the Code.
- 2) Resolve disputes constructively.
- 3) Earn personal honor and recognition within your House.
- 4) Earn honor in the Order.

For a Transitionalist, 1) and 2) are reversed.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** Their secretiveness breeds suspicion and dissent. Do not let them shirk the Code.
- **Bonisagus:** Most-honored descendants of this Order's founder. Sometimes, however, they need to be reminded that Bonisagus merely revived an eternal institution.
- **Criamon:** They sometimes believe that their

“insights” place them above the law, but they rarely give others trouble.

- **Ex Miscellanea:** Some of them flout the Code in their distant, hidden hovels. When the current crises are over, we might have to take a close look at the riffraff that has made its way into House Ex Miscellanea.
- **Flambeau:** They can be allies who help enforce the Code or violent nuisances.
- **Jerbiton:** They seek to breach the boundary that has separated mundane from magus. If they continue in their actions, the Order could become so unstable that it will fall apart.
- **Mercere:** Most-valued and useful Redcaps. While we are the Order’s conscience, they are its limbs, mouth, and ears.
- **Merinita:** They rashly side with faeries against their sworn sodales. They are difficult to control and to predict.
- **Tremere:** They know the value of discipline. More Houses should adopt their methods of leadership.
- **Tytalus:** Irritating jesters whose constant conflicts distract us from more important work.
- **Verditius:** They work well with magi of other Houses, building stability.
- **Faeries:** Distracting, silly, pointless beings.
- **Demons:** A terrible threat to the Order. Fortunately for all, we are vigilant against them.
- **Mundanes:** We should have nothing to do with them. If we could enslave them all without danger to ourselves, we would.

Intra-House Relations

As a young quaesitor, you have a lot to prove. If you can maintain order in the area assigned to you, you will rise in the ranks and be given more territory to oversee.

Be attentive to your superiors and follow their commands carefully. Watch over your lessers and teach them in the ways of the House.

You can call on your superiors when magi fail to respect your legal power, but you will never rise to a position of importance if you cannot handle disobedience by yourself.

Magic

Guernicus gave up the pursuit of earth magic to study the Art of detection, and his followers have excelled at Intéllego ever since. They also tend to be gifted at Imáginem and Mentem, which complements the way they usually use Intéllego. Quaesitoris were the ones who pro-

vided the Order with such spells as *Eyes of the Past* and *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie*.

If you go through temporary wizard’s Twilight, you will be put on probation for a year. Your superiors must judge you fit before you can resume normal duties.

In addition to the spells listed below, the House has secret, powerful rituals. Other magi speculate that these rituals give the quaesitoris unknown power over the Order.

The Oath of Truth (Perdo Corpus 25)

Spell Focus: Silver manacles (+4)

R: Reach, D: Perm., Ritual, Intéllego

This oath assures that a person will, on pain of death, take or avoid a specified action. You and two others whom you know well join hands in a circle around the target of the spell to cast this ritual. You address the target by name as part of the ritual and say, “Do you swear to . . .,” and then state the conditions of the oath. When the target responds, “I do so swear,” the ritual is complete.

From that point on, the target is under the spell and dies if he or she breaks the oath. (Stm roll of 18+ to resist; if successful, the target is knocked unconscious and receives 3 Decrepitude points.) Even considering breaking the oath causes the character to become uncomfortable and a bit disoriented.

Quaesitoris use this ritual to assure compliance with the law, but since it is seen as highly intrusive and heavy-handed, it is only used in extreme cases. According to tradition, the oath-swearer provides the raw vis needed for the ritual.

Chain that Links the Minds (Intéllego Mentem 25)

Spell Focus: A gold chain (+2)

R: Touch, D: Spec.

Cast over a chain to be held by you and one or more others, this spell allows you to hold a silent mental conversation with all those who grasp the chain. The spell lasts until anyone who holds the chain lets go of it. This silent “speech” is voluntary, so no resistance roll is allowed. Quaesitoris use this spell to discuss private matters of import in the presence of others.

The Peripheral Code

Over the years, the quaesitoris have built up the Peripheral Code. Because of the adversarial

Quaesitor characters can have a special arcane knowledge, Hermetic Law, that represents in general their ability to fulfill their duties, both in theory and practice.

relationship that has developed between this House and the rest of the Order, magi generally only follow quaesitor judgments that are backed by precedents in the Peripheral Code. Therefore, the more laws written into the Peripheral Code, the more power the quaesitoris have.

Should a ruling be hotly disputed, the quaesitoris have records even more detailed that describe the circumstances involving all the cases they have overseen, including most of the cases entered into the Peripheral Code.

Example Precedents from the Peripheral Code:

“A.D. 780. The provisions of the Code of Hermes that refer to Bonisagus apply equally to all members of his House.”

“A.D. 781. The provisions in the Code of Hermes referring to tribunal apply equally to any official tribunal presided over by a quaesitor.”

“A.D. 807. Certámen is to be respected as a means of settling disputes decisively. Any magus refusing to engage in certámen or refusing to abide by the results of the certámen is defeating the purpose of this skill, which is to settle conflicts peacefully. Those who refuse to accept certámen challenges, therefore, or who refuse to abide by the outcome of a certámen may suffer coercion that is more violent and may be punished by tribunal.

“No magus may challenge another magus to certámen a second time unless the magus to be challenged has challenged the first in the meantime.

“Magi may use raw vis to aid them even in official certámen.”

“A.D. 889. No quaesitor shall hold power to officiate at tribunal unless that quaesitor bears a document declaring him or her by name to be a quaesitor in good standing. This document must be signed and dated by the primus of House Guernicus, and said document shall be invalid if it is more than seven years old.”

“A.D. 913. The magus Hernis, filius of Dorin, follower of Tytalus, was renounced for having declared three Wizard Wars within the space of fourteen months. On careful investigation, the tribunal at Durenmar found that his causes were not sufficient to warrant Wizard Wars. The voting sodales agreed that if Hernis had cooperated with the tribunal, he would have been punished but not renounced. His stubborn refusal to cooperate,

to heed earlier warnings, or to admit his errors forced the voting members to renounce him.”

“A.D. 1017. It was determined at the tribunal at Doissetep that the magus Pisitulus of Flambeau used poor but excusable judgment in slaying the magus Forcus of Tytalus, who was approaching Pisitulus’s sanctum with apparent but not obvious intent to threaten Pisitulus’s laboratory and apprentice. Pisitulus was punished by the loss of his familiar.”

HOUSE QUAESITOR IN PLAY

Saga Idea

A Traditionalist invalidates a tribunal on technicalities, causing hard feelings among the attending magi. In response, Prima Bilera declares herself a Transitionalist, and the tension between the two camps escalates.

Encouraged by a “lenient” quaesitor in the role of prima, various extreme factions in the Order begin to press their claims. With a sense that they can “get away with it,” magi begin making deals with nobles, slaughtering peasants, flouting tribunal edicts, and otherwise acting with less restraint. Some of these actions are arguably healthy, having been previously suppressed by legalistic quaesitoris. Others, however, are clearly selfish, and dangerous to the Order.

In response to this chaos (and exaggerating its extent), Traditionalist quaesitoris begin a campaign of merciless enforcement of the Code, while Transitionalists try to keep the peace. The Traditionalists may even split from House Quaesitor (though they, of course, claim to be the “true quaesitoris”).

The conflict and turmoil may not resolve itself for years. In the meantime, the player characters have ample opportunity for adventure and profit. They may use the opportunity to pursue some goals without hard-line quaesitoris looking over their shoulders. On the other hand, they may find themselves in the way of magi who are taking advantage of anarchy, and they may sorely miss quaesitoris keeping order.

Ultimately the Order will have to reach a consensus on the nature of the quaesitoris. It may be that only merciless enforcers can restore order and that the quaesitoris become more

powerful than ever before. Or perhaps the magi find other ways to settle differences and reach harmony, with the quaesitoris relegated to the role of scribes in the “new Hermetic Order.”

Story Ideas

- A Transitionalist visits the characters to find out where they stand in a local dispute between another covenant and the Church. She is looking for new approaches to this old conflict. Can the characters offer constructive advice based on their knowledge of local politics? The quaesitor makes it clear that, as a quaesitor, she cannot enter direct negotiations with mundanes, but she would happily accompany and aid anyone who would try such an approach. Can the characters do it?
- The old quaesitor who served the area dies, and a new one is appointed. Representatives of the local covenants scramble to find out more about the appointee. She arranges a special council at which she will introduce herself and familiarize herself with the local magi. Player characters attend the council, and compete in the struggles in order to paint the covenant and themselves in the best light.

CRINOS THE QUAESITOR

Crinos looks frail, but his piercing eyes reveal an inner strength. He is balding, and what hair he has left is graying unevenly. He is stooped, and he moves about slowly as if his body were an unwilling mule. But when he opens his mouth or levels his gaze, any doubts another may harbor about his capabilities go away.

Crinos sees demons everywhere, and revealing their machinations is his personal quest. His vigilance borders on paranoia, but his abilities are beyond question. His favorite saying is “A keen eye and a sharp nose serve the Order better than a hundred leaves of the Peripheral Code.”

When Crinos was an apprentice and nearly ready to try the apprentice’s gauntlet, a friend of his, also an apprentice, was killed by a diabolist maga. The friend had been serving under a quaesitor who had been assigned to investigate the diabolist. Though the quaesitor knew of the diabolist’s crimes, she followed the Peripheral Code to the letter, which slowed her investigation. Crinos believes that if the quaesi-

tor had been more liberal in following (or *not* following) the Code, his friend would be alive today. As it was, the diabolist killed the friend and used his lifeblood to boost her power and escape. Because of this experience, Crinos is willing to run his investigations outside the letter of the law.

Crinos’s Apprentice

Crinos recognizes the need to take an apprentice, but he does not let him or her slow him down. He cares for the apprentice with a combination of neglect and concern. While Crinos cares little for the apprentice’s feelings, needs, comfort, or even diet, he is very careful not to bring him or her into dangerous situations. The apprentice is most often seen accompanying him carrying a ponderous copy of the Peripheral Code.

Crinos certainly tries to impress his charge with the importance of fighting diabolism, but he or she may not share his zeal. Crinos tracks down a number of false leads, and he overlooks some breaches of the Code that do not involve diabolism. An apprentice seeing this may conclude that demons and diabolists are not nearly the concern that his or her master thinks they are.

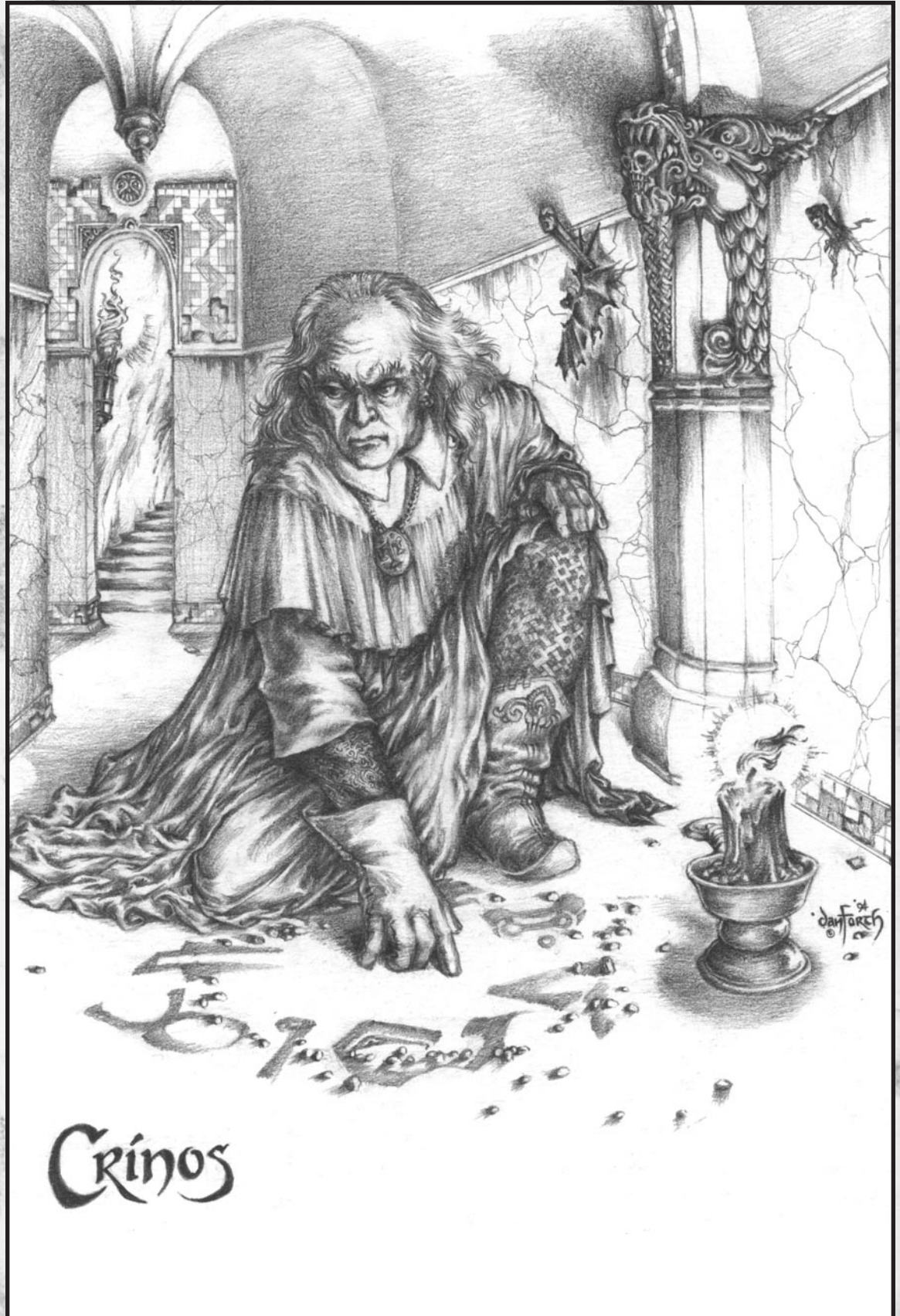
Crinos’s Filius

A filius is certain to have good Intéllego magic and to have practiced some investigatory skills. His or her attitude toward demons is likely to be extreme, but it’s not necessarily going to match Crinos’s. While the filius may share his obsession with demons, he or she may also strive to gain distance from him and his goals.

Crinos certainly plans to call on his filius to help him in his investigations, whether he or she is eager to help him or not.

Story Idea

Devils have become active nearby, and evidence points to diabolists within the player characters’ covenant. Crinos comes to investigate, and the characters must put up with snooping and interrogation while trying to find out what happened themselves. Perhaps the devils are framing the characters, or perhaps there really is a diabolist among them.



Crinos the quaesitor is renowned for uncovering the handiwork of Hell. This bat succumbed to *Demon's Eternal Oblivion*, suggesting that it was an imp of some kind.

Crinos, Quaesitor, Follower of Guernicus

Age: 49; Apparent Age: 45 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 3

Frail, stooped appearance; piercing eyes; balding, with wisps of unevenly graying hair.

Characteristics

+4 Int (shrewd)	-2 Prs (unassuming)
+3 Per (keen-eyed)	+2 Com (eloquent)
-3 Str (puny)	+1 Dex (steady hand)
+1 Stm (tenacious)	-2 Qik (sedentary)

Virtues & Flaws

Visions	Bad Reputation
House Quaesitor	Duty-Bound
Piercing Gaze	Fragile Constitution
Social Contacts (Church)	Obsessed
Social Contacts (covenfolk)	Sensitive
Strong Personality	Suscept. to Divine Power
	Warped Magic (headaches)

Personality Traits

+6 Tenacious
+4 Brave
+2 Cunning

Strong Writer

+3 Empathetic
-5 Frivolous
-3 Naive

Reputation

2 Heartless (Order of Hermes)

Abilities

2 Alertness	3 Disguise	4 Hermetic Law	4 Scribe Latin
3 Area Lore	1 Dodge	1 Intimidation	5 Speak Latin
2 Bargain	2 Etiquette	5 Magic Theory	5 Speak Vulgar
4 Certámen	2 Finesse	3 Occult Lore	2 Storytelling
2 Church Knowledge	2 Folk Ken	4 Parma Magica	1 Survival
2 Church Lore	2 Hermes History	3 Penetration	1 Track
2 Dagger Attack	2 Hermes Lore	2 Pretend	3 Visions
1 Diplomacy			

Combat Information

Weapon	1st	Atk	Parry	Dam	Dodge: +1
Hand	-2	+1	0	-3	Soak: +1
Dagger	+1	+7	+1	+1	Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

6 Cr	7 An	5 Ig
11 In	5 Aq	14 Im
5 Mu	5 Au	10 Me
9 Pe	9 Co	5 Te
12 Re	5 He	16 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 0
Twilight Points: 0
Effects of Twilight: None
Wizard's Sigil: A sense of utter confidence

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+28/40) Circ. Ward vs. Demons	(+16/25) Track of Faerie Glow	(+21/20) Tongue of the Folk
(+25/35) Demon's Eternal Obliv.	(+16/25) Weight of 1,000 Hells	(+13/20) Weaver's Trap of Webs
(+28/35) Watching Ward	(+22/20) Aura Right. Authority	(+16/15) Cripple Howling Wolf
(+19/30) Eye of the Sage	(+25/20) Eyes of the Past	(+16/15) Whispering Winds
(+21/30) Peering Mortal Mind	(+21/20) Frst. Breath Spkn. Lie	(+20/15) Whispers Black Gate
(+23/30) Veil of Invisibility	(+20/20) Inexorable Search	(+18/10) Grip of Chok. Hand
(+19/25) Blessing of Childlike Bliss	(+18/20) Tongue of the Beasts	(+11/10) Lamp Without Flame

CHAPTER ELEVEN: HOUSE TREMERE

Motto: *Voluntas vincet omnia.* (Will conquers all.)

Symbol: The symbol of Mars with a square inscribed

Tremere: tray-MARE-ay or tray-MARE

“IF YOU MASTER MAGIC, YOU
CAN MASTER OTHERS. IF YOU
MASTER YOUR MIND, YOU CAN
MASTER YOURSELF.”

—TREMERE



House Tremere abides by carefully defined codes of subordination and dominance, and its members often expect magi of other Houses to fall in line as well. Their rigid structure makes them strong as a House, and intense competition makes them strong individuals as well.

HISTORY

Tremere was the youngest and weakest magus among the founders. He had studied under Guorna the Fetid, whose fame gave Tremere the prestige he needed to be included in the Order despite his youth and lack of experience. Within the Order, Tremere had a problem. Studying under Guorna had given him a taste for fighting, but spell battles put him at risk because the other magi were more powerful than he. Tremere wanted a way to best the other magi, and to do so he had to invent some kind of contest at which he would be the expert. He consulted Bonisagus and worked with him, and they invented a way for magi to duel magically: certámen. Bonisagus and his filia Trianoma were happy with the new skill because it allowed magi to fight each other without deadly spells, and Tremere was happy with it because no other magus had more experience with the skill than he did. Tremere quickly became a master of the new art, and he passed his secrets to his apprentices.

In A.D. 837, Verditius died, making Tremere the last living founder. This status gave him great prestige and power, which he managed and cultivated carefully. Personally guiding his followers and turning them into an organized political and military force, he nearly took control of the Order. With their superiority in certámen, their united force, and their political skill, Tremere magi were taking control of politics, land, resources, and the Peripheral Code. By 848, they held positions of power throughout the Order and were sending books, raw vis, and magic devices to Tremere himself. Some feared he was

amassing these items for a battle that would make him and his followers masters of the Order.

These schemes came to an abrupt end during a night in A.D. 848. Tremere found his lieutenants stricken with madness and violent urges. They were unable to follow his orders and coordinate their underlings, and across the Order other followers met similar fates on the nights to come. Tremere's efficient political machine fell into ruin. The event came to be known as the Sundering.

Unable to find out who had defeated him, Tremere appealed to the quaesitoris for justice. In a secret and still unknown meeting place, Tremere met with representatives of the magi who had attacked his House and with the primus of the quaesitoris. Apparently they came to some kind of agreement, because hostilities against Tremere ceased. To keep this conflict from resurfacing, the House Quaesitor primus ruled that all records of this conflict and the negotiations that followed be stricken from Hermetic records and that none were to pass on knowledge of these events. Followers of Tremere were subject to mental searches until Tremere's death in 861 to make sure that none of them had learned the identity of the magi responsible for the Sundering. This action has kept House Tremere from holding a grudge against those who brought them down, but one never knows if magi might discover historical clues that will bring this conflict back to the minds of Tremere's followers.

After Tremere's near domination of the Order, magi from other Houses began studying the skill of certámen more seriously, but the followers of Tremere have remained the masters of the art.

Early in the 11th century, House Tremere played the central role in the battles that came to be called the Schism War. Unwilling to accept any affront from House Díedne and others, the followers of Tremere responded to each offense or attack with a stronger counterattack. After years of escalating skirmishes, the primus Cercistum rallied House Tremere to full-scale war. With their strong discipline and organization and with the aid of House Flambeau and the sanction of the quaesitoris, the Tremere magi destroyed House Díedne. They might have continued their attacks on other, lesser enemies, such as House Merinita, but the quaesitoris stopped them and negotiated peace throughout the Order.

House Díedne proved surprisingly adept at returning attacks, and House Tremere, like House Flambeau, lost nearly half its number during the Schism War. Still, the war may have been to House Tremere's benefit. Some say that the real motive for House Tremere's hostility was a desire to steal House Díedne's secrets. These

suspicious magi say that House Tremere may well have won powerful secrets from the defeated Díedne magi, secrets that House Tremere is ready to use against the Order now that they have replenished their ranks.

Early in the 13th century, several Tremere magi in the Transylvanian Tribunal voluntarily became vampires in a misguided effort to gain immortality and to increase their power. While the resulting sorcerous undead creatures were indeed formidable, they were routed and destroyed by other magi (mostly of House Flambeau). The loss of these members has weakened House Tremere.

Over the centuries, House Tremere has been sometimes close to and sometimes at odds with House Tytalus. The two founders had the same master, so they were similar in philosophy. At times the Houses find themselves close enough to cooperate, and at others they are close enough to be rivals. Magi from other Houses sometimes see Tremere and Tytalus as very similar, but those within the Houses see a clear distinction: followers of Tytalus fight in order to learn more, while followers of Tremere learn in order to fight better.

NOTABLE MAGI OF TREMERE

Tremere: He went from being the youngest founder to nearly controlling vast portions of the Order. Magi regard him more with respect than with fear or hate now that his actions are centuries past.

Cercistum: The primus who headed the war against House Díedne, regarded as a hero who saved the Order. Tremere magi who are descended from him (and only these magi) are sometimes named after him.

Pusicalle: The maga who headed the secret vampiric faction that was discovered and defeated earlier this century.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Sixty-four.

Domus magna: Coeris, in the Transylvanian Tribunal. The covenant is a center of power in the area.

Primus: Roto. He publicly denounces the Tremere magi who turned to vampirism to gain power, but some suspect that the movement could never have started without at least the passive assent of Roto and other high-ranking Tremere magi.

Current concerns: To demonstrate goodwill toward the Order.

House Tremere is a hierarchy regulated by certámen. Rank is symbolized by sigils. Masters construct sigils for their apprentices but do not grant them when the apprentices become magi. Instead, the parens holds and votes with the sigil until the filius can best him or her in ritual certámen or until the parens passes on. Followers of Tremere can command those whose sigils they hold, as well as vote with those sigils at tribunals. If a magus whose sigil is held by another trains an apprentice, that apprentice's sigil is also held by the magus who holds the master's sigil. Thus a follower of Tremere has no voting power without first besting his or her parens (provided the parens has in turn bested his or her own parens, and so on).

In beating the parens, a Tremere magus gains his or her own sigil and the sigils of his or her apprentices. This hierarchy has made it so that only thirteen magi currently have their own sigils, and they hold among them the remaining fifty-one sigils of the other followers of Tremere. With sigils and power so concentrated, House Tremere can present a strong, nearly united force when it needs to. Within House Tremere, one's rank is determined by the number of sigils one holds (except that the primi hold head rank even if their filii win their sigils).

Besides using certámen to distribute sigils, the followers of Tremere regularly use certámen to settle all manner of disputes. They regard certámen as the purest form of conflict and despise debates and politics, and also battles that could be solved through orderly duels. Naturally, they surpass other magi at this skill and even have secret techniques that help them win their many duels.

Members of the House meet at Coeris every ten years to coordinate strategies for the next decade, as they have since the end of the Schism War. The next meeting is in 1222.

Politically, the House is primarily concerned with power. Its members fight for their rights and privileges, and they are unforgiving when others underestimate them in any way. The magi are carefully ranked within the House, and even when dealing with outsiders they take care to use the respect proper to the status of those they deal with. They demand, likewise, that others respect them according to their own status.

The followers of Tremere have developed a complex version of chess, in which certain pieces have powers over others depending on their level in a hierarchy. Few outside the House bother to learn it, but Tremere magi can absorb themselves in it almost indefinitely if they can find opponents of nearly equal ability.

The apprentice's gauntlet consists of performing well in certámen. Victory is not necessary; to defeat a full magus is too unrealistic a task to expect from a neophyte.

Theoretically, entrance is gained by those who can defeat three champions of the House in certámen. No outsider has ever gained entrance.

MAGI OF TREMERE

Mentality of a Tremere Magus

You see yourself rising rung by rung up the ladder of power. At first you will be under the power of others, and the submission required of you may rankle at times; but you must be patient. Your superiors are teaching you what it is like to be subordinate, and when you rise to rule over others, you will be able to understand your underlings better thanks to this experience. Submission to superiors will also train your will and self-control, and no one can rule others without first ruling him or herself. Obey your superiors, and do everything you can to make yourself a valued underling.

But you must not be satisfied to remain a mere underling your whole life. Study magic, practice certámen, use politics to your advantage, and come to rule others. When you have power over others, you are not to abuse it. It will still be your responsibility to your superiors to lead your inferiors prudently. Power over others is the most useful tool in this life, and if you misuse this power, you are a fool on the same order as the haughty barons and priests of mundane society. With inferiors, be firm and consistent. Almost anyone makes a good follower if the leader is a good enough leader.

You may be sent out to live and work among the magi of other Houses, weakening your direct ties with your superiors in House Tremere. If so, use your time wisely: grow in magical and political power, pull others under your leadership, and prepare the way should your superiors wish to enter and control the area where you live.

Priorities

- 1) Serve House Tremere.
- 2) Serve your superiors in the House.
- 3) Pursue personal achievement.
- 4) Raise the Order above the mundanes.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They know something about themselves, but are too weak to rule others.
- **Bonisagus:** The magic they invent is useful, and they deserve a special place in the Order.
- **Criamon:** They never lead and never follow; ignore them.

- **Ex Miscellanea:** One can dominate them individually, but as they have no internal hierarchy, doing so is next to pointless.
- **Flambeau:** A good ally, a fearsome enemy.
- **Jerbiton:** The knowledge they gather about the mundanes will help us rule the world some day.
- **Mercere:** They know their place.
- **Merinita:** They are controlled by faerie power, rather than controlling it; very dangerous.
- **Quaesitoris:** Without them, the Order would fall apart and our power would be nothing; respect and obey them always; ruin any who disobey them.
- **Tyталus:** No hierarchy and no self-control; their skill and energy are wasted in anarchy.
- **Verditius:** They know their place and serve other magi; value them for that.
- **Grogs:** Accept no insubordination.
- **Demons:** They know the strength to be found in hierarchy and are therefore very dangerous.
- **Faeries:** Anarchic, frivolous, and best avoided.
- **Mundane Society:** The pope has proved that the world can be brought under one ruler; someday that ruler will be a magus.
- **Nobles:** Some are wise and weak; others, foolish and weak.

Intra-House Relations

Obey the primus and the magus who holds your sigil. At times they will seem to expect too much of you; but remember that they want you to be a leader, and a strong magus as well, so they want to help you grow and thrive. You will probably not be called onto dangerous missions often, but be prepared to serve with courage when you are.

Magic

You are likely to have spells that help you control those you cannot control through certámen: grogs and other mundanes, beasts, supernatural creatures, etc. Rego, Mentem, Corpus, and Animál are common Arts.

HOUSE TREMERE IN PLAY

Saga Idea

Over the course of many years, a group of Tremere magi attempts to dominate the local tribunal. First the members of the group attempt to ally the player magi and anyone else who can oppose them, and then when they have enough allies, they use certámen and unified voting to control the tribunal and unite it for a specific campaign, which naturally they lead. For example,

they may try to unite the magi behind a campaign to obliterate an evil faerie forest or to assassinate a local baron. To carry out this scheme, they require that some of the tribunal's resources be diverted to their cause (that is, to them). They promise the characters a share of the power that they will win.

The Tremere magi can draw on resources from others in the House to help them control the local tribunal, but for a price. If the Tremere magi gain control, they will divert resources to the other Tremere magi who helped them.

The threat of a political take-over can alter alliances. For instance, the quaesitoris who usually protect weaker magi from more powerful ones support the Tremere magi, as long as they adhere strictly to the Code (which they do). Enemies within the tribunal may have to cooperate to form a united resistance to the Tremere magi.

The power push may not simply be local. Primus Roto may have unspoken plans for this area. Once subordinate Tremere magi take control, superiors will be able to take direct control, if they wish.

Player characters may take any stand in this conflict. They may oppose the Tremere magi and fight for freedom. They may go along with the Tremere magi just to be on the winning side. Indeed, they may be part of the plan, if there are any player-character Tremere magi.

Story Ideas

- The dread vampiric magi of the Transylvanian Tribunal have not been completely exterminated. Some simply fled to lands where fewer magi are familiar with them, and a vampiric magus has sought refuge in the player characters' land. It has found that just as a human vampire cannot slake its thirst with goat's blood, a vampiric magus cannot slake its thirst on the blood of mundanes. It's hunting magi, using the powers of the night to supplement its magical powers.
- A player-character Tremere is required to investigate a local covenant and deliver all relevant information to be found. The character's superior hints that this information is eventually meant for the primus's eyes.

TRESSA OF HOUSE TREMERE

Tressa cuts a dramatic figure. Her black hair is long and full but always carefully groomed. Though she is small and slim, she seems large and imposing. She always seems to know what she's doing, and she usually knows what other people ought to be doing as well.

Tressa is an exile from her home tribunal. Early in her career, her pater commanded her to take the blame for some political maneuverings of his own that had gone awry. He had been advocating, and executing, deep dealings with the mundanes, and when the repercussions came, Tressa took the fall. Her home tribunal exiled her, and she's been living in her new home ever since. And ever since, she's been plotting to return. She is waiting until she can demand readmittance; she will never request it.

She does not have her sigil.

Tressa's Apprentice

Tressa teaches her apprentice whatever magical Arts seem best for him or her. The Arts the apprentice chooses are less important than the way he or she conducts him or herself. Tressa instills discipline, respect for authority, self-control, and pride in her apprentice. She also teaches her apprentice the secrets of certamen.

Tressa wastes no time in involving her apprentice in her machinations. Before the apprentice is competent and trustworthy at politics, she uses him or her to spread misinformation. For instance, she lies to the apprentice and then sends him or her on errands that bring him or her near her rivals. In this way, she misleads rivals who try to learn about Tressa from her apprentice. Once the apprentice is capable in the ways of deceit, she assigns him or her to more sensitive tasks.

Tressa has an amber amulet that grants the *Leap of Homecoming* (ReCo 35, 1/day).

Tressa's Filius

Tressa sees a filius as a competent underling. She certainly tries to include the filius in her plans. She may, for instance, send the filius to live in her home tribunal where he or she can spy for her and help her prepare for her eventual return.

The filius's sigil is given to Tressa's pater, who still holds Tressa's as well.

Story Idea

Tressa hires the player characters to head back to her homeland and spy for her. She gives them inside information on the magi there and lets them know whom they can trust and whom they can't. She instructs them in specific knowledge to gather, but in addition she expects them to use discretion in delving into other worthy areas of investigation. The story may take a twist if the magi in Tressa's homeland ask the characters to spy on Tressa for them.



Tressa studies records of tribunals, looking for exploitable weaknesses in her fellow magi.

Tressa, Follower of Tremere

Age: 47; Apparent Age: 35 (longevity potion); Size: -1; Confidence: 5
Slim with imposing features; long black hair, carefully groomed.

Characteristics

+4 Int (cunning)	+2 Prs (arrogant)
+2 Per (suspicious)	+3 Com (sly)
-1 Str (small frame)	-2 Dex (awkward)
-1 Stm (frail)	-2 Qik (overly cautious)

Virtues & Flaws

Enduring Magic	Driving Goal (return home)
Knack (Certámen +4)	Favors
Piercing Gaze	Infamous Master
Strong Personality	No Sigil
Strong-Willed	Slow Caster

Personality Traits

+5 Scheming	+3 Vengeful
+4 Cautious	-1 Brave

Reputation

2 Radical (magi)

Abilities

7 Certámen	2 Hermes Law	5 Magic Theory	3 Scribe Latin
4 Charisma	5 Hermes Lore	4 Parma Magica	6 Speak Latin
6 Finesse	1 Homeland Lore	3 Penetration	5 Speak Vulgar
2 Guile	3 Intrigue	3 Pretend	2 Storytelling
3 Hermes History	1 Leadership		

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: -1</i>
Hand	-2	-2	0	-1	Soak: -2
					Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

8 Cr	5 An	5 Ig
9 In	5 Aq	9 Im
10 Mu	5 Au	14 Me
8 Pe	6 Co	5 Te
11 Re	5 He	5 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 4
Twilight Points: 2
Effects of Twilight: None
Wizard's Sigil: Spells are slow and elegant in forming

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in caps)

(+21/30) Black Whisper	(+23/20) Rec. Mem. Never Lived	(+16/10) Despair of Quiv. Manacles
(+24/30) Exchange Two Minds	(+19/20) Wizard's Sidestep	(+16/10) Rise of the Feathery Body
(+22/25) Thoughts w/in Babble	(+18/15) Disguise Trans. Image	(+22/10) Sight of Transparent Motive
(+21/25) Weight of 1,000 Hells	(+23/15) Ench. of Detachment	(+21/10) Trust of Childlike Faith
(+24/20) Aura of Rightful Authority	(+21/15) Panic Trembling Heart	(+16/5) Curse of the Unruly Tongue
(+23/20) Emotion Rev. Intentions		

Magic Items:

An amber amulet with *Leap of Homecoming*, once/day.

CHAPTER TWELVE: HOUSE TYTALUS

Motto: *Incrementum ex certamine.* (From conflict, growth.)

Symbol: A spiral turning in to the right

Tyталus: TEU-tah-loos. The first vowel sound is the sound in the French *tu* or the German *über*. To make this sound, the lips form the shape proper to saying “oo” while the mouth says “ee.”

“HARISTE, I GO NOW TO CONFRONT THE QUEEN OF THE FAERIES. I HAVE BESTED MANY OPPONENTS IN MANY CONTESTS, AND NOW I INTEND TO FACE THE QUEEN IN HER LANDS, TO PLAY HER GAME, AND TO BEST HER IF IT IS WITHIN MY ABILITY. IT IS THE ONLY GAME I HAVE LEFT TO PLAY. IT MAY BE MY LAST OR MY FIRST.”

—TYTALUS, TO HARISTE, HIS FAVORITE FILIA

“THE DECEIVER PLAYS A SUBTLE GAME. HE WANTS ONLY ONE THING—YOUR SOUL. AND BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY THING HE WANTS, HE WILL GIVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THE CHANCE TO GET IT. THE OBJECT OF ANY GAME PLAYED WITH THE DECEIVER IS TO TAKE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN FROM HIM WITHOUT GIVING HIM THE ONE THING HE WANTS IN RETURN. I FAILED THE CONTEST, BUT I CANNOT AND WILL NOT REGRET THE ATTEMPT. PLEASE REMEMBER ME AS ONE WHO SIMPLY FAILED A CONTEST THAT IS MORE VITAL, AND THEREFORE MORE WORTHY OF PLAY, THAN MOST.”

—THE LAST WORDS OF TASGILLIA, PRIMA OF TYTALUS,
CONVICTED OF DIABOLISM



House Tytalus is small but energetic. Tytalus taught that conflict and struggle are sources of growth and learning, and his followers continue to put this philosophy in action. They can be found in all levels of contests and strife, within the Order and without: debating at tribunals, engaging in certámen, skirmishing with nobles, facing magical beasts, and challenging each other in complicated tests of will and wit. Their history tainted with diabolism, the followers of Tytalus find it hard to gain the trust of others.

HISTORY

The incessant battles between Tytalus and other magi were one of the reasons that forming the Order appealed to wizards of the 8th century. Tytalus was known as a hot-tempered wizard prone to challenging other powerful wizards just for the sake of testing himself and learning from his defeats and victories. He spoke out against the Order because he thought it would restrict magi too much, but when its formation became more certain, he admitted his political defeat and joined the others in founding the Order.

Once the Order was formed, Tytalus turned his energies outward at those magi who refused to join. He took great pleasure in hunting them down and defeating them, though he often let them live once they had acknowledged defeat—unlike Flambeau, who did not give up until they were slain.

Tytalus's relationship with his favored filia Hariste set a tradition of "beloved rivals" for all his followers to the present. Though devoted to each other, they were constantly involved in competitive games and contests of power. To those who did not know them well, they seemed to hate each other.

Tytalus was lost to the Order in A.D. 807 when he went into the Maddenhofen Woods to challenge the queen of the faeries at her own game. He never returned from the forest, and the faeries have denied any knowledge of his fate. Some in the House, believing him simply to be trapped there, look forward to the bright day when Tytalus shall return from Faerieland. Perhaps he is thinking that he entered Faerieland for only a few days, and so may return when centuries have actually passed. A few Tytalus magi follow his example and head into the faerie woods when they have grown too old or too near Twilight to continue their lives as they would like. There they greet whatever fate awaits them, perhaps the same fate that Tytalus met.

With the loss of Tytalus, the House became more gentle, starting a trend that still continues. Tytalus lived in a more brutal time, and his extravagant shows of force would be out of place in the more civilized 13th century. Tytalus magi follow his example of conflict and struggle, but they tend to be more subtle in the pursuit of their goals these days.

In the 10th century, the three leaders of House Tytalus, including Tasgillia, the prima, along with many other members, were found to be diabolists. They had been implanting diabolic symbols in spells that they invented and then shared with others, thereby exposing magi to demonic influence. Many magi throughout the Order, including several of Bonisagus, had been corrupted by the time the quaesitoris uncovered the plot. The diabolists were exposed, tried, and destroyed, and their names were struck from official Hermetic records. Since the diabolists were no longer considered magi of the Order, those who had been their apprentices had to be adopted by other magi in order to retain their status as Hermetic wizards.

Tytalus learned magic under Guorna the Fetid, as did Tremere. Their shared master made the two founders "brothers," and their followers are considered "cousins."

Followers of Tytalus have since assured the Order that they have learned their lesson and will never again dabble in such things, but many (perhaps most) Tytalus magi regard the affair as an example of a game that proved too subtle for the magi involved. They tried to get secrets from Hell without losing their souls, and they failed. They think it was a mistake to lose the game, not a mistake to have played it.

With the best of the House destroyed, Tytalus became only a minor force in the Order. Previous to this catastrophe, the energetic spirit of House Tytalus had made it well known and forceful, but only now is it recovering some of the power and prestige it once had. It is still the smallest House in the Order.

NOTABLE MAGI OF TYTALUS

Tyталus: Known for being combative and hot-tempered. He drove off or slew many exotic magi.

Hariste: Tyталus's favored filia.

Pralix: Filia of Tyталus, founder of House Ex Miscellanea.

Tasgillia: The prima who masterminded a diabolic plot in the 10th century.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Twenty-nine.

Domus magna: Fudarus, in the Normandy Tribunal. Since this is a small House, its domus magna has little influence in the area.

Primus: Bulistie. In younger years, he defended Tyталus's brash nature and even Tasgillia's daring, but now he is near Twilight and usually silent. He exerts little central power, leaving lower-ranking magi to compete amongst themselves.

Current concerns: To establish a plan on how to deal with increasing conflicts

between the magical and the mundane. Tyталus magi's training leads them to favor conflict with the mundanes, but they don't have the reputation or numbers to risk breaking the Code.

The followers of Tyталus have learned subtlety over the years. While they still thrive on conflict, they have learned that nonviolent, or at least less-violent, conflicts are most acceptable in the Order and in the world in general. Many of them are deeply involved in Hermetic politics, using all the intelligence, will, and trickery they can muster to influence the votes of others. Others prefer to learn from conflicts with nobles, the Church, and faeries. In more barbaric lands, however, some still focus on violent battles with other supernatural forces, including exotic magi.

The subtlety now practiced by the followers of Tyталus worries some magi of other Houses. For instance, a Tyталus magus who puts all his or her energy behind some political move at tribunal might not be at all concerned with the outcome, *per se*, but may be simply looking for a contest worthy of his or her abilities. What the Tyталus magi, as a House, are really after no one knows. Most suspect that the House has no overall goal, other than to regain lost prestige, but others hold that Bulistie has some secret plan that the followers of Tyталus are working on even now. With their practice at conflicts, from politics to combat, the followers of Tyталus could be a formidable force if they had a common goal.

Much to the relief of other magi, Tyталus magi often keep their most subtle battles within the House. After all, there are few outside the House who can provide a Tyталus magus with the subtle challenges that another follower of Tyталus can. Every seventeen years the magi of Tyталus meet at Fudarus, the domus magna. They use this time to share what they have learned in their various covenants and to get any directions that the primus may wish to give them, but most of the time is devoted to one, long, involved contest. There are no rules and no boundaries to this contest, except that at the end of the gathering, which is generally about a month long, the magi vote on which of them has "won." Since the criteria for judging the winner are themselves open

to debate as part of the contest, no one can say what the vote is exactly based on, but somehow they always reach a majority vote. To any outside the House, the entire process is nearly inexplicable. Young magi especially enjoy these gatherings, because they have the opportunity to see their parentes bested by even older and more experienced magi. Many of these young magi are highly competitive with their former masters, and the opportunity to see one's parens toyed with and possibly humiliated is not to be missed.

Each master may determine his or her own apprentice's gauntlets.

The primus sets the requirements on a case-by-case basis for anyone who wishes to gain entrance to House Tytalus.

MAGI OF TYTALUS

Mentality of a Tytalus Magus

By challenging others, you believe you are helping them to achieve more while

you learn much yourself in the bargain. You feel a kinship with any other powerful beings, even with your enemies, because from them you can learn much. You have been taught to distinguish between destructive and constructive conflict, and indulging in destructive conflict is looked down on in the House as a misuse of a valuable tool.

Priorities

- 1) Achieve personally.
- 2) Help your covenant achieve.
- 3) Help House Tytalus achieve.
- 4) Help the Order achieve.
- 5) Help worthy beings outside the Order achieve.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** Too introspective to engage in useful challenges.
- **Bonisagus:** Boring and pedantic, slow of mind.
- **Criamon:** They play the game of magic bet-



A Tytalus maga conducts the *Duel of Minds* with one of her rivals. Note the use of the silver cord (the spell's focus).

ter than anyone and are respected for that.

- **Ex Miscellanea:** Their access to unpredictable, exotic magic makes them interesting opponents.
- **Flambeau:** Good allies, good opponents—as far as violence is concerned, anyhow.
- **Jerbiton:** They value cooperation too highly.
- **Mercere:** A valuable part of the Hermetic contest, since they control who learns what.
- **Merinita:** Challenge those who mock our founder. Defeat them whenever possible.
- **Quaesitoris:** Masters of their game, worthy of challenge, yet weakened by attachment to dogma; fun to argue with.
- **Tremere:** Worthy cousins, magically and politically strong.
- **Verditius:** Their weakness has taught them cunning and strength.
- **Grogs:** They recognize the glory of conflict; too bad they're so limited.
- **Demons:** Too dangerous to challenge (probably).
- **Faeries:** Don't try to beat them at their own game.
- **Mundane Society:** Not worth fighting.

Intra-House Relations

You must always prove yourself to the others in the House, and any means you find to do so are acceptable. Your superiors may call on your services from time to time, but there is no dishonor in ignoring them. You had better be ready, however, to face them when they come to draw you in line. When they can no longer coerce you to follow their orders, they are no longer your superiors.

If you ever prove to be a misfit, such as by refusing to fight back with others in the House, you will be labeled a “weakling” and cast out of the House.

You will likely form some strong bonds with others in the House, even if these bonds are based on competition.

Magic

Tyталus magi prefer aggressive but non-lethal spells. You can learn a lot from killing a powerful opponent, but you learn

even more if your enemy can come back to challenge you another day.

Followers of Tyталus consider it a show of excellence to win conflicts with more subtle spells. Since overpowering spells like *Pilum of Fire* take little ingenuity to use, it is considered base to rely on them. A Tyталus magus who can use subtle spells effectively is highly respected.

The Burning Mark of Shame (Perdo Corpus 10)

Spell Focus: A brand (+1)

R: Near, D: Inst.

Each Tyталus magus invents a unique version of this spell, which burns a reddish mark into the skin of a target (which in periods of exertion actually exudes small amounts of blood). The magus who creates the spell determines where the mark is and what it looks like. The burn does not heal naturally and itches for up to a week.

Honor dictates that a Tyталus magus cast this spell only on a defeated opponent, and that person is to wear it as a sign of being defeated by the wizard who cast it. If someone (besides the caster) removes the mark, the caster feels that the target has not accepted defeat and must be defeated again, more decisively this time. Tyталus magi who remove a *Burning Mark of Shame* without permission of the one who put it there may be cast out of the House.

Duel of Minds (Rego Mentem 20)

Spell Focus: A silver cord (+3)

R: Touch, D: Spec.

Allows you and one other intelligent being to engage in a direct battle of mental power. First you choose one way in which you disagree with the target, and then you cast the spell. Roll Int + Concentration vs. Int + Concentration each round (Strong-Willed counts as a bonus), with the victor accumulating one point for each point by which his or her roll exceeds the other's. The first to accumulate 7 points can change the other's mind so that he or she agrees on the stated issue in the victor's favor. The loser can shake off the effect with an Int roll of 7+. The loser can roll anywhere from once per

Tyталus magi may have the social skill Debate, which represents the character's ability to argue logically and effectively. It covers intellectual contests, not contests of emotions. Other magi may also have this skill, though it's more common among Tyталus magi, who consider intellectual debate one more arena in which conflict is beneficial.

round to once per day, depending on how great the change of mind is.

Altering another's opinion this way risks that your opinion will be the one changed, so it is seen as more praiseworthy than using a spell that changes another's mind directly.

HOUSE TYTALUS IN PLAY

Saga Idea

Tyталus returns from Maddenhofen, saying that he's had a pleasant, four-day visit with the queen of the faeries. Shocked at how the world has changed since A.D. 807, he soon makes plans to "set things right."

First, he makes peace with House Merinita, saying that Quendalon was right to turn the House to faerie ways. Then he proposes a grand alliance between wizards and faeries as the only way to oppose the encroachment of mundane society. Tyталus, brasher and more violent than the followers who carry his name, says that it's high time to put the mundanes in their place. "What has the Code's restriction against interference given us? The habit of meekness. What has it given the mundanes? Time to grow. If we could have seen into the future, none of us founders would have sworn to avoid the wrath of the mundanes."

The presence of a living founder has broad repercussions in the Order. Tyталus can tell engaging tales of the lives of the other founders and of the early days of the Order, and his opinions on what the founders intended carry great weight in Hermetic politics. He also has strange views on magic, since he learned his powers before Bonisagus taught him Hermetic theory. He knows secrets that Hermetic magic cannot duplicate. Just the strength of his personality and reputation are enough to sway magi to his side. To many, he represents an earlier time in the Order when magi had more power and they didn't face the problems of the 13th century. Now he promises to "restore" the Order, and many magi from outside House Tyталus are eager to follow his lead.

Those who oppose Tyталus, however, have two ways to undercut his authority.

First, there's no proving that this is really Tyталus. Just as the faeries may have presented the Order with an impostor Quendalon, so they may be presenting it with an impostor Tyталus. Second, even if this is the real Tyталus, he's renowned for deceit; anything he says must be seen as part of a scheme, not as simply the truth.

As powers and loyalties shift, there is plenty of room for player characters to influence the outcome. As powerful as Tyталus is, he needs allies and underlings to help him cope with 13th-century politics. The player characters can help or hinder Tyталus by working with him or by opposing those who do. Even if Tyталus loses his bid for leadership, his campaign sets magus against magus. Unless the Redcaps, quaesitoris, and primi can handle the conflicts that the returned Tyталus brings with him, a schism is imminent. Tyталus may be the only magus to see both the Order's birth and its death.

Story Ideas

- The local follower of Tyталus causes trouble, robbing the player characters, encroaching on their territory, or otherwise threatening the covenant. If stopped and caught, she explains that she was just harassing them to expose their weaknesses so they could learn to be stronger in the long run.
- A strange Tyталus magus visits the covenant, expecting hospitality that magi are obliged to offer each other. He seems somehow involved with diabolic activity in the area. This activity is traced to 10th century scrolls that contain Tasgillia's diabolic charms. Perhaps he is yet another Tyталus who has fallen to temptation and corruption, or he may be hunting these scrolls down to eradicate them.

OPACUS, FOLLOWER OF TYTALUS

Opacus has the striking good looks of a well-bred noble, with short black hair, deep

eyes, smooth skin, and sharp features. When he wants to be seen, he wears stylish clothes that let him fit in among lords and ladies but that make him stand out among magi. When he wants to blend in, he either adopts peasant clothes or wears black to slip into the shadows of night.

Opacus lives on the border between the Order and mundane society. Nominally he is a member of a covenant, but he rarely makes his presence known there. He is known by various names in different nearby cities and courts, as a noble from a distant land, as a merchant, or as a friar.

Opacus is developing plans, but no one knows what they are. He has allies in the mundane and Hermetic worlds, but outsiders don't know who they are. He has several hiding places across the land, but no one knows where they are.

Opacus's Apprentice

Opacus has little time to train an apprentice. The apprentice spends some time at Opacus's covenant studying alone, but for teachings that are more secret, Opacus sequesters him or her in one of his hiding places. He assigns the apprentice learning tasks and monitors his or her progress, but he has little time to train directly. Once the apprentice is advanced enough, Opacus takes him or her along on some of his less-sensitive missions. For instance, he may introduce the apprentice in a city as a relative of the "merchant" whose identity he assumes.

The apprentice's gauntlet is for the apprentice to move secretly into a hostile area, steal something, or spy on someone, and escape without being detected.

Opacus's Filius

Opacus may tell his filius what his plans are if he believes he or she will support him. In any event, Opacus makes no explicit deals with his filius. The filius is free to go and do as he or she sees fit, as long as he or she does not betray him.

Most likely, he monitors the filius, though he is subtle enough that the filius doesn't necessarily realize it. If he needs the filius's help, he may come to him or her, as he might if the filius needs his help.

His filius may have a false public identity developed during apprenticeship.

Since Opacus spent little time training his filius, he or she may have less Hermetic knowledge than other magi (the Flaw Stinging Master).

Story Idea

The player characters investigate a merchant who is suspected of diabolism, and the "merchant" turns out to be a cover identity for Opacus. They may discover something of his plans in their investigation. He gives them the option of being part of his schemes (without revealing everything about them) or suffering his wrath.

Opacus (oh-PAH-koos) is Latin for "dark one" or "shadowy one."

Opacus, Follower of Tytalus

Age: 57; Apparent Age: 40 (longevity potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 5

Strikingly good-looking, noble look about him; short black hair; deep eyes; smooth skin; sharp features.

Characteristics

+4	Int (Machiavellian)	+2	Prs (darkly hndsm.)
+3	Per (hidden mean.)	+2	Com (slip. tongue)
0	Str	+2	Dex (smooth)
0	Stm	+1	Qik (fast reflexes)

Virtues & Flaws

Clear Thinker	Curse of Venus
Gentle Gift	Dark Secret (involved in mundane affairs)
Piercing Gaze	Enemies (mem. of Guernicus, Jerbiton, Tytalus)
Quiet Magic	Enemies (several notable nobles and churchmen)
Social Contacts (nobles, Church)	Minor Magic Def. (Cr)
Spec. Circumst. (no observers)	

Personality Traits

+3	Cunning	+3	Ruthless
+3	Daring	+1	Brutal
+3	Manipulative		

Reputation

4	Gentleman (nobles)
3	Meddler in mundane affairs (magi)
1	Power to be reckoned with (nobles)

Abilities

3	Acting	3	Dagger Attack	2	Hermes History	4	Ride
2	Alertness	4	Debate	2	Hermes Lore	3	Scan
4	Area Lore	4	Disguise	2	Intimidation	4	Scribe Latin
2	Bargain	2	Dodge	4	Intrigue	3	Search
3	Certamen	3	Etiquette	4	Legerdemain	5	Speak Latin
3	Charm	2	Faerie Lore	5	Magic Theory	6	Speak Vulgar
2	Church Knowledge	2	Finesse	5	Parma Magica	4	Stealth
3	Church Lore	4	Folk Ken	1	Penetration	3	Subterfuge
3	Climb	4	Forgery	3	Pick Lock	3	Swim
2	Concentration	4	Guile	4	Pretend		

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Dodge: +3</i>
Hand	+1	+2	0	0	Soak: 0
Dagger	+5	+9	+1	+5	Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

6	Cr	5	An	7	Ig
9	In	6	Aq	13	Im
9	Mu	5	Au	12	Me
12	Pe	6	Co	7	Te
9	Re	6	He	6	Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: +3
 Twilight Points: 9
 Effects of Twilight: All his spells with Sun. duration end at noon, as well as at dusk and dawn.
 Wizard's Sigil: Faint sounds of a party in progress.

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+25/30)	Veil of Invisibility	(+15/15)	DISGUISE NEW VISAGE	(+13/10)	Lamp Without Flame
(+25/25)	Silence Smothered Sound	(+22/15)	Disguise Trans. Image	(+21/10)	Subtle Shift of Heart
(+21/20)	Aura Right. Authority	(+25/15)	Invis. of Stand. Wizard	(+15/10)	Subtle Taste Pois. & Pur.
(+22/20)	Image From Wizard Torn	(+18/15)	Panic Trembling Heart	(+16/10)	Tales of the Ashes
(+24/20)	Loss of Moment's Memory	(+21/15)	Per. of Conflict. Mot.	(+24/10)	Trust of Childlike Faith
(+18/20)	Memory of Distant Dream	(+18/15)	Rising Ire	(+15/5)	Curse of Unruly Tongue
(+15/20)	Perceive the Magical Scent	(+19/15)	Rstd. Decay 10-score Yrs.	(+14/5)	Disguise of Putrid Aroma
(+21/20)	Rec. Mem. Nvr Quite Lived	(+14/15)	Whispering Winds	(+13/5)	Palm of Flame
(+21/15)	Call to Slumber	(+22/10)	Aura Ennobled Presence	(+21/5)	Snap of Awakening
(+25/15)	Captive Voice	(+15/10)	EYES OF THE CAT	(+18/5)	Words of Unbroken Silence



Opacus leads a secretive life, pursuing hidden plans within the Order and among the mundanes.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN: HOUSE VERDITIUS

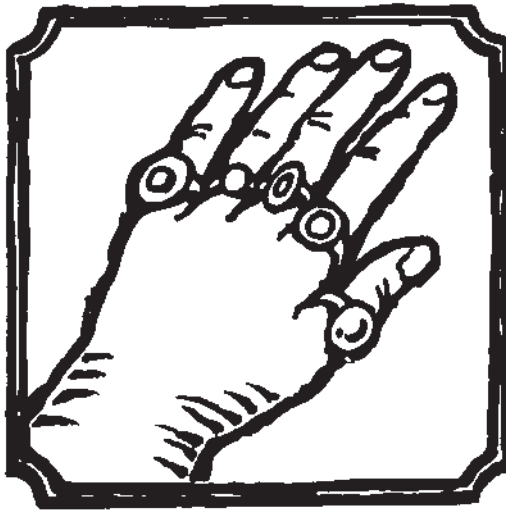
Motto: *Omnia nostra instrumenta.* (All things are our tools.)

Symbol: A hand with a ring on each finger. (These are the five rings that Verditius used, perhaps the most powerful magical rings in Hermetic history.)

Verditius: ware-DEE-tee-oos

“OTHER MAGI SEE THESE DEVICES AS TOOLS, LIKE A SWORD OR A SPADE. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE MAGICAL DEVICES, AND THAT IS WHY THEY CANNOT MAKE THEM AS WELL AS WE CAN. THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT THEY CALL TOOLS ARE PARTS OF OUR MINDS, EXTENSIONS OF OURSELVES AS SURELY AS ARE OUR HANDS AND OUR WORDS.”

—VERDITIUS



Followers of Verditius are brilliant crafters of magic items, and they sell magic devices of all kinds to other magi. They must use small devices to cast formulaic magic. Though their position appears subservient since they are working for others, they have a great deal of quiet power.

HISTORY

Verditius could never cast a spell in his life, but as a designer of magic devices, he has never been matched. He was eager to join the Order because it protected him from other magi. He feared that he was unable to hold his own in magical battles and wanted to be part of an Order that would allow him to practice his craft in peace and safety.

He worked long and hard with Bonisagus, sharing what he knew about crafting magic devices, but every time he became philosophical about the intangible, inexpressible part of magical creation, Bonisagus said that such talk was fruitless. Though Bonisagus managed to capture the simplest and most direct instructions for making magic devices, he never could quantify the personal element that Verditius thought was so important. Hermetic theory includes basic techniques for creating magic items, but it lacks the special touch that the followers of Verditius have gained.

In turn, Verditius failed to learn Bonisagus's spellcasting techniques. He never could manage a single spell.

His apprentices, however, had some success in this pursuit. They learned to cast spontaneous magic, and one of them, Fenistour, developed a way to mimic formulaic spells. She created the first casting tools, small devices that allow Verditius magi to cast formulaic Hermetic spells. These casting tools are now universal in the House.

Even with the ability to cast formulaic spells, however, the followers of Verditius retained a defensive attitude about their powers and consolidated their identity as master artificers. They developed the habit of designing magic devices for other magi, a practice that serves a double purpose. On one hand, it makes a direct profit for the House, bringing in raw vis or silver. On the other hand, it makes other magi slightly dependent on House Verditius to provide these excellent items, so the House has become highly valued in the Order. Some magi respect the Verditius magi less than magi of most other houses, for being "crafters" instead of philosophers, but House Verditius is happy with raw vis and favorable treatment, if it can't get respect.

During the various crises that shook the Order, House Verditius has played it safe. They refused to involve themselves in the Schism War, and they let the quaesitoris handle the execution of the Tytalus diabolists. There is a recent growing threat, however, that is worrying some Verditius magi. As mundane society encroaches on mundane and faerie areas, more and more sources of raw vis are lost. Verditius magi need raw vis for their devices, so they are not all willing to sit by and let other magi handle the situation.

Immediately after the death of the previous primus, Imanitosi, an alarming trend began. Some Verditius magi bribed mundanes into their service by giving them magic devices. These mundanes are using the devices to defend magical and faerie areas. So far, these magically armed groups are in isolated areas, as are the remaining magical and faerie lands, but as mundane society grows, conflicts between nobles on one side and the warriors allied with Verditius on the other will become more common. The primus, Stouritus, has promised to keep these magi equipping mundanes in check, but little has come of these promises.

NOTABLE MAGI OF VERDITIUS

Verditius: Founder, crafter of magic items nonpareil.

Fenistour: Invented casting tools.

Himnis the Mad: An 11th-century magus plagued by fear and delusions of persecution. He invented a great number of magic items that had hidden curses, to strike back at the world that tormented him. Many of these items can be found in use or in old treasure chambers, their curses still undiscovered.

Tierent: He perfected ways to capture and coerce faerie creatures, using them to power his magic items.

CURRENT STATUS

Membership: Sixty-two.

Domus magna: Verdi, in the Roman Tribunal. It is filled with automata and small magic items for the convenience of residents and visitors. Every eighteen years, the primus hosts a contest within the House to invent the most efficient, interesting, and useful device; the winning device is donated to the domus magna, and its inventor may choose three magic items from among the other entries in the contest as compensation. Having one of your items win the contest is a very high honor (granting the magus a Reputation of 3+ in House Verditius and 1+ in the Order in general). Verdi crafts numerous magic items for other magi in the Roman Tribunal, which finds them useful in the Dominion. In turn, it pulls in huge amounts of silver and other wealth, which it uses to buy raw vis from less-civilized areas.

Primus: Stouritus, a personable man who seems uninterested in political dealings.

Current concerns: Certain Verditius magi have begun arming mundanes with magic devices and enlisting them to protect magical areas from mundane encroachment. Magi of other Houses are very concerned about this behavior. Also, several ancient and powerful magic devices are currently in Verdi, under examination by Verditius experts.

To pass the apprentice's gauntlet, one must make a magic device that shows one's skill and ingenuity. This is one's "journeyman piece."

No magus may enter House Verditius from another House.

MAGI OF VERDITIUS

Mentality of a Verditius Magus

You have been taught to put a small bit of yourself into inert matter and bring it to a kind of life. If you can perfect your skills, you will earn respect and honor from your peers. You will also be able to use these skills to earn wealth from those magi who are less skilled than you. If you are careful, they will come to depend on you more than they think they do, and your position in life will be secure.

Over your life, you may amass great wealth. Some will be mundane wealth, providing a comfort unknown except to kings. Some wealth will be magical, with devices that provide services no king can enjoy. This wealth and comfort are your due rewards as a master crafter.

Verditius taught how to change and control things, how to take inert matter and make it a powerful tool. You can apply this lesson to all aspects of your life. Begin with something neutral, such as a person or a situation. Study how you can make use of it and apply your skills. What words need to be said? What promises or threats made? If you are clever, you can turn almost anything into a tool for your use.

Priorities

- 1) Perfect your craft.
- 2) Gain honor and prestige in the House.
- 3) Gain wealth and prestige as a provider of magic items.

Outlook

- **Bjornaer:** They are too caught up in their primitive magic to see the value in our devices.

All Verditius magi (and no others) have the arcane skill Verditius Magic. Add this score to your Lab total when it applies to magic devices, including longevity potions.

- **Bonisagus:** They overestimate their capabilities; after centuries of trying, they still can't craft devices as we can.
- **Criamon:** They have no use for power, so they have no use for what we offer. Ignore them.
- **Ex Miscellanea:** They are good customers, bringing in raw vis from the barbarian lands. They need our items because their own magic is limited.
- **Flambeau:** They appreciate devices that perform tasks not related to fire so that they don't have to study anything but their chosen specialties.
- **Jerbiton:** They recognize the beauty of artistic crafts, but they are too patient with the mundanes, who are making life ever more difficult for us.
- **Mercere:** They are regular clients because so many of them have no Gift at all.
- **Merinita:** They resent us because we use raw vis that is often gathered from faerie forests. Let them resent us—the rest of the Order recognizes the value in what we do.
- **Quaesitoris:** Without them, the Order would collapse. Obey and support them.
- **Tremere:** They recognize power when they see it, so they know the value of our products.
- **Tyталus:** They enjoy bargaining; indulge them, but watch them carefully.
- **Mundane society:** They are expanding into areas that used to provide regular amounts of raw vis. Something has to be done about them or they will mean the end of the entire Order. On the other hand, if the quaesitoris would let us sell them magic devices, we could increase our markets and our profits.

Intra-House Relations

There is no political hierarchy within the House, only the ever-changing ranks of skill, prestige, and wealth. If you create inventive, unique, and useful items, you will rise steadily in these ranks. All that is expected of you is that every eighteen years you bring your best device to Verdi, the domus magna. There you can compare it to the works of others. You should also be careful about infringing on the territories of other followers of Verditius. If someone else already sells in a given area, you should

think twice before moving in and providing competition to your fellow.

Magic

Verditius magi have the same varied interests in magic as other magi. There are Verditius necromancers, air wizards, nature mages, and so on. Their common link is their use of devices; the magic they work with these devices varies from one device to the next.

When you learn a formulaic spell, you construct a small device, called a casting tool, that helps you cast it. Without the casting tool, you cannot cast the spell. Since you need a lot of these casting tools, it's best to keep them small; and be sure that they are all different from each other so you can grab the right one even if you are in a hurry. To use a casting tool, you must be able to concentrate momentarily on it. If it is a ring, for example, you must be able to feel it on your finger. You cannot cast the spell if you can't feel the casting tool and identify it by touch. (So you can't grab a handful of casting tools and cast a spell with just one of them.)

When using a casting tool, you must still perform hand gestures and speak magic words, and you suffer the normal penalties if you do not.

Use your imagination when you invent casting tools. The shape or material should have something to do with the effect. For example, a casting tool for a *Pilum of Fire* could be a small wand shaped like a pilum (a Roman spear). The casting tools of different magi have different styles. Some are mechanical, with small moving parts. Others are made all from unworked materials, such as stones and twigs. Some are blown from glass of various colors.

The time it takes you to learn a spell includes time spent making a casting tool. If you make more than one casting tool, you must subtract 3 from your Lab total for each extra casting tool created. If you ever need to create a replacement casting tool for one that is lost, you must deduct 3 from the Lab total of whatever you do that season.

Verditius's Runes

Verditius developed fifteen runes, one for each of Bonisagus's Arts. If these runes are carved or otherwise worked into a magical item, they help focus magical power and make the item easier to manufacture. Using one rune gives you a +2 bonus on your Lab total for instilling a power, and using two gives you a +3 bonus. The only disadvantage is that these runes can hint at the purpose of the item. Anyone with Magic Theory (score of 3+) can identify the runes and get a general idea of the item's powers. Also, the same bonus that applies to instilling a power is added to a magus's roll to discover that power in the laboratory.

If an item has multiple powers, the complementary runes must be put together for each power. The various runes are ineffective if not properly associated, so simply mixing them up to disguise their function is not an option.

Magi sometimes carve false runes into their devices so that casual observation cannot reveal their powers, but rudimentary investigation with *Intéllego Vim* (level 10+) reveals which are the true runes and which the false. If you really want to confuse other magi, you can work false runes into a power. Instead of getting a bonus, you receive -3 on your Lab total for every false rune you use. Magical investigation cannot distinguish these runes from true ones, and anyone attempting to investigate the item in the Lab suffers a similar penalty on rolls to reveal that power.

For example, suppose *Retistius* wants to make a ring that transforms the wearer's body. If he uses the *Muto* and *Corpus* runes, he will get +3 on his Lab total. If he wants to confuse other magi who might come across the ring, he could use the *Creo* rune instead of *Muto*. He would get -1 on his Lab total (-3 for the false *Creo* rune, +2 for the correct *Corpus* rune). If he wanted to be more confusing, he could use, for example, *Creo Mentem* runes and suffer a -6 on his Lab total.

House Verditius has shared knowledge of these runes with the Order, so magi of any House can use them.

HOUSE VERDITIUS IN PLAY

Saga Idea

House Verditius, the sleeping giant, awakes. *Primus Stouritus* determines that it's time to act. In secret messages to Verditius magi and their allies across Europe, he announces the first stage in hostilities. The Verditius magi begin winning back magic and faerie lands. On a strategic level, they use magic disguised as natural effects (storms, rockslides, plagues, etc.) to hinder their enemies, while in direct conflict they lead bands of liberated peasants armed with magic devices into battle. Player-character magi may get caught up in these fights just because they happen to live in contested areas.

The faeries take an interest in the conflict as well, since they will benefit from limiting the expansion of the mundanes. The faeries, however, resent the Verditius magi's habit of looting faerie lands for raw vis. The player characters may be able to work as go-betweens to get these erstwhile enemies to cooperate, or they can thwart the unsteady alliance and turn the faeries and Verditius magi against each other.

In the mundane realms, few will be able to learn the truth about what's threatening them. Player characters may be able to operate in the mundane lands to confuse the nobles and clergy, either to help the Verditius magi's cause or to just keep the mundanes from rising up in force against the Order.

Other Houses soon take sides in the issue, some following the Verditius magi's lead, others trying to hold them in check, and still others simply using the confusion to pursue their own goals. The stakes go up when House Verditius reveals that many of the magic items they've produced for other magi over the years have secret, latent curses imbedded in them and that the House will activate the curses if the other Houses resist them.

Story Ideas

- The characters discover a magic device that seems very powerful and useful.

Verditius's Runes



Animál



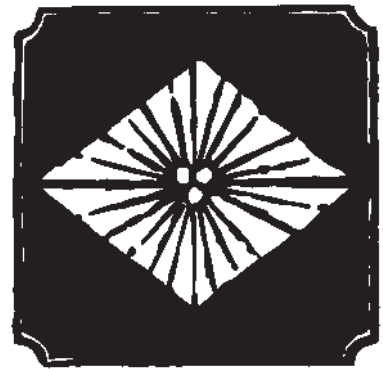
Corpus



Creo



Imáginem



Intéllego



Perdo



Rego



Aquam



Auram



Herbam



Ignem



Mentem



Muto



Terram



Vim

Unfortunately, the device was created by Himinis the Mad and has an insidious curse or secondary effect, which the characters do not immediately notice.

- The eighteen-year meeting at Verdi is coming up soon, and some are saying that the champion will lose this time to a young, secretive magus nearby. The champion, acting through an agent, hires the characters to spy on this magus and find out what he is doing so the champion can beat him out.

MALACIS, FOLLOWER OF VERDITIUS

Wherever she goes, Malacis (MAHL-uh-kees) wears a large leather apron, a tool belt, a cap to contain her unkempt hair, and thick boots. Hanging from the apron, from the tool belt, and from straps around her body are the many casting tools she uses to cast formulaic magic. Secreted somewhere on her person is a small white mouse; this is her familiar, Whitey. Malacis is friendly, even jovial, though she has a tendency to talk about herself and her projects a bit more than is polite.

While most Verditius magi use casting tools that easily fit in the palm of a hand, Malacis's tools are all large and cumbersome. For instance, her tool for *Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* is a heavy bronze gauntlet that makes her hand appear to be twice its size, and her tool for *Edge of the Razor* is a whetstone fully a span in diameter.

Her magic devices are even larger, many of them requiring individual porters and some requiring mule-driven carts or wagons. Her magical devices have large effects in proportion to their large size.

She believes that magic devices are the "golden bridge" between the magi and the common folk. By selling them magic devices, the Order could make them share the concerns of the magi. The Order could replace the Church as the common person's authority, blessing-bringer, and source of knowledge and wisdom. This attitude puts her at odds with the Verditius magi who have reportedly begun opposing the mundanes, but

she may be able to find common cause with them. After all, if the Order were to become the protectors of the mundanes, then the mundanes would stop invading magical and faerie areas.

Malacis has a large number of magic items at her disposal. Almost universally, they are large, clanking monstrosities, usually carried by peasants, grogs, or even teams of horses and wagons. Listed below are a few of Malacis's favorite items.

Drums of Fear: This set of seven drums, ranging in size from a small pot to a large barrel, are tied together by an intricate set of pulleys, ropes, and sticks. The device is constructed in such a way that when one pedal in the rear of the item is pumped, all of the drums are beat at different speeds. The entire mechanism is so large and unwieldy that it has been permanently mounted in a small cart.

When the drums are beaten, a single victim may be stricken with a sudden and irrational fear (*Panic of the Trembling Heart* [Creo Mentem 15], 50/day) each turn. Malacis is still quite proud of the Drums of Fear, for they were her journeyman piece that gained her admittance as a full maga. She would be quite distraught if anything ever happened to them.

Arbalest of Flames: This huge steel bow sits upon a trio of steadying legs. To the rear of the bow, supported by two more legs, is a cylindrical compartment full of javelins. It is connected to the bow by a wooden tube, surrounded by mechanisms of all shapes imaginable. Together, they form an ingenious loading mechanism for the arbalest, which may be used to quickly reload the bow by simply turning a few cranks.

The Arbalest of Flames may be treated as a normal arbalest, with the exception that its Rate is much quicker (-13). Additionally, if a certain red-colored lever is thrown, then the javelins will burst into flames as they leave the bow (*Pilum of Fire* [Creo Ignem 20], unlimited uses). Malacis has made several of these mechanisms for her grogs and often lends out her laboratory texts on them to other covenants, for a small fee.

The Demonsbane Bellows: Connected to the exit tube of this large bellows are

Span: A unit of measure roughly nine inches.

two cylindrical containers, one containing crushed red coral, the other diamond dust. When the bellows is contracted, carefully measured amounts of red coral and diamond dust are dropped in front of the exit tube of the bellows and thus blown forth in a fine mist.

These bellows may be used to destroy demons (*Demon's Eternal Oblivion* [Perdo Vim 45], unlimited uses). Unfortunately, Malacis experimented while making this item and the result was slightly flawed. A targeting roll is needed for the spell to be successful.

Other Enchantments: Malacis believes that magic items should be used to help the common folk and that the Order should become the new "Church," replacing miracles with Hermetic magic. Thus, she has, on occasion, enchanted items for mundanes, for a small fee. One such example is the Barn of Plenty, a large barn enchanted to keep out the many animals of the land (enlarged *Circle of Beast Warding* [Rego Animál 25], constant). It is used to store surplus foods away from the vermin who might otherwise devour them.

Malacis's Familiar

Malacis's familiar is a white mouse named Whitey. Whitey enjoys climbing on and in Malacis's large and complex contraptions. When a large device is malfunctioning, Whitey can climb inside it to find out what the problem is. Some magi have accused Malacis of designing her creations to be fun playgrounds for Whitey first and functional devices second.

Whitey has the following three abilities:

Shared Protection: Whitey gets the full benefit of Malacis's parma magica whenever it is activated.

Shared Speech: Whitey speaks fluent French and Latin. In exchange, Malacis is able to speak with all land creatures.

Transfer Wounds: Malacis can transfer wounds to Whitey or take damage upon herself that Whitey has suffered. Whitey's cords are: Gold +3, Silver 0, Bronze 0.

Malacis's Apprentice

Malacis is devoted to her work in the lab, and she treats her apprentice as an assistant. Naturally she must spend some time instructing her apprentice to make him or her more valuable, but mostly the apprentice learns by helping her. She expects little from the apprentice except that he or she take responsibility seriously. She doesn't even much care about the apprentice's political leanings, though the apprentice is doubtless going to pick up some of her attitudes just by listening to her ramble on, as she occasionally does.

Malacis's Filius

Malacis has a hard time saying good-bye to her filius. After working with her filius for fifteen years, Malacis has made her filius very valuable to her.

Malacis may call her filius back to help her with particularly challenging projects. She may also want to trade magic items with her filius. If he or she can produce small-scale devices, she'd be happy to trade large-scale items for his or her more modest creations.

Story Idea

Malacis begins sharing her knowledge with the nearby mundanes. She is trying to improve her standing, and the standing of the Order, among the common people. The lord in the player characters' area is angry. He either wants Malacis stopped, or he wants the player characters to provide the same services to his chosen vassals.

Malacis, Follower of Verditius

Age: 53; Apparent Age: 40 (Longevity Potion); Size: 0; Confidence: 3

Large, leather apron with a tool belt; thick boots; adorned with tools; friendly and jovial woman.

Characteristics

+5 Int (creative)	+2 Prs (powerful pers.)
-2 Per (nearsighted)	-1 Com (big words)
-1 Str (out of shape)	+3 Dex (subtle manip.)
0 Stm	+1 Qik (fast reactions)

Virtues & Flaws

Gentle Gift	Delet. Circumstances
Hermetic Prestige	(making simple, hand held magic items)
Inventive Genius	Lack of Control
Learns fm. Mistakes	Necessary Condition
Mag. Affinity (Vim)	(casting tools must be large)
Strong Writer	Verditius Magic
Overconfident	

Personality Traits

+3 Friendly to Mundanes	+2 Good-Natured
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Reputation

1 Friendly to Mundanes (tribunal)

Abilities

6 Bargain	4 Folk Ken	6 Magical Affinity	5 Speak Latin
4 Blacksmithing	4 Hermes History	3 Meditation	4 Speak Vulgar
1 Church Lore	3 Hermes Lore	4 Parma Magica	7 Verditius Magic
4 Evaluate Magic Items	2 Local Lore	3 Scribe Latin	4 Woodcrafting
4 Finesse	9 Magic Theory		

Combat Information

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Parry</i>	<i>Dam</i>	Dodge: +1
Hand	+1	+3	0	-1	Soak: 0
					Encumbrance: 0

Techniques and Forms

13 Cr	11 An	7 Ig
12 In	6 Aq	5 Im
7 Mu	5 Au	7 Me
5 Pe	12 Co	9 Te
6 Re	5 He	12 Vi

Spellcasting Information

Spellcasting Speed: 5
 Twilight Points: 8
 Effects of Twilight: She can write a Vim book up to 2/3 her score.
 Wizard's Sigil: Her spells are soothing in nature.

Spells Known (bonus/level) Name (mastered spells are in CAPS)

(+35/40) Shell of Opaque Mysteries	(+18/15) Endurance of Berserkers	(+29/10) Change Nature of Vis
(+23/30) Breaking Perpetual Drought	(+25/15) Gather Essence of Beast	(+24/10) Rev. Flaws Mortal Flesh
(+25/20) Chir. Healing Touch	(+25/15) Gentle Tch. Pur. Body	(+30/10) Sense the Nature of Vis
(+30/20) Perceive the Magical Scent	(+30/15) Scales Magical Weight	(+20/5) Edge of the Razor
(+24/20) Return of Mental Lucidity		

Familiar

Whitey the Mouse	Size: -5	Combat Information								
<i>Str</i>	<i>Stm</i>	<i>Dex</i>	<i>Qik</i>	<i>Per</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>Atk</i>	<i>Dam</i>	<i>Def</i>	<i>Soak</i>
-5	-1	+1	+1	+3	Bite	+2	+2	-5	+7	-5

Body Levels: OK, Killed; Cord Strengths: Gold +3, Silver 0, Bronze 0

Bond Qualities:

Shared Protection: Whitey gets the full benefit of Malacis's parma magica whenever it is activated.

Shared Speech: Whitey speaks fluent French and Latin. In exchange, Malacis is able to speak with all land creatures.

Transfer Wounds: Malacis can transfer wounds to Whitey or take damage upon herself that Whitey has suffered.

Magic Items

Drums of Fear, Arbalest of Flames, The Demonsbane Bellows (see text for details on these items)



Malacis

Malacis's casting tools and magic devices are all large, and most are complicated as well. The white mouse is her familiar.

*CHAPTER FOURTEEN:
HISTORY OF THE ORDER*



“WE ARE SIMPLE SCHOOLCHILDREN COPYING THE WORKS OF THE MASTERS AND OCCASIONALLY INTRODUCING OUR OWN PETTY INNOVATIONS INTO THEIR BRILLIANT SPELLS AND WORDS. WHO AMONG US CAN COMPARE TO THOSE WHO FOUNDED THE ORDER, WHOSE MAGIC KNEW ONLY THE BOUNDS OF THEIR IMAGINATIONS AND WILLS? WHO AMONG US COULD CONSTRUCT DEVICES LIKE THE CHARIOT OF VERDITIUS, THE STAFF OF SEVEN FIRES, OR THE EYES OF QUENDALON? WHO AMONG EVEN MY OWN HOUSE COULD INVENT A MAGICAL RITUAL AS WORLD-ALTERING AS THE PARMA MAGICA? WE HAVE GROWN WEAK, AND OUR ONLY CHANCE TO FEEL POWER IS TO COPY, AS CLOSELY AS OUR SMALL MINDS CAN MANAGE, THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US .”

—AVARRET, PRIMUS OF BONISAGUS (1191-1213)

The history of the Order of Hermes goes very far back into the past. The quaesitoris have traced the Order past the Roman cult of Mercury, through the Greek cult of Hermes, and back to ancient Egypt and Persia. They claim that the Order of Hermes is a temporary manifestation of an eternal institution and that its form may change but its essence remains constant. If this eternal organization does exist, it did not take its current form until the 8th century, after the fall of Rome.

ANCIENT ORIGINS

The Order of Hermes was founded chiefly by magi who had descended from the Roman cult of Mercury, which in turn took its wisdom from the Greek cult of Hermes. The Seekers believe that these ancient Greek wizards had some contact with those beings known to the Greeks as gods. Evidence of wizards in ancient Egypt and still more ancient Babylon suggests that even the cult of Hermes was a descendant of a previous order. Again, these Egyptian and Babylonian sorcerers, say the Seekers, had contact with what the commoners called gods. There is a "history" of sorts as to the origin of Babylonian and Egyptian magi, and the Seekers call it the "Legend of the Old Ones."

Legend of the Old Ones

"In the time before Rome, before Greece, before even Egypt, there was a great civilization located on land that is now beneath the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. A mighty race of gods lived there, creatures who used magic as if it were a mere toy, a people whose lives were woven around magic, whose lives were, in some ways, nothing but magic. Not of any one form, they could change shape at will, but they most commonly appeared as human. Now all lost to the ken of humanity, their palaces and cities were beautiful gardens, constructed of crystal and light, and a plethora of flowers grew there. Their lives were filled with music, dance, and all the earthly delights. Not satisfied with ordinary pleasure, they intensified it with their magic, and enjoyed pursuits so esoteric and fantastic that we cannot understand them today. Their study of magic was centered around creating new pleasures and sometimes simply pursuing knowledge itself—for that too is a pleasure. They labored not at all, for they only worked on whatever they wished, so that it was play. For millennia they resided in their garden cities, living forever, totally engaged in their play and their delights.

"Then one arose among them, a dangerous creature. At first he was as full of laughter as the rest of them, but as he grew to adulthood, he became full of hate. No one knows what sin or curse could have brought him forth from the womb of a beautiful goddess, but of his existence and the destruction he wrought there can be no doubt. The others did not like or trust him, and they did not include him in their games and lovemaking. He was an oddity among the gods. They called him Tarhuti, which in their language meant 'the outsider.' Beneath Tarhuti's brow resided a curse of hatred and a tormenting ambition. Once he grew to adulthood, Tarhuti found that he could no longer laugh nor cry and that he no longer saw himself as one of the others. He removed himself from them and spent his time on his studies, attempting to increase his might. Mere political influence was not enough for him; he was engaged in the pursuit of magic—ever more potent magic—for he understood that to be the only real power.

"Hate grew ever stronger and blacker in him; hate of those for whom pleasure was enough, of those who did not carry his curse of ambition. Gradually he directed his studies towards finding satisfaction for his hatred.

"So Tarhuti decided to kill the gods, and he spent seven hundred and seventy-seven years in the caves beneath the Lake of Salt, a marsh that stood between what are now the Pillars of Hercules, preparing their end. Tarhuti constructed a mighty spell and blew away the natural dam that had protected the valley of the gods from the vast cold seas, and a huge torrent of water flooded in. Through the waters coursed all of Tarhuti's hate, turned to vile poison through his potent magic. Within days, the cities of the gods were destroyed, and their civilization was gone. Through their magic, however, a few of them lived on. Tarhuti also lived on, still in the caves beneath the lake, a lake that had become a sea. The Greeks and other people still tell legends of a great flood, referring to this ancient disaster.

"Some of these beings became gods of the Egyptians and Greeks, while others spawned the dragons. All were fascinated by their former servants, the humans, and watched their progress with the intent fascination that only boredom can breed, for Tarhuti's poisons had weakened the powers they had employed to entertain themselves. Some searched for Tarhuti, but they could never capture him, and they could never meet him face to face unless he revealed himself to them, which he did only to laugh. Because of his ambition and hatred, he was powerful, so even

together the gods could not defeat him. So they turned their energies to playing with human lives, and they became gods to many human civilizations. But life became tedious, and even the humans could not amuse them for long. Slowly they stopped interfering in human affairs and began only to watch them from afar. Still, their boredom grew even more intense. Soon they began to sleep, arising only one day a year to see what had occurred among the humans.

“Our magic, the magic of Hermes, is directly descended from that of these gods. It is their magic that we now can only harness but never create. And even our Gifts of magic come directly from the Old Ones, for these gods sometimes bedded mortals and produced progeny that was half god and half human. These children have passed the blood of the gods down through the millennia, and we fortunate few have enough of that divine nature to work with the magic created by our ancestors.

“The dragons are also descended from them, for some of the gods took beastly forms in their search for new pleasures. The children they bore are the dragons, worms, drakes, and serpents of today. Perhaps a few of the mightiest dragons are actually Old Ones who have never given up their beast forms.

“The gods sleep on, and all who know the truth hope that they will sleep until the end of time, for if they stirred from slumber and walked once more upon the earth, their very presence could well destroy all civilization, and perhaps the Order along with it. Remember that, despite how they might appear, they are not human but are most monstrous indeed. Perhaps the Dominion will protect humanity from their onslaught, but if that is the case, they would certainly overwhelm the Order of Hermes and use us magi as their playthings.

“Today, it is said, they sleep upon Mount Olympus and in the forest of Tertius Quid and, according to some, at Stonehenge as well. The dwellings of the gods do not exist in time as most things do, but rather return to time periodically as they so will. Only if you visit those places at the right moment will you be able to enter their palaces and gardens and meet with them, though through most of the year you will find only desolation. No one has ever reported an encounter with the Old Ones, so it must be assumed that they kill all those who intrude on their home. All wizards must be careful when they visit these places, for an improperly intoned spell could awaken them out of time and bring them to earth once again so that we all would have to face their full fury.

“It is my understanding that Tarhuti came to be known to the Egyptians as Tahuti or Thoth, as he is also named. On this god are based the myths of Hermes and Mercury. In any case, Tarhuti was the first magus. His creation of the spell that destroyed his world shows that he pursued power as we do today. He was one of us, yet he destroyed everything. What can it say about us that our true ancestor was the destroyer of all? Let us all look into our hearts and see how much of Tarhuti's blood courses through them.”

—Archmage Infamitus, in his tome *The True Origins of the Magical Traditions*

The Seekers

Those magi who believe in the Old Ones and seek to learn from their power call themselves the Seekers. They believe that if they can find the Old Ones, they will have access to great knowledge and untold might. Because they share a common purpose, they sometimes work together; but because they are all trying to reach the same goal, they also can be violently competitive. The competition, at times, has led to the destruction of laboratories, familiars, and apprentices; sometimes even to Wizard War. If any of the Seekers have found anything concrete, they are not telling anyone, especially not other Seekers.

Seekers can be of any House, though currently there are none from Criamon, Bonisagus, Jerbiton, or Mercere. The thirty or so avowed Seekers are mostly from the Houses Tremere, Tylalus, and Ex Miscellanea.

THE CULT OF MERCURY

Though the Order is directly descended from Roman society, it is named after the cult of Hermes, the Greek god of magic. When Rome began to build its empire, it borrowed a great deal of culture and religion from the Greeks, who centuries before had achieved a highly advanced culture. Roman culture borrowed such things as religion and magic, both of which came from the original cult of Hermes. The members of the early Order of Hermes, however, were once priests of Mercury (though, by that time, they used this title in name only). They were able to work powerful magic in prolonged rituals involving many participants. It is the Roman traditions of the cult of Mercury that are most used in the Order of Hermes and that give it much

of its character. Of the twelve magi who founded the modern Order in A.D. 767, all but Bjornaer and Díedne were descended from the Roman priests of Mercury.

The cult of Mercury was never one of the more powerful cults in Rome, and the magic its priests employed never figured largely in the political history of the empire. It is thought by some Hermetic scholars, however, that the spells it cast were essential for retaining the long-lasting integrity of the empire, even though the emperors never acknowledged this aid publicly. The magic used by the cult required difficult and lengthy rituals that incorporated scores—sometimes even hundreds—of priests, spread across many cities. These rituals held at bay most of the darker denizens of the world. Those scholars further speculate that the rise of Christianity in Rome, and thus the downfall of the cult of Mercury, is what brought about the end of the empire.

Priests of Mercury traveled all across the world in search of lore, and the remains of small temples have been found across Europe, as well as across the southern and eastern continents.

Plentarch and Mercuric Magic

In the second century B.C., the priest Plentarch codified the rituals of the cult into thirty-eight spells, each of which had to be studied and mastered separately. The cult's theory of magic included nothing of general use like the Hermetic Techniques and Forms. Most of these spells were elaborate rituals that required several wizards who felt bound to each other by background or purpose. The tome that described these spells, however, has now been lost. Some seek it avidly in ancient temples of Mercury, because it could teach the Order much about magic.

The Fall of the Cult of Mercury

Since the cult of Mercury required so many dedicated priests to cast even a single spell, as well as broad financial support for the ritual components, it lost much of its power as Rome decayed. The cult fragmented as different groups of priests chose different sides in the civil wars, and by A.D. 300, most of its stronger spells could no longer be cast, because of the lack of cooperating priests. Many temples, including the ones in Rome itself, decayed to the point where they became little more than carnivals where citizens could have their fortunes read and their curiosity tickled by minor magic.

The gradual rise of Christianity slowly eclipsed the older religions of Rome, and the cult of Mercury was further weakened as more and more people turned away from it and no longer provided the money needed to purchase the expensive components of its spells. In the 4th century, when Emperor Constantine the Great finally made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, what was left of the cult of Mercury rapidly moved out of the cities and into the wilderness, out of political power and into seclusion. It had already lost so much of its religious vigor that its members were interested in little else but increasing their personal influence and their knowledge of the art of magic. As a Roman institution, the cult ceased to exist; as a loose organization of spellcasters, however, it remained.

The Fall of Rome

When Rome finally fell to the barbarians, the cult of Mercury was formally disbanded, and the members who were left were forced to survive on their own in the brutal society that remained. They were no longer a priesthood, but were instead solitary sorcerers who were able to cast only a few minor spells, except when they were still able to come together with their peers. They became known as wizards or magi as their connections with the cult of Mercury were forgotten. The wizards themselves encouraged these new titles because the Christians did not tolerate the old religions. A period of transition began, and the study and use of magic were transformed. First, the magi needed to modify the magic they knew, which relied on large gatherings, a temple, and other such resources no longer available to a lone magus. Using other sources (possibly Greek or Egyptian), the wizards began developing another kind of magic immediately after the fall of Rome, magic more suitable to use by an individual, though they still used rigid spells, like the formulaic spells of Hermetic magic.

Naturally, the magicians still tried gathering into groups to share their knowledge, but these groups were short-lived. Each magician had precious secrets not to be shared with others, leading to jealousy and distrust. A wizard who could slay a fellow wizard would then be free to loot the magical treasury of the deceased, and therefore mortal combat was common. Because of this danger, wizards in the early Dark Ages rarely came together. One wizard was never able to trust another, and without the benefit of sharing information, the knowledge of the magi grew little over the years. As even appren-

The quaesitoris claim to have discovered secret rituals that they use to protect the Order, and these rituals may include some of Plentarch's spells.

tices could not be fully trusted, the numbers of magi in the world dropped sharply. For a time it seemed as if the tradition of magic—sprung from the gods, carried to the Babylonians, nurtured by the waters of the Nile, refined by the Greeks, and brought to great glory by the Romans—was coming to an end.

THE ORDER OF HERMES

The First Tribunal

Early in the 8th century, the sorceress Trianoma had a vision: the magi united as they had been in Rome. But she did not know how she could overcome the distrust and history of violence prevalent in the tradition. She traveled across Europe speaking with various wizards, and most supported the idea in theory, but few trusted their fellows enough to be willing to work together. Furthermore, many doubted that working together would be profitable, because the wizards used divergent and incompatible magical techniques.

After years of searching, Trianoma found a solution to her problem. In seclusion, the wizard Bonisagus was working on a universal theory of magic. His studies had already revealed to him a way to create a simple magical shield that protected one from spells (now called simply the “parma magica”). Trianoma saw that these discoveries would let her form the order she envisioned. The parma magica would allow magi to meet with little fear of being attacked, and a universal theory of magic would give them a reason to work together. Trianoma encouraged many magi to visit with Bonisagus and share what they knew with him. From Druids, for example, he learned how to create new spells at a moment’s notice. This skill developed into spontaneous magic. Using this and other knowledge, Bonisagus developed a broadly applicable theory of magic, now known as Hermetic theory.

While Bonisagus unified the magic of the magi, Trianoma masterminded their political unification. She had brought twelve magi together who all wanted to form an order. They learned the parma magica, studied Bonisagus’s theory of magic, wrote the Code, and named their order after the Greek god of magic, whose cult they knew to predate the Roman cult of Mercury. At Durenmar in the Black Forest in A.D. 767, the twelve magi swore to uphold the Code of Hermes, and the Order was formed.

Since these magi could work together and share what they learned, they grew quickly in power. They realized that with the power of magic in their hands, the only other mortals they needed to fear were other magi. Systematically they sought other wizards out and offered them membership in the newly reformed order. All they asked was for the wizards to abide by the simple Code of Hermes and to allow themselves to be adopted into one of the Houses that had been formed.

Those who joined the Order could be trusted, but those who refused to join were still a threat to those who did, and the Order eliminated them or drove them off. It is because of this massive effort to consolidate wizards into the Order of Hermes that currently most of the wizards in Europe are Hermetic magi. Nevertheless, independent wizards and even groups of wizards continue to exist. They remain a threat to the Order because they are not bound by the Order’s Code.

Hermetic Magic

Apprentices who learn Hermetic magic take for granted the symbols, conventions, and structure used throughout the Order. They do not realize what a tremendous feat Bonisagus accomplished when he took the knowledge and power of several varied types of magic and designed a single system to encompass them all. It was this work of unprecedented and perhaps irreproducible genius that made the Order of Hermes possible. It became a system in which fire wizards can share information with water mages and necromancers can cast spells designed by shapeshifters.

The categorization and regularity of Bonisagus’s system of magic is a mixed blessing. It is much easier for a Hermetic magus to understand magic of all types than it is for an exotic wizard. Exotic wizards usually get an intense education in a very specific kind of magic, such as water magic or shapeshifting, and they have little or no understanding of other types of magic. On the other hand, true innovation is more difficult with the structures of Hermetic magic. For each apprentice trained by a Hermetic magus, there is a better way to teach him or her magic, some way of understanding magic that would be suited perfectly to the apprentice’s own nature. Such a system of magic could turn that apprentice into an equal of one of the founders. But no one knows what that system would be for any given apprentice, and a new system would have to be constructed for every new apprentice. Hermetic wiz-

ards, therefore, simply use the same system for all their apprentices. It is a workable system, and it allows magi to share information with each other; so its inevitable limits are easy to bear.

There are still aspects of magic that fail to fit into the rigid categories of Bonisagus's design, which is why apprentices usually develop Specialties, Affinities, and Antipathies in their Arts and why some manifest unique abilities beyond the scope of Hermetic magic. The members of House Ex Miscellanea, some of whom are only nominally Hermetic magi, and those exotic wizards who survive despite the hegemony of the Order all prove that there is more to magic than Bonisagus's theories.

The Order and Exotic Wizards

The relation with exotic wizards has changed through the centuries since the Order's founding in A.D. 767. Before the Order, naturally, there were no exotic wizards (or *only* exotic wizards, depending on your point of view). Still, there was a distinction between Roman-descended wizards and more "primitive" wizards primarily from Celtic and Nordic traditions. Those descended from Roman magical traditions considered themselves superior (as, no doubt, did each definable group), and it was this group of Latin-speakers who formed the core of the Order. Two wizards from other traditions, Bjornaer and Diedne, joined the Order as well, but the effort to recruit members was most strongly aimed at those who followed the Latin tradition. The founders generally thought that including the more barbaric wizards in the Order would only lead to internal strife, as the acceptance of non-Roman people had weakened the Roman Empire, and they didn't value the knowledge that the non-Latin wizards would be able to offer, anyway.

Once the Order had consolidated, it turned its energies on those it considered dangerous, the exotic wizards. Since exotic wizards were not bound by the Hermetic Code, they were seen as threats. In these dark times, Tytalus, Flambeau, and other magi avidly hunted down these wizards. Bonisagus's parma magica made these wizards stronger than their exotic enemies, and they enjoyed repeated victories.

These bloody years of fighting with other wizards gave rise to many tales of great deeds and wondrous battles, but within seventy years or so the battles died down. The Druids who did not join House Diedne had retreated into impenetrable faerie forests, and the wizards of the northlands proved too powerful on their home

ground to be destroyed. Most independent wizards in the central parts of Europe, however, were killed, driven into hiding, or forced to join the Order. Over the centuries, fighting exotic wizards has become less and less important (as well as less feasible, given the decrease in the population of exotic wizards). Some exotic wizards carry on, but most are simple, unassuming hedge wizards who survive by not attracting attention to themselves and posing no threat to the Order. Unfortunately, the common folk remember those days of magical war, and through their legends, fear of the wizards has been passed down over the generations.

Early in the 11th century, the Order came into direct and violent conflict with Kabbalists in Barcelona. The Kabbalists commanded enough power that the Order agreed to a perpetual truce with them. This truce is the only example of the Order according rights to exotic wizards. The Kabbalists and Hermetics rarely meet or work together; their magic traditions are too far apart to promote cooperation, or even mutual respect.

In recent decades, some Hermetic magi have become more accepting of their exotic cousins. As the mundane world encroaches more and more, the magi look for allies, not enemies. These magi see the Order's violent and paranoid policy regarding exotic wizards as a mistake. Those who have cooperated with exotic wizards have often found them good company and profitable allies.

CRISES IN THE ORDER

The Domination of House Tremere

In the 9th century, House Tremere, through skillful use of certámen and political intrigue, nearly dominated the Order, ruling several tribunals and continually growing in power. Tremere, who was still alive and masterminding the attempt to control the Order, was finally stopped by a group of unidentified magi who broke the minds of his chief lieutenants. No one knows who was responsible for "the Sundering," as this attack is called. After this event, other magi were more watchful of political events and more eager to improve their ability at certámen.

The Corruption of House Tytalus

Near the end of the 10th century, the prima and several other leaders of House Tytalus

Parma magica (PAR-mah MAH-gee-kah) literally "magical shield."

Trianoma did not form her own House. Instead, she had been "adopted" by Bonisagus and was part of his House.

were found to be diabolists. They had been engaged in a campaign of corrupting magi of other Houses. Amid much fear and accusation, they were tried and executed. This corruption of powerful magi increased the Order's fear of devils and added to the suspicion that had developed among magi. Some mark this event as a precursor to the Schism War.

Fear of devils increases and decreases through the Order. Near the end of the 12th century, for example, demons seemed to be everywhere. It's unclear whether an increased concern over demons results from increased infernal activity or mere fashion.

The Schism War

Just after the turn of the millennium, open conflict broke out within the Order, a prolonged series of skirmishes, battles, and assassinations that have come to be known as the Schism War.

Some Houses and magi wanted to restrict the interaction among the Houses so that corruption in one House would not lead to the downfall of others. The corruption of House Tytalus was, no doubt, the main cause for this paranoia, but intrigue, competition, and skirmishing in general added to the atmosphere of distrust. Differences of opinion turned into frequent Wizard Wars and raids.

The confusion led to a free-for-all, and old feuds came alive. Sides shifted continually, and fighting took many lives. Some Houses retreated to avoid the violence, while others increased their violent activities to deter attackers or just to pursue personal grudges amid the chaos. The quaesitoris lost effective power as the magi stopped obeying their orders, and it looked to most as if the Order of Hermes was about to fall.

Then House Tremere declared war on House Díedne. House Díedne, composed of descendants of the Druids, had always been distant from the other Houses, and it was generally distrusted. Tremere's primus, Cercistum, called on House Flambeau to help rid the Order of these troublemakers and their exotic traditions. The Flambeau magi joined in the battle with relish. The quaesitoris, seeing a chance to regain power, backed House Tremere and declared House Díedne renounced. Most of the other Houses retreated for safety, but many individual magi with grudges to settle joined the assault.

House Díedne was entirely eliminated, but its leaders were never found. The magi of the

day hoped that the far-reaching spells they had used had killed them, but many suspected that the leaders of House Díedne had retreated into a faerie forest. If that is the case, they might return at any time, bent on revenge.

With House Díedne destroyed, the Schism War was over. The quaesitoris insisted on settling all remaining conflicts peacefully, and most magi were eager to stop fighting once they had seen the destruction that can result from an all-out war among the magi.

House Díedne

"We shall last as long as the wind blows hot on the backs of your necks, as long as the storms pound your tower walls, as long as the waves smash the sides of your ships, as long as the merciless sun looks down upon your abominations, sees your sins, and calls out for vengeance. We will return to haunt you."

—Attributed to the primus Llewellyn, words carved into the ruins of a stone wall at the last place he was seen

Motto: *Beata Terra beata omnia eam servant.*
(Blessed be Earth and all who serve her.)

Symbol: The symbol of House Díedne has been stricken from Hermetic records, by order of the quaesitoris.

House Díedne was destroyed during the Schism War, its last living members seen in the year A.D. 1012. This House, made up of pagan wizards descended from the Celtic Druids, was the largest, most powerful House of the Order's early years; it was based mainly in France, Spain, and the British Isles but had covenants as far away as Greece and Denmark. When the Schism War broke out and conflict was rampant throughout the Order, House Tremere turned on House Díedne. With the support of House Flambeau and the sanction of the quaesitoris, House Tremere defeated House Díedne and slew all Díedne magi it could find. The primus Llewellyn and a few of his followers, however, were never found and are believed to have escaped. Legend says that the faeries gave them sanctuary in Arcadia, where they may be living still. Since one day in Faerieland is often a century in the mortal world, the remnants of the outlawed House may return any day with vengeance fresh in their minds. Another legend says that they sailed away on a magic ship staffed with skeletons, and that they ride the seas yet or that their ship rose into the skies and can be seen sailing among the stars.

Hermetic magi use the term "exotic" to refer to magic that is outside the Hermetic tradition. Some Hermetic magi even have exotic powers or knowledge.

History

In his search for new ways to perform magic, Bonisagus talked with a few of the last members of the Druidic tradition. From them, he learned new ways for magi to cast small, quick spontaneous spells, but legend says that their leader would have nothing to do with Bonisagus's new order. Díedne, one of the leader's younger followers, joined, however, after Bonisagus promised the wary maga he would give her his personal protection. Many other members of the sect followed over the next few years, quickly forming a large House, but they never fully participated in the Order. Remaining mostly in covenants made up exclusively of their own members, they allowed little information to circulate about them, and their distance and attitude of superiority quickly made for resentment in some of the other Houses.

In the early 11th century, problems plagued the Order. The execution of the Tylalus primus for diabolism caused fear among the Houses. Old resentments resurfaced, and odd ways took on sinister implications; rumors ran wild throughout the Order. House Díedne's secrecy, its reclusiveness, and its odd traditions put it at the center of suspicion. At a conference of the leaders of all Houses, a senior Díedne magus publicly insulted the primus of Tremere, increasing the tension between already-hostile Houses. When the quaesitoris began investigating all the Houses for diabolism, House Díedne resisted, accusing House Tremere of using the quaesitoris to try to steal House Díedne's magical techniques.

Violence was common during this period and not only against followers of Díedne. Wizard

Wars and Wizards' Marches were constant, and a few individual covenants had broken into open conflict without even pretending to justify it under the Hermetic Code. For six years, House Díedne stalled the efforts to investigate them, before House Tremere issued an unprecedented House-on-House declaration of Wizard War. Tired of House Díedne's tactics and unwilling to confront House Tremere, the quaesitoris refused to oppose the challenge, though all precedent dictated that Wizard War was restricted to individuals. Instead, shortly after the fighting began, they retroactively sanctioned House Tremere's actions by declaring all of House Díedne renounced. In a bloody, month-long struggle, House Díedne was destroyed.

At first the remaining Hermetic magi guarded vigilantly against the specter of House Díedne's return, but as the years have passed with no sign of this House, the magi have turned their attention to more-immediate concerns. A few radical Hermetic historians have even dared, from the safety of nearly two hundred years' distance, to suggest that House Díedne may not have been entirely the monsters they are traditionally portrayed to have been. Houses Flambeau and Tremere, both of which lost nearly half their members in the war, remain watchful and implacable, and there are a few lineages within House Tremere that make their apprentices swear to renew the struggle if the remnants of House Díedne are ever found.

Magi of House Díedne

Few specifics about the followers of Díedne are known. Having descended from Druids, they specialized in nature-oriented magic.

Tensions have eased between Hermetic and "exotic" wizards, allowing them to meet in peace and learn from each other.



Legend says that Diedne and Merinita were close friends before joining the Order, although today's followers of Merinita deny or downplay any such friendship. In addition, Diedne magi excelled at spontaneous magic and had great difficulty with formulaic spells.

If they ever resurface, the magi of Diedne may attack with magically controlled animals or forests, or with elemental magic; their most powerful spells during the Schism War used upheavals in the earth and rains of fire. If the stories of their time in Arcadia are true, they will probably use faerie magic as well and may have faerie assistance. That Hermetic magi do not know exactly what these magi are capable of (especially after all these years) makes House Diedne all the more frightening. The escaped members of House Diedne are the bogeymen in the nightmares of the Order's apprentices—and in the nightmares of some of its magi as well.

Recent History

The last hundred years have been a century of relative calm, with no crises threatening the Order as a whole. The main current concerns are the growth of the mundane population, the increasing strength and expanse of the Dominion, and the resulting loss of magical areas. Many magi are becoming impatient with isolating themselves from the mundane world, and they call for concerted efforts to stop the mundanes from encroaching further into magical areas.

Within the Order, a growing concern over the restrictions of Hermetic magic has developed. There are those magi who say that Bonisagus's system of magic has stifled the imaginations and limited the wills of every magus since the founders, and that the Order of Hermes is in a steady decline that can only result in stagnation and death. These magi strive to find new ways to understand magic, systems that will potentially open them and others to power and wisdom that Bonisagus's system cannot tap. Recently, magi have become more open in their pursuit of "exotic" magic, although House Bonisagus frowns on such explorations.

LEGENDS OF THE ORDER OF HERMES

There are many legends among the wizards of the Order of Hermes, as there are in

any culture. Though they certainly may have some truth to them, these myths are largely thought of as inaccurate. Still, a few wizards always seem to be obsessed by them and spend much of their time trying to prove their validity.

Legend of the Old Ones

Hermetic magic comes from the "Old Ones," ancient beings of incredible power, whose civilization was destroyed millennia ago. They were last known to humanity as the gods of Greece and Egypt, and now they sleep away the centuries in hidden tombs and on mountaintops. Perhaps they will awaken one day to claim what was theirs, but they may need the help of those who would aid them.

Legend of the Mundane

Soon the Dominion will cover the world, and magic will be a thing of the past. With magic and the faeries, beauty and delight will also depart. Even the gentle magic of a moving song or a mother's love will disappear, leaving dull, unintelligent humans as final masters of a gray and dying world.

Legend of the Faeries

The faeries are the true owners of earth, and humans are degenerate faeries. Hermetic magic is a pitiful attempt to regain the magic power that humans lost when they lost their faerie powers. The faeries have so far ignored humanity out of contempt, but if magi continue to raid the faerie forest and if church bells continue to drive the faeries back, they will soon turn against us. If we humans are lucky, they will kill us. Otherwise, they may retain us for their amusement.

Legend of Degeneration

As the Order has grown in number, it has shrunk in quality. Magi of the 13th century are weak and unimaginative compared to the founders, and the Order shows only signs of continued decay. Some predict that the magi will simply become less and less powerful, until the Order is overrun by society, while others believe that one day a daring magus will challenge the tenets of the Order and of Hermetic magic, destroying the Order and rebuilding it afresh.

See the chapters on Bjornaer, Merinita, and Verditius for more information on how Hermetic magi are reacting to the spread of mundane civilization.

General Timeline

Year	Hermetic Event	Mundane Event
B.C.		
ca. 5,000 ca. 500 139	<i>Cult of Hermes at its height.</i> <i>Age of Aries begins.</i>	Creation of the world (disputed).
A.D.		
410 412 767 800	<i>Cult of Mercury disbanded.</i> <i>Order of Hermes founded.</i>	Fall of Rome.
817 848 961 1003–1012	<i>House Ex Miscellanea admitted.</i> <i>Sundering of Tremere.</i> <i>Execution of Tasgillia.</i> <i>Schism War.</i>	Charlemagne crowned emperor.
1066 1095 1195 1216	<i>Last Grand Tribunal held.</i>	William conquers Britain. The First Crusade. Pope Honorius III assumes office.

Detailed Timeline

B.C.	
ca. 5,000	Creation of the world (disputed).
ca. 4,000	Destruction of Old Ones' civilization (possibly mythical).
ca. 2,000	Egyptian cult of Thoth at its height.
ca. 500	Greek cult of Hermes at its height.
ca. 160	Plentarch codifies the spells of the cult of Mercury.
ca. 150	Roman cult of Mercury at its height.
139	The Age of Aries begins (Hermetic reckoning). The Hermetic calendar is based on the zodiac and counts its years from this year.
A.D.	
4th century	Christianity becomes official religion of Rome.
410	Alaric, king of the Visigoths, sacks Rome.
412	Cult of Mercury officially disbanded.
711	Muslims ("Moors") invade Spain.
731	Trianoma meets Bonisagus. These two become the political and magical geniuses, respectively, whose work eventually makes the Order of Hermes possible.
767	Order of Hermes founded at Durenmar.
770	Mercere loses his magical power and becomes a messenger within the Order. He devotes his House to delivering messages among magi.

- 772 Tremere and Bonisagus invent certámen.
- 799 Quendalon, primus of Merinita, enters faerie woods.
- 801 Someone claiming to be Quendalon comes out of the faerie woods; he takes control of House Merinita in 802.
- 807 Tytalus enters Maddenhofen Woods to confront the faerie queen and is never seen by mortal eyes again.
- 810 Certámen is adopted as an official means of resolving disputes.
- 814 Death of Charlemagne, dissolution of his empire.
- 814-816 Pralix of House Tytalus, leading the exotic wizards of the British Isles, hunts down and kills the sorcerer Damhan-allaidh. She then declares her group of wizards to be the "Order of Miscellany."
- 817 Admission of the Order of Miscellany as "House Ex Miscellanea."
- 843 Verderis, primus of Criamon, finishes writing *The Travels of Fedoso*.
- 848 Tremere almost dominates the Order, but is stopped by a band of unidentified magi who strike his chief lieutenants with spells.
- 861 Tremere, the last living founder, dies.
- 875 Fenicil, primus of House Quaesitor, declares the conclusions of his long study of ancient magical history: that the Order is based on a magical tradition that goes back to the very beginning of history.
- 876 Doissetep covenant founded.
- 887 Belín, the "ideal Redcap," dies. Her reputation has since grown to near-mythic status.
- 891 Iamitu'krielle of House Criamon apparently passes into Twilight, only to return from time to time with strange prophecies and riddles.
- 937 Duresca scrolls discovered. They seem to have been written by Guernicus, founder of House Quaesitor, and they involve a plot to control the Order. Three years later they are officially ruled to be fraudulent.
- 961 Trial and execution of Tasgillia, prima of Tytalus, found guilty of diabolism.
- 1003-1012 The Schism War. Widespread violence and anarchy culminate when Houses Tremere and Flambeau, with the sanction of the quaesitoris, destroy House Díedne.
- 1006-1047 Himinis the Mad, of House Verditius, crafts numerous magic devices that have hidden traps. Many of these devices still exist, their curses or traps as yet unknown.
- 1018 Open conflict breaks out between Hermetic magi and Jewish followers of the Kabbalah in Barcelona. The followers of the Kabbalah negotiate a perpetual truce with the Hermetic magi.
- 1066 William the Conqueror and his Norman army conquer Britain.
- 1095 The first Crusade called by Pope Urban II.
- 1148 Simprim, a quaesitor, starts the Transitionalist faction within his House.
- 1158 Last apparent sighting of Merinita, who is thought to be living perpetually in the wilderness.
- 1160 Zurenziale of House Merinita disappears, and evidence left in his laboratory proves that he was an elf passing as a human. No one knows what his true goals were.
- 1195 Last Grand Tribunal held.
- 1211 A massive Wizards' March against several vampiric Tremere magi.
- 1212 The last sighting of a vampiric Tremere. None are known to survive.
- 1216 The current pope, Honorius III, takes office.

*CHAPTER FIFTEEN:
APPRENTICESHIP*



“CORACOL WAS ALWAYS HARD WITH ME. WHILE I THOUGHT HE WAS ONLY BEING CRUEL AND PETTY, HE WAS ACTUALLY TEACHING ME TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH ALL THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF MAGIC. WE ALL KNOW THAT MAGIC RARELY TURNS OUT EXACTLY AS INTENDED AND THAT SOMETIMES SURPRISE AT AN UNFORE-SEEN RESULT CAN SLOW OUR REACTION TO POTENTIAL DANGER. BY BEING AS INCONSISTENT AND HARD WITH ME AS HE WAS, CORACOL TAUGHT ME TO PUT UP WITH WHATEVER CAME AND TO BE READY FOR UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTY. IT IS HE WHO MADE ME AS TOUGH AS I AM NOW.”

—ERAT CAECUS, FOLLOWER OF TYTALUS

The traditions of the Order's Houses depend on the practice of apprenticeship, during which the ways of the older generation are passed on to the younger. This chapter describes apprenticeship, on which the lineages of Hermes depend.

BEFORE APPRENTICESHIP

"I fully expected to follow my vulgar father onto the battlefield as a respected mercenary and probably the leader of a mercenary band, but I knew I would never be content in that life. I never lived up to my vulgar father's expectations, because I was not fast or strong and he had no respect for my intelligence. Furthermore, other children were uncomfortable around me; I was not the born leader that my vulgar father was. I had few friends, and many of the people in the area whispered about my being tainted and strange. But I never knew I had an option other than becoming a mercenary. When I look back now on that life, I am thankful to my Hermetic father, Coracol, for rescuing me from it. I was meant to be a magus from birth, and if I had not come into the Order, I would have been miserable. I would have lived my life with the knowledge that I was somehow different, but without any knowledge of my real powers. What could be a more terrible curse?"

—*Erat Caecus of House Tytalus*

Each magus has a unique story to tell of his or her "life as a mundane," of the life led before becoming an apprentice. Most magi regard their apprenticeships as the beginning of their true lives, since few fit in with normal society. Indeed, some magi count their age as starting at the beginning of apprenticeship, not at "vulgar birth."

The major problem faced by most magi in the time before apprenticeship is the Gift. The Gift is apparently with one from birth, and it causes discomfort in almost all nearby non-magical creatures, including people. Many magi tell of being shunned by dogs and of frightening horses (though cats, on the other hand, seem unusually amenable to magical beings). Worse than the Gift's effect on animals, however, is its effect on people. Though people cannot say exactly why someone with the Gift disturbs them, they tend to dislike and distrust magical people. While some parents might overcome this aversion toward their own offspring, one's peers generally do not. Many magi were ostracized, teased, tormented, or beaten by other children.

In addition to having the Gift, many magi were unusually intelligent as children. Perhaps the Gift encourages the development of intelligence, or perhaps magi choose mostly bright youths as apprentices. In any case, there are few places in society for bright, curious children. For those fortunate enough to be born of noble parents, intelligence may be a blessing that leads to education in preparation for the priesthood, but for commoners, intelligence encourages a child to ask too many insightful questions that adults cannot answer or will not face. Intelligence also makes children unsatisfied with the common life in which they are brought up.

Finally, some magi had obvious magical manifestations in their minds or bodies as children; the Gift is known to warp both. Any child unfortunate enough to display immature magical abilities or strange physical features may be punished severely, feared, hated, and possibly even killed. While commoners accept employment of everyday magic as a part of life, such as planting crops in accordance with the phase of the moon or using charms to ward off the evil eye, children with the Gift often demonstrate unusual magical abilities, which the commoners fear.

A minority of magi actually grew up in covenants, the offspring of grogs, servants, or even magi themselves. These apprentices often are very strange, because growing up in a covenant isolates one from normal society and because the magical aura of the place might even warp or exaggerate the Gift.

Children with the Gift

Some magi believe that a child born in a magical area has a greater chance to possess the Gift, while others believe it can be bestowed by a faerie blessing. Most magi now subscribe to the theory that the Gift is passed along bloodlines, perhaps occurring only once every few generations. Some magi believe that all these Gifted bloodlines must contain some of the blood of the Old Ones, who, legend says, frequently mated with mortals. They claim that all mortals with magical powers, including all magi, are descended from these legendary beings.

Virtues like Visions or Enchanting Music may represent magical talent that a magus developed before apprenticeship.

Some magi, especially those whose magic does not bother non-magical beings (that is, those who have the "gentle Gift"), may have had typical or even fortunate childhoods. For the majority, however, the years before apprenticeship are painful and perhaps best forgotten.

Because longevity potions cause a magus to become sterile, it has been difficult to prove that the Gift is hereditary. The theory of the bloodlines being traceable to the Old Ones is impossible to validate, especially since many magi doubt the very existence of the Old Ones. The Gift's following bloodlines, however, would perhaps explain why there seem to be fewer young people with the Gift now than there were centuries ago. For hundreds of years, many of those with the Gift have become magi and rarely had children. Their bloodlines were therefore thinned. Another possibility is that the growing influence of the Dominion has reduced the appearance of the Gift. In either case, the number of apprentices is likely to continue to drop over the years. Those less eager to see danger ahead, however, state that there are not fewer apprentices now than before, simply more Hermetic magi looking for them.

Some Hermetic scholars have speculated that all humans have an innate capacity for magic. There are many magi who have no apparent magical power; they have what is known as the "gentle Gift." Perhaps they don't have the "Gift" at all and what Hermetic theory labels the "Gift" is something different. If these people without the obvious traces of magical ability can learn magic equally as well as other magi, perhaps anyone could be taught magic. It might be that Hermetic magic simply does not have the capacity to bring forth the innate abilities of most people but that some other approach could bring out magic ability in anyone. Such speculation, however, has never been verified through experience.

APPRENTICESHIP

Being taken away as an apprentice is always disturbing and frightening, even if the apprentice is excited and even relieved to be freed from a miserable life as a mundane. Some apprentices are kidnapped by their masters; some are coaxed away by promises of knowledge and power, while still others are actually offered to the magi by families who cannot handle their youngster's strange ways.

Once in the covenant, the apprentices first have to learn new habits and knowl-

edge before even beginning to work with spells. First, they must fit into the hierarchy of the covenant and learn which rooms they are free to enter, which places in the covenant are forbidden, how to address magi, how to interact with grogs, and so on. They also have to learn Latin and how to read and write: arduous and demanding tasks. The first year of apprenticeship is often disappointing, since apprentices generally study and perform menial tasks without ever learning any of the exciting secrets mastered by the magi around them. If there are other, older apprentices in the covenant, this time can be even more oppressive, as the older ones may torment the youngest apprentice, perhaps trying out some of the spells they are learning from their masters. This first year is so hard on apprentices that it is customary for masters to restrict them from leaving the covenant except under direct supervision. There are few, if any, apprentices who do not at times wish to run away during this period.

Learning Latin teaches the apprentice the vocabulary and mental discipline necessary to begin the study of magic. Once an apprentice has developed the necessary mental skills, the master can begin magical training. Most magi begin teaching magic as soon as possible to mold the youth's Gift while it is young and pliable.

Learning magic is at first a wondrous thing. All magi can remember the first spells they cast. When they realize that they have power within them restricted to a tiny few in the world and that they are going to receive the training necessary to actualize that power, many begin fantasizing about being mighty wizards. During the second year, apprenticeship becomes easier because the apprentices see concrete and amazing results from their long hours of study. After the initial awe wears off, however, the apprentice still faces years of hard mental work in the mastery of magic.

Much of an apprentice's life has little to do with learning magic. In addition to spending long hours learning reading, writing, Latin, and mathematics, apprentices must tend fires, stir bubbling cauldrons, and run errands within the covenant. These menial tasks serve a double purpose: teaching the apprentice patience and helping the master work faster in the laboratory.

The course of a magus's life is largely

About Your Years Before Apprenticeship

First, determine at what age you were taken as an apprentice. Apprenticeship typically lasts at least fifteen years, so subtract 15 or so from your beginning age to find out how old you were. Then answer some of the following questions for yourself.

- How did your Gift manifest itself when you were young? In what ways were you different from "normal" children?
- What was your family like? Into what class were you born? Nobility? Peasantry? Artisans? Did you live in the country or in a city? What did your parents do for a living?
- How well did you fit in to your family? To your position in society? What early events or circumstances helped to shape your personality or attitudes? What skills did you pick up from your mundane life before you became an apprentice?
- Did you grow up in a covenant? If so, who are your parents, and what is their status in the covenant?

Those families that bring their children to magi generally claim that their children ran away, to avoid the stigma of having dealt with the magi.

determined by apprenticeship. While apprentices have innate inclinations that partly determine the kinds of magic at which they will excel or fail, early experience in magical training can also create lifelong Affinities or Deficiencies. Fifteen years spent under the tutelage of a single master, however, shapes not only the person's magical abilities but his or her personality as well. It is from the master that an apprentice learns what it is to be a magus, even if the master is by no means typical of magi in general. It is because of the great influence that masters have on their apprentices that magi of the 13th century often closely resemble the founders who lived hundreds of years before them.

While most of apprenticeship is spent in tedious study or menial labor, it is not without its dangers. No apprentice becomes a magus without some magical mishap. Magic is unpredictable, and before the master learns the specific nature of an apprentice's magical Gift, the master inevitably has the apprentice attempt tasks beyond his or her power and understanding. For instance, some apprentices are innately deficient in certain Arts, or they may require extra effort to learn certain kinds of magic. Masters who have not yet learned their apprentices' limits can sometimes set them to tasks that are at best impossible or at worst deadly. But then apprentices must also be taught to keep a clear head in the face of danger, and usually the risks that masters expose their apprentices to are not grave. For those apprentices whose curiosity is not satisfied by the master's slow tuition, however, the risks of apprenticeship are more serious.

"One night, while my master, Coracol, was in council with the other magi of the covenant, I sneaked into his private chamber to peer into his most precious tomes, and there I found a large crystal. I gazed into it and seemed to fall an endless distance into a darkness filled with tiny sparkling lights and spinning spheres. And there was something else I saw, something wondrous and terrible. When Coracol revived me hours later, I could not remember what I had seen, and my eyes had been damaged. My vision and my appearance have never recovered.

"That's how I received my Hermetic name, for thereafter Coracol called me 'Caecus.' He always was a cruel but unfailingly truthful master. I shall always revere him for what he did for me, but I would not care to have to serve him another sixteen years.

"When I was first free of him, I envied the other magi

who had not suffered under masters like Coracol, but now I see the wisdom in his teachings. In fact, my own apprentice, whom I call 'Dog,' is learning that wisdom now."

—Erat Caecus of House Tylalus

Most people in medieval society who do possess the Gift either never learn about it or are taught from an early age to suppress and hide their powers. Even those with enough courage to use their powers develop them in ways that are incompatible with Hermetic magic and that are usually far weaker as well. Once a young person with the Gift is found by a Hermetic magus and taken into apprenticeship, a new stage of the person's life begins. The apprentice's magical abilities are nurtured and encouraged to blossom, and the master does everything possible to get the apprentice to demonstrate and use magic powers. Sometimes this has disastrous results, as the apprentice has not yet learned to control this talent, yet this pressure is essential for the apprentice and the master to learn the full extent of the apprentice's powers. Without this early testing, the apprentice would never be able to tap the strongest, innermost aspects of the Gift.

If the apprentice has already begun to explore magic, either independently or in a tradition antithetical to Hermetic theory, then the master must either weaken this power or find a way to fit it into Hermetic training. Sometimes that is not possible and the apprentice always retains these early powers. Invariably, however, this exotic power leads to weakness in Hermetic magic, such as a deficiency in one or more Arts. Therefore, the master spends a great deal of effort and time endeavoring to wean the apprentice from dependence on and association with his or her first experiences with magic. If the master cannot mold the apprentice's powers to Hermetic magic, the master typically commands the apprentice to not use those powers and threatens dire consequences if he or she does. Sometimes a master uses magical means to get the apprentice to forget that he or she ever had such powers, as well as forget the means to use them. There are stories of magi suddenly regaining their memory and having access to magical powers they never realized they had. This event can result from Twilight, and it might produce problems for the magus who has never learned to combine Hermetic and exotic powers.

Among the common folk, reading and writing are considered magical acts in themselves. Many of them wear talismans that incorporate magic words or phrases, even though they cannot read. In their minds, the distinction between a magic symbol and a letter is unclear.

Erat Caecus (ay-RAHT KY-koos, "He was blind") was originally given the name "Caecus" ("Blind" or "Blind One"). Later in his life, after being possessed by a demon and then having it exorcised, he added "Erat" to his name, to commemorate this experience with corruption.

Generally, however, the master works with the apprentice very diligently, teaching new magical techniques in the hope that the new powers will overwhelm the earlier powers. For instance, apprentices who have already developed the power to affect plants might be taught the Art of Herbam immediately, in the hope that their earlier powers will be transformed into an Affinity for Herbam, instead of becoming a block to the apprentices' growth.

The Peripheral Code guarantees an apprentice one season's worth of training every year. If a master gives an apprentice less training than this, or if the training is far below expected standards, another magus may take the apprentice as his or her own to give the apprentice proper training. The apprentice must consent to the change, and the master has one year's warning in which to begin training the apprentice as expected. The Peripheral Code makes this effort to protect apprentices because people with the Gift are rare and valuable people. The magi of Hermes agree that such people should not be wasted on stingy or incompetent masters.

The process of apprenticeship generally ends only in reaching magus status or in death. No apprentices can return to the life they left. Society will not accept them, and the Order will only accept those who become full magi. Sometimes an apprentice proves somehow incapable of continuing Hermetic studies, either because of an innate lack of talent or because of an accident in magical training. These half-magi are generally accepted as consortes, since they cannot return to their lost homes. Most of those who become apprentices succeed in becoming magi, or die in the attempt.

BECOMING A MAGUS

"It took me sixteen years to finish apprenticeship, because I failed the gauntlet on my first attempt. There I was, standing in a room with magi gathered around me, and Coracol wheeled in a massive chest: the project he had been working on for months. It was covered with bronze bands, bolts, locks, nails, knobs, and clasps. 'Open it,' he said.

"I threw everything I had against that chest. Rego magic to open it, Muto magic to warp it, even Perdo

magic, my specialty, to weaken it. Nothing worked; every attempt made the chest glow, but there was no effect. And the chest was enchanted to laugh every time a spell was cast on it, so it laughed constantly. That Coracol was a sneaky, vicious, heartless dog. After half an hour, I gave up. That might have been the hardest thing in my life—giving up the gauntlet and facing another year with Coracol. When I said I had conceded defeat, Coracol strode over and opened the chest by hand. It had not been locked.

"I got a second chance at the gauntlet the next year. Coracol was a bit more serious about it that time. He summoned an air elemental called Breathsucker and locked me in a room alone with it. The thing might have sucked the breath right out of me if I hadn't stolen a dozen pawns of raw vis from Coracol over the previous year, stashing it away for just this purpose. With the elemental defeated, I had proved myself; Coracol was especially pleased to see I had won by wit and not brute force, so he treated me much better after that.

"In another month, there was a tribunal at Cad Gadu, and I was officially named a magus. Coracol gave me my sigil, made my nickname my true Hermetic name, and welcomed me as a sodalis. As soon as I returned from the tribunal, I packed my goods and set off for ill-fated Tagelyn Covenant. I had had enough of Coracol, and now I was free to leave him behind."

—Erat Caecus of House Tytalus

Apprentices and masters have one central conflict: the length of apprenticeship. Masters often would like to keep their apprentices for very long times, since they can help in the laboratory. In fact, as the apprentice's knowledge grows, he or she can provide ever-more-valuable assistance, and parting with the apprentice becomes harder and harder for the master. Apprentices, on the other hand, want to be recognized as full magi and gain their freedom. To settle this universal conflict, the Order of Hermes has settled on fifteen years as the proper amount of time to retain an apprentice. Anyone keeping an apprentice much longer than that can be reprimanded and forced to give up the apprentice.

Once the apprentice can manipulate each of the fifteen Arts, create a parma magica, engage in certámen, and cast a number of formulaic spells, he or she is considered ready for testing. The test is called the apprentice's gauntlet, and should the apprentice pass, he or she then is to be inducted as a magus. Those

About Your Apprenticeship

Your apprenticeship was the most important time in establishing who you are now as a young magus, so put some serious thought into what it was like for you.

- Who was your master, and what was he or she like? How were you treated and trained? What did your master expect you to become, and what did you actually become? What was your master's reputation? How much of that reputation follows you into your life as a magus?
- Besides your master, who was important to you during your apprenticeship? Another apprentice? A different magus? A scullery maid? The grogs?
- What were important events in your apprenticeship? Magical disasters? Crises that your master went through? How have these affected you?



Caecus fails his first apprentice's gauntlet. Since Caecus is of House Tytalus, his master could devise whatever gauntlet he wished.

who fail (and survive) may try again after one year's time, and again each year until they succeed.

Ceremony of Initiation

This ceremony usually takes place at tribunal because it requires the presence of a quaesitor and at least one member of the master's House other than the master. Since full tribunals take place about every seven years, special tribunals of initiation are often held once or twice in between regular tribunals so that apprentices don't have to wait too long for initiation once they have passed the apprentice's gauntlet. If the apprentice has chosen to enter another House and has passed that House's requirements, the ceremony requires a sponsor from the House who adopts the apprentice as his or her filius, plus another member of the House who serves as a witness. The quaesitor, of course, is still required.

Declaration of Competence

The master first declares that the apprentice has fulfilled his or her studies, has passed the apprentice's gauntlet, and is ready to become a magus.

The Hermetic Name

The apprentice's master says, "This is [Hermetic name], filius/filia of [master's own name], follower of [founder's name]." Officially, the Hermetic name is chosen by the master, though many masters allow their apprentices to choose their names.

Swearing the Oath

The quaesitor asks the apprentice whether he or she will uphold the Code of Hermes, and the apprentice takes the oath by repeating the Code from memory and swearing to follow it. The quaesitor then says, "I, [name], filius/filia of [parens' name], a quaesitor in good standing, hereby recognize you, [apprentice's Hermetic name], filius/filia of [master's name], follower of [founder's name], as a

magus/maga of the Order of Hermes."

Giving of the Sigil

The master, now a parens, presents the apprentice, now a magus and a filius, with a sigil. The sigil is usually a wand of some kind, crafted in secret by the master. It typically bears arcane symbols related to the apprentice's magical specialties, the apprentice's House, or other aspects of the apprentice's identity as a magus. The newly initiated magi keep this sigil for their entire life, as a symbol of their membership in the Order of Hermes. This sigil also represents the magus's vote at tribunal. Whoever holds this sigil can vote as this magus's proxy.

After this ceremony, the sodales of the newly initiated magus welcome him or her to the Order with a celebration whose nature depends largely on the magus's House. Typically, however, the older magi give short speeches about their experiences as wizards and offer informal blessings to their new sodalis. The drink of choice in the area is often consumed in considerable quantities.

Leaving the Home Covenant

It is traditional for the newly initiated magi to seek a covenant other than the one at which they were trained. For one thing, after fifteen years in one place, most are eager to travel and see the world. For another, most magi consider it important for a young magus to find a new home and learn independence. Nevertheless, a few young magi prefer to stay in the covenants of their masters, where they are already known and where they are, perhaps, comfortable.

FINDING AN APPRENTICE

"My apprenticeship was traumatic and sometimes filled with terror, but I respect and thank my pater for teaching me as he did. I can still remember the day I first met Coracol.

"One day, as I was wandering alone down a street far from the home of my vulgar parents, a thin old man

came up to me. I remember that at age fifteen I was soon to begin my duties as a mercenary under my vulgar father, and I was dreading finally taking this role that held so little interest for me. This old man approached me and talked to me, asking personal questions about my life. At that time, most strangers shunned me, probably disturbed by my Gift, so I was surprised to find someone talking to me like this. He asked about my family, my future, my plans, and so on. After a few minutes, he said, 'We will meet again soon,' and left.

"That night, I woke to see him standing above me, holding a candle for light. I let out a yell of surprise and fear, but my family sleeping in the same room did not hear. He told me that they would sleep through everything, that I was to gather the things I wanted most and come with him. Was it his confidence, a sense of adventure, or some enchantment of his that made me obey? I still don't know. I gathered some things into a trunk, and we left. Outside was a gathering of dark, silent people on mules, with three extra mules waiting for us. We put my trunk on one mule, mounted the other two, and set off. For days we rode in silence, the old man cutting me off whenever I tried to speak, and finally we arrived at my master's covenant. There he revealed his name, Coracol, his identity as a magus, and my destiny, which was to become his apprentice. Thus began my long and arduous apprenticeship."

—*Erat Caecus*

Different magi have various reasons for taking apprentices. The most practical simply want help in the laboratory, but many want their apprentices to carry on the tradition taught them by their masters. Some want to increase the power of their Houses by training new magi to join them, while others are concerned only with more personal traditions. Undeniably, it is a boost to one's pride to see a young magus who has learned everything about magic from him or her. Magi realize that, even with longevity potions, their lifetimes are limited, and training an apprentice grants one a sort of immortality.

When a magus goes in search of an apprentice, he or she sometimes need look no further than his or her own covenant. Because the covenant is usually in a magical area, whatever Gift any person has is more readily apparent and is perhaps stronger as well. A magus simply has to search through the children of the covenant and find a

child with both the Gift and a precocious intelligence, and that magus has found an apprentice. Magi who can find these apprentices, however, consider themselves highly fortunate. Much more often, a magus has to travel far to find an appropriate child.

The task of finding an apprentice can be quite difficult for a magus, as there seem to be fewer and fewer people who have the Gift. In some lands, especially where the Dominion is strong, it seems almost impossible to find youths with the Gift. Even when magi can find magical youths, many of them lack the mental capacity to learn Hermetic magic. Finally, some magical people develop their abilities independently. This immature exercise of power sometimes ruins them for Hermetic magic. At best, these individuals can become consortes and possibly develop their powers further under trained guidance, but they will never become true magi.

As the magus explores the land around the covenant, he or she listens for rumors of children who are intelligent, strange, "cursed," "blessed," "faerie-touched," or just out of place. This search often takes the magus face-to-face with strange events and mysteries, even when he or she does not find a suitable child.

Even when a child is found, the problems may not be over. Many children do not wish to leave their homes, or if they do, their parents do not want to part with them. In such cases, some magi leave the children alone, but many have turned to kidnapping because potential apprentices have become so hard to find. With a little Mentem magic, kidnapping is easy, but unless the apprentice develops a true desire to become a wizard, the apprenticeship will certainly fail.

Even when the child wishes to become an apprentice, the family, fearing for the child's soul or their own income, usually objects. Except in barbarian lands, it has become typical for magi not to risk even approaching the parents. They simply take the children and use whatever means are necessary to keep the parents from finding out what happened to them. Since those with the Gift rarely fit in with others, many families don't miss these children much once the initial shock has passed. It is as if, somewhere

Masters of House Tremere do not present their apprentices with sigils, though they do construct the sigils and display them at the ceremony. In House Tremere, becoming a magus does not mean that one is competent to vote or even to direct oneself. A filius must defeat his or her parens in certamen to earn the sigil.



The quaesitoris claim to have discovered and revived powerful rituals used in ages past by the precursors of Hermetic magi.

Houses of Hermes at a Glance

Twelve Houses compose the Order of Hermes. A House is a lineage or tradition linked to one of the wizards who founded the Order in the 8th century, and most Houses are named for their respective founders. The House a magus was trained in affects his or her Hermetic status, magical specialty, and outlook on life.

The twelve Houses are:

Bjornaer: Shapechanging, nature-oriented magi.

Bonisagus: Esteemed experts at magic theory. Some of them are also politicians who strive to strengthen the Order.

Criamon: Strange, philosophical magi who pursue “the Enigma” and court Twilight. They bear magical symbols on their skin.

Ex Miscellanea: The largest and most diverse House, including many magi whose connection to the Order is weak. It was originally a separate Order.

Flambeau: Belligerent magi who specialize in fiery and destructive magic.

Jerbiton: Magi who revere art, philosophy, and other mundane pursuits. They respect non-magi more than other Hermetic magi do.

Mercere: The “Redcaps,” who serve as messengers for the Order. Most have no magic power, though each enjoys the official status of “magus.”

Merinita: Magi who specialize in faeries and faerie magic.

Quaesitoris: Quaesitoris are the investigators and judges of the Order, ruling on Hermetic law. Officially this House is “House Guernicus.”

Tremere: Wizards devoted to political machinations and hierarchies, masters of certámen.

Tyталus: Magi who relish conflict on all levels.

Verditius: Magi who work their magic through “casting tools” and who create miraculous enchanted items.