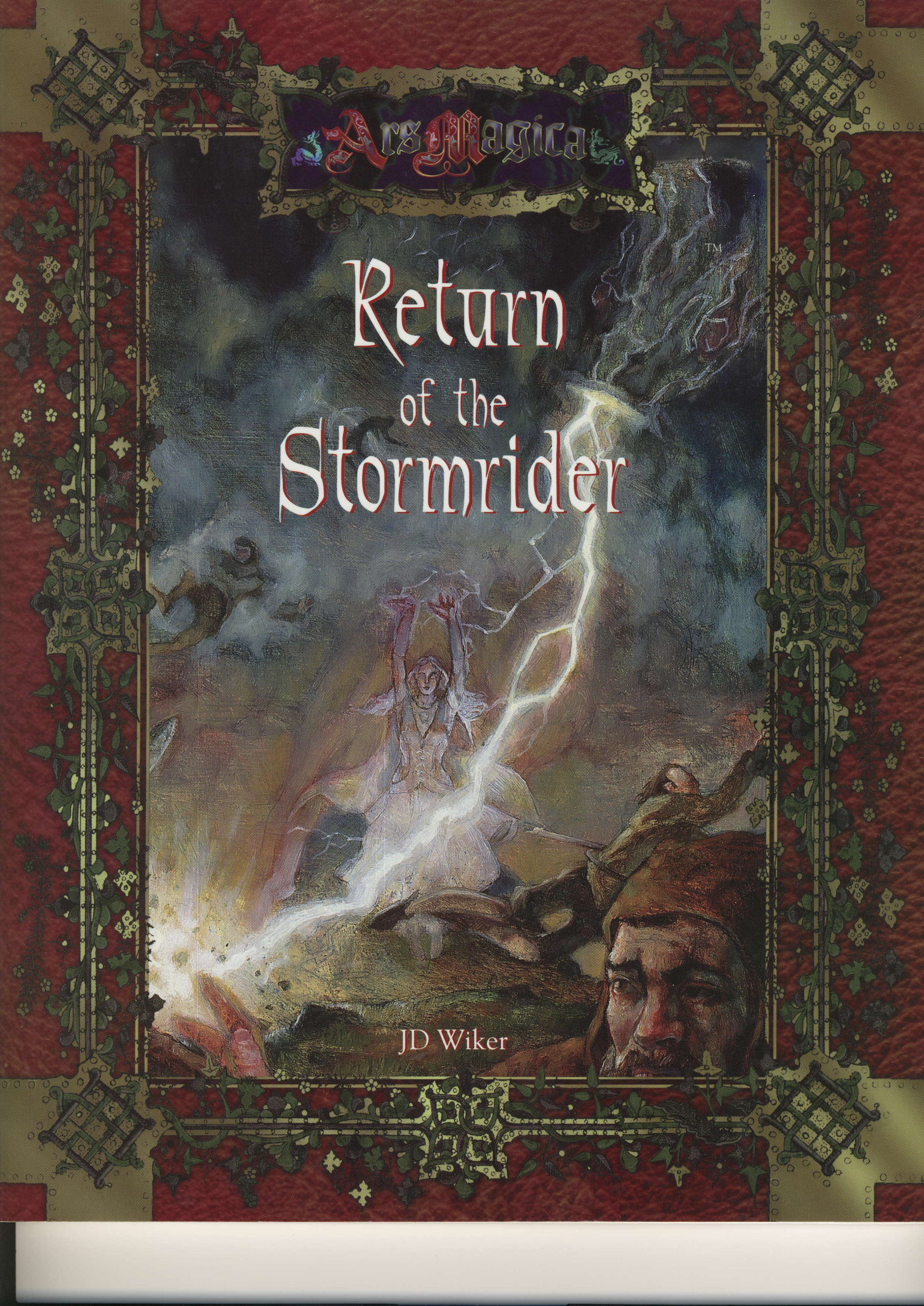


Ars Magica

Return  
of the  
Stormrider

JD Wiker



# The Return of the Stormrider™

A Jump-Start Kit  
for use with Ars Magica™ Fourth Edition

by J.D. Wiker

# Return of the Stormrider

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# Chapter I

## Beginning

### Background: The Story of the Stormrider

Over 120 years ago, a lonely man named Fallemon (FALL-uh-mon), son of a local baron, encountered a beautiful and kind woman named Fabía (FAH-bee-uh). Fallemon had spent his life isolated from society due to his burgeoning magical talents; his father had not wanted him to darken the family name by displaying occult abilities. So Fallemon grew to adulthood alone, except for a few servants.

### About the Author

JD Wiker started seriously gaming in 1987, and has been playing *Ars Magica* since the second edition was still in print. He helped with *Ars Magica* while it was at *Wizards of the Coast*, and is currently the storyguide for an *Ars Magica 4th Edition* saga set in Mythic Constantinople. His favorite pastime is asking cashiers if they can accept Hawaiian currency. He can be reached by e-mail at [CDBALES@WIZARDS.COM](mailto:CDBALES@WIZARDS.COM).

When Fallemon met Fabía, she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and he instantly fell in love. He courted and wooed her, at first pretending to be his twin brother—heir to their father's lands and titles. But when Fallemon professed his undying love for Fabía, she told him that she had dedicated her life to another. Blinded by his jealousy of his brother, Fallemon immediately assumed that she meant him, and in a rage, struck her down. But Fabía did not love Fallemon or his brother; she intended to take holy orders as the one to whom Fabía had dedicated her life was God.

Wandering blindly, Fallemon's rage grew, until a supernatural Steed—a vicious elemental spirit of the air that fed on anger—appeared before him. When Fallemon touched it, it fed him some of its power; Fallemon became the Stormrider.

The Stormrider was a creature of pure rage and immense power. Coupled with Fallemon's own magical talents, the Stormrider was nearly invincible. He rampaged through Val du Bosque (VALL-due-BOSK), eventually attacking Castle d'Uverre (due-VAIR) and slaying his own father. His anger abated, along with the storm, and the Stormrider retreated to dwell in the clouds that wreathed Mount Tierné (TEER-nay).

For years afterward, every particularly violent storm drew the Stormrider out of the sky to devastate the countryside,

inflicting pain and suffering wherever he went. During one such onslaught, he encountered and slew his brother, but Fabía (recovered but scarred from the injuries the Stormrider had caused her previously) prayed over him and a miracle occurred; Fallemon's dead brother was restored to life. Years later, the Stormrider tried to carry Fabía away, but while he battled some peasants a bolt of lightning struck her, slaying her instantly. (This martyrdom eventually led to her canonization.)

The Stormrider ravaged largely unchecked for decades afterward. The wizards of Mistridge (MIST-ridge), led by the mighty Grimgroth, confronted the Stormrider on more than one occasion, and Grimgroth wrote a major treatise based on the assumption that the Stormrider was an air elemental.

Twenty-three years ago, the Stormrider was defeated. Two apprentices studying at Mistridge learned that the Stormrider was actually Fallemon (by now an old man), and they convinced him that he no longer had a reason to be angry. They overcame his Steed, dispersing it back to the air. Fallemon, no longer charged with his overwhelming rage, died peacefully, finally reuniting with Fabía. Fallemon hasn't been seen since.

## Introduction

### The Aims Of This Adventure

This book has a two-fold purpose. Its primary goal is to introduce new players

to the flavor and feel of the Mythic Europe™ setting while teaching them the basic game systems of *Ars Magica*™ (ars MAH-gee-kah). With only minor preparation, the storyguide can present this story to the players within a few minutes of gathering them together, through the use of handouts providing extensive briefings on the characters, the setting, and the game systems. By the end of the play session, all of the players should have a better idea of what *Ars Magica* is all about.

*The Return of the Stormrider* is also intended to demonstrate to the storyguide how to tell an involving, interactive story. Because *The Return of the Stormrider*, like any good roleplaying game, allows for player involvement, your players are likely to take you in new directions with their own particular cleverness and their unique playing styles. Do not be afraid to ride the wave, but don't let it take you too far from shore, either. You are their guide on this imaginary journey.

Conversely, new players might at first be at a loss for what to do; they may allow themselves to become spectators instead of participants in the adventure. The storyguide should acquaint himself with the character backgrounds, as they provide a number of "buttons" that can be pushed to spur the players to action.



## STOP READING!

If you are not planning to be the storyguide for this story you should read no further. Your enjoyment in playing it, and the enjoyment of the other players, will be lessened if you know what is going to happen.

## Storyguide's Notes



As an introductory scenario, *The Return of the Stormrider* is meant to be played at a fast pace, allowing little time for the players to grow bored. If things begin to slow down, you should remind the players of their characters' reasons for wanting to vanquish the Stormrider. If necessary, bring the encounters to the characters, rather than waiting for the characters to reach the encounters.

Remember also that the apprentice wizards are the leaders of this group of characters, and that any decisions ultimately rest in their hands. You can urge

them to forge on by gently reminding them that they are in charge.

The themes of this story are revenge and the desperation of old age. The characters should easily see the revenge, especially when they realize that it is reflected in their own personalities. Their characters' emotions will affect the outcome of the story, and you should remind them that their characters are (within the game world) living, breathing people, and encourage them to play that way. While real people can often temporarily overcome their emotions in order to accomplish something important, it is never an easy thing if these emotions are intense. It can take days for ordinary people to



recover from a particularly strong emotional state.

The most important thing to remember while playing *The Return of the Stormrider* is that the events here are only a guide; you shouldn't worry overmuch if the players stray from the path, or if you should overlook some "necessary" element. If, for example, the players split up their characters in order to accomplish two separate goals at once, be prepared to temporarily depart from the written text so that the players can have their fun while you subtly guide them back together so that the events of the climax come to pass, in one form or another.

## The Rules

Enough of the *Ars Magica* rules are provided here that you should be able to play out the story without needing any other books. The point is to introduce players to the game—not to bury them under rules. However, players have a way of trying things that are not allowed for, and storyguides will have to improvise a resolution to many, many situations.

If you wish to be as prepared as possible to run *The Return of the Stormrider*, we recommend that you pick up a copy of *Ars Magica*. The rules presented there, while in no way complete enough to cover every possible circumstance, are more than enough to handle the situations that are likely to develop in this story.

## The Stormrider Returns

*The Return of the Stormrider* features a thematic story, rather than a straightfor-

ward "adventure." This story is a sequel to the original Jump Start Kit, *The Stormrider*. Players who have already experienced *The Stormrider* will find many familiar names and places here, but *The Return of the Stormrider* gives players a chance to start afresh on familiar ground.

## Cast of Characters

**Fabienne**, named after the patron saint of Val du Bosque, is a Jerbiton apprentice, nominally in charge of the group but still unsure of her ability to command. She must take charge of the others as they pursue the Stormrider.

**Philippe** is her foil, a Tytalus apprentice who is outwardly antagonistic, but feels that it is for Fabienne's own good. He feels that if the group wishes to defeat the Stormrider, it needs a stronger leader than Fabienne, whether that is himself, or a more confident Fabienne.

**Bertrand** and his son **Le Fort** are two of Fabienne's staunchest supporters. Bertrand is the group's grog-sergeant, and he's grooming his son to one day take his place. They generally do whatever Fabienne wills, although more out of loyalty than respect for her abilities. Bertrand actually saw the original Stormrider once, in his childhood.

**Étienne** is a minstrel given to fits of deep depression. He is the group's single best source of information about the Stormrider, even though in combat he is fairly useless. However, his talent for swaying the emotions of others with his music could prove handy to the group.

**Sir Guillaume** is a young knight who has joined the ranks of the grogs in order to practice modesty. Along with Le Fort and Claude, Guillaume is a valiant warrior, but his eagerness for battle, although it will move him to combat the Stormrider, could prove his undoing.







Claude is a grog new to this covenant, having come from another where he had a somewhat checkered past. Claude's abilities are tremendous, but he lacks discipline. Whenever there is a fight, Claude wants to be involved, and the Stormrider is a perfect opponent to test his mettle.

Gloria is adept with a bow, but has the unfortunate reputation of being a cold-blooded killer. Her overconfidence will draw her into the coming struggle, but her abilities may not measure up to the task.

## Preparing for Play

You will need to do several things in order to prepare to tell this story. First,

### Mood Music

Many songs deal with rain and storms, and a tape of several of them playing quietly in the background could enhance the mood of the story. Also, recordings of thunderstorms are available in many nature stores. Bursts of thunder could be quite dramatic at the right times. You could start the tape or CD when the madman announces that the Stormrider is returning, and let it play afterward. But don't let the music distract the players or let tending the machine distract you.

read this book from cover to cover; you should know all the details of the story before you try to present it to anyone else.

Second, we strongly suggest that you make photocopies of all of the materials that the players will be using, including their character sheets and backgrounds, the Basic Briefing, the Combat Briefing, the Magic Briefing, and the two handouts. Étienne's player will also need a copy of *The Story of the Stormrider*. That

way, you can use this adventure with more than one group of players without having to worry about them destroying the handouts.

Third, you need to find out just how many people will be playing. The maximum number is eight, but if you have less, some of the characters will have to go unused. If you have only six or seven players, leave out Claude and/or Gloria, explaining that they withdrew from the expedition at the last minute in order to assist some of the other wizards at the covenant. If only four or five people will be playing, ask if any of your players would mind playing more than one character, and if not, give Bertrand to Le Fort's player, and Sir Guillaume to Étienne's player. If the other players wish, they can also play Claude and Gloria. Although you can play *The Return of the Stormrider* with less than four players, each will have to play multiple characters, and as this can be disconcerting for first-time players, you might wish to consider rescheduling.

You also have to adjust the power levels of the game if not all of the characters are being played. For each character not played, reduce the Initiative, Attack, and Damage scores of each antagonist by one point.

Seating at the gaming table can help illustrate important relationships within the story. Fabienne and her faction should sit near each other, and Philippe and his should do the same. Fabienne's and Philippe's players should also sit closest to you, as they will be the ones who need to speak to you the most. Starting from your left and proceeding clockwise, the order should be: Fabienne, Le Fort, Bertrand, Claude, Gloria, Guillaume, Étienne, and Philippe.

Before you begin play, have plenty of pencils and 10-sided dice on hand. You should have at least one die for each player and yourself.

## Plot Synopsis

The characters are traveling to Mistridge to buy some books in exchange for raw vis (WEES). Their covenant has sent two of its best apprentices (along with two companions and four grogs) to fetch the books. (Apprentices were chosen because the way is mostly safe; the best apprentices were chosen because the way is not *completely* safe.) While passing through the village of Siernami (SEER-nahm-ee), they learn that the dreaded Stormrider is about to return.

The characters all have some motivation for wanting to vanquish the Stormrider, and they should be heartened that the Stormrider was not only defeated before by two apprentices and their retinue, but that those who came before showed them what they think is the way: defuse the Stormrider's anger and he is much less of a threat.

However, as the characters go to meet the Stormrider, they learn that not all is as it seems. A local oracle who was present when the Stormrider was defeated previously tells them where to find the man who will become the Stormrider *before* he becomes the Stormrider, and hints that it might not be the same man as before. They even encounter the Stormrider's Steed as it races through the forest to meet its new rider.

Unfortunately the new Stormrider is actually Caeron (CARE-on), one of the two apprentices who defeated the previous Stormrider. Embittered by his own failure as a magus (MAH-goos; plural magi: MAH-gee), he blames Grimgoth, the leader of the Mistridge covenant. Perhaps even more unfortunate is the fact that the magical Steed that gives him his power is not what it seems, either.

Caeron has prepared for the interference of the characters though, and gains his new power before he can be stopped.

He sets off for Mistridge, stopping at Castle d'Uverre and a grove on the slopes of Mount Tierné, before assaulting Mistridge itself. Here he has his vengeance on those who wronged him in the past, after which the characters may finally be able to defeat him and learn the secret of the magical being masquerading as his mount.

Further complicating things are the characters' personalities and internal conflicts as they strive to fulfil their goals. Although disharmony within the group does not play the same part that it did in *The Stormrider*, it is present nonetheless, and may serve to hinder the characters in their quest. Overcoming their own squabbles in order to achieve a common goal is only one thing they must do in order to succeed.

## The True Story

Some time past, Caeron kidnapped a faerie lord named Marradal (MAR-uh-doll) and attempted to hold him for ransom. Marradal escaped however, and placed a curse on Caeron—Caeron would never be able to benefit from the effects of a longevity potion. Unable to extend his lifespan as other Hermetic magi did, Caeron would die of old age.

Caeron was understandably depressed about this, but refused to give up hope. After many failed experiments, he decided that his only hope was to do something extreme; he would become the Stormrider. The Stormrider was a mortal man who had been made into a rampaging monster by the power of an air elemental in the form of a horned horse. The Stormrider was also immortal, until, that is, Caeron and his comrades defeated the horse, some two decades ago.





For amusement, Marradal occasionally watched Caeron's efforts, and so learned of the wizard's plans. Marradal knew enough about the Stormrider to realize that, unhindered, Caeron could actually carry out his scheme. Not only would this make Caeron immortal, but more powerful than Marradal. However, if the faerie lord were masquerading as the elemental Steed, he could *pretend* to grant Caeron that power, and withdraw it when Caeron needed it most. In his quest for immortality, Caeron would die.

Unfortunately for Marradal, he didn't have the power to perform all of the Storm Steed's tricks. So Marradal consulted a water-faerie, a kelpie named Seumas (SHAY-muss). Through an

encounter with the original Stormrider, Seumas had part of one of the Storm Steed's horns, and he promised to use it to create a potion to transform Marradal into a facsimile of the Steed. Seumas named as his price the death of Baron d'Uverre, for reasons of his own. Marradal felt he could grant this particular favor, and so became the Storm Steed. He set off to meet with Caeron, confident that night would see the return of the Stormrider and the end of the wizard.

Unbeknownst to Marradal, Seumas was in league with Sir Luc (LUKE), the Baron's heir. Two years ago, Luc encountered and almost slew the kelpie, but Seumas bargained for his life, offering to make the knight the most powerful man

## The Original Stormrider Jump Start Kit: A Recap

*If you or your players have never played the original Stormrider, we recommend it, even though the rules are out of date. However, it is not necessary to have done so, nor even to have read it, as enough of the background is presented here for you to be able to tell an effective story regardless. The following is a "thumbnail sketch" of the events of that adventure.*

After seeing telltale signs of the presence of the Stormrider in the small village of Javielle, two grogs from Mistridge informed two of the wizards present in their covenant—rival apprentices named Caeron and Lucienne. They were each interested in the Stormrider for their own reasons. Lucienne had been attacked by the Stormrider some years earlier and saved by her close friend Pol, who gave his life to protect her,

while Caeron merely wanted to prove that Grimgroth—Lucienne's master, and the nominal head of Mistridge's wizards—was wrong in his theories about the Stormrider. Grimgroth had humiliated Caeron some years before by refusing to accept him as an apprentice, and Caeron was burning for revenge.

Gathering some of their most trusted companions, Caeron and Lucienne set off to confront the Stormrider. Along the way, they discovered a wounded squire lying beside a burning tree, encircled by a ring of fire. The squire, Brien Guifré, of Castle d'Uverre, had been courting Marie (mah-REE), the daughter of a carpenter from Javielle, when the Stormrider came upon them and carried the girl away, leaving Brien to die. Here Tomas (toe-MAHSS), one of Caeron's companions, received a vision of the Stormrider after touching part of the



1989 edition,  
cover art by Doug Shuler

in Val du Bosque. This would mean, of course, that Baron d'Uverre would have to die, but Sir Luc had no compunctions about the old man's death. With the baron out of the way, Luc could realize his dream of conquering Mistridge and establishing himself as the only true power in Val du Bosque. With no real risk to himself, Sir Luc felt reasonably assured that he could succeed.

To help ensure this end, Marradal, as the Storm Steed, had to arrange for Caeron to visit Castle d'Uverre before proceeding to Mistridge. With Seumas's prompting, he hit upon the idea of befuddling Caeron's mind and causing him to retrace the steps of the original Stormrider. This would bring him to the

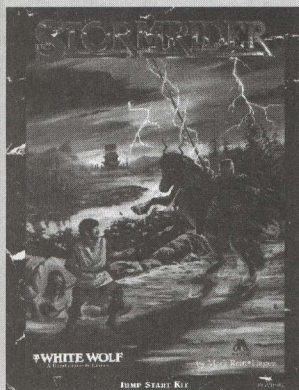
castle, where the baron would certainly emerge and attempt to deal with the new Stormrider. Once Caeron dispatched Baron d'Uverre, Marradal could betray Caeron.

When Caeron engages Grimgroth in combat at Mistridge, Marradal intends to withdraw the Stormrider's power and let him die. Because of his rather alien faerie thought processes, Marradal thinks it perfectly reasonable to assume that no one will bother attacking him (in his role as Steed), and so has no fear that he will be seriously hurt. (In fact, whenever someone specifically attacks him, he feels affronted.) Seumas knows better, but it is vital to his plan that he not dissuade Marradal.



Stormrider's torn cloak. Here also the group learned that any living creature caught in the Stormrider's ring of fire would go mad with strong passions — usually rage.

They followed the burning hoofprints of the Storm Steed, arriving at Javielle, where the Stormrider had destroyed a festival dedicated to Sante Fabía (who figured prominently in the legends of the Stormrider). The people of Javielle had taken refuge inside the church, but the group found Marie lying in a puddle, surrounded by a ring of fire. She had been struck by the Stormrider, leaving a hand-shaped burn on her face.

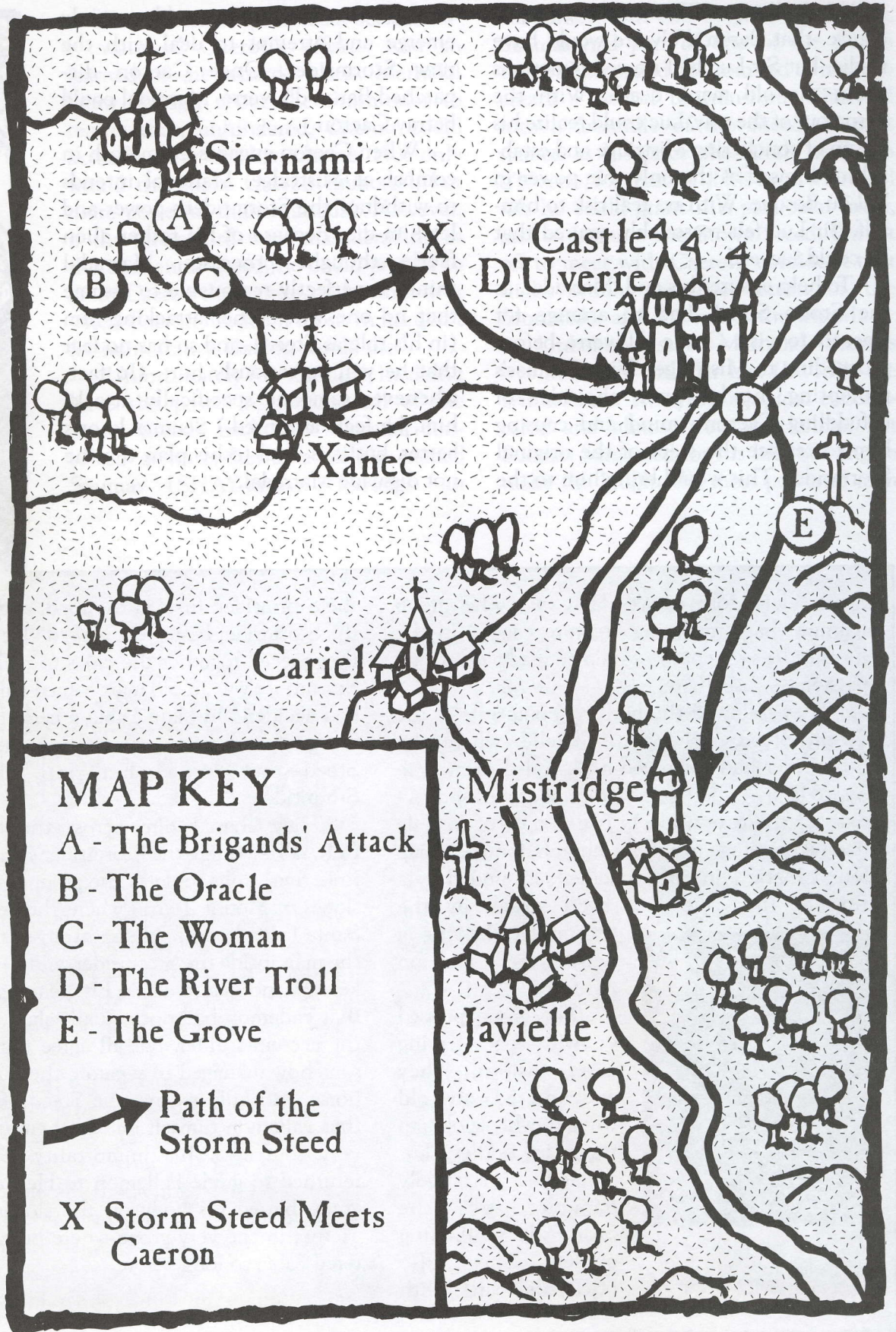


1991 edition,  
cover art by Jeff Menges

The group pressed on, with Tomas having more visions. They encountered an old woman who spoke to them in riddles, but seemed strangely immune to the Stormrider's flaming circles. They also briefly did battle with

the Stormrider, first on the road, and later when the Stormrider besieged Castle d'Uverre. In time, they pieced together the clues to realize that the Stormrider was an old man named Fallemon, who had accidentally slain Fabía a century earlier, in his grief and rage encountering the elemental Steed that turned him into the terrible Stormrider.

They chased him across the River Vreis (VRAY) — where the Stormrider summoned horrible river trolls to delay the group — and up the slopes of Mount Tierné where they encountered Sante Fabía herself. The saint urged them to free the man inside the Stormrider, and gave them the key they needed to defuse his great rage: the truth that Fallemon had not actually slain Fabía. Here the accounts differ, but all agree that the group somehow managed to separate the man from the horse, and kill or drive the Steed off. Some say that Fallemon himself helped them drive off the very source of his immortality. Sante Fabía returned to guide Fallemon to Heaven, and the group buried his body on the slopes of Mount Tierné, in the very grove where he had encountered Fabía so long before.



### MAP KEY

- A - The Brigands' Attack
- B - The Oracle
- C - The Woman
- D - The River Troll
- E - The Grove

 Path of the Storm Steed

X Storm Steed Meets Caeron

# Chapter II

## Clouds Gather

### The Road

To begin the story, the storyguide should read aloud or paraphrase the following sections of italicized text:

*•Mistridge lies only a day's hard travel away, but the covenant is not expecting you until two evenings hence. Light woods surround the road, but ahead you can see the lights of a small village in the growing twilight. This must be Siernami, where the residents of the last village told you that you could find lodgings for the night. A church tower rises above the low trees, reminding you that you must be careful not to arouse suspicion, or worse, reveal your true nature. But the thought of hot food, a warm bed, and perhaps a little ale encourages you. •*

At this point, each player should read his character's quote, starting with Fabienne and working around the table from her to Philipe. The players can then begin interacting without a script. The players may also wish to describe their characters' actions as they approach the village. Remind them that, although the day's travel has been relatively easy, they are beginning to feel the wear of several miles spent carrying heavy loads.

*•The road approaches the village from the north. Near a broken fence some fifty paces ahead, you notice three men gathered. One is huddled on the ground, apparently busy at some task, while the others stand watching the road ahead. They see you at the same time you see them. One steps forward and raises a hand in greeting; he appears to be a priest. •*

### The Priest

The players might be just a little wary of this scene. If anyone wishes to get a better look at the three men, ask him to roll Perception + Awareness + a quality die. If the players do not think to check their character sheets for applicable specialties, wait for them to announce their rolls, then ask if any of them have particularly good eyesight, either due to specialties or perhaps Virtues. Compare their results to the chart on page 14.

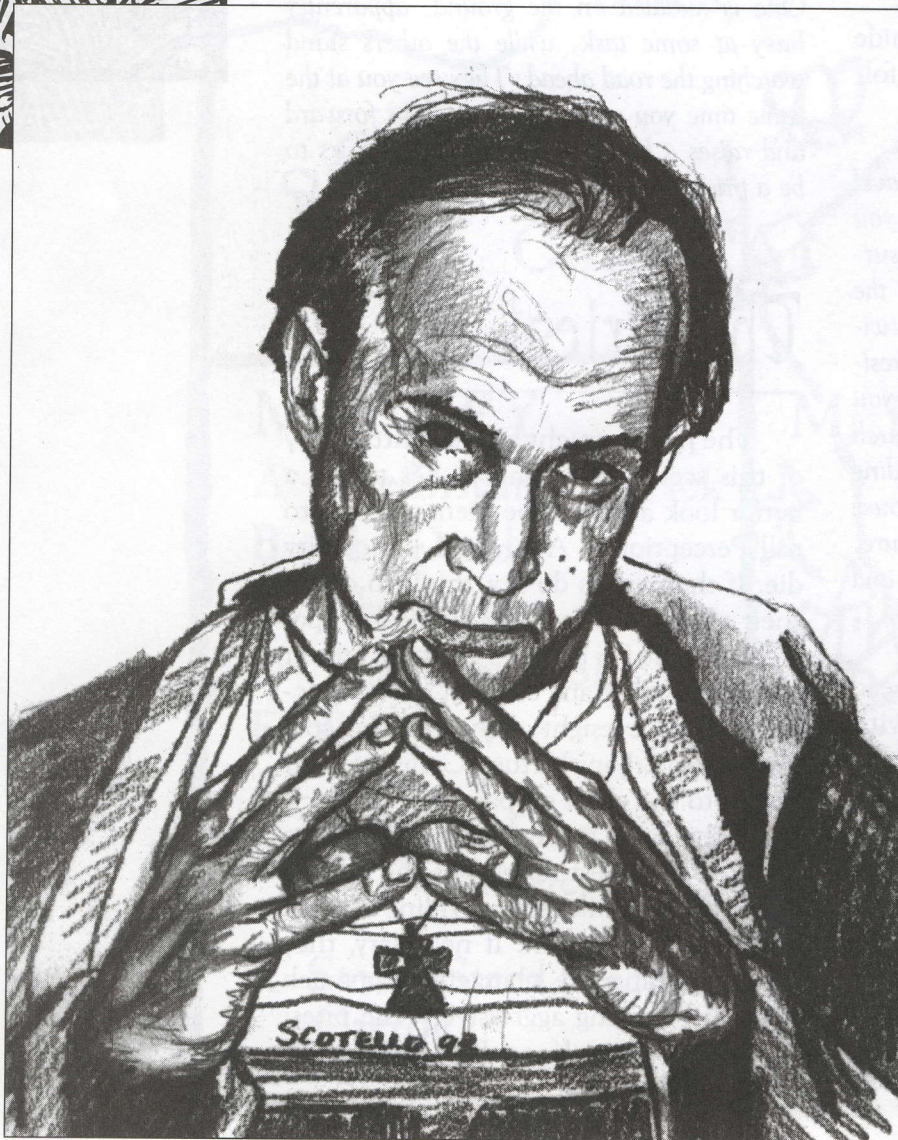
If the party behaves in a threatening manner, the priest retreats to the village, with the two villagers providing a small amount of protection. If necessary, they run. Assuming the characters approach without behaving aggressively, the priest introduces himself as Father François (frahn-SWAH).





## Per + Awareness Results Chart

Roll	Result
3+	The other two men are villagers.
6+	You have a clear view of the area. There is no one else on the road or near the three men.
9+	The man on the ground is trying to light a torch. None of the men is carrying any visible weaponry.
12+	The two standing men are apparently making a point of keeping their hands in sight.
15+	The men are obviously a little nervous, but they do not seem dangerous. They are all definitely unarmed.



•“Good eve, travelers,” he begins. “Welcome to Siernami. Please forgive my manners, but I must ask a delicate question of you, for our need is great, tonight of all nights. Are any among you members of the Ordo Hermetica?” (OR-doe her-MET-ick-uh: the Order of Hermes)•

The characters should be extremely careful how they answer. If they avoid the question, Father François suspects that they are stalling, and asks again, in a firmer voice. The characters may also attempt to use Guile (Roll Communication + Guile against Father François’ Intelligence) to trick François into revealing how they should answer. However, if the attempt fails, he grows impatient and says, “I don’t have time for this petty banter! Answer me, or move on.”

The players may decide that they don’t wish to answer, in which case Father François informs them that they may find lodgings for the night at the home of the wagon-maker. As they

enter the village though, they hear shrill laughter and horrible shrieks coming from the church.

An honest answer to Father François' question elicits a look of relief from him.

•*"Then God is with us. Jean-Michel said you would come. Follow me to the church, and I will take you to him. Be warned, though: he is not himself."*•

## The Mad Man

François leads the characters into the village, with the two other men trailing along behind him. They make no effort to

watch the group, and in fact depart silently some distance from the church, leaving François alone with the party. If anyone pays particular attention, they notice that the two men seem distinctly relieved to be leaving their presence.

•*As you draw near the church, you catch the faint sound of shrill laughter, punctuated with wordless screams. Father François shivers visibly, and says, "Jean-Michel. Normally, he is a harmless idiot, but since late this afternoon he has been beset by devils. I fear for his soul, but in his lucid moments he has managed to say that when a group arrived from the north, we must bring it to him. I must assume that it was you of whom he spoke."*



### Father François

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

**Age:** 46

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 2

**Personality Traits:** Pious +2, Stern +2

**Reputations:** Pious (among the peasants) 3

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

**Soak:** +0

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Awareness 3 (peoples' moods), Charm 3 (good listener), Church Lore 3 (local saints), Civil and Canon Law 3 (heresy), Disputatio 3 (debating heretics), Folk Ken 4 (peasants), Lectio 3 (scripture), Scribe Latin 3 (correspondence), Speak Latin 4 (church service), Speak Provençal 6 (sermons), Theology 3 (arguments against the Cathar heresy)

**Encumbrance:** 0

Father François is a devoted man of God, but has lately begun to feel that God solves his problems by presenting him with choices, rather than

making it clear what he should do. In the case of the player characters, Father François suspects that they do God's work whether they know it or not, and he must urge them onto the right path. He could easily become a recurring character, visiting Fabienne and Philippe after they become magi. If the subject of the baron's heir, Sir Luc, ever comes up, Father François is quite vocal about how little he likes the man.

**Description:** François dresses in a faded grey robe with a frayed hood. He is partly bald, and what hair he does have is a dark grey. His expression seems disapproving of everything he lays eyes on.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Gaze steadily at anyone who is speaking, and scowl if they visibly display weakness when innocents are endangered. If the characters seem belligerent toward you or the villagers, or profess a desire not to get involved, scold them soundly, decrying them as cowards. If they take umbrage and threaten you, point out that their behavior only proves that you were right.

**Quote:** *"Let me make this clear: I don't like wizards. But God has provided, and I must not question His divine plan."*





The horrible sounds grow loudest as you reach the rear door of the church, and the priest opens it unceremoniously. This room is obviously Father François' quarters. The screaming man is within, held down by three strong men. Though he is scrawnier than any one of them, it seems to be all they can do to keep him from flailing wildly. He has a cut on his arm, and one of the men will obviously sport a black eye come morning. The furniture has been overturned, and lies scattered. An upset candle lies perilously close to a book, fallen with its pages open. "He isn't gone! He isn't gone!" the man shouts, as Father François hurries to rescue the book from the open flame. •

Any efforts from the heroes to assist in restraining Jean-Michel earn grateful looks from the three villagers, who have been holding him here for over an hour. However, if either of the apprentices touches Jean-Michel, he immediately relaxes completely, seeming to fall into a stupor. The villagers breathe sighs of relief and release him, sitting back and rubbing sore muscles. The one with the wound tenderly prods his eye, wincing.

•Suddenly, Jean-Michel stands bolt upright, easily throwing off anyone still holding him. A bluish-white light fills the room as his eyes roll back in his head and he turns his face toward the ceiling, screaming:

*"The Stormrider returns tonight!"*

*There is a distant clap of thunder.* •

## The Madman Flees

Each character should react to Jean-Michel's raving as befits his individual nature. Point out to the players that the Stormrider is possibly the most pow-

erful and destructive creature they have ever heard of. While the players may want to do something brave or logical, their characters will most likely be governed by an applicable Personality Trait. For instance, Fabienne would feel underconfident, Bertrand vengeful, Étienne afraid. Once you and the players have established their characters' reactions, continue reading:

•Jean-Michel suddenly bolts for the door, his eyes wild, his lips foaming. You have just seen the strength his madness has lent him; does anyone try to stop him? •

The characters might try to stop Jean-Michel from escaping Father François' quarters. If anyone announces that his character wishes to intervene, ask him to roll his character's Initiative Total [Weapon skill + Weapon Initiative bonus + Qik + Encumbrance + stress die], but point out that using weapons on an unarmed man will likely kill him. The most humane mundane option is to try to grapple with Jean-Michel to restrain him until someone else can lend a hand.

Although the *Ars Magica* rulebook includes a detailed method of resolving an attempt to restrain someone, you can simply compare the characters' Initiative Totals with Jean-Michel's Initiative Total of 5. If no one has an Initiative Total higher than his, he escapes through the door unmolested. Anyone with a higher Initiative Total can roll an attack against Jean-Michel. If the character is attempting to immobilize or tackle him, ask the player to make a Strength roll instead of an attack roll, and roll one for Jean-Michel. If the player's roll is higher, Jean-Michel cannot slip free before others can join in and help hold him.

If Jean-Michel escapes, he bursts through the door and runs off into the night. If someone pursues, he can be caught by one or more characters rolling

Quickness – Encumbrance against Jean-Michel's "roll" of 7. Should someone manage to catch up with him—highly unlikely with most of them fairly encumbered—he can again try to tackle or immobilize the madman, using the same system as above.

The players may come up with another way to stop Jean-Michel, but all that is really required is that someone slow Jean-Michel down long enough so that others can join in and help. Three or more people can hold him until he can be restrained with ropes—or perhaps magic. Étienne's music could also calm Jean-Michel down considerably. If he does escape, however, he will not appear again during this story, but you should feel free to use him again if you decide to develop the characters and plot threads here into an actual saga.

Once this situation is resolved, you should ask anyone who participated in capturing Jean-Michel to roll a Fatigue

test: rolling Stamina + Encumbrance + a stress die. A total less than the ease factor of 6 means the loss of one Fatigue level; a botch costs two levels. Consult the Systems Briefing for information on how characters recover lost Fatigue levels.

## Gathering Information

If the players already know the story, then the characters know what the players know, having heard stories from grogs and other apprentices, or learned it from their covenant's library. If not, Étienne should tell the group the story of the Stormrider, amending it however his player desires. Bear in mind that Étienne's version is already rather embellished; it



### Jean-Michel

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

**Age:** 27

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 1

**Virtues & Flaws:** Visions +2, Feeble Intelligence -4

**Reputations:** Insane (among the peasants) 3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl (Fist)	+5	+1	+4	+1	+2

**Soak:** +1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Brawl 1

**Encumbrance:** 0

Jean-Michel is the village idiot, simple-minded but hard-working. The only thing that makes him unusual is that he has visions which he has no control over. Earlier today, he encountered a

lone traveler (the faerie lord Marradal, see page 62) who asked him for directions. When the traveler departed, Jean-Michel received a mystical vision of the return of the Stormrider, and it has haunted him mercilessly. By the time the characters reach Siernami, Jean-Michel is hysterical.

**Description:** Jean-Michel is thin, but wiry. Normally he has a rather dull expression on his face and his jaw hangs slack. His hair is brown and curly, and he has numerous scratches on his arms and knuckles from working in the fields.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Jean-Michel is currently hardly lucid, and does not actually hear anyone speaking to him. Rather than screaming, he mostly giggles and laughs. While portraying Jean-Michel, do not look at anyone in particular, and throw in random ravings like "He never left!", "It's not our fault!", and "The storm the storm the storm!"

**Quote:** "I beg of you — make it stop!"



takes quite a few liberties with the details, for the sake of entertainment.

Father François is also a source of information, if anyone should think to ask him. He has heard, from an old nun, that Fallemon was buried in a grove of trees on Mount Tierné, and that those who helped defeat the Stormrider before are either dead or “scattered to the four corners of the Earth.” If the group asks specifically about the two apprentices — Caeron and Lucienne — Father François remembers that Lucienne now dwells at the covenant Mistridge, using the name Rosa. He has no idea what became of Caeron.

The PCs might be a bit reluctant to get involved in this, especially if they can simply report what they have learned to either their own covenant or, better yet, the much-closer covenant of Mistridge. Unlike the original Jump Start Kit, only a couple of these characters have any real interest in facing the Stormrider. Remind Bertrand’s player of his childhood experiences with the Stormrider; play up Claude’s faith in his fighting ability; point out that Sir Guillaume might actually have a match in the Stormrider; and perhaps most importantly, indicate to Fabienne’s player that if the group was somehow able to defeat the Stormrider while under her command, Veristus would hardly be able to claim that she was unworthy of becoming a full magus...

But if it appears that the heroes wish to avoid dealing with the Stormrider altogether, Father François chastises them:

•Father François has stood quietly by during much of your discussion, but he speaks now. His voice filled with anger, he shouts: “What cowardice! Do my ears deceive me, or do you truly mean to turn your back on the men and women—even the children—of Val du Bosque and let them be slaughtered like sheep? I had been told how you wizards would just as soon let demons butcher every living thing, but you others—! Have you no shame? How many have to die while you break your fast and take your rest before you tell the tale you have witnessed tonight? How many?” •

At the very least, Father François should be able to persuade them not to pursue any plan which will avoid all contact with the Stormrider (such as returning to their own covenant). Hopefully the players elect to pursue the matter, in which case one of the villagers in the room tells them of the oracle who lives just south of Siernami. The oracle is a highly-respected figure among the peasants of the area, and the man suggests that the oracle can advise the group how to defeat the Stormrider. If nothing else, they should at least visit him, to see if he can offer any advice at all. The villager tells them that the oracle lives atop a small hill west of the road—at a rock cairn beside the road they will find a path to the oracle’s hut.

# Chapter III

## Storm Winds

Whether the heroes decide to seek out the oracle or merely continue on to Mistridge, their path takes them south toward Xanec (ZON-eck).

### The Brigands' Attack

Ask the players to make Perception + Awareness + a simple die rolls, and take note of anyone who scores higher than a 10. You might wish to apply a penalty of -2 due to poor lighting conditions unless the players have specifically provided additional lighting.

•A light rain is beginning to fall as the group trudges southward along the road, seeking the small pile of rocks that denotes the start of trail to the oracle's hut. You have just glimpsed the hill where the oracle lives when you hear a terrifying howl, and monstrous figures hurtle down from the trees! •

Because of their horned helmets and the poor light, the two grogs appear to be inhuman monsters, and the party might be temporarily taken aback. The grogs, Estaban (ESS-tuh-bonn) and Paul (PUL), rely on this tactic to gain the edge

of surprise, but if they realize they do not have the advantage, they attempt to flee.

As before, each character who wishes to engage in combat should roll his Initiative Total, applying a -2 to the roll if he did not score 10+ on his Awareness roll. Assume that Estaban has rolled a 5 and Paul has rolled a 6.

While surly, Estaban and Paul are not stupid, and attack the middle of the players' group instead of the front: in the confusion, the group is liable to do itself more harm than its attackers.

In the event that an apprentice begins casting a spell and either of the two grogs notice (Perception + Awareness + a simple die - 2 for poor lighting, plus any other appropriate modifiers, such as for words and gestures, against an ease factor of 9), they warn each other and concentrate their efforts on disrupting the wizard's spells. (The player characters may well remark upon this and wonder about it later.)

Estaban and Paul are not particularly powerful, however, and the tide of battle should soon turn. Once either is wounded, he throws down his weapons and asks for quarter, followed by the other likewise surrendering; they have already worked out in advance that they will claim to have mistaken their victims for a band of traveling brigands. "We've been looking for the bandits for over a week and when we saw you, we thought we could finally get out of





*this miserable weather and go home.*" Unfortunately, their story isn't terribly well prepared, and quickly breaks down under any serious examination. Once again, because battling with Estaban and Paul is tiring, anyone who physically exerted himself must score a 6+ on his Fatigue test (Stm + Enc + stress die) or lose one Fatigue level.

If questioned, Estaban and Paul reveal that they came out here with a wizard who hired them several months ago. He brought them to a remote and abandoned village many miles north of Siernami, where their main duty was to make sure no one bothered the wizard—which was extraordinarily easy, as no one else ever visited. They spent more time gambling and drinking than anything else. The few people who actually lived there eventually left, giving Estaban and Paul the run of the place.

A few days ago, though, the wizard suddenly packed up a wagon full of equipment and marched south, eventually stopping at a rocky hill northeast of Xanec. (They can only roughly identify the location, as they got lost returning from the hill.) There he ordered the two grogs to help him don a suit of ornate armor, then to return here to prevent anyone from visiting the oracle. He paid them ten silver denere and promised to rejoin them before dawn, when he would pay them a further ten.

The most important information is the wizard's name. Estaban and Paul always knew him as "Fallemon," and any spell designed to detect falsehood (such as *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie*) shows this to be what the two grogs truly believe. Caeron felt it a wise idea to disguise his identity when he began his quest

## Estaban and Paul

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

**Age:** 24 (Estaban), 23 (Paul)

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 2 (Estaban), 1 (Paul)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Compulsion (Gambling for Estaban, Womanizing for Paul) -1, Social Handicap (Stammer; Paul only) -1

**Personality Traits:** Belligerent +1, Cowardly +1, Loyal -2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawling (fist)	+2	+1	+1	+2	+3
Shortsword	+4	+2	+3	+5	+2

**Soak:** +4

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Brawling 2, Single Weapon 1

**Equipment:** Heavy Leather Hauberk

**Encumbrance:** 1

Estaban originally came from Iberia, and has worked off and on as a mercenary in the Val du

Bosque. He met Paul, a former watchman in the Foix militia, when the two of them were hired by the man they know as Fallemon. They are generally lazy and surly, and will only display bravery when they believe they have an advantage. Otherwise, they run at the first sign of real danger.

**Descriptions:** Estaban is tall and well-muscled, with an aquiline nose and deep brown eyes. Paul is of average height, with thick blond hair and a scruffy beard.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Estaban is Iberian, and speaks with an accent. (If you cannot muster a decent Spanish accent, just be sure to make him speak in a different tone than Paul does.) Paul is distinctly ill-at-ease with authority figures—having been severely punished in the past by his superiors in the Foix watch—and tends to avert his eyes and stammer a bit.

### Quotes:

*Estaban:* "We mean you no harm, good lords and ladies. We were just confused in the night."

*Paul:* "P-p-p-please d-don't hurt us!"



to become the Stormrider, and he saw no reason to let grogs in on his deception.

If Estaban and Paul have survived the combat to answer the group's questions, ask the players what they intend to do with them afterward. Killing them out of hand would be heartless and cruel, and the captive grogs beg pitiably for mercy if they deduce that they are to be executed. Tying them to a tree is more kind, but considering the approaching storm, it is tantamount to torture.

Taking them along is an option, and you actually should not discourage the players from this avenue; later, when you wish to display the awesome power of this living embodiment of the storm's rage, who better for him to visit his wrath upon than his faithless former grogs? The group should not rely upon them as combatants, however, as they will flee at the first opportunity.

In the long run, the most reasonable course might be to set them free, without their weapons, with a stern warning that they should never be seen in these parts again.

## The Oracle

The local oracle is Tomas (toe-MAHSS), a companion from the original *Stormrider* Jump Start Kit. He is only the latest in a series of seers who have taken up the mantle of oracle for Val du Bosque. Tomas has foreseen the return of the Stormrider in his dreams, but he cannot see the face of the man who will be the Stormrider. Due to the unpredictable nature of his visions, Tomas is just as likely to see the past as



the future, and if pressed, he may again see Fallemon becoming the Stormrider, as he did in his visions 23 years ago. (See “The Story of the Stormrider,” page 4.)

During his visions he speaks in a cryptic fashion, but he is quite calm. Interestingly, Caeron visited him several months ago (prior to hiring Estaban and Paul) and consulted him on the subject of air elementals, and the Stormrider’s Steed in particular. But, because Tomas has no memory of what he says during his visions, he has no recollection of what he and Caeron discussed.

- *A little further down the road a number of small stones form a rough cairn. On the flat face of the largest of these stones there is carved an inscription, but it is too dark to make it out clearly. To the left of this is a shadowy footpath, leading toward the hill where the oracle reportedly dwells.* •

If the players are interested, they can provide enough light to make out the writing. In Latin, it reads: “Here abides Truth.” Below, in a different hand, it reads: “If you seek Comfort, you are lost.” Tomas himself carved this last part when he became the oracle ten years ago.

The path to the oracle’s hut atop the hill is narrow, providing room enough for only one person to walk at a time. Although this is not particularly important for this story, as the group will not encounter anyone on the path, you might wish to emphasize the path’s width, and make a show of asking if the players wish the characters to travel in a specific order. This will most likely foster a feeling of paranoia, and make them ever so slightly edgy—which, under the circumstances, is probably a valid emotion for the characters!

- *Atop the hill sits a ramshackle hut that seems to huddle against the driving wind. Irregular gusts of wind whip at the ragged*

*blanket that hangs over the doorway, and dim light can be seen coming from within. The rain is beginning to fall a little harder.* •

This is Tomas’s abode, and he is within, half-dozing as he listens to the rising wind. If the PCs knock or call out, Tomas immediately bids them enter, as he has been expecting them. Only four people—including Tomas—can fit in the hut at one time, though, so the majority of the group has to wait outside in the rain. Even if three of them enter, one has to stand in the doorway itself.

He greets the characters perfunctorily and invites them to sit on several rather aromatic furs piled near the doorway. He sips water from an expensive-looking goblet, then says in a disinterested voice: “Stormrider?” If the characters acknowledge that this is their reason for coming, he adds: “Some of you are going to die at his hands, you know.” He then lays the goblet aside. “Now, what can I tell you?”

At this point, the characters may ask him specific questions about the Stormrider’s return. On questions of general knowledge, Tomas can speak quite conversationally, detailing a bit more about the truth behind the defeat of the original Stormrider. If you have never played the original adventure, refer to “The Original Stormrider Jump Start Kit: A Recap” on page 10.

There will no doubt be rather specific questions about the new Stormrider, and the first time the characters ask one of these, Tomas seems to become highly distracted:

- *Tomas falls silent and gazes thoughtfully off into the distance, as though remembering something. After several long moments have passed, you notice that his lips are moving, and straining your ears over the sound of the wind, you can hear him muttering to himself.* •

Since becoming the oracle of Val du Bosque, Tomas has spent a great deal more time alone than ever before, and has a little more difficulty communicating than he once did. He must be reminded to speak clearly, after which his answers are more readily understandable.

Tomas will answer, in cryptic fashion, only the following questions concerning the Stormrider. Tomas can interpret them if the players are unable to, by rolling his Intelligence + 5 (his Ability in Visions) plus a simple die versus a target number of 12. On a successful roll, he gives them an accurate interpretation; otherwise, he leaves out something. In any event, he must have his visions repeated to him, as he no longer remembers what he says while he is having them. Bear in mind that Tomas can only answer each question once; once he has had a vision, it is gone forever. If asked again, he can only speculate, given his limited knowledge of the outside world.

### Who is the Stormrider?

• "He who rides the tempest forsook the mist, only to struggle with himself, and fail. He sought to conquer the magic of the mountain, only to have it turn on him. Now he is cursed, but his curse is not his doom. His doom is the magic, for it despises him." •

**Interpretation:** The new Stormrider left a home in the mists but failed to prosper on his own. He was cursed as a result of his own powers, but the curse will not kill him.

### Is this the same Stormrider as before?

• "Is this the same storm as yesterday? It is a different wind, a different thunder, but it howls and rumbles the same." •

**Interpretation:** It really does not matter; he is equally dangerous.



## Tomas, the Oracle

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

**Age:** 56

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Virtues & Flaws:** Educated +1, Visions +2

**Personality Traits:** Intense +3, Somber +3

**Weapon/Attack**      Init    Atk    Dfn    Dam    Fat

Brawl (fist)            0     -1    -1    -3    0

**Soak:** +0

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Artes Liberales 3, Brawl 1, Concentration 2, Faerie Lore 3, Intrigue 2, Legend Lore 3, Occult Lore 5, Scribe Latin 4, Speak Latin 5, Speak Provençal 6, Visions 5

**Encumbrance:** 0

Tomas was one of the original group that traveled with Lucienne and Caeron when they finally defeated the original Stormrider. Afterward, he

spent some time studying at Mistridge, but after he had learned everything he could, he left. Some time later, he felt an unmistakable urge to go to the hill of the Val du Bosque oracle, where he discovered that the former oracle had just died. It seemed to him the most natural thing in the world to assume the oracle's mantle, and he has been here ever since.

**Description:** Tomas is a grizzled, lanky old man, dressed in a shabby grey gown and well-worn sandals. His most noticeable feature is his piercing stare.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Tomas has not quite lost the edge on his grim demeanor. He is still exceptionally intense, and whenever he speaks to anyone, he stares at him until someone else speaks to him—at which point he stares at *that* person. He does not do this consciously, and is not really aware that it makes people uncomfortable. (You may want to practice this.)

**Quote:** "I'll tell you how you are going to die, if you really think it will make you feel better."





### Where is the Stormrider?

• “He waits atop the hill for destiny to find him. But he will find it where you find yours: where the fires burn and the eagle falls.” •

**Interpretation:** The Stormrider is waiting atop a hill for his life, but you will find him where he seeks death.

### How can we defeat the Stormrider?

• “Rage is his power, but his revenge will be his undoing. But there will be no justice until there is truth.” •

**Interpretation:** If the Stormrider has his revenge, he will become vulnerable. However it does not mean the mission will be over.

### Has Fallemon returned?

• “Fallemon’s spirit lives on in one who is of this Earth and one who is not.” •

**Interpretation:** There will be more than one villain afoot tonight.

On other subjects Tomas can only offer educated guesses, which, in many cases, are quite close to the truth. For example, Tomas readily points out that the Steed is the source of the Stormrider’s power; separate man from horse, and you have only a man to defeat. If the players seem stumped as to how to proceed, Tomas can also be an excellent plot device to steer them in the right direction. At the very least, he knows how to find the path leading to the hill where the new Stormrider awaits his Steed, and will direct the group toward it. Other than knowledge, though, Tomas can offer little. He is not particularly wealthy, well-equipped, or able-bodied.

While the others are busy with Tomas in the hut, those who are waiting outside should rest to recover lost Fatigue levels, but they may decide to examine the area. Aside from the hut, however, there is little to be found—everything Tomas values is inside the hut, out of the rain.

## Leaving the Oracle

When the group decides that it is time to leave Tomas’s hut, they must travel back down the hill, along the path they came up. However, because the rain is falling a little harder, the path has become slippery.

• The path that leads back to the main road is slick with rainwater, and your very first step on it causes you to slide dangerously. Although it is fifty paces down the hill, if you are not careful it could be a short—and painful—journey. •

Obviously, the players should try to devise a safe way of working their way down the hill. Nearly anything will work, provided they make reasonable preparations. If anyone is foolish enough to attempt to traverse the slippery path without first taking some precautions, have that player make a Dexterity + Climb – Encumbrance roll of 5+, or he loses his footing and slides down the hill. Because the path is so narrow, however, he doesn’t travel very far, and only suffers +5 damage (unless, perhaps, he botched—in which case landing by Tomas’s sign would be a poetic touch).

## The Steed

Once safely at the bottom of the hill, the player characters can travel on without difficulty. While the road is muddy, it is not particularly treacherous, and the group can make fairly good time. Suggest to the players that this travel time might be a good opportunity to discuss what Tomas has told them, or strategies for dealing with the Stormrider. After they have had a little time to talk, however, read this:

•With the storm clouds gathering overhead and the rain falling steadily, the night is cold and nearly pitch-black. On either side of you the tall trees lash wildly in the wind, which blows in your faces as you trudge along the road. When the wind changes directions abruptly, the going becomes easier, but with an icy blast the wind suddenly redoubles from the rear. Startled, you turn to look, and see the horrible figure of a midnight-black stallion charging forward, its flaming hooves setting the muddy ground ablaze. Its gleaming eyes glow like twin lightning bolts. •

The Storm Steed has come upon the group from behind. It charges forward,





attempting to use its wickedly-sharp horns to gore one of the characters. It does not want to kill anyone, merely rouse their interest in slaying the Stormrider.

Ask all of the players what their characters are doing. The apprentices no doubt wish to cast spells or perhaps dive for cover among the undergrowth. The grogs probably wish to strike the Steed, so have anyone who wants to engage in combat roll his Initiative Total. Assume that the Steed has an Initiative Total of 12 for this encounter.

Everyone who rolls higher than 12 can get into a position to attack the Steed, but because it is moving so fast their attacks against it suffer a +3 ease factor adjustment. Characters whose Initiative Totals are 12 or below do not have time to strike blows, but can use missile weapons against it after it has passed (+6 to ease factor). Whichever character the Steed actually attacks can also strike a blow, whether the player rolled higher than 12 or not.

To avoid unnecessarily damaging a character who cannot afford to lose body levels, you should choose which character it attacks—but do not let the players know that! Roll a die and pretend to count off numbers as you look at each player in turn, until you get to the one you have chosen. Le Fort or Bertrand would be good choices, as they have the highest Soak scores of the group.

Take the attacks in order, from the highest Initiative Total until the Steed attacks. After attempting to gore one character, it continues on without stopping, gaining +3 to its Attack and Defense Totals for charging. If the attacked character sets a thrusting weapon to receive the Steed's charge, it simply does not attack him, leaping over his head instead.

The Steed has a high Soak total, so it is unlikely that the characters will be able

to injure it significantly during this fleeting encounter. (If they do, however, do not worry—the Steed will heal itself later.) After the Steed attacks, it passes out of range of melee combat, and can only be attacked with missiles or magic (with a +6 adjustment to the ease factor because of its speed). After one more round of combat, the Steed leaps into the air and flies off into the night. When it is finally out of sight, the flaming hoofprints it left behind extinguish themselves in an instant. You should allow one more round of missile or spell combat (with a +12 adjustment because of range and speed), but then the Steed is too far away to be seen clearly, let alone attacked. After the Steed has departed, the players should check for Fatigue loss.

## The Woman

•You are very nearly at the path Tomas described when you spy a massive bulk lurking at the side of the road. In the darkness

### Perception + Awareness Chart

Roll	Result
3+	The creature is crouched in a ditch beside the road.
6+	The creature appears to be completely motionless.
9+	The creature is actually a wagon, stuck in a ditch.
12+	The wagon is empty; there is not even a draft animal to pull it.
15+	A faint sound of snoring is coming from the wagon.

and pouring rain it is difficult to make out, but it appears to be a large creature of some sort. It does not seem to have noticed your approach. •

This is a wagon which was dragged off the road and into a small ditch when the Storm Steed passed by and the draft-horse pulling the wagon panicked. The only occupant is a man passed out in the back. Ask the players to make Perception + Awareness + quality die rolls and compare their results to the chart on page 26.

Hopefully the characters perceive that the “lurking shape” is only a wagon before they do something drastic. If not, it might be interesting to go through the entire process of asking them to roll their Initiative Totals and attacks before you point out that they are bravely vanquishing a wagon. Do not forget to roll damage—the wagon’s owner will not be too pleased to find that it has been “slain.”

Any noise that is louder than a thunderstorm and a few seconds of combat awakens the snoring man, who comes to long enough to realize he is being rained on, and attempts to sit up and look around. When he does so, however, he loses his balance and tumbles backward, out of the wagon, where he passes out again.

The characters may wish to examine the wagon or help the drunken man. The former is wholly unremarkable, except that the yoke has come loose and is lying a short distance away. The drunken man, if woken, has no recollection of how he got into the wagon, let alone how the wagon came to be in a ditch in the middle of a rainstorm. His last memory—should he remain lucid long enough to impart it—is of drinking with some friends in Xanec. His name is Henri (on-REE).

While the characters are busy with the wagon and its occupant, its driver

returns from retrieving the horse that was pulling it. Her name is Marie (Mah-REE), and in addition to the horse, she has two rather brutish-looking children trailing behind her. (The children bear a striking resemblance to their father—the man in the wagon.) Any character who makes a Perception + Awareness + simple die roll of 9+ notices her before she arrives, but she makes no special effort to remain unseen; she simply does not care that strangers are examining her wagon.

•From further up the road a woman wearing a hooded cloak approaches, leading a horse and two children. She gazes at you with little interest, then finally says, “If you’re brigands I’ve nothing for you, but if you must take something, take that useless lout yonder in the wagon. If you’re not here to loot, then make yourselves useful and help me get this stupid nag yoked again.” •

Anyone who helps her yoke the horse to the wagon should roll for Fatigue loss afterwards, but each additional character helping lowers the ease factor by one.

If asked, she says her name is Marie. These are her two children, André (on-DRAY) and Anna (AH-na), fathered by the drunkard in the wagon. If he is awake, he makes some lewd noises at her, to her obvious disgust. While Marie attempts to get the wagon out of the ditch—with or without the help of the characters, the two children stand glaring at the PCs, apparently oblivious to the heavy rain. Questions about her husband elicit snorts of derision, or the occasional insult. Anyone who takes a close look at her notices that she not only sports a black eye and split lip, but that she has a scar—much older—in the shape of a man’s hand, on the left side of her face. This seems familiar to everyone, but it takes an Intelligence + Val du Bosque Lore or Legend Lore roll of 6+ to remember that





the scarred face was characteristic of the valley's patron saint, Sante Fabía.

If Étienne rolls a 10+ on his Intelligence + Legend Lore, he not only remembers that Sante Fabía is always portrayed as scarred, but that this woman must be the same woman who was injured when the Stormrider was last seen. He also remembers that her betrothed (a squire from Castle d'Uverre) was killed by the Stormrider.

If anyone mentions her scar or the Stormrider, she asks them,

•“So, did you see the demon as well? Is that what brings you out in this foul weather?”•

She explains that while returning from Xanec with her drunken husband (who has been passed out for almost a full day) the Storm Steed swooped down out

of the sky, almost striking her with a flaming hoof. Her horse was so startled it bolted, throwing the wagon into the ditch before it escaped. She left her husband in the back of the wagon (hoping he would “swallow the storm and drown” as she puts it) while she took the two children to find the horse. She was barely startled to see the group around the wagon when she returned. Had they been brigands, she actually hoped that they might have killed Henri.

Marie holds her husband in complete contempt. He beats her regularly, and even the children are no comfort to her; they are both as crude as their father. If Étienne has not already brought up the story, she explains that 23 years ago she was a beautiful young woman, planning to wed a good squire and live in luxury—and in love. Then, on a night like this, the Stormrider came and killed her

## Marie

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

**Age:** 39

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 1

**Virtues & Flaws:**

**Personality Traits:** Bitter +3, Defeated +2

**Reputations:**

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl	-2	-4	-3	0	-2

**Soak:** 1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Encumbrance:** 0

Marie is the daughter of a carpenter from Javielle, near Mount Tierné. Twenty-three years ago, she was attacked by the Stormrider while being courted by Brien Guifre, who died defending her. When the Stormrider struck her in his anger, her beautiful face was permanently scarred. With Brien dead, her father sought to marry her

to any who would have her. Eventually, a wainwright from Siernami, Henri by name, took her as his wife, but proved to be abusive—even when he wasn't drunk. Now, after two loutish children and years of suffering, Marie has given up any dreams she might have had. She blames the Stormrider for all that has befallen her, and fervently wants him to die in great pain.

**Description:** Marie was once blonde, but her hair has turned mostly grey. Her hazel eyes seem haunted, and her expression radiates resignation. The hand-shaped burn scar on her face grows bright red when she is angry.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Marie is extremely bitter about life, and holds no love for either her husband or her children. Whenever she or anyone mentions her husband, she curses and spits in his direction. If her children misbehave, she unhesitatingly screams at them.

**Quote:** “Does it startle you that I am so bitter? With this pig for a husband, how could I be otherwise?”

betrotted, carrying her off. He meant to kill her as well, but spared her at the last moment—but not before permanently scarring her face. After that, no good man would have her, and she was forced to take Henri as her husband, to her lasting regret.

If Étienne hears this story, suggest to his player that Étienne could find himself deeply depressed over the passing of youth and beauty, and the futility of life in general, becoming easily discouraged and unable to concentrate as a result. The player doesn't have to let Étienne grow depressed, but this would be an excellent

time to explore one of his Personality Traits.

Marie expresses curiosity about the group's interest in the Stormrider; do they mean to slay him? She is quite keen on this point, for she feels that the Stormrider has been the source of all her woes these many years. She proclaims,

•“Had I the strength I would run a sword through his black heart myself! I hope you have what it takes to do it for me—that demon spawn should be made to feel half the pain I've felt, first with this brute and then having his children!”•



## Henri

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

**Age:** 44

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 1

**Personality Traits:** Abusive +2, Drunk +2, Violent +2

**Reputations:** Drunken Lout +3

<b>Weapon/Attack</b>	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Brawl	+3	+2	+2	+2	+4

**Soak:** 1

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Brawling 2

**Equipment:** None

**Encumbrance:** 0

Henri's statistics are provided should the players find a way to wake him up and get him more sober. Remember that in Mythic Europe wife-beating was common enough that people didn't question it much unless it resulted in maiming or death. Still, due to Philippe's background with his own abusive father—and what will no doubt be the players' own feelings—the players may feel inclined to inflict some sort of punishment on Henri. While this is not out of line, you might wish to point out that in another light the people

of Val du Bosque might not agree. At the very least, the heroes should refrain from killing Henri.

**Description:** Henri has a dark red nose (commonly referred to as a gin-blossom) and dull, close-set eyes under a heavy brow. He has dark hair and a patchy beard, giving him the impression of being an articulate ape.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Because spousal abuse is such a distasteful subject, you should be sure to adjust how you play Henri, according to the sensibilities of your players. If you feel that they would be seriously offended by his behavior, it is probably best that he doesn't remain conscious long enough to display his bad nature.

Since Henri is not important to this scene, he is portrayed as a stereotypical abusive husband. If awakened, he blinks stupidly at everyone (remember, he has been sleeping for nearly a day) until he catches up with what is going on, then glowers at the group and bellows at his wife. He doesn't hesitate to cuff her or their children, then defend his actions as his right.

**Quote:** “Who are you to tell me my business?”

## Anna and André

No statistics are needed for Anna and André, as they do not even speak, spending their time hiding under the wagon. They glare sullenly at anyone who attempts to speak with them.



If they try to explain that the Stormrider must be defeated with compassion, she laughs derisively at them.

• *“My good Brien tried to treat him fairly! Now he lies rotting in the ground! You’ll meet the same end if you don’t muster the spine to slay this villain with steel and fire! Be kind to yourself and to the rest of us—show him no mercy at all! Drag him down off his horse and cut off his head with a rusty saw!”* •

Marie doesn’t relent until she extracts from the characters a solemn promise to show the Stormrider no mercy, and kill him by any means necessary. If she meets with steadfast resistance, she becomes hysterical; she screams, kicks the wagon, and wildly strikes anyone who attempts

to restrain her. She is no match for the heroes, however, and cannot cause a reasonably sturdy person much harm.

Once the group has either promised to kill the Stormrider—or otherwise pacified Marie—she finishes yoking her horse and drives off.

If the adventurers invite Marie to leave her husband and stay at their covenant, she readily accepts. However, as she is not much of a combatant, she refuses to travel with them when they face the Stormrider.

• *“He’ll recognize me straight-away and kill me; then I’ll never have the satisfaction of knowing he’s dead.”* •

She will, however, make arrangements to meet the characters elsewhere when they are finished.



# Chapter IV

## The Tempest Unleashed



### The Storm Begins

•After perhaps another half an hour you reach the path leading eastward into the forest. The rain suddenly begins to fall in earnest, accompanied by a vicious wind. Bolts of lightning flicker endlessly across the sky, casting garish light as bright as day. Although you are instantly soaked to the skin, the visibility has increased enough to make the going much quicker. •

Traveling the path to the hill takes another half-hour during which the players may wish to discuss what they have learned, or strategies for defeating "Fallemon" before the Storm Steed arrives. They should also be spurred to greater speed, as their best chance to defeat him is before he has gained the power of the Stormrider.

### Finding the Stormrider

•The path widens into a clearing, and before you rises the bulk of a rocky hill, dotted with gnarled oak trees. In flashes of light-

ning you can just make out the head and shoulders of an armored figure at the peak of the hill, near the edge of a high cliff. Grasped in the figure's hand is a stout lance. The ancient and ornate armor could only belong to the Stormrider. There is no sign of the Stormrider's hellish Steed, though, so you may yet have time to defeat him before he becomes invincible. •

The figure at the top of the hill is, of course, Caeron. He cast *Gathering the Stormy Might* on the existing rainstorm in order to attract the Storm Steed. Then Estaban and Paul helped him into his armor and walked him to the crest of the hill, after which he sent them away. He then settled in to await the Steed, but anticipating that he might be attacked before it arrived, he took the time to cast *Lord of the Trees* on an ancient oak further down the hill—using quite a bit of raw vis in the process. (It is not an easy thing to cast spells while wearing armor.) As the tree stands more or less directly in the way of the easiest way up the hill he is reasonably certain he will not be disturbed. He does, however, need to maintain his concentration on the *Lord of the Trees* spell, although he is still free to scan the skies.

Before you do anything else, have all the players make Fatigue tests, due to the rigors of traveling all this distance through the rain and mud. As usual, any-





one who scores less than a 6 loses one Fatigue level.

Knowing where the Stormrider is and being able to attack him are not the same thing. Even with missile weapons, the assault would be tricky, due to the high winds, the range, and the availability of cover. Thus, the players may wish to locate a way up the hill, and as not all of them can scale the cliff-face (the most direct route), they might seek another way.

Because this is a tense moment and time is of the essence, you should stress the need for speed, while at the same time forcing the players to take everything one step at a time. Instead of letting one player say what he wants to do and then resolving it to be followed by the next player stating his desired actions, have *everyone* state their actions first and then resolve them in sequence. That way no-one will get the advantage of hearing the

results of the other players' actions before he has to decide what his own character will attempt. Continue this until the Storm Steed arrives.

## Options

The most obvious things that the heroes will wish to do include finding a way to the hilltop, climbing the hill, firing missiles, and casting spells.

**Finding a way to the hilltop:** The easiest way up is not very obvious, so anyone searching should make a Perception + Survival + simple die roll of 6+ to find the way. If Le Fort, Bertrand, or Claude have chosen to do something else, you should inform them that they are the members of the group best suited to finding trails. Each attempt at this takes two combat rounds, as finding the direct route involves carefully looking over the lay of the land and trying various paths.

If the searchers find the trail, read the following:

- A rocky path of sorts leads up past a twisted oak to where the Stormrider stands, eagerly watching the Steed's approach. The way up is rough but certainly easier than climbing straight up the cliff, and you might be able to catch the Stormrider unawares if you hurry. •

This path leads to "The Tree Lord" on page 33.

**Climbing the hill:** Using the easy route takes (Climb skill – Quickness – Encumbrance) rounds to ascend the hill. The climber must make a Fatigue test, but this test can be avoided by taking an extra round to climb. Scaling the cliff-face itself takes twice as long as using the easy route (but the climber doesn't have to spend time looking for the trail), with

## Sequence of Events

The action at this point may be confusing, and an inexperienced storyguide might become a little lost. Here is the sequence of events, although the players' actions might alter it.

1. The PCs arrive at the bottom of the cliff and the storyguide reads: "The path widens into a clearing..."
2. They begin executing their chosen actions. (See "Options".)
3. After they have had four combat rounds worth of action, the Storm Steed arrives in the air above the hilltop and the storyguide reads: "Where the storm clouds roil the most..." Any player characters who have reached the hilltop by this time will encounter Caeron's animated tree ("As you draw near the oak...").
4. After one more round of PC activity, the Storm Steed begins descending toward the hilltop and the storyguide reads: "The Steed suddenly plunges downward..."
5. After two more rounds of PC activity, the Storm Steed reaches the hilltop, Caeron becomes the Stormrider, and the storyguide reads: "With a burst of fire..."

# Background Briefing

It is the Year of Our Lord 1220, and the world is a wondrous place, filled with brave heroes and fell beasts, great deeds and vile treachery. Men perform acts of faith and heresy, and miracles are as common as magic.

And magic is very real. Faeries walk the forests and the fields, dragons lie sleeping in time-lost lairs, and wizards study sorcery in arcane laboratories.

Wizards also train apprentices and hire guards, and you are these people. Many of the most powerful wizards of Mythic Europe are members of the Order of Hermes, devoted to furthering magical knowledge. The wizards of your covenant—a place where wizards dwell—selected two of their best apprentices and sent them forth with a complement of guards—or “grogg”—to visit another covenant, called Mistridge. Your own covenant is still very new (a “Spring” covenant—Mistridge is a “Summer” covenant), and while rich in raw vis (the physical essence of raw magic), it lacks the texts and manuals needed for it to grow and learn. Mistridge has proposed a trade: vis for books.

The covenant of Mistridge is a tower located on the western slope of Mount Tierné (teer-NAY) in southern France. You are only a day’s travel from your goal, and aside from some frayed nerves within the group, nothing untoward has happened. As night falls, you approach the village of Siernami, where you hope to find lodgings for the night.

## Val du Bosque

Val du Bosque (VALL-due-BOSK; “Valley of the Woods”) is a magical place, although with the growing power of the Holy Church, the magic dwindles. It is the domain of Baron d’Uverre, who dwells in a small castle in the center of the valley. He commands many vassals, who dwell throughout the area. The valley is also the site of the Monastery of San Blas (SONN BLAH) and the Convent of Sante Fabía (SONT-uh FAH-bee-uh), who is the patron saint of healing, as well as of Val du Bosque itself. Sante Fabía was a holy woman who lived in the valley over a hundred years ago, before she was slain by the monstrous Stormrider.

The Stormrider was the most infamous denizen of Val du Bosque. Legend has it that he was a man who made an unholy pact with diabolical forces to gain immeasurable power and eternal life, and in his madness he vented his awesome rage upon the valley whenever the storm clouds gathered over Mount Tierné. The Stormrider was vanquished over twenty years ago, but the peasants still tell tales of his return, to frighten their children. Most claim not to believe such tales, but they are often the first to make the sign of the Cross when they hear the distant sound of thunder....

## The Characters

These are the characters who might make up your group:

**Fabienne** (fa-beeEN): A member of House Jerbiton (YARE-bih-tahn), which is comprised of wizards who seek to bring the Order of Hermes and mundane folk closer together. Fabienne is adept at earth-magic—shaping, building, and destroying the rock and soil of the world. She is the leader of this expedition—although she is very unsure of herself.

**Bertrand** (BARE-trund): The leader of the grogg. Although a trusted shield-grog, Bertrand is growing old, and sometimes needs the help of his son, Armand—Le Fort—to make sure things gets done.

**Le Fort** (luh-FOR): Bertrand’s son, he will replace his father one day as grogg-sergeant. His strength is great, and he will be a good leader—but his anger is fearsome to behold.

**Claude** (CLODE): Originally from another covenant, Claude bears horrible scars on his face and head from intervening in a magical duel between two wizards. Rumor has it he left that other covenant because they suspected him of later killing one of the magi involved.

**Philipe** (fi-LEEP): Although Fabienne’s junior, Philipe is just as learned an apprentice magus. A member of House Tyalus (TEU-tah-loos), Philipe believes in the superiority of logic, and constantly probes people to learn the motives behind their actions. His efforts to help people solve their problems are perhaps well-intentioned, but hardly ever well-received.

**Étienne** (eh-teeEN): Étienne is a traveling minstrel who has been living at the covenant for a time. He entertains the

wizards, and motivates the grogg, but his music can do far more when he wants it to. Like all minstrels, he can be a bit too melancholy for his own good.

**Guillaume** (gee-YAWM): Guillaume is the son of Sir Tarbil (TAR-bill), a vassal of Baron d’Uverre. Although he is a knight, Guillaume has joined the ranks of the grogg for his own reasons, but he never lets anyone forget his noble birth.

**Gloria** (GLO-ree-uh): A shepherdess from Iberia, Gloria is an excellent archer, and has a cold-blooded attitude toward killing. When she stares at someone, he can almost feel her aiming.

Remember as you play that these characters, just like real people, are flexible. The information on the character sheet is what they are normally like, but that does not mean that Philipe is never emotional, or that Guillaume never retreats from a fight. And each character’s attitudes may change during the course of the game; Fabienne may find an inner strength, or Bertrand may decide that Le Fort would not make such a good grogg-sergeant, after all.

## Standard Equipment

Every grogg is expected to carry a full pack when on expeditions. Their packs each contain twenty feet of rope, four days of supplies for one person, a blanket, and a wooden bowl and spoon. The apprentices carry their own spoons, bowls and so forth, but not heavier gear.

## Special Equipment

The master magi of your covenant have entrusted the apprentices with four pawns of raw vis: one of Perdo (a small, heavily-corroded dagger), one of Terram (a lump of clay that when held forms itself into a shape representative of the bearer’s emotional state), and two of Corpus (a vial of glowing blood). Decide before you begin play who carries these and how they will be carried—they should be easily accessible in case they are needed for spellcasting, and some magi wear sources of vis prominently displayed so that other wizards can see that they have vis to use in response to attacks.

# The Tale of the Stormrider

Over a hundred years ago, a great knight lived in Val du Bosque. His name was Sir Fallemon, and he was the son of Baron d'Uverre, who dwelled in a mighty castle on the banks of the river Vreis.

But Sir Fallemon had taken a vow to live alone until a woman loved him for his own deeds, and not his heritage. When he met a local peasant girl named Fabía, he thought he had found her. He loved her with all his heart, and prayed that she would return his love.

But Fabía had devoted her life to the service of the Lord, and Fallemon was so stricken when she would not wed him that he set out to climb the slopes of Mount Tierné and live the life of a hermit.

Once there, he was set upon by a horrible demon that took the form of a flaming horse. It bested him, and bound his soul to its own dark purposes. It stained his armor a foul black color, and took the lightning out of the sky, binding it into his lance. Good Sir Fallemon was gone, and in his place was the evil Stormrider.

The demon Steed filled him with a mighty rage, and the Stormrider charged down from the mountain, destroying village after village as the heavens raged above him. When the storm finally abated, the Stormrider retreated to the peak of

Mount Tierné, leaving a trail of death and destruction behind him.

For five-score years the Stormrider preyed upon the good people of Val du Bosque. He slew fair Fabía, who became Sante Fabía, the patron saint of this valley. His own brother and father met their deaths on his sword, but Sante Fabía touched them with three roses and resurrected them. Prevented from venting his rage on his own family, he instead preyed upon their descendants.

The Stormrider's reign would have continued unabated save that two heroes came forward to vanquish him once and for all. They were Clobi the Strong, whose axe could split full-grown trees with one stroke, and Torlen the Ancient, who hurled javelins that never missed their mark. Aided by Brother Caeron and Sister Lucienne, holy hermits from an abbey on the slopes of Mount Tierné itself, they drove off the demon Steed, freeing Sir Fallemon from its curse. By now an old man, and no longer sustained by the demonic power of the unholy horse, Sir Fallemon called upon Sante Fabía to take him up into Heaven, where God gave him back his youthful demeanor, and put him upon a winged white steed that rides the clouds, so that good Sir Fallemon could guard against the return of the demon-beast.

# Basic Briefing

## Character Types

**Ars Magica** allows you to play three different types of characters: magi (or wizards), grogs (usually men-at-arms), and companions (covering nearly every other type of character). Most **Ars Magica** games revolve around the magi, who wield potent magics and are individually mightier than nearly any single non-magical person or creature. Becoming so powerful is a learning process, though, and the wizards in this story are only apprentice magi—albeit very near the end of their apprenticeships.

Most grogs are mercenaries. They are paid to fight for and guard the magi, and they have sworn to die in the line of duty, if necessary. Their lives are brutal and often short, but never boring.

Companions are socially more important than grogs, but in the covenant, less important than magi. They are very necessary to the covenant, however, as they supply the kind of specialized skills that grogs do not have, and magi do not have time for. Most companion characters do not *have* to take orders from the magi. Some, however, *choose* to take orders from grogs.

## Characteristics

Characteristics describe the untrained potential of your character, including how strong, intelligent, impressive, and quick he is. An average Characteristic score is 0; positive scores indicate

higher-than-average ability, while negative scores indicate below-average ability. Characteristic scores normally range from -3 to +3, although exceptional individuals or beasts have scores beyond this range.

When you make certain rolls the relevant Characteristic is added to the roll. For instance, if Étienne attempts to calm someone down he adds his Communication score of +2. If Sir Guillaume attempts the same thing his -1 in Communication is a penalty to the roll.

The eight Characteristics and the attributes to which they relate are:

- **Intelligence (Int):** Memory and the capacity to learn and think.
- **Perception (Per):** Intuition and the ability to notice things.
- **Strength (Str):** Muscle power.
- **Stamina (Stm):** Toughness and endurance (both mental and physical).
- **Presence (Pre):** Appearance, demeanor, and charisma.
- **Communication (Com):** The aptitude for self-expression.
- **Dexterity (Dex):** Hand-eye coordination, fine motor control, and bodily grace.
- **Quickness (Qik):** Reaction speed, reflexes, and how well the character can do something in a hurry.

## Virtues & Flaws

Virtues and Flaws set your character apart from other characters, by defining how your character is qualitatively different. Because they can be so important to play, you should take some time to familiarize yourself with your character's Virtues and Flaws. If any effects of Virtues and Flaws apply to his statistics, they have generally already been added in.

## Dice Rolling

All dice rolls in **Ars Magica** use a single ten-sided die. Because some situations are different than others, there are three ways to use the dice.

A **simple die** roll is made when a character is doing something simple in which there is little variability in the results and little likelihood of spectacular success or failure, such as lifting a heavy object. Read the numbers on the die as 1-10; a 0 counts as a 10.

A **quality die** roll is made when the character can succeed wildly, but devastating failure is not possible—perception rolls, for example. The numbers 2 through 10 are read normally. If a 1 is rolled, roll the die again, doubling whatever number comes up. If a second 1 comes up, reroll and quadruple the result; a third 1 means multiply the result by 8; and so on.

A **stress die** roll is made when disastrous failures and spectacular successes are both possible, usually

when the character is under stress. If you roll a 1 on a stress die, roll again and double the result, as with a quality die roll (a 0 counting as a 10 in this context). If you initially roll a 0 on a stress die, it counts as a 0, not a 10, and you must roll a botch die; if you roll another 0, you botch and something very bad happens. In particularly stressful situations, the storyguide might ask you to roll multiple botch dice, with multiple 0's increasing the severity of the failure. (Note that any other result but a 0 on a botch die is disregarded.)

For all of these die rolls, once you have rolled the die, you add the Characteristic and Ability (learned and practiced skills) required for the skill attempt, plus any appropriate modifiers. If this total is greater than an ease factor set by the storyguide, the attempt succeeds. If a character has particularly high Characteristic and Ability scores his total may exceed the ease factor before a die is rolled, but the roll must still be made to determine the degree of success and because a botched roll is always a failure, no matter how high the total score would have been.

## Specialties

Your character's Abilities often have descriptive words associated with them, such as "Concentration 2 (while aiming)." These describe circumstances in which he is especially capable—whenever such a listed specialty applies, you gain a +1 bonus on the die roll to accomplish the task.

Specialties are also listed for Characteristics, but these are

only descriptive; they should help you visualize your character, but have no mechanical effect on die rolls.

## Confidence

Confidence represents a character's faith in himself, coolness under fire, determination to do his best, and command over his full potential. It is measured in Confidence points; most people in Mythic Europe have one point while most player characters begin the game with three.

When your character is making a stress roll, you may declare that you are going to use Confidence to help ensure success. For every point you expend on the roll, you receive a +1 bonus. If you succeed, no points are lost, but if you fail the points are lost, to be regained only after a week or two or when the character succeeds at some vitally important task without using Confidence.

If you use Confidence and your total score to perform the action comes out to exactly what was needed, immediately make a simple roll. If this roll exceeds the character's Confidence total (including any points temporarily lost), he permanently gains one point of Confidence.

If you botch a roll while using Confidence the character loses one Confidence point permanently. You cannot lose your last point in this way—only suffering extended dehumanizing treatment, such as slavery or torture, or experiencing something that destroys a character's will to live, such as losing his true love, will drop one's Confidence to 0.

## Personality

Each character has Personality Traits that describe his inclinations and predilections. A positive number indicates a higher-than-average level in that trait, and a negative number indicates limited expression of that trait. So Le Fort's Brave score of +3 means he is extremely courageous, while Gloria's -2 Kind indicates that she is hard-hearted. Scores usually range from -3 to +3. While a character doesn't have to slavishly adhere to his Personality Traits, under ordinary circumstances you should use them as a guideline for how to roleplay him.

## Size

An average adult human is Size 0, and nearly all humans fall within a -1 to +1 range. Generally, only animals and fantastic creatures exceed this range.

## Encumbrance

Carrying too much equipment can slow a person down, and this is represented by the statistic Encumbrance (Enc). Encumbrance is applied as a penalty to roll requiring free fast movement, including spellcasting and nearly all Quickness rolls. A character's Encumbrance is determined by adding the total Load values of all his equipment (always a negative number) to a character's Strength. Encumbrance can never be higher than 0, nor can a character carrying no Load have a negative Encumbrance score, no matter how low his Strength.

# Combat Briefing

Although combat covers a wide range of possible situations and maneuvers, describing them all is beyond the scope of this Jump Start Kit. If the storyguide does not have the *Ars Magica* rulebook, he will have to improvise rules for whatever novel situations come up.

## Combat Ratings and Rolls

Six calculated scores (plus Encumbrance) are used in *Ars Magica* combat, and have already been included on your character sheets.

**Initiative (Init):** Your character's ability to maneuver quickly and tactically on the battlefield. As some weapons are faster than others, a character can have a higher Init when using certain of his weapons.

**Attack (Atk):** Your character's ability to connect with a given weapon.

**Defense (Dfn or Def):** Your character's ability to avoid incoming attacks through defensive postures and blocks. Missile weapons cannot be used in this way for defense; characters holding missile weapons use their Brawling skills in defense.

**Damage (Dam):** This score indicates how much harm you inflict when you connect with the weapon.

**Soak:** This score reflects the amount of physical punishment a character can sustain before being genuinely hurt. The score is derived largely from the character's armor protection.

**Combat Fatigue (Fat):** Strenuous activity (including combat) carries with it the risk of exhaustion, and this score represents a character's ability to resist collapse while fighting.

## Resolving Combat

Time in combat is measured in rounds, and each round consists of six phases: Movement, First Missile, Melee, Second Missile, Magic, and Fatigue.

### 1. Movement

Each player declares what actions his character will perform in the round, including any necessary movement. If he plans to fight, he states whom he intends to engage in combat, at what range (Touch, Reach, Close, Near, Middle, or Far), and with what weapon.

After declarations are made, each combatant rolls a stress die + Initiative score (using the Init modifier for the weapon he's wielding, plus any other appropriate modifiers); this is his Initiative Total. Movement is then resolved in order of Initiative Totals from highest to lowest. If there is a conflict (for example, two characters wanting to occupy the same position, or one character attempting to engage an unwilling opponent) the character with the highest Initiative Total prevails. If one character declares intent to engage another, the character with the higher Initiative Total not only prevails, but he gets the difference between the Initiative Totals as a bonus to add to his Attack Total or Defense Total this round.

### 2. First Missiles

There are two missile phases per round, and which phase(s) a character fires in depends on his Initiative Total, as reflected in the Missile Rate Table.

This table assumes that the character is doing nothing between actual shots but reloading and prepping his weapon; if he moves to a new location or changes weapons after firing, he must begin counting rounds anew.

To hit with a missile weapon, the player rolls a stress die + Attack score. If this exceeds the ease factor set by the storyguide (generally 6 or more), the attack is a success. The character hit loses one Body level for every five full points by which the attacker's Damage Total exceeds the victim's Soak. The Damage Total is the weapon's Damage score plus the amount by which the missile's Attack Total exceeded the ease factor.

Firing into a melee is a risky proposition—+3 is added to the shooting ease factor and if this causes the attack to miss (but it would have hit without that modifier), then a friend of the character is hit instead of an enemy.

### 3. Melee

During this phase, hand to hand combat is resolved. During each round the combatants are assumed to conduct a number of swings, parries, and other maneuvers and the rolls made sum up all of the actions taken during the round.

Each engaged party must use the weapons he declared during the movement phase with two exceptions. First, a character may opt to use Brawling to defend himself against an opponent that he declared the intent to engage, no matter what range the two wound up at. Second, if a character finds himself at Touch range after declaring the intent to engage at a greater range, he may use Brawling to attack provided he has either a free hand or a brawlcapable weapon in hand.

When two combatants are engaged, each rolls his Attack Total (stress die + Attack score); the same stress die result is added to his Defense score to give the Defense Total. After applying any modifiers, if a combatant's Attack Total is higher than his opponent's Defense Total, the difference between the two may be applied to a hit this round or to an advantage bonus to be applied to the next round's Attack or Defense Total.

If the difference is applied to a hit, it is added to the attacker's Damage score to

## Missile Rate Table

Initiative	First Missile?	Second Missile?
-20 or less	Every third round	Never
-19 to -10	Every other round	Never
-9 to 0	Every round	Never
+1 to +10	Every round	Every other round
+11 or more	Every round	Every round

become the Damage Total. The character hit loses one Body level for every five full points by which the attacker's Damage Total exceeds the victim's Soak. The character with the highest Initiative Total deals damage first, and could conceivably kill or incapacitate his opponent before the opponent has a chance to strike back.

#### 4. Second Missiles

This missile phase is resolved just like First Missiles.

#### 5. Magic

During this phase all spontaneous spells are cast and resolved, and then all formulaic spells are cast and resolved. If a magus wishes to interrupt an action in any phase before the Magic phase with a spell, he must fast-cast (see the Magic Summary).

If it's important to know which magus can cast a spell first (and both spells are formulaic or both are spontaneous), compare Quickness + Finesse + Encumbrance; the caster with the higher score gets his spell off first.

#### 6. Fatigue

At the end of each round of combat, any combatant who engaged an enemy in hand to hand combat must roll a stress die and add it to his Combat Fatigue score. Wound penalties apply to this roll. If the total doesn't beat an ease factor of 6 (possibly modified by the storyguide), the character loses a Fatigue level. Fatigue levels can also be lost by engaging in other strenuous activities.

Each Fatigue level above Winded has a penalty associated with it (except for Unconscious, which is its penalty), as shown on the Fatigue Chart. This penalty

### Fatigue Chart

Fatigue Level	Penalty	Time to recover to next lower level
Winded	0	2 minutes
Weary	-1	10 minutes
Tired	-3	30 minutes
Dazed	-5	60 minutes
Unconscious	—	2 hours

is applied to all rolls, including further fatigue tests. These penalties are cumulative with those from lost Body levels.

### Recovering From Fatigue

Recovering Fatigue levels is a matter of time. When your character rests, he recovers lost Fatigue, starting at the lowest level. Thus, a character who is Tired can rest and recover back to Weary, then Winded. If the character was fatigued by short-duration exertions, such as combat, recovery time for each level is shown on the Fatigue Chart. For any Fatigue levels lost through long-term exertion (such as running a long distance, or fighting back sleep for an entire evening), the character can recover only with a good meal and a good night's sleep.

### Wounds

Physical damage is recorded in Body levels. Characters begin at the Unhurt level but as they become more wounded, penalties begin to apply. Individuals at the Hurt level suffer no penalty. Those with Light Wounds suffer -1 to all rolls,

Medium Wounds -3, and Heavy Wounds -5. These penalties are cumulative with those from lost Fatigue levels. At Incapacitated level, the character is incapable of taking any action at all. A character who is wounded beyond Incapacitated is dead, or at best, inevitably dying.

Recovering from slight wounds requires only rest and natural healing—a Hurt character automatically recovers to Unhurt in one day. More serious wounds require lengthy rest and specialized care. Severely wounded characters are unlikely to recover during the course of this story without magical assistance—the rules below are provided in the event that the storyguide wants to continue the saga past this adventure.

The Wound Recovery Chart indicates the progress of a character's healing. Roll Stamina + Chirurgy (or Medicine) on a stress die, and look up the total in the appropriate column. Cross-index this with the current state of the wounded character to determine the number of days required to recover one Body level. The same roll determines how long the next level will take to heal, and so on. On a botch, the character recovers at the slowest rate for that Body level and a catastrophe occurs.

An Incapacitated character might never recover. His player must make two Stamina stress rolls each day (at sunrise and sunset) that the character remains at this level. On a roll of 0 or less, the character dies. A roll of 9+ improves the Body level to Heavy Wounds, and recovery proceeds normally. Any other roll means a somewhat worsened condition, and all subsequent recovery rolls are made at a cumulative -1 penalty until the character either recovers a Body level or dies.

Certain Creo Corpus spells also aid recovery, however, they do not have a permanent effect unless raw vis is used. A character does not recover at all while temporarily healed through magic, but can recuperate normally after permanent healing.

### Wound Recovery Chart

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

Numbers indicate the number of days required to heal to the next lower level. If the result is an X, a catastrophe has occurred.

# Magic Briefing

**A**rs Magica's magic system allows for specific, controlled effects, as well as more random results, but describing the entire system isn't necessary for this story. The basic rules presented below should be more than sufficient to play *The Return of the Stormrider*.

## Magic Arts

The various aspects of Hermetic magic are classified into fifteen magical **Arts**. The five **Techniques** govern what magic can do; the ten **Forms** describe what magic affects.

### Techniques

- **Creo (Cr)**: "I create" (pronounced KRAY-oh).
- **Intéllego (In)**: "I perceive" (pronounced in-TELL-eh-goh).
- **Muto (Mu)**: "I change" (pronounced MOO-toh).
- **Perdo (Pe)**: "I destroy" (pronounced PARE-doh).
- **Rego (Re)**: "I control" (pronounced RAY-goh).

### Forms

- **Animál (An)**: "Animal" (pronounced ah-nee-MAHL).
- **Aquam (Aq)**: "Water" (pronounced AH-kwum).
- **Auram (Au)**: "Air" (pronounced OWR-um).
- **Corpus (Co)**: "Body" (pronounced KOR-poos).
- **Herbam (He)**: "Plant"

(pronounced HARE-bahm).

- **Ignem (Ig)**: "Fire" (pronounced EEG-num).
- **Imáginem (Im)**: "Image" (pronounced ee-MAH-gih-num).
- **Mentem (Me)**: "Mind" (pronounced MEN-tum).
- **Terram (Te)**: "Earth" (pronounced TARE-um).
- **Vim (Vi)**: "Power" (pronounced WEEM).

You combine one Technique and one Form to cast a spell, and together their names indicate the spell's general function: a Muto Terram spell transforms earth in some way while a Perdo Ignem spell destroys some aspect (such as light or heat) of flame.

Every magus has a score in each Art, representing his aptitude for working with each type of magic. The Arts are ultimately the way a magus' body expresses magical energy, and his score in a Form helps him resist spells of that type and avoid harm from mundane sources related to that Form. For instance, a character's Ignem (fire) score gives him a bonus to resist damage from fire and cold. (See Magic Resistance below.)

## Formulaic Spells

The formulaic spells Fabienne and Philippe have studied are listed on their character sheets. They may cast any of these spells whenever they want,

and each spell's level shows how difficult it is to cast.

To cast a formulaic spell the character recites magic words and executes arcane hand gestures memorized as part of the spell. The player adds a die roll and the wizard's casting bonus (listed in the spell description). If the total exceeds the spell's level, the spell has been successfully cast. If the roll is equal to or less than the spell's level but within 10 of the level, it is successfully cast, but the caster loses one Fatigue level. If the roll is lower than that, the spell fails and the caster loses one Fatigue level.

Certain spells indicate in their description that they must be targeted; see Targeting. Other spells can be resisted; see Magic Resistance.

## Spontaneous Spells

A more flexible but less powerful method of casting spells is called spontaneous magic, in which a magus can do almost anything by inventing a spell on the spur of the moment. The player describes the desired effect, and he and the storyguide decide which Technique and Form are appropriate.

If the character exerts himself (expending a Fatigue level), the spell will be much more effective. If not, the spell is less powerful, but also less tiring. The player must decide whether to spend the Fatigue level before casting the spell.



The player then rolls a die (a stress die if there could be an immediate harmful result if he doesn't cast the spell or if he chose to expend a Fatigue level, a simple die otherwise), adding the character's Technique + Form + Intelligence + Encumbrance. If the character spent a Fatigue level, divide the total by 2; divide by 5 if not. The result is the level of the spell cast. The storyguide can refer to the Spells chapter of the *Ars Magica* rulebook to determine how effective the spell is, or he can use other spells in *The Return of the Stormrider* as a guide.

If the magus has a formulaic spell in his repertoire that produces effects similar to those desired of the spontaneous spell, he can get a bonus on his spontaneous spell roll by spending one full minute contemplating the similarities between the effects of the two spells. The bonus is equal to one-fifth of the level of the similar spell. If the caster is disturbed during this contemplation, he must make an Intelligence + Concentration stress roll of 6+ or lose his concentration.

In order to be considered similar, the formulaic spell can only differ from the spontaneous spell in a single limited way, such as having a different range, duration, or target, a different spell focus, or a different type of target (such as people instead of animals).

## Fast-Cast Spells

If a character is daring or desperate, he can gather the

energies to cast a spontaneous spell and expend them immediately, before the normal precautions are taken to control it. Such fast-cast spells can be used to defend against an incoming attack or spell, to react to a sudden mishap, or to provide magical protection against attacks that neither natural resistance or magic resistance can defend against.

There are three steps to determine the success of a fast-cast spell: compare speed, roll for casting, and determine spell potency.

First, compare the fast-caster's Quickness + Finesse + Encumbrance + a stress die to the Quickness + Finesse + Encumbrance + stress die of another spell caster, to the Initiative Totals of those attacking the caster physically, or to an ease factor set by the storyguide. If the opponent's total is higher, his spell or attack occurs before the fast-caster can cast his spell.

Second, roll for a normal spontaneous spell, but subtract 5 before dividing the roll. If a 0 is rolled when fast-casting, the player must roll three extra botch dice.

Finally, determine the effectiveness of the spell. If the fast-cast total equals or exceeds half the attacking spell's penetration (see Magic Resistance), the attacking spell is completely warded off; otherwise, the spell penetrates unhindered. If defending against a mundane attack, a spell total of 10 wards off a single attack, 15 deflects up to three known attacks, 20 protects against any number of

known attacks, and 25 protects the caster from all attacks, assuming that the spell is appropriate to the attack forms (such as *Rego Herbam* to deflect wooden arrow-shafts, or *Rego Terram* for metal axe-heads).

If the attacking magus is clearly visible or audible when casting his spells, the fast-casting wizard can automatically determine the attacking spell's Technique and Form (the better to ward against it). If conditions don't permit him to perceive or interpret the words and gestures, he must make an Awareness roll of 9+ (adding his Magic Theory score if the spell is Hermetic) in order to recognize the Technique and Form.

## Targeting

Some spells must be aimed as though they were missile weapons. Each such spell lists a Targeting total. The magus casting the spell must roll a die and add his Targeting total; if the roll meets or exceeds an ease factor determined by the storyguide, the target is struck.

If the target is missed, the spell still takes effect, but in a different location. The storyguide determines where the spell takes effect and what consequences this has based on how much the roll was missed by—the results of a botched roll can be horrible.

## Magic Resistance

Some spells can be resisted by mundane creatures using natural resistance. The descriptions of such spells outline how they

can be resisted. Most spells can only be resisted magically (if at all).

Magic resistance can come from a number of sources: from innate magical nature, holy blessings, a wizard's Parma Magica, or from his knowledge of a Hermetic Form. A character with magic resistance can only use it against spells that affect him directly or through a magically-formed medium (such as a magically-created lightning bolt)—if the spell only affects the magus indirectly (such as pelting him with normal rocks magically dislodged from a cliff-face, or letting him experience an illusion-altered environment) it cannot be resisted.

To resist a spell, the character rolls a stress die, adding his Might (a statistic describing non-human creatures, such as faeries), his Parma Magica, and his score in the Form of magic that is affecting him. If this total exceeds the roll of the attacking spell, it is resisted. There are occasionally modifiers to these compared numbers (for example, an Ability called Penetration can increase the odds of a spell getting through an opponent's resistance).

A target's magic resistance only covers himself and anything he wears or holds close in his hands. Magic resistance is automatic for characters who possess it—in order not to resist a spell cast by someone else, a magus must concentrate on suppressing his Form bonus and Parma Magica.

## Parma Magica

Almost all Hermetic wizards learn a magical ritual called the Parma Magica (Shield of Magic). This ritual is generally performed at dawn and dusk, and lasts until the sun rises or sets—whichever comes first. As long as the Parma Magica is in effect, the character has an effective magic resistance of 5 times his Parma Magica Ability.

## Raw Vis

Raw magic power, known as vis, is found stored in a number of physical substances, and can be used in a variety of ways by magi. It is most valuable to wizards because they can use it to expand their knowledge of magic, but it can also be used to strengthen a spell, make a spell permanent, or create a magical enchantment.

Vis comes in a form associated with the various Arts; thus, there is Creo vis, Imáginem vis, and so on, usually found in matter appropriate to the Art (such as Animál vis in the horns of magical creatures). When raw vis is used its power is permanently lost and the substance in which it was contained degrades in some appropriate manner (a rock crumbling, for instance).

Vis used in spell casting must be the same Form or Technique as the spell being cast, and the caster must be touching the substance in which the raw vis is contained in order to use its power. The magus must declare before casting the spell how many pawns of vis he will use, and he is limited in the amount

he can use—he cannot spend more pawns of a given type of vis than he has score in that Art.

When using vis to increase a spell roll, add +5 to the roll for every pawn of vis expended. When casting spontaneous spells, this bonus is added before the roll is divided. If the vis is used to increase the range or duration of a formulaic spell (to the amount listed after the slash in the description), one pawn is expended per 5 levels of the spell or fraction thereof—to extend both range and duration, vis must be expended for each.

Using raw vis when casting spells is always tricky—a stress die is always rolled, and if a 0 is rolled, one extra botch die is rolled per pawn of vis expended.

## Spellcasting Terms

In the summary below, two ranges, durations, or targets separated by a slash are considered the same “level” of difficulty. In the spell descriptions above, if a spell has two ranges, durations, or targets separated by a slash, the second duration takes place only when you use “boost” the spell with raw vis, one pawn of vis per 5 levels of the spell.

### Ranges

**Personal:** The effect of the spell is centered on the casting magus. The amount affected depends on the spell.

**Touch/Eye:** *Touch:* The magus or anything he touches, whether a person or a thing. *Eye:* The magus may target any person or creature with which he has established eye contact.

**Reach:** Anything that the magus could touch (but is not necessarily touching) without moving substantially. Anything within roughly two paces.

**Near:** Anything within fifteen paces of the magus.

**Far:** Anything within a hundred paces of the magus.

**Sight:** Anything that the magus can see.

**Arcane Connection:** Anything that the magus has an arcane connection to. Distance is immaterial unless the storyguide decides to impose some limit. Note that the Arcane Connection range is different from a physical item that is an arcane connection; some spells require an arcane connection but must be cast at some other range.

### Durations

**Momentary:** The spell lasts but a moment and then dissipates. Any effect that it has remains, however.

**Concentration/Diameter:**  
*Concentration:* The spell lasts as long as the caster concentrates on it. When distracted, or when you attempt to do something else in addition to concentrating, you need to make a stress roll of Intelligence + Concentration against an ease factor determined by the storyguide to maintain the spell.  
*Diameter:* The spell lasts for the time that the sun takes to move its diameter in the sky—almost exactly two minutes.

**Sun:** The spell lasts until the sun next rises or sets.

**Ring/Moon:** *Ring:* The spell lasts until its target moves out-

side a ring drawn at the time of casting, or until the ring is physically broken. *Moon:* The spell lasts until both the new and full moon have been in the sky.

**Season:** The spell lasts until the next solstice or equinox after its casting.

**Year:** The spell lasts until the fourth equinox or solstice after its casting.

**Permanent/Instant:**  
*Permanent:* The spell lasts forever, but remains forever magical. Thus, it could be dispelled at some point in the future. *Instant:* The spell effect persists forever as a mundane thing. It cannot be magically dispelled, although it can be destroyed by any method which would destroy the mundane thing that it is.

### Targets

**Small:** Affects a small item; something a person of average strength could comfortably hold or carry with both hands.

**Individual:** The spell can affect a single discrete thing, such as one person or one object. A huge boulder is a discrete object, a mountain is not (because it is joined to the ground).

**Group/Room:** *Group:* This spell can affect a small group of people or things. There should be no more than about a dozen things, and they must be an obvious and discrete grouping. *Room:* The spell affects a chamber and every-one or -thing within it. This room can be very large, but it must be enclosed and have definite boundaries.

**Circle/Structure:** *Circle:* The spell affects everything

within a ring drawn by the magus at the time of casting, and ends if the circle is broken, irrespective of the nominal duration of the spell. *Structure:* The spell affects a single structure and everything within it. The structure can range in size from a hut to a castle, but it must be a single, linked edifice.

**Boundary:** The spell affects everything within a well-defined natural or man-made boundary. The magus must be able to see most of the bounded area unless the spell is being cast at Arcane Connection range.

**Sight:** The spell affects everything within sight of the caster.

### Changing Ranges, Durations, and Targets

To calculate the level of a spell that has the same effects as a listed spell but with a different range, duration, or target, add five levels to the level of the spell for each "step" (for example, the difference between the targets Boundary and Sight) by which a category is raised, or subtract five levels for each "step" by which it is lowered. (If subtractions take the level below five, subtract single levels instead; no spell can be lowered below level 1.)

These calculations will probably not be required in this scenario, but can be useful when determining the levels of spontaneous spells that are similar to formulaic spells of known levels.

# Storyguide's Briefing

If you don't have the **Ars Magica** rulebook, some situations that could arise during the course of this adventure might be hard to adjudicate. Here are some rules to help with a few of them.

## Wizard's Twilight

Death is not certain for magi. As long as they can create magical potions to preserve their lives they can live considerably longer than normal humans. Far more likely than death is the prospect of Wizard's Twilight; after a time, a wizard's soul simply leaves his body, never to return.

Certain magical events—such as botching spells—can cause a magus to experience a temporary Twilight, with potentially drastic effects: some wizards undergo a sort of magical enlightenment, while others develop awful flaws in their magical Abilities.

For the purposes of *The Return of the Stormrider*, you should be prepared to account for Twilight, but not to let it bring the game to a halt. If Fabienne or Philippe botches a spell, ask the player to make a stress roll. If the total is 24+, the PC enters temporary Twilight. He is dazed and unable to take any actions—including defending himself—for the remainder of the scene. At the end of the story, if you wish to continue the saga using these PCs, you should consult pages 182-185 of the **Ars Magica** rules for further possible effects.

## Falling

A falling character suffers a quality die of damage which is compared to his Soak (with the Protection value of armor halved). For every two

feet fallen, +1 is added to the damage roll. Hard surface, such as rock, double the falling roll. Extremely soft surfaces halve the damage roll. An individual falling into water takes only one-quarter damage. If there is something to grab at and the character makes an Athletics roll of 6+, the first five feet of the fall do not count toward the damage roll.

## Drowning

When a character is attempting to swim, you should ask the player to make a Strength + Swim + Encumbrance stress roll every round, with an ease factor of 6 (9 or more in rough water). If the swimmer fails a roll he begins to drown, making a Stamina stress roll each round (against an ease factor of 6 or more) and losing one Fatigue level whenever he fails until he is unconscious, after which he automatically loses one Body level per round until he dies or is rescued. If the character makes two consecutive Stamina rolls successfully, he is once again swimming.

## Enchanting Music

Each time Étienne attempts to alter someone's emotions using his Enchanting Music Talent, he must roll a die (stress or simple, depending on the situation) + Communication + Enchanting Music. A roll of 9+ calms the upset, a 12+ would win someone's heart, a 15+ could incite a riot, an 18+ would touch the heart of a magus, and a 24+ could win a soul back from the Prince of Darkness. (In numerical terms, a 6+ raises or lowers a Personality Trait by one, a 9+ raises or lowers it by two, and so on.) A botch inspires unwanted emotions.

*Handout: The Faerie*

...looking to the faeries of the mountain was a tremendous mistake, and i have paid for it dearly. the wind-lord marradal managed to overcome his guards and escaped, but not before placing this thrice-damned curse upon me. my potions are useless now. i could just as well be drinking water. marradal could not have known how well he has destroyed my last chance at immortality, but i will never give him the satisfaction of giving up. there must be some other way.

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*Handout: The Stormrider*

...grimgroth will pay for his insult, and he shall pay with his life. the power of the stormrider shall not only counteract the effects of the aging, but it shall grant me the wherewithal to crush grimgroth under my heel. and if i must grind mistridge to pieces in the process, so be it. the order of hermes can punish caeron of bonisagus, but the stormrider is well beyond their reach. and i will still be bending thunderbolts to my will when their longevity has turned to dust...

# Bertrand

## Grog

Age: 40

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

Decrepitude: 1

### Characteristics

Intelligence: -1

Perception: 0

*Forgetful*

Strength: +1

Stamina: 0

*Bulging Biceps*

Presence: +1

Communication: 0

*Commanding Stare*

Dexterity: -1

Quickness: -2

*Graceless*

*Slow Reflexes*

**Personality Traits:** Brave +2, Loyal (to Fabienne) +2, Devoted (to Armand) +1, Reliable +2, Vengeful +2

### Weapon/Attack

	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	-3	-3	-4	+1	-2
Javelin	-3	+1	-3	+6	-1
Spear & Shield	+1	+0	+3	+4	-1

**Encumbrance:** -5

**Soak:** +8

**Armor:** Half chain mail, kite shield

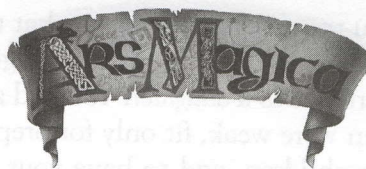
**Abilities (Specialties):** Awareness 3 (dangers to magi), Brawling 3 (immobilizing), Carouse 2 (keeping your head), Chirurgy 3 (binding wounds), Climb 1 (ladders), Folk Ken 2 (grog), Hunt 3 (wounded people), Leadership 3 (leading grogs), Legend Lore 2 (the Stormrider), Shield & Weapon 4 (guarding magi), Sing 2 (war songs), Speak Provençal 4 (curses), Survival 1 (finding food), Thrown Weapon 4 (targeting leaders), Val du Bosque Lore 3 (history)

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



## Virtues & Flaws

**Grog Leader (+1):** The magi expect you to control the other grogs, and you are the liason between the two groups.

**Strong-Willed (+1):** You cannot easily be coerced into activities, beliefs, or feelings. You get a +3 on any roll which requires strength of will, such as resisting temptation, torture, or the effects of a spell that attempts to dominate your will.

**Well-Traveled (+1):** You have journeyed extensively in this part of the world and find it easy to get along with people throughout the area. You are familiar with the region's dialects and can pick others up quickly, giving you +3 to appropriate speaking rolls. You also know something of local habits and traditions, giving you +3 bonus to appropriate Knowledge rolls, such as Legend Lore.

**Dark Secret (-1):** You hide the fact that Le Fort is a girl, as the truth could lead to shame or rejection if discovered. Hints about the secret continually arise. If people were to find out about your secret, your life and Le Fort's would change drastically.

**Decrepit (-2):** You have one Decrepitude point from old wounds.

## Background

You have lived in the covenant since you were a young man, and your family was murdered by the Stormrider. He came rampaging into your village one night, calling lightning down on the huts, driving the people out into the pounding rain. Then he began hurling lightning *at them...* You escaped unnoticed, but sometimes when the storms are particularly bad you can still hear their screams... Thank God the demon is no more.

Your life revolves around the covenant. Your wife died giving birth to your only son, Armand, and you've taught him to be as strong and as skilled as you are. One day, he'll be the grog-sergeant, and you can sit with a mug of ale and tell stories of the old days.

But you try very hard to forget that the biggest part of your life is a lie. Your wife died giving birth not to a son, but to a *daughter*. You had always said that women were weak, fit only for preparing food and raising children, and to have your only child be a girl was more humiliation than you could bear.

So you named your daughter Armand. For seventeen years you've managed somehow to keep this fact a secret, and she—who by chance isn't a pretty girl anyway—has honored your wishes by playing along. Armand plays the part so well that there are times you think he's forgotten he's not really a man. Everyone else is completely fooled; he's even earned the nickname Le Fort, "the strong."

Now you are getting just a bit too old to be an effective shield-grog, although as grog-sergeant you can still knock heads together when it's needed. Armand is your pride and joy, and you take great pleasure in watching him put the grogs through their paces, or wade into a brawl and come out on top. Yes, Armand makes you proud. Now if only he could give you grandsons...

### Your Goals

You are a grog-sergeant, which means that you call the shots when the grogs are concerned. Armand—whom the others call Le Fort—helps you maintain order, and the two of you are a formidable team. You are also a shield-grog, which means that you stand close to the nearest wizard and protect him from attacks. You carry one javelin to throw while enemies are at a distance (preferring to target obvious leaders), and a spear to fight with when they get close.

### Group Relations

You are very devoted to Fabienne, and you feel that she is much stronger than she is normally allowed to be. She is quick to defer to the judgment of others, especially her master, Veristus, the other apprentice, Philippe, and even

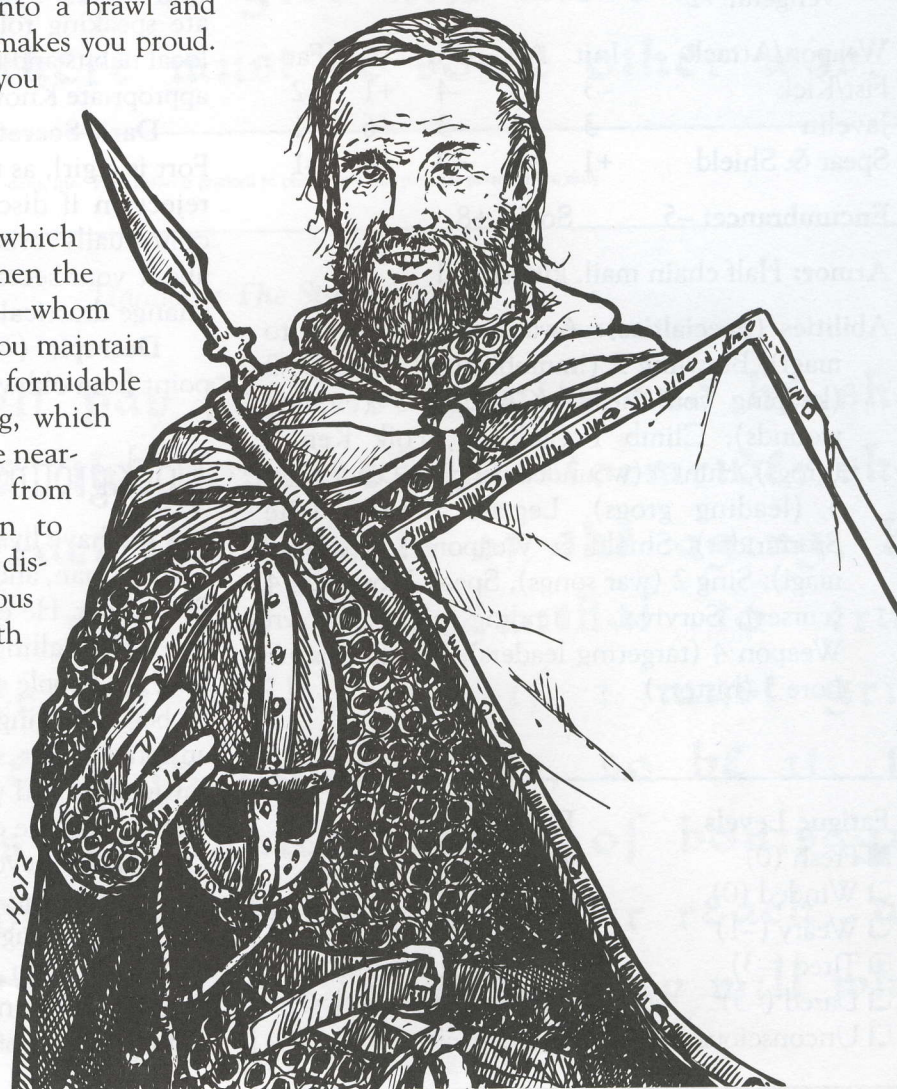
you. Although she will have to find her own way to drawn on her inner strength, you feel the need to protect her from those who would take advantage of her, such as Philippe.

### Roleplaying Bertrand

Your authority as grog-sergeant will be destroyed if it becomes known that the mighty Le Fort is actually a girl. Guard this secret as closely as you can.

You have a number of old scars that start to hurt whenever you've been resting. Groan and complain a bit whenever the group starts moving after having rested for a while.

**Quote:** "The decision is yours, mistress. The grogs do what I say, and I do what you say."



# Claude

## Grog

Age: 23

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: -1

*Dull-Witted*

Strength: +3

*Able-Bodied*

Presence: 0

Dexterity: +2

*Adept Athlete*

Perception: -2

*Careless*

Stamina: +2

*Durable*

Communication: -1

*Raspy Voice*

Quickness: 0

**Personality Traits:** Reckless +3, Reliable -2, Violent +2, Disrespectful +1

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	+3	+4	+2	+3	+4
Pole Axe	+9	+8	+8	+12	+5
Short Sword	+4	+4	+3	+6	+2

**Encumbrance:** -1 **Soak:** +10

**Armor:** Half metal reinforced (rings) leather armor

**Abilities (Specialties):** Animal Handling 2 (draft animals), Athletics 1 (jumping), Awareness 2 (ambushes), Brawl 3 (versus unarmed attacks), Great Weapon 4 (versus pole arms), Legend Lore 3 (heroes), Single Weapon 1 (attacking from behind), Speak Provençal 4 (insults), Survival 2 (building fires), Val du Bosque Lore 2 (geography)

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



## Virtues & Flaws

**Standard Grog (+0):** You are just another member of the covenant, doing your job day in and day out, toiling hard and playing harder.

**Reckless (+1):** You tend not to notice that situations are threatening. You start with a personality trait of Reckless +3, and can never have a positive Personality Trait reflecting care or patience. Whenever the storyguide deems it necessary for you to check bravery or a similar Personality Trait, make a roll against your Reckless score instead. A success means you do not realize your danger, and can act immediately without further checks.

**Tough (+1):** You can take physical punishment better than most people. You get a +3 bonus on your Soak score.

**Disfigured (-1):** The horrible burns on your face make you ugly and easy to recognize. Presence rolls that involve good looks and gaining respect from most people are at -3.

**Judged Unfairly (-1):** Somehow you come across wrong to people, and they universally distrust and underestimate you. You catch no one's eyes, impress no one, and can get no one to take you seriously. If anyone were to ever see you as you want to be seen, you would cling to that person.

## Background

You are easily the ugliest man in the covenant. A few years ago, when you served at a different covenant, one of the wizards, Sagitta Ignicula (SAHG-it-tuh ig-NICK-oo-lah), engaged in a duel with some other wizard, and accidentally blasted you full in the face with some kind of fire-magic.

You hate fire-magic.

Sagitta was apologetic, but couldn't really do anything to repair the damage; she was fire specialist, not a healer. So now you have scars all over the upper half of your body, and your face is a pinkish lump with eyes and a mouth, but no nose



to speak of. One of the other wizards could probably have healed the damage, but they decided that they didn't want to waste the effort on a lowly grog.

So when Sagitta Ignicula fell to her death down a crevasse, a lot of suspicion was directed at you. You were the only one with her, maybe you really hated her, maybe enough to wait until she wasn't looking and give her a push... You know that's not what happened, but you have to admit, you didn't exactly hurry when you heard her fall.

Regardless of what really happened, you decided that you'd be better off working somewhere else. So when one of the wizards decided to change covenants, you went with him. Still, a fair amount of suspicion follows you, and you resent it. If they don't respect you, then why should you respect them?

What you do is fight. And you're good at it. When you get your pole axe swinging, *nothing* can stand in your way. You enjoy hacking things down, and you occasionally forget that you're supposed to be standing watch, or guarding the rear, or protecting a wizard...but so what? No one's ever died because of it.

### Your Goals

You don't really like Fabienne or Philippe, the two wizards, but you don't really hate them either. Guillaume, on the other hand, he's a spoiled brat, some knight's son who acts like he's going to *own* you some day. You'd love a chance to take him down a peg; just let him say the wrong thing...

### Group Relations

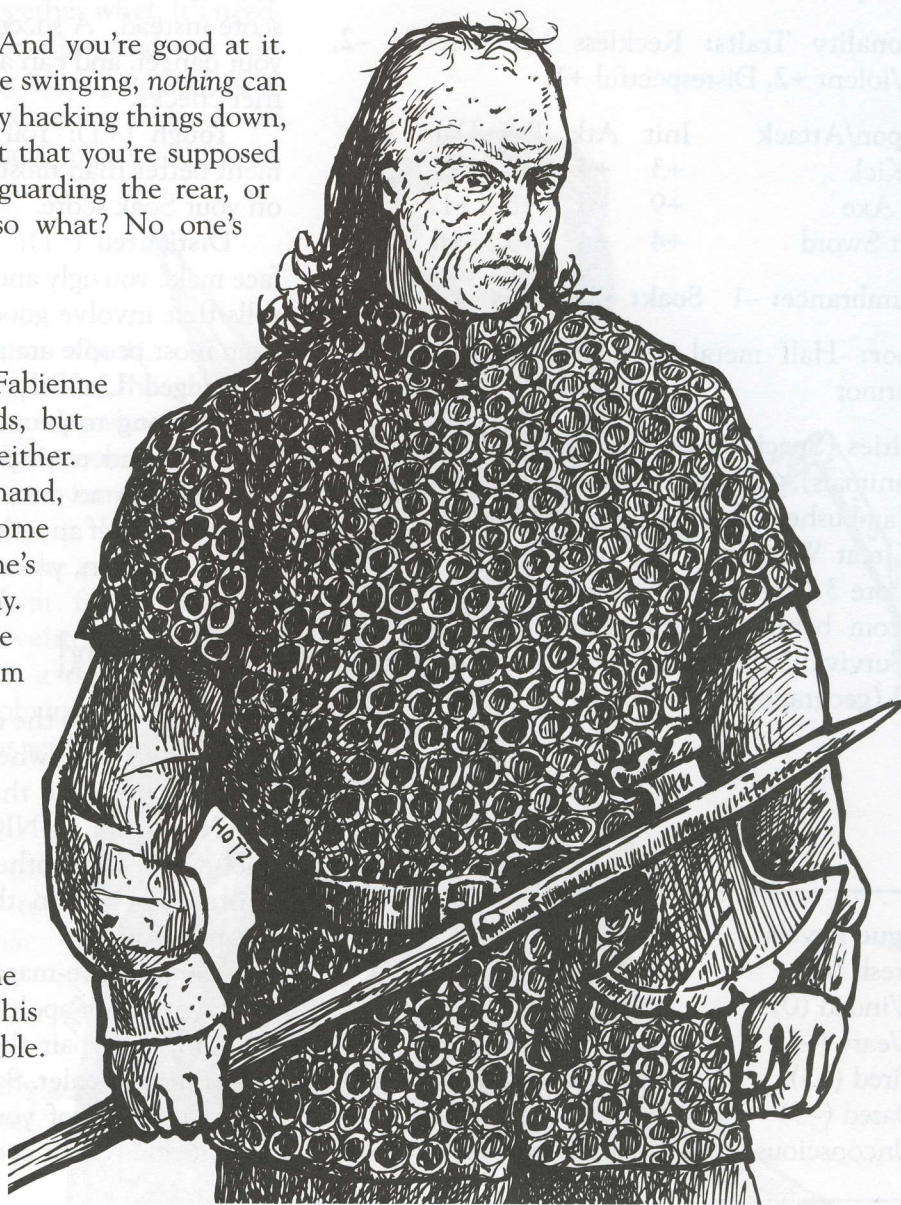
Everyone suspects you whenever something goes amiss, and it's all because of your background. The knight, Sir Guillaume, is the worst; he seems to go out of his way to get you into trouble. You once spent two weeks standing double watches because Guillaume had

reported you drunk on duty, and you've not forgotten that. It would be satisfying to make Guillaume look bad, if you could, but you don't feel strongly enough about it that you would seek to harm the knight.

### Roleplaying Claude

You're probably the toughest warrior on this expedition, and your help is *always* needed—at least, that's what you think. Whenever there's a fight going on, you'll want to get involved. Your injury has left you with a deep, scratchy voice. You also like to show people your fire-scarred face, in hopes that they'll give you trouble over it...

**Quote:** "I say we stop for the night. I'm thirsty, and his lordship looks hot in his armor."



# Étienne

## Companion



Age: 24

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: +1

*Knowledgeable*

Strength: -1

*Small Frame*

Presence: +1

*Alluring*

Dexterity: -1

*Cannot Dance*

Perception: +1

*Attentive*

Stamina: 0

Communication: +2

*Captivating Speaker*

Quickness: -1

*Languid Stride*

**Personality Traits:** Brave -1, Kind +2, Pensive +1, Respectful +1, Depressed +2

**Reputations:** Entertainer 2 (in Val du Bosque), Gentle Man 2 (in Val du Bosque)

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	-3	-4	-4	-1	-3
Dagger	-2	-3	-2	+2	-3

Encumbrance: 0

Soak: +0

Armor: None

**Abilities (Specialties):** Charm 2 (inspirational speeches), Enchanting Music 4 (love), Etiquette 1 (nobility), Folk Ken 1 (townsfolk), Legend Lore 2 (heroes), Play Mandolin 3 (vast repertoire), Sing 3 (ballads), Speak Provençal 5 (poetry), Storytelling 2 (romances)

## Virtues & Flaws

**Free Expression (+1):** You have the imagination and creativity needed to compose a new ballad or to

paint an original painting, and have the potential to be a great artist. You get a +3 bonus to all rolls to create a new work of art.

**Enchanting Music (+2):** When you set your mind to it, you can influence others in a specific way with your music. For a specific effect, you must sing words that people can understand. You can calm the grieving with tunes alone, but you need lyrics to convince peasants to rise up against their lord. You must roll a die (stress or simple, depending on the situation) + Communication + Enchanting Music. A roll of 9+ calms the upset, a 12+ would win someone's heart, a 15+ could incite a riot, an 18+ would touch the heart of a magus, and a 24+ could win a soul back from the Prince of Darkness. (In numerical terms, a 6+ raises or lowers a Personality Trait by one, a 9+ raises or lowers it by two, and so on.) A botch inspires unwanted emotions. If you, the player, compose and sing appropriate lyrics (and the result is pleasant), a positive modifier should be applied.

**Well-Known (+1):** You have a good reputation in Val du Bosque and are generally well-liked.

**Well-Traveled (+1):** You have journeyed extensively in this part of the world and find it easy to get along with people throughout the area. You are familiar with the region's dialects and can pick others up quickly, giving you +3 to appropriate speaking rolls. You also know something of local habits and traditions, giving you +3 bonus to appropriate Knowledge rolls, such as Legend Lore.

**Vow (-2):** You have sworn never to fight with anyone. Obedience to this vow is determined by your roleplaying; to break your vow is a serious matter. If you break your vow, some act of atonement is called for, whether it be religious penance or coming to terms with your failure. Furthermore, you lose one point of Confidence and can only regain any by redeeming yourself. People respect your dedication, and you have a reputation for being gentle.

**Soft-Hearted (-1):** You cannot bear to witness suffering and causing it brings you sleepless nights. Even the deaths of enemies are painful for you. You avoid danger and try to keep your friends out of it as well. Life and health mean so much that you would rather give up important goals than let another person risk combat. You are easily moved by song and story.

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated

**Depression (-2):** A deep depression sometimes overwhelms you, sending you into uncontrollable misery. All sorts of events could set this off, but usually it involves failure, or steep opposition, although sometimes sad stories can have the same effect.

## Background

You were still very young when the Stormrider was defeated by some mighty heroes from the wizard's keep of Mistridge, but you heard the story over and over again. It froze you with fear to know that such horrible monsters could exist. But at the same time, you were comforted to know that no matter what the danger, there would always be heroes brave enough to confront and, ultimately, vanquish it.

From the day you learned how to sing you've sung stories of brave souls venturing into the very jaws of death to defend the weak and the timid. You've memorized every story you've ever heard, and learned everything there is to know about every hero who ever lived. And you hope that in your own small way, you've taught people that they don't need to wait for heroes to come along, that heroes are made from the most unlikely people.

You, on the other hand, were never meant to be a hero. You don't mind encouraging others to do brave things, but courage is a virtue you have no use for. Dire need makes heroes of men, but it makes corpses of minstrels...or their loved ones. Your betrothed, Elise, died that way, slain by a faerie knight with nothing in his heart but brutality. He beat her to death before your terrified eyes, but you were too frightened to come to her aid. Ever since, you've been unable to bear any act of cruelty, and the suffering of others always leaves you in the grip of a deep and dark melancholy.

But you are content to entertain others, filling their heads with endless tales of heroism, duty, and honor. That may be why the wizards at the covenant like you so much: you help keep their grogs

in the right frame of mind. And you aren't above telling the occasional love-story to a fair young maiden now and again, although you make it a point never to get too close...most of the time.

## Your Goals

You serve the wizards by motivating their guardsmen, the grogs. Your music can incite strong emotions in those who take the trouble to listen. You've literally played until your fingers have bled, but you'd like to think that your small sacrifice made a difference, that you saved someone's life somehow.

## Group Relations

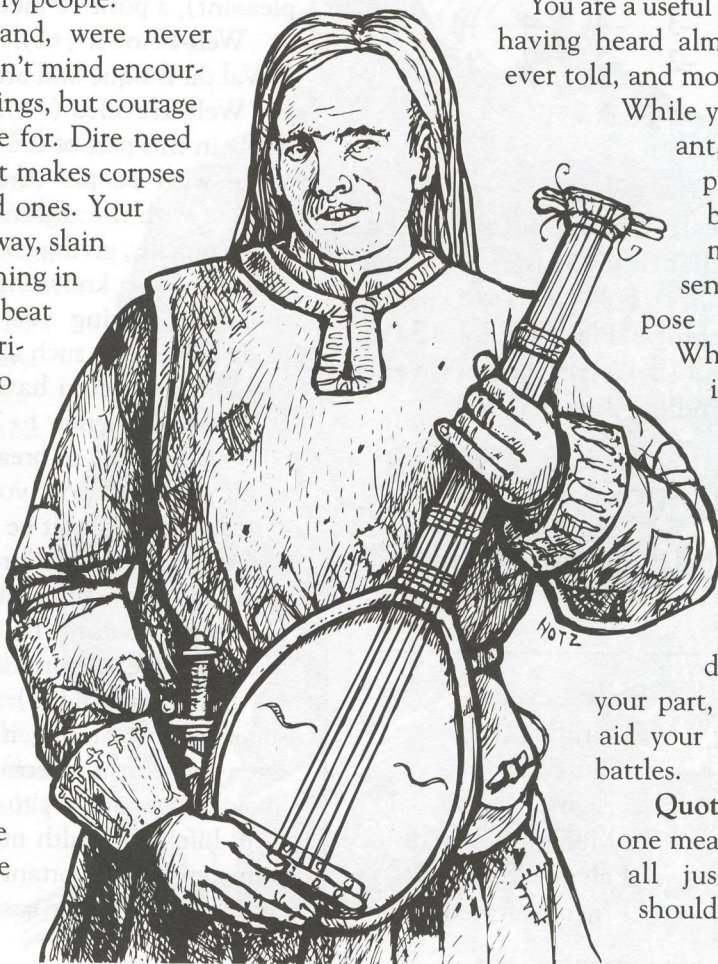
You once had a very brief night of passion with Fabienne, but even though you felt strongly about her, she refused to have anything to do with you afterward. You would like to rekindle that romance, but she is aloof toward you now. In your heart you know it has nothing to do with you, but you are beginning to grow bitter toward her.

## Roleplaying Étienne

You are a useful source of information, having heard almost every major tale ever told, and most minor ones as well.

While you are a non-combatant, you are not completely useless in combat situations: your music can instill a sense of duty and purpose in the grogs. Whenever you are playing music, try to tell a running story that is appropriate to whatever emotional response you are trying to produce. This requires a great deal of creativity on your part, but your efforts may aid your companions in their battles.

**Quote:** "I don't think anyone meant any offense...we're all just tired. Perhaps I should play something..."



# Gloria

## Grog

Age: 25

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: -1

Perception: +2

*Bored*

*Keen-Eyed*

Strength: -1

Stamina: 0

*Scrawny Legs*

Presence: +1

Communication: -1

*Unnerving Stare*

*Heavy Accent*

Dexterity: +2

Quickness: -1

*Steady Hand*

*Flat-Footed*

**Personality Traits:** Kind -2, Disrespectful +1, Arrogant +2, Wrathful +2

**Reputations:** Cold-Blooded Killer 2 (at Covenant)

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	+0	+2	-1	-1	+2
Dagger	+1	+3	+1	+2	+2
Long Sword	+2	+3	+3	+3	+2
Self Bow	+1	+4	n/a	+4	+4

**Encumbrance:** -3

**Soak:** +5

**Armor:** Steel Scale Mail Hauberk

**Abilities (Specialties) :** Awareness 3 (targets in cover), Bows 4 (charging targets), Brawl 3 (dodging missiles), Concentration 2 (while aiming), Sing 2 (lullabies), Single Weapon 3 (bodyguarding), Speak Catalan 4 (cruel words), Speak Provençal 3 (boasting)



## Virtues & Flaws

**Standard Grog (+0):** You are just another member of the covenant, doing your job day in and day out, toiling hard and playing harder.

**Piercing Gaze (+2):** By staring intently at people you make them feel uneasy, as if you are peering into their souls. Those with ulterior motives, uneasy consciences, or lying tongues must make rolls against an appropriate Personality Trait, Guile, or whatever the storyguide deems appropriate, to remain calm. Furthermore, you get a +3 to rolls involving intimidation. Faeries and demons are unfazed by your power.

**Knack with Bows (+1):** You have an innate aptitude which gives you a +1 modifier on all rolls using your Bows combat ability.

**Bad Reputation (-1):** People in your covenant consider you a cold-blooded killer. While this sometimes serves you, it also sets you apart from those who could otherwise be your friends.

**Overconfident (-2):** You have an exaggerated and unshakable opinion of your capabilities and do not hesitate to try things that promise only defeat. If you are convincing in your speech, you can infect others with your overconfidence.

## Background

You were born in Iberia and spent more or less your entire life tending sheep. The best weapon you had against the wolves that preyed upon the flock was your bow, and you got quite good at killing them before they even got close.

Then one night a different kind of predator came...men wearing armor and carrying swords. They only laughed when they saw you and your bow. One of them came toward you, leering wickedly, and you put your first arrow in his hand, the second in his foot. The others came to his aid, and you would have feathered them, too, but then their master appeared. He was a wizard.

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated

He severely reprimanded his soldiers, and offered to pay you for the sheep they had killed. He complimented you on your marksmanship, and asked if you had any higher ambitions than tending sheep. At first you were sceptical, but when he showed you his silver, you turned your back on sheep-herding forever.

You've lived at the covenant for five years now, and you've picked up a few other skills, as well as a bit of a reputation. The others are used to killing, but your lack of a conscience about it is sort of unnerving to them. That, and perhaps your wrath, has made certain that even the most aggressive of the grogs keeps his hands to himself.

### Your Goals

You are almost always assigned to use your archery skill to protect the wizards when they begin casting their spells, and that suits you just fine. By rights, the grog-sergeant can assign you to any task, but he knows that you don't take well to menial work, and he respects that.



### Group Relations

Your reputation usually keeps the men at a safe distance, but some just do not get the hints, or rather, warnings. Claude, for example, seems to go out of his way to get in your way, and you just know that he wants you to notice him. Consequently, you're less interested in him than ever, but if he doesn't catch on soon, you may have to drive the point home...with your sword, if it comes to that.

### Roleplaying Gloria

Your skill with a bow makes you an asset to any expedition, and you don't like being made to fulfill some other role. Always be aware that you are the best archer in the covenant, and make others aware that skill with a sword is nothing compared to the ability to kill at a distance. You also have this unsettling habit of *targeting* people when you look at them, as though you are visualizing an arrow going in.

**Quote:** "It doesn't matter to me what we do—just someone, make a decision." Remember that you are from Iberia; try to muster a Spanish accent, if possible.

# Sir Guillaume

## Companion

Age: 19

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: -2

Slow Learner

Strength: +2

Big

Presence: -1

Despairing Expression

Dexterity: 0

Perception: -2

Unheeding

Stamina: +2

Tireless

Communication: -1

No Sense of Humor

Quickness: +1

Energetic

**Personality Traits:** Brave +2, Aggressive +3, Dependable +1, Scornful +1, Proud +3

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	+2	+0	+1	+2	+2
Gauntlet	+2	+0	+2	+3	+2
Long Sword	+6	+3	+7	+6	+4
Sword & Shield	+4	+3	+10	+6	+3

Encumbrance: -2

Soak: +8

**Armor:** Chain mail hauberk, kite shield

**Abilities (Specialties):** Brawl 2 (wrestling for an item), Charm 2 (peasants), Leadership 2 (intimidating peasants), Shield & Weapon 3 (desperate defense), Single Weapon 4 (versus first attacks), Speak Provençal 4 (terms used by the nobility), Val du Bosque Lore 2 (local nobility)

## Virtues & Flaws

**Knight-Errant (+2):** You wander in search of adventure, honor, fame, and wealth. You are enti-

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



tled to bear arms, and are a member of the nobility. This virtue confers upon you Superior Armaments, a +1 virtue, at no cost.

**Superior Armaments** (no cost because of Knight Errant virtue): Your armaments are family heirlooms that belonged to your uncle.

**Heir (+1):** You have little power or wealth now, but you stand to inherit land (your father's manor) and possibly money. When you finally win your inheritance you gain its responsibilities as well, so your freedom may be restricted.

**Oath of Fealty (-1):** You owe one season per year in service to your lord, Baron d'Uverre. Additionally, you must justify your actions to the baron, and sometimes there is a conflict between your oath and your activities in the covenant, where you are pledged to serve the remaining three seasons each year for the next five years.

**Enemy (-1):** Sir Luc, the baron's heir, causes you trouble.

**Expenses (-1):** You devote 25-30% of your wealth and income to the upkeep of your arms and armor. Failure to do so not only reduces the effectiveness of your equipment, but lowers your social standing in noble circles.

## Background

You are the son of Sir Tarbil, the lord of a small manor to the east of the river Vreis. Your father owes allegiance to the aging Baron d'Uverre, and one day you will carry on this tradition.

But rather than spend your days in endless drill and practice, you have followed your father's advice and traveled the length and breadth of Val du Bosque and beyond. You have seen many wonders and horrors, but most fascinating of all are the wizards who dwell in the valley.

With your father's blessing, you traveled to a small covenant after you had been knighted, and pledged them your services three seasons out of four for five years. Although you have barely spent one season with them, you have learned a great

deal—most especially tolerance for their strange ways.

To learn modesty, you have entered the rank and file of their men-at-arms, whom the wizards call “grogs.” You take orders from their sergeant, the shield-grog Bertrand, and you at least listen to Bertrand’s son Armand, who is called Le Fort by the men. You respect Armand’s skill at arms, but he is not the same natural leader that his father is. Le Fort is being trained to replace his father eventually, but you aren’t looking forward to that day.

What you *are* looking forward to is battle! But the wizards seem content to brood and study in their darkened chambers, mixing potions and reading musty books. How dull! You are a man of action, and it chafes you to stand sentry duty and help build walls. You are trained to fight, not stand about!

When this expedition to go to another covenant presented itself, you were the first to volunteer. Alas, it has been nothing short of disappointing, and you sincerely wish something would happen so that you could draw your sword and do something other than polish it.

### *Your Goals*

Humility is all well and good, but battle is the true test of a man’s mettle! At least once you want to be in the thick of things, overcoming worthy opponents—not just leaping to arms to defend against the depredations of another fox in the hedge.

Your dearest wish is to find an opportunity to do battle with Sir Luc, the baron’s heir. Sir Luc is a vindictive and ambitious man, who wed the baron’s only daughter and acts as though he is already lord of the castle. Your father hates him with a passion, and you would love to see him ask you for quarter. You have made a silent vow that this day will come to pass while your father is still alive to enjoy it.

### *Group Relations*

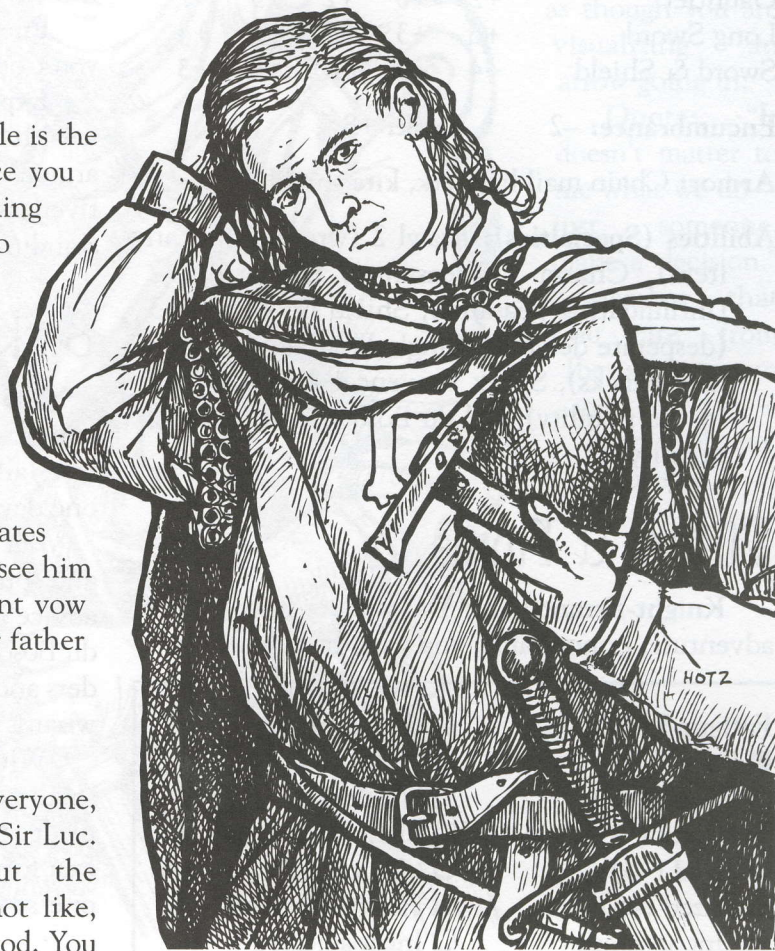
Ordinarily, you get on well with everyone, with a few notable exceptions, including Sir Luc. However, there is something about the burned-faced grog Claude that you do not like, and you are certain that he is up to no good. You

have taken it upon yourself to keep him in line, for his own good and the good of the covenant, but he resents your help, and you may have to teach him a lesson one day.

### *Roleplaying Guillaume*

Never let anyone forget that you are Sir Guillaume, and that you will one day own a manor and rule its lands. Your presence at the covenant is a favor to the wizards, and they owe you respect for your vow to aid them. Make an effort to draw a potential foe into combat, but only those who bear arms against you—brutalizing peasants is for cowards.

**Quote:** “I’ll match anyone here, step for step...or blow for blow, if that’s what you want.”



# Le Fort

## Grog

Age: 17

Confidence: 3

Size: +1

### Characteristics

Intelligence: 0

Perception: -1

*Preoccupied*

Strength: +3

Stamina: +2

*Husky Build*

*Enduring*

Presence: -2

Communication: +2

*Greasy Hair*

*Good Sense of Humor*

Dexterity: 0

Quickness: -2

*Lumbering*

**Personality Traits:** Brave +3, Dependable +1, Quick-Tempered +1, Loyal (to Bertrand) +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist	+1	+2	-1	+4	+4
Kick	+0	+1	-2	+4	+3
Short Spear	+4	+2	+0	+7	+3
Great sword	+5	+5	+2	+12	+3

Encumbrance: -1

Soak: +8

**Armor:** Metal reinforced (rings) leather armor

**Abilities (Specialties):** Athletics 2 (distance running), Brawl 2 (punching), Disguise 4 (as male), Great Weapon 2 (attacking objects), Leadership 1 (commanding grogs), Single Weapon 2 (holding opponents at bay), Speak Provençal 4 (local slang), Survival 1 (seeking shelter)



## Virtues & Flaws

Note that Le Fort has more negative than positive points for "his" virtues and flaws. This is permitted by the rules of the game: you must balance your virtues with flaws, but you can always choose to have more flaws to individualize your character, if you choose.

**Standard Grog (+0):** You are just another member of the covenant, doing your job day in and day out, toiling hard and playing harder.

**Androgynous Features (+0):** Through some vagary of heredity, you have features that can be taken for either male or female. While you could make it obvious that you are a woman, you choose to pretend to be a man.

**Large (+1):** Your Size is +1 instead of 0. This gives you an extra Winded Fatigue level and an extra Hurt Body level (already added to your character sheet).

**Superior Armaments (+2):** You have an expensive weapon: your greatsword.

**Obsessed (-1):** You are consumed by the desire to make your father proud of you. You always try to do things they way he would.

**Dark Secret (-1):** You hide the fact that you are a woman, as the truth could lead to shame or rejection if discovered. Hints about the secret continually arise. If people find out about your secret, your life and your father's will change drastically.

**Fury (-3):** A violent temper sometimes overwhelms you, sending you into a destructive, uncontrollable rage. Whenever anyone casts doubts about your abilities as a man (and thus gets close to your Dark Secret), you must roll 9+ on a stress die or fly into a rage. You can attempt a similar roll every round to calm yourself afterward. On a botched Fury roll, you try to kill everyone around you. While enraged you get +3 to Damage, but -1 on all other scores and rolls.

## Background

You are a big man, so tough that the other grogs have named you Le Fort, "the strong." Your

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



real name is Armand, and your father is Bertrand, the grog-sergeant. He taught you everything you know, and you accept his judgment without question. One day, when you are worthy, you will be the grog-sergeant, and your father can spend the rest of his life in comfort.

Your father gave you everything you own. Your armor and weapons were once his, and every time you've wielded his great sword in battle, you thought only to bring honor to him. "Serve the covenant," he always says. "Never run, never hide, and never forget whose son you are."

But what you and your father never really talk about is the lie you are both living. For you are not your father's son, but his *daughter*. He thinks of women as frail, addled creatures who tend cook-pots and have babies. If anyone ever found out that Bertrand's son was actually a girl, the humiliation would kill him. So you play at being a man, and you're good at it.

Anyone who's ever questioned your masculinity has had his skull cracked for proof.

You don't really miss being a girl, since you never lived that life. While other children were learning how to cook and playing with dolls, you were learning the proper way to hold a sword and how to dodge your father's spear. No matter how you started life, your father has made a man out of you, and you don't intend to ever let him down.



## Your Goals

One day you will be the grog-sergeant, and everything you have done in your life has been taking you toward that day. Your father occasionally lets you take charge, to prove your mettle, and you've never disappointed him. In a fight, your job is to carry the battle to the enemy, and keep it from reaching the wizards.

## Group Relations

Philippe has drawn you into conversation a couple of times, and each time he has come close to causing you to admit that you are not really a man. If you are not constantly on guard against his "friendly" advances, you might slip up, and he could wheedle your secret out of you. Any so-called friendliness on his part should be met with "polite hostility;" he may be prying, but he is, after all, a wizard.

## Roleplaying Armand

Your father's authority as grog-sergeant will be completely destroyed if it becomes known that the mighty Le Fort is actually a girl, so guard this secret as closely as you can. Try to create a sense of camaraderie among the grogs; the more you act like "just another man," the less they will question.

**Quote:** "We should forge on—anyone who is tired can catch up later."

# Philipe

## Magus

Age: 25

Confidence: 4

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: +2

*Discerning*

Strength: -1

*Scrawny Arms*

Presence: -2

*Annoying*

Dexterity: -1

*Awkward*

Perception: +3

*Probing*

Stamina: 0

Communication: +2

*Smooth Talker*

Quickness: -2

*Slow Reflexes*

**Personality Traits:** Inquisitive +2, Insensitive +1, Dispassionate +2, Ambitious +1, Meddlesome +3

**Reputation:** Meddler, 1 (at Covenant)

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	+0	+0	-1	-1	+1
Dagger	+1	+1	+1	+2	+1

**Encumbrance:** 0

**Soak:** +0

**Armor:** None

**Abilities (Specialties):** Affinity with Mentem 2, Brawling 1 (dodging), Certámen 2 (Mentem), Disputatio 3 (debating motives), Folk Ken 1 (wizards), Intrigue 3 (Tytalus), Leadership 2 (giving advice), Magic Theory 4 (inventing spells), Order of Hermes Lore 2 (conflicts), Parma Magica 3 (versus Mentem), Penetration 3 (versus Mentem), Scribe Latin 2 (reading magic), Speak Latin 5 (discussing theories), Speak Provençal 5 (expressing thoughts)

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



## Arts

Creo 1

Animál 2

Ignem 1

Intéllego 5

Aquam 4

Imáginem 3

Muto 5

Auram 3

Mentem 10

Perdo 2 (1)

Corpus 1

Terram 1

Rego 5

Herbam 2

Vim 5

## Virtues & Flaws

**Strong-Willed (+1):** You cannot easily be coerced into activities, beliefs, or feelings. You get a +3 on any roll which requires strength of will, such as resisting temptation, torture, or the effects of a spell that attempts to dominate your will.

**Magical Affinity—Mentem (+3):** You have an innate knack for casting spells dealing with Mentem. You gain +2 on all spell rolls and Lab Totals involving this kind of magic. (The bonus has already been added to casting totals below.)

**Clear Thinker (+1):** You think logically and rationally. You get a +3 bonus on all rolls to resist lies, confusion, befuddlement, and subterfuge—whether magical or mundane.

**Self-Confident (+1):** You have firm confidence in your own abilities. You begin the game with one extra Confidence point.

**Meddler (-1):** You want to fix other peoples' lives: arrange matches, teach people how to do things properly, and so on. You waste a lot of time and energy on such endeavors, and people usually resent it. While dabbling in private lives you don't violate Hermetic Law, but you come close—and you certainly irritate the magi of your covenant.

**Deleterious Circumstances (-1):** Your magic rolls are at -3 against irrational people.

**Minor Magic Deficiency (-4):** You have trouble with Perdo magic, and its score is halved for any purpose other than study, which makes it effectively a 1.

## Background

The single most useful thing you have learned after fifteen years of apprenticeship to Sentus (SEN-toos) of House Tylalus (TEU-tah-loos) is that by exploring the motivations of others, you can better understand how they may be manipulated. More powerful than the strongest magic is being able to explore the reasons underlying the actions of sentient beings.

Sentus recognized your magical Gift when you were only a boy working in your father's mill. You were happy to go away with him. Your father—dead for many years now—was an abusive man, and regularly beat your mother. She protected you from him, as you were too precocious for your own good, and you were quite thankful that it wasn't long after she died that Sentus turned up.

Sentus educated you, nurtured your magical talents, and showed you how to discern logic from emotion and reason from reaction. He has been the single most important influence in your life.

Your apprenticeship is nearly at an end. You and your fellow apprentice, Fabienne, have been assigned to trade raw vis—the essence of magic—for magical texts with the wizards of Mistridge, an older covenant located on the slopes of Mount Tierné in Val du Bosque. The wizards voted almost unanimously to put Fabienne in charge of the expedition, with one notable exception: Fabienne's master, Veristus. You and Sentus suspect that Veristus, a follower of Jerbiton, resents his apprentice, for her presence has made him the object of a great deal of political maneuvering between the factions of House Jerbiton. Some want her trained as a wizard, others as an envoy to the mundanes. If she trains to be a liaison to the mundane

world, the ability to perform magic will only hinder her.

Strangely, Fabienne seems completely unaware of the storm of controversy. While you could lead her to see the source of her difficulties, she resents your intrusion into her affairs, no doubt due to envy of your superior training despite your comparative youth. A pity, but she will probably never realize that her own resistance will keep her from becoming a truly capable Jerbiton.

## Your Goals

Fabienne must be made to see that her lack of confidence is preventing her from progressing as a wizard. By engaging her in conversation, you can eventually lead her to the conclusion that she sets her own limitations. If she cannot overcome her faults, you will have to assume leadership of the expedition.

## Group Relations

Face it, no one likes a meddler. Thus, no one really likes *you*, but you've learned to accept that.

However, that doesn't stop you from trying to help people understand their motivations better. After all, if they learn what it is about themselves that makes them unhappy, they'll thank you for it.

## Roleplaying Philippe

You have a good grasp of what makes other act the way they do: Fabienne is underconfident, Bertrand and his son Le Fort share some deep secret, Étienne feels insignificant, Guillaume wants to make a name for himself, Gloria enjoys killing, Claude hates wizards, and you...you are motivated completely by



logic. Bring these facts up when in conversation with the persons in question; in this way, you can guide them to cast aside their petty motivations in favor of more lofty ones. Be blunt about it—after all, sheltered sensibilities are part of the problem. Steeple your fingers whenever you engage in an important discussion.

**Quote:** “It would appear that we are divided. [pause] If you cannot make a decision for us, then I will.”

## Spells

Philipe's wizard's sigil (the “signature” of his magic) is that those who perceive his spells feel curiously detached from the world.

### *Words of the Unbroken Silence*

Creo Mentem 5

Casting Bonus: +13

Range: Near/Sight, Duration: Momentary,

Target: Individual

Lets you say two words directly to the mind of a target. The target can recognize your voice and knows that the message is of supernatural origin.

If you have a clear crystal to use as a focus when casting this spell, it gives you a +2 bonus to your casting roll.

### *Return of Mental Lucidity*

Creo Mentem 20; Ritual

Casting Bonus: +13

Range: Touch, Duration: Instant, Target:

Individual

Cancels the effects (short of death) of a malign Mentem spell if you can match or exceed the level of the spell with this ritual's level + a stress die.

This is a ritual spell, meaning it requires the use of raw vis and special preparation. You are not likely to be able to use it in this scenario, but you do have it in your repertoire, should you play Philipe in a continuing saga.

### *Sight of the Transparent Motive*

Intéllego Mentem 10

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Near; Duration: Momentary,

Target: Individual

Spell Focus: A clear crystal (+3)

Detects the general motive most powerfully influencing the target at the moment. General motives are such things as fear, anger, and greed, not specific things like the desire to look good before one's superiors.

You have a small, clear crystal which gives you a +3 bonus to your roll when casting this spell.

### *Perception of the Conflicting Motives*

Intéllego Mentem 15

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Near, Duration: Momentary,

Target: Individual

You can detect the conflicting motives behind one target's actions. Thus you might learn that a guard feels conflict between fear and duty. This spell is often used before application of a Muto spell, since it is usually easier to change a target's emotions after you've sensed them than it is to create emotions.

### *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie*

Intéllego Mentem 20

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Sight, Duration: Concentration,

Target: Individual

Requisite: Auram

For as long as you maintain this spell, the target exhales a misty breath with each spoken lie. Small bits of ice form on the person's lips if the lie is particularly severe. In winter, when breath is visible anyway, lies produce a greater than normal amount of mist (the mist actually billows out). A target who makes a Communication + Guile stress roll of 15+ can determine whether any given statement will be taken by the spell as a lie. The spell can be defeated through extensive and judicious application of Creo Auram and Perdo Auram spells, and a demon is able to manipulate it in any way it wishes, as demons are the embodiment of deception and are never caught in a lie if they do not wish to be. If the spell focus of an almond is used, it must be crushed during the casting of the spell.

You can use a single almond to gain a +1 bonus to cast this spell, and you carry several. The almond must be crushed during the casting of the spell.

## Posing the Silent Question

Intéllego Mentem 20

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Sight, Duration: Momentary,

Target: Individual

You can ask one silent mental question of the target, then detect the answer. The truth of the answer is limited by the knowledge of the target. Questions to the effect of "What would you do if . . . ?" often receive inaccurate replies. You are likely to get what the target thinks he would do, not necessarily what he would really do. The target of this spell does not notice the questioning unless he or she makes a magic resistance roll.

## Search the Soul

Muto Mentem 10

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Sight, Duration: Sun/Moon,

Target: Individual

Requisite: Intéllego

You can make the target aware of his own hidden motives. For the duration of this spell, the target perceives his motivations clearly, but need not choose to act upon them. At the end of the spell's duration, the target gradually comes to believe that the magically-altered perceptions were false.

This spell was invented by your master to force people to recognize their asinine beliefs in things that are patently incorrect.

## Subtle Shift of Heart

Muto Mentem 10

Casting Bonus: +17

Range: Eye/Sight, Duration: Sun/Moon,

Target: Individual

Subtly change an emotion into a related but different one. For instance, loathing can become hate, and greed can become jealousy.

If you have a figure representing the person on whom you cast this spell, you gain a +3 bonus to your casting roll.

## Wizard's Subtle Touch

Intéllego Vim 5

Casting Bonus: +10

Range: Near/Far, Duration: Concentration,

Target: Individual

You can tell whether an object is magical by concentrating on it. After a short time the object seems to vibrate softly if it is magical.

This spell can only detect magical effects of level 50 or higher—for every five levels by which the spell level is increased, the minimum level that can be detected is reduced by ten. Thus, a level 30 *Wizard's Subtle Touch* can detect "zero level" effects such as traces of powerful magic or the recent presence of weak magic. The addition of further levels gives increased sensitivity and information.

You keep the toe of a frog on a thong attached to your sash. Using it gives you a +1 bonus to cast this spell.

## Wizard's Boost (Mentem)

Muto Vim 20

Casting Bonus: +10

Range: Reach, Duration: Special, Target:

Individual

You cast this as a Mentem spell of a level less than this one is cast. The effect of the other spell increases 5 levels in power, but not past the level of the *Wizard's Boost*. The effects of the extra 5 levels of power are for the storyguide to determine. A *Wizard's Boost* may never affect the same spell more than once. You can also cast this spell simultaneously with one of your own, if you can make an Intelligence + Concentration stress roll of 9+. There are nine other versions of this spell, each affecting one of the other Hermetic Forms.

## Gather the Essence of the Beast

Muto Vim 15

Casting Bonus: +10

Range: Touch/Near, Duration: Instant,

Target: Individual

Concentrates the raw vis in a corpse into one part of that corpse, which can then be removed. This spell lets you gather all the raw vis you find without lugging around entire corpses of beasts. Note that the vis in many magical creatures is already concentrated in this manner in some specific organ, though this spell will allow you to relocate that vis if you wish.

# Fabienne

## Maga

Age: 29

Confidence: 3

Size: 0

### Characteristics

Intelligence: +3

*Bookworm*

Strength: +1

*Hidden reserves*

Presence: +1

*Genial*

Dexterity: -1

*Gawky Limbs*

Perception: 0

Stamina: +1

*Tough-Minded*

Communication: 0

Quickness: -2

*Lumbering*

**Personality Traits:** Confident -2, Careful +2,  
Brave +1, Irritable +2

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Def	Dam	Fat
Fist/Kick	-1	-1	-2	+1	+1
Quarterstaff	+4	+3	+4	+4	+1

Encumbrance: 0

Soak: +1

Armor: None

**Abilities (Specialties):** Affinity with Terram 3,  
Chirurgy 3 (Set Bones), Etiquette 2  
(Peasants), Folk Ken 2 (Peasants), Intrigue 3  
(Tact), Magic Theory 4 (Investigating  
Enchantments), Medicine 2 (Diseases),  
Organization Lore (The Order) 3 (Historical  
Figures), Parma Magica 2 (versus Rego),  
Scribe Latin 3 (Illumination), Sing 2  
(Ballads), Speak Latin 5 (Precise Grammar),  
Speak Provençal 5 (Expansive Vocabulary)

### Fatigue Levels

- Fresh (0)
- Winded (0)
- Weary (-1)
- Tired (-3)
- Dazed (-5)
- Unconscious

### Body Levels

- Unhurt (0)
- Hurt (0)
- Light Wounds (-1)
- Medium Wounds (-3)
- Heavy Wounds (-5)
- Incapacitated



## Arts

Creo 3 <sup>4</sup>	Animál 0	Ignem 1
Intéllego 3	Aquam 2	Imáginem 0
Muto 5	Auram 0	Mentem 0
Perdo 4	Corpus 2	Terram 9
Rego 4	Herbam 7	Vim 2

## Virtues & Flaws

**Gentle Gift (+1):** Unlike other magi, whose Magical natures disturb normal people and animals, your Gift is subtle and quiet. You do not suffer the usual penalties for interacting with people and animals.

**Deft Art—Terram (+1):** You are particularly skilled with Terram. You suffer only half the normal penalty for casting Terram spells under unusual circumstances and when using non-standard voicings/gestures.

**Magical Affinity—Terram (+3):** You have an innate knack for casting spells dealing with Terram. You gain +3 on all spell rolls and Lab Totals involving this kind of magic. (The bonus has already been added to casting totals below.)

**Rigid Magic (-2):** You cannot use vis when you cast spells. Thus, you cannot extend the duration or range of spells, increase your spell rolls, cast ritual magic, or create permanent effects. You can use vis in the laboratory.

**Stingy Master (-2):** Veristus trained you less thoroughly than most masters train their apprentices, so you have had only 130 points to buy spells and 130 points to purchase Arts instead of the customary 150 for each.

**Tormenting Master (-1):** Your master, Veristus (VARE-ist-oos), feels that you are not capable of passing the apprentice's gauntlet, and makes your life more difficult as a result.

## Background

After nearly seventeen years of study, your apprenticeship to Veristus of House Jerbiton (YARE-bih-tahn) should be nearly at an end. But it isn't. Almost since the day Veristus persuaded your parents to give you to him rather than send you to a convent, he has been a cold and harsh master, first teaching you something, then forcing you to disregard everything you had learned.

Perhaps Veristus has had some overall strategy in this manner of instruction, but even with all of your hard-learned knowledge you can't perceive the method to his erratic behavior. He may be trying to teach you flexibility, or perhaps this is traditional for the followers of Jerbiton. In any event, you are confused by his inconstant attention to your education, and you have begun to despair that the failing is yours, not his; you may actually be something of a disappointment to him, and he may regret having ever taken you as an apprentice. If this is truly the case, you may never pass your apprentice's gauntlet, the test that determines your worthiness to be a full-fledged wizard.

Veristus has delayed your gauntlet anyway. Twice last year he found a reason not to administer it, and this year he has only promised that it

will be "soon." Your worst fear is that he is deliberately holding you back because you don't have what it takes to be a wizard of the Order of Hermes.

This particular fear stems from a conversation you had with Philipe, the apprentice of Sentus. Philipe is your junior, but is just as far along in his studies as you are in yours. Philipe suggested that

Veristus might be delaying your gauntlet

*because you can't fathom why he's*

delaying your gauntlet, that a

Jerbiton who cannot divine

the motivations of others is

hardly fit to represent the

House or the Order.

Philipe himself is

expecting to

undergo his own

gauntlet shortly

after he returns

from this jour-

ney.

You are

trying to

concentrate

trate



less on your own troubles and more on your current undertaking. Your covenant has sent you and Philippe to trade raw vis—the essence of magic—for books at the venerable covenant of Mistridge. You volunteered to lead the expedition—and were humiliated that the only magus who voted against you was Veristus. It has completely shaken your faith that you were the right choice, and you are relying heavily on the advice of your friend Bertrand, the old grog-sergeant. Philippe's offers of assistance only irritate you; if you give him any authority, he will soon try to take it all, and you will only end up proving that Veristus was right.

### *Your Goals*

You *must* maintain control over this expedition. Philippe is probably the better choice, but you are not about to let him know that. Bertrand will help you control the grogs, but with Philippe's relentless logic, he could probably take charge any time he really wanted to.

### *Group Relations*

Philippe annoys you with his constant meddling, even when he isn't talking to you. As a result, you have a short temper where Philippe and his endless questions and examinations are concerned.

You also once spent a night with Étienne, the minstrel, although afterward you realized he had only seduced you for his own amusement. Now you refuse to talk to him any more than you have to, for fear that he will work his wiles on you again.

### *Roleplaying Fabienne*

You are underconfident, and have a hard time making decisions without seeking approval. Until you know you have made the right choice, you tend to be cautious and touchy. Bite your lip while you are considering your options.

**Quote:** "Do you think we ought to stop? Or press on? Whatever you decide is fine with me."

## Spells

Fabienne's wizard's sigil (the "signature" of her magic) is the sound of falling rock that accompanies all her spells.

### *Revealed Flaws of Mortal Flesh*

Intéllego Corpus 10

Casting Total: +6

Range: Sight, Duration: Momentary, Target: Individual

You are able to find any medical defects in a person or being who you are looking at. You must possess something of emotional value to the person (an arcane connection).

### *Piercing Shaft of Wood*

Muto Herbam 25

Casting Total: +12

Aimed: +2

Range: Touch/Near, Duration: Instant, Target: Individual

Requisite: Rego

Turns a piece of wood into a sleek, barbed, strong shaft that flies through the air at a target. Damage depends on the size of the item from which the shaft is formed: staff (upper size limit) +10, 2-foot branch +8, wand +5. If it pierces a body, removing the shaft causes the target to automatically lose a Body level, unless a Stamina stress roll of 6+ is made (add the Chirurgy score of the one who removes the shaft).

You can use your own staff to cast this spell, but it might be destroyed or lost in the process. If you have an arrow shaft in addition to the required piece of wood, it will add +1 to your roll to cast the spell.

### *Moonbeam*

Creo Ignem 1

Casting Total: +5

Range: Special, Duration: Special, Target: Special

Causes a gentle light, bright enough to read by, to shine down from above and illuminate the area described by your encircled arms. Lasts as long as you hold your arms in a circle.

You have a piece of quartz, a rock associated with the moon, which gives you a +5 bonus to cast this spell.

### *Seal the Earth*

Creo Terram 15

Casting Total: +16



Range: Near/Sight, Duration: Sun/Instant,  
Target: Room

Creates enough dirt to fill in a pit of up to 6 paces across and 3 paces deep.

You can use a handful of dirt to add +3 to your roll to cast this spell.

### *Rampart of the Protecting Earth*

Creo Terram 20

Casting Total: +16

Range: Near/Sight, Duration: Sun/Instant,  
Target: Special

Creates a wall of packed dirt up to 10 paces wide, 4 paces high, and 1 pace thick. It has a Soak of +15, and 3 "Body levels" and can be knocked down by repeated striking.

A clod of tightly-packed dirt gives a +1 to your casting bonus.

### *Eyes of the Eons*

Intéllego Terram 10

Casting Total: +16

Range: Sight, Duration:  
Momentary/Concentration, Target: Small

Determines the age of any nonliving target to within 10% of its actual age.

### *The Forgiving Earth*

Muto Terram 15

Casting Total: +18

Range: Near, Duration: Sun/Instant, Target:  
Special

Weakens earth in a 15-pace-by-15-pace area, making packed dirt as loose as plowed ground.

You have a handful of silt which gives you a +3 bonus to cast this spell.

### *The Earth's Carbuncle*

Rego Terram 15

Casting Total: +17

Targeting Modifier: +1

Range: Near/Sight, Duration: Momentary,  
Target: Special

Requisite: Muto

Causes a 1-pace circle of ground to become jagged, just under the surface, and those fragments burst into the air. Anyone standing on the circle is thrown into the air and hit with flying debris.

Damage is +10. On landing, a victim is partially buried.

Veristus once took you into a cavern near the covenant, where you "harvested" the tips of small stalactites. You have three of them, and using one gives you a +3 bonus to cast this spell. Using more than one doesn't increase the bonus—you carry the others in case one is broken or lost.

### *Wind of Mundane Silence*

Perdo Vim 19

Casting Total: +7

Range: Reach/Near, Duration: Instant, Target:  
Room

You raise a metaphorical "breeze" that blows the magic away from an area, canceling the effects of any spell there. You can cancel the effects of any spell if, with this spell, you can double the original caster's Technique + Form score (at the time he cast the spell) on a quality die + the level of your spell - 5. If the spell to be eliminated was not cast by a magus, the number to match is double the caster's Might score. If the spell was from a magic item, the value to beat is double the level of the spell. Parmae can be blown down if the total exceeds 10 x Parma Magica. *Wind of Mundane Silence* does not affect spells of Instant duration. Magical things near the area of the Wind wave slightly from the "breeze."

an ease factor of 12 on an unavoidable Fatigue test.

**Firing missiles:** There are two places where characters can get a view of—and hence a shot at—the Stormrider. One is at the base of the cliff, where they first see him, but because of the range, the intervening cliff-edge, and high winds, all shots at him are at an ease factor of 15+ (18+ if they are using weapons designed for short-range use, such as javelins). Firing or throwing weapons from the top of the hill is much easier (9+ for missile weapons, 12+ for thrown weapons), but PCs in a position to make these attacks may be more directly involved with the animated tree. Note that the Stormrider does not even notice he is being fired at until a projectile actually strikes him, so he is not likely to react immediately, potentially allowing several attacks against him. If he becomes aware he is being attacked from the base of the cliff, though, he merely steps back out of sight.

**Casting spells:** The two apprentices' best contribution to the attack may be to cast spells at the Stormrider. Fabienne might wish to use her *Piercing Shaft of Wood*, while Philipe might wish to use his *Wizard's Boost* to assist her, or perhaps to cast a spontaneous spell of some sort. Again, if the Stormrider realizes that he can be seen from the base of the cliff, he steps back.

Unless attacked by missiles or spells, the Stormrider is completely oblivious to the approach of the group. Even when he *does* become aware of them, he does little more than step out of their line of sight, if possible. Because of the animated tree which guards him, he firmly believes that there is nothing anyone can do to stop him.

After the end of the fourth round of PC activity, read the following aloud:

•Where the storm clouds roil the most a flickering light has appeared, swiftly drawing

closer. Bolts of lightning flash about it like the grasping fingers of God, but the light eludes the bolts, approaching ever nearer. You recognize it instantly. It is the Storm Steed. •

## The Tree Lord

The twisted oak beside the trail is the tree that the Stormrider has cast *Lord of the Trees* upon, and as the characters approach it, you should read the following:

•As you draw near the oak tree, it twists toward you with an ominous rumbling, reaching out with its ancient limbs. In the flashing light, the gnarled trunk seems to leer like some monstrous gargoyle, and the creaking and groaning coming from the tree sounds almost like diabolical laughter. •

The tree's function is to prevent anyone from reaching the Stormrider. As long as the Stormrider concentrates on it, it attacks anyone attempting to come up the path, using its four great limbs to



### The Animated Tree

**Characteristics:** Cun -5, Per 0, Pre +1, Com -5, Str +6, Sta +6, Dex 0, Qik 0

**Faerie Might:** 24

**Size:** +4

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Limb	+5	+7	-5	+16

**Soak:** +10\*

**Fatigue:** n/a

**Body levels:** OK/OK/OK, -1, -3, -6, Incap.

\*This Soak total is for spells directed against the tree. Ordinary weapons are practically useless against it, as cutting off part of a branch merely shortens its reach slightly, and cutting it off at the trunk will take an extremely long time.



knock people back down the hill. It can attack once for each limb.

## The Stormrider's Rebirth

While the characters are occupied, the Storm Steed approaches ever closer. It arrives two rounds after its appearance. On the first round, read this:

•The Steed suddenly plunges down out of the wildly-surfing sky, heading straight for the Stormrider. Lightning crackles in its wake, and the winds roar so loudly you can barely hear the person next to you. •

The Steed continues flying downward at breakneck speed until it reaches the hilltop. At the end of the third round read this:

•With a burst of fire the Storm Steed arrives, its hooves striking up goutts of flame on the rocky hill. The Stormrider loses interest in all else, and the tree suddenly stiffens and ceases moving, its bizarrely-twisted shape the only evidence of its prior animation.

The demonic horse shivers in anticipation, snorting fire and stamping its burning hooves impatiently. Its whinny sounds like the distant rumble of thunder. The Stormrider steps boldly forward, reaching out with a mailed fist. His hand hesitates for a second over the dark beast's mane, then he grasps it tightly.



There is a brilliant flash as though lightning has struck the hill's peak, accompanied by a terrific burst of thunder. Those of you on the hill are hurled backward, tumbling haphazardly among the rocks. Bits of stone shower the entire area, testament to the massive power that has just been unleashed. Lightning hurtles from the sky, striking the hilltop again and again, and both Stormrider and Steed are lost in the blinding light. Then the lightning abruptly stops, leaving only an incandescent glow and an unearthly quiet.

A moment later, a terrific thunderbolt rips skyward with a deafening crash. The Stormrider sits mounted on the Steed, which hovers several feet above the blasted hilltop. The Stormrider raises his lance high over his head and shouts: "**Immortality is mine!**"•

## Power Unleashed

Now that Caeron is the Stormrider, he takes a moment to revel in his newfound power before riding off to pursue his revenge.

•Abruptly you realize that you have been lying among the rocks, gaping helplessly at this awesome scene. Now you can act. •

Once again, the players have a chance to attack the Stormrider. Missile-users now have a clearer shot at him, as his transformation has more or less destroyed the peak of the hill, removing all cover (reducing the ease factors under "Firing Missiles" on page 33 by +3). Additionally, since he has stopped concentrating on the spell, the animated tree is no longer an obstacle, and any characters on the hill can charge him unobstructed.

It takes one round to reach the Stormrider, plus an additional round for each five full points of protection provid-

ed by the character's armor. (*Ars Magica* usually uses a more detailed system, but this will suffice for now.)

The Stormrider ignores anyone charging up the hill if anyone is attacking him using missiles or spells. He hurls lightning bolts from his lance at anyone using spells, but because he is still new to using his power, he automatically misses—but only barely. This, however, still forces anyone trying to cast a spell directly at him to attempt a targeting roll of Perception + Finesse + a stress die against an ease factor of 9+. All the while, the Stormrider roars with laughter, taunting those who seek to stop him.

•"Pitiful! Ineffectual apprentices! You are less than worthless! **I am the Stormrider! I am armor and steel and thunder and lightning!** And soon—very soon—Grimgroth shall be on his knees **begging me for mercy!**"•

The Steed, however, is paying careful attention to approaching combatants, and when any of them come close enough to strike a blow, it abruptly leaps off the cliff, toward the ground—and perhaps any characters at the cliffbase. The Steed lands easily, amid a burst of fire. Anyone nearby can try to attack the Stormrider, but he merely parries them with the butt of his lance by way of defending himself. (Remember to roll the Stormrider's Initiative Total again.)

•The Stormrider draws a deep breath, apparently exhilarated with his new power. He levels his lance at you. Lightning plays up and down the shaft, and you feel your hair rising. Although a single bolt of lightning would reduce you to a smoking cinder, the Stormrider merely watches you. The Steed almost seems to be silently laughing at you. Finally, the Stormrider lifts his lance and says, "No. You shall go forth and tell the tale of my return, to make the women weep and





*the children wail. But know this: Cross my path again, and you will not go to Hell. I shall bring it to you." Then he and the horse are gone, leaving behind a trail of flaming hoofprints that wink out of existence as he moves out of sight. •*

## Aftermath

After the Stormrider has departed, the characters may want to heal wounds they suffered, and they may be very tired. The wizards especially may have lost

Fatigue levels by putting extra effort into spontaneous spells. This would be a good time to rest, and you should pointedly ask what everyone's current Fatigue levels are if they do not think of it themselves. Consult the Systems Briefing for information on recovery times for lost Fatigue.

While they are resting, the group discovers the remains of the Stormrider's camp, which is largely in disarray after having been through the storm. There is however a serviceable canvas tent which has only partly collapsed, and it can hold up to four people comfortably—"comfortable" being the operative word for purposes of resting.

## Dealing with the Unexpected

What happens if the players manage to kill the Stormrider during this scene? The storyguide could end the scenario at this point, or he could use some ingenuity to return the adventure to its ordained course.

The key to coping with unexpected events is to be prepared to improvise. For example, spontaneous magic being what it is, a clever player may come up with a way to remove the Stormrider from the hilltop before the Steed arrives, or to lock the joints of his armor so that he cannot move. Remember, though, that magic directed at the Stormrider himself encounters his Parma Magica (PAR-muh MAH-gee-kah), giving him a resistance roll of 20 (five times his Parma of 4) plus his score in the form being used against him, plus a stress die. Make sure you roll this die where the players cannot see, however, as a botch at this juncture is worse than not resisting at all. Treat any possible botch as though you rolled a 2, instead. (When the Stormrider is astride the Steed, he gains the benefit of the Steed's Faerie Might of 25, using that instead of his own Parma Magica.)

Spells designed to affect the Stormrider indirectly are a bit more problematic. As the Stormrider is most likely concentrating on keep-

ing the tree animated, he cannot fast-cast a counter-spell, and will probably be completely affected by the spell. You should be prepared to adjust events accordingly. For example, if Fabienne managed to dissolve the cliff-face under the Stormrider with a spontaneous Perdo Terram spell, plunging him down the cliff, the Storm Steed could change directions to compensate, catching its rider in mid-air.

Another strong possibility is that someone will severely injure the Stormrider with a particularly strong blow. Simply having the Stormrider ignore it will discourage the players, as will having the damage only slow him down for a moment. If the Stormrider should suffer a massive amount of damage, let him fall, quivering feebly. The Storm Steed then goes to him, using its whipping winds to drive away anyone who might further damage its rider. At its touch, the Stormrider recovers enough to mount the Steed, and immediately rides off. He doesn't remain to deliver threats; he's in far too much pain. Although the Stormrider should escape, even the power of the Storm Steed is not enough to heal him completely. For future encounters, subtract one or two Body levels from his total.

Within the tent are the last material possessions that Caeron thought he would need until he became the Stormrider. Most of the items are for day-to-day living (for example, clothing, eating utensils, and stores of food) but in a locked wooden chest the characters discover some items of magical use: a small, corked bottle, a branch of holly, a collection of thorns, a pouch containing spearmint leaves, an elaborately-woven net, some bark, assorted pieces of cone-shaped rock, and a quantity of sawdust. In addition, there is a heavy book with an iron lock upon it. If the characters examine the chest itself, point out that it once had some engraving on it, but the words have been scratched out. (A spontaneous level 10 *Intéllego Imáginem* spell, with a *Herbam* requisite, reveals that the writing originally read "CAERON.")

Either Fabienne or Philippe immediately recognizes the contents of the chest as foci for formulaic Hermetic spells. An Intelligence + Magic Theory roll tells them what spell an individual focus is for, if the roll is equal to half the level of the spell or greater. If the magus actually has the spell in question, he need not roll—he knows what spell the focus is intended for automatically.

The foci correspond to spells as follows:

**Corked bottle:** *Disguise of the Putrid Aroma* (ReAn 5)

**Branch of holly:** *Curse of the Unruly Tongue* (ReCo 5)

**Thorns:** *Wall of Thorns* (CrHe 20)

**Spearmint leaves:** *Converse with Plant and Tree* (InHe 25)

**Net:** *Coil of Entangling Plants* (ReHe 20)

**Bark:** *Lord of the Trees* (ReHe 25)

**Cone-shaped rock:** *The Earth's Carbuncle* (ReTe 15)

**Sawdust:** *Curse of the Rotted Wood* (PeHe 10)

The book can be opened as easily as the chest, but remember that any violent means used severely damage the book. Magic is probably a better way. Inside, the book is clearly the lab notes of a Hermetic wizard. Everything is written in Latin, including descriptions of how to cast the spells listed above, with the exclusion of *Converse with Plants & Trees* and *Lord of the Trees*. This book can be used to learn any of these spells, although it takes at least a full season to do so. Thus, the book is more or less useless now, but will have value in the future.

Several pages are devoted to "Fallemon's" quest for raw vis, and one entire page details his difficulty with a powerful faerie named Marradal.

(If a player wishes to read it in depth, give that player the handout labeled "The Faerie" to read aloud.)

• "...Looking to the faeries of the mountain was a tremendous mistake, and I have paid for it dearly. The Wind-Lord Marradal managed to overcome his guards and escaped, but not before placing this thrice-damned curse upon me. My potions are useless now. I could just as well be drinking water. Marradal could not have known how well he has destroyed my last chance at immortality, but I will never give him the satisfaction of giving up. There must be some other way."•

This is a reference to Caeron's attempt to extort raw vis from the Fey. Periodically throughout the text, Caeron makes reference to Marradal as "that damned faerie" and entertains notions of revenge.

Near the end of the book the notes turn toward speculation regarding the Stormrider, and another passage stands out.

(Give the players the handout labeled "The Stormrider.")



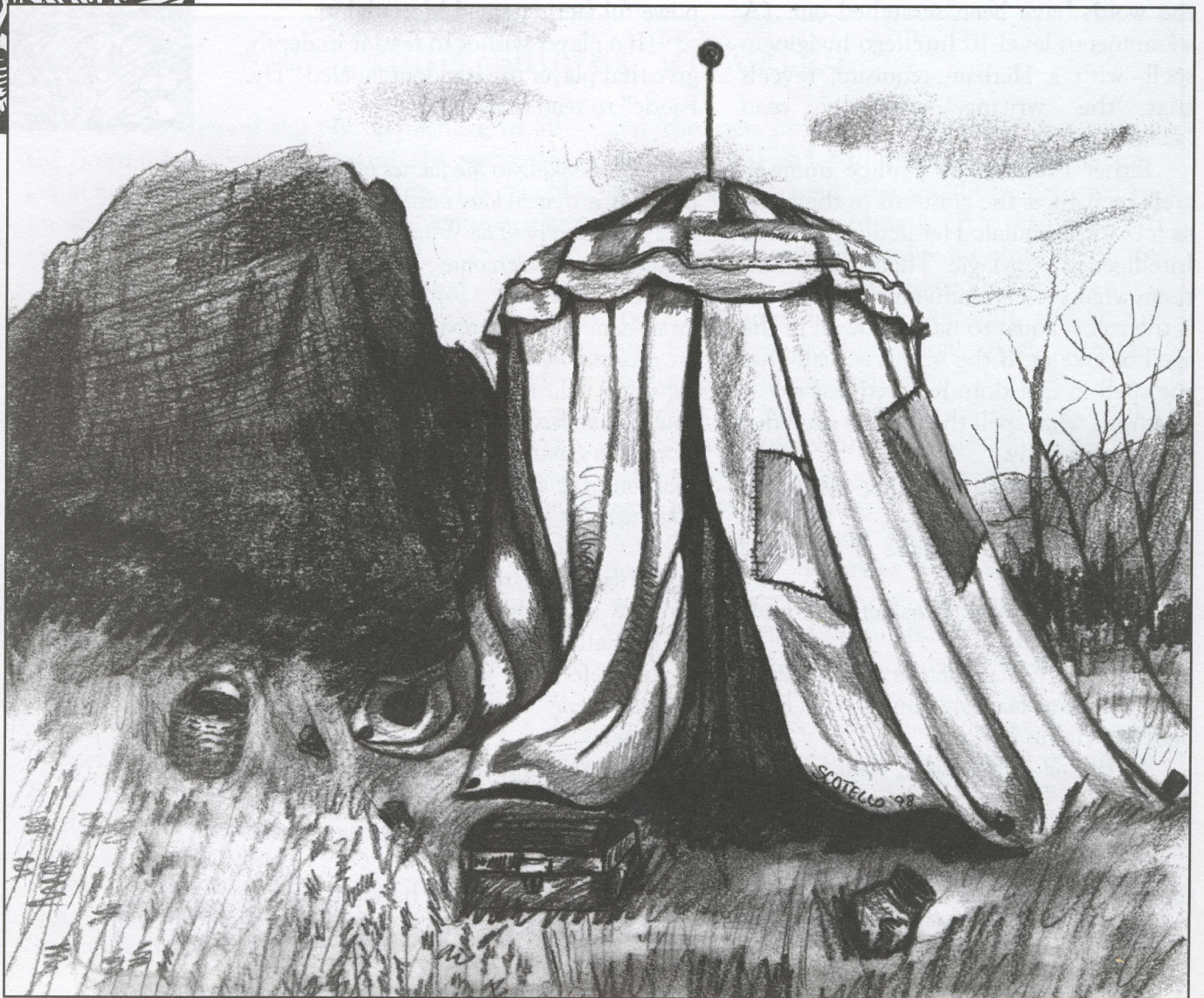


•“...Grimgroth will pay for his insult, and he shall pay with his life. The power of the Stormrider shall not only counteract the effects of the aging, but it shall grant me the wherewithal to crush Grimgroth under my heel. And if I must grind Mistridge to pieces in the process, so be it. The Order of Hermes can punish Caeron of Bonisagus, but the Stormrider is well beyond their reach. And I will still be bending thunderbolts to my will when their longevity has turned to dust...”•

Everything after this is highly technical and otherwise uninformative. The details of what Caeron means by these passages are buried in the book, if they are

mentioned at all. If anyone truly wishes to sort through it, it takes several hours of concentrating on the book alone; not something that can be done while marching through the rain.

When the characters decide to depart, ask the players to roll Perception + Awareness + a simple die. Those who roll a 9+ notice that the landscape atop the hill does not seem nearly as ruined as they originally thought, and closer inspection reveals that little actual damage has been done. This is because much of the scene atop the hill was the work of Marradal's faerie glamour, but they have no way of knowing this yet.



# Chapter V

## Stalking the Storm

### Resuming Pursuit

It's a simple matter to follow the Stormrider; one simply follows the trail of devastation. All along the path trees are uprooted or split asunder, debris is scattered in all directions, and lightning-lit fires burn unchecked. The only thing preventing the fires from burning out of control is the relentless rain.

The storm doesn't let up until the Stormrider is defeated. Although future descriptions may not specifically mention the rain, you should make it a point to describe the endless rainfall whenever you feel it is appropriate. (For example, if the players ask if they hear anything, tell them: "The noise of the wind and the rain makes it difficult to pick out particular sounds, but...")

When the group decides to pursue the Stormrider, progress is easier—the Stormrider has cleared the path for them:

- Once you depart the hill the going is easier, although not by much. The full force of the rain seems to have followed the Stormrider when he left, and the occasional lightning-spawned fire provides a spot of illumination. The trail leads more or less south, judging by the dark bulk of Mount Tierné, turning southeast directly toward Castle d'Uverre upon reaching the road. •

### The Castle

- As the towers of Castle d'Uverre come into view through the torrential rain, it is plain to see that the Stormrider is here. The castle is in flames, and men on the battlements valiantly attempt to fight the fires, but with little success. While the Stormrider continues to attack, the castle is doomed.

The burning hoofprints of the Storm Steed completely ring the castle. Within the ring lie many wounded soldiers, screaming for aid. Many more lie dead. At the main gate, several men have thrown down their arms and are frantically trying to get back inside. All the while, the Stormrider continues to circle the castle, roaring with laughter as he hurls lightning at the walls. •

The heroes are a good distance away at the edge of the woods, but still close enough to make out what is happening. An arrow shot at the Stormrider might hit when he passes, but the ease factor for the shot would be 21+.

As there is little the PCs can do from this range, they will likely want to move closer, perhaps while the Stormrider is on the far side of the castle. However, as the characters leave the shelter of the woods, the castle gates open.







• Suddenly the massive gates of the castle swing open, and a small procession of armored knights rides out. The men outside are nearly trampled as they scramble frantically to slip past the knights and into the questionable safety of the burning fortress.

Leading the four knights is an elderly man in expensive, polished armor and a fine cloak. His shield device and embroidered eye-patch mark him as Baron d'Uverre, and although an impressive and sturdy figure atop his dappled charger, his age clearly shows. He and his retinue rush forward, taking up a position directly in the Stormrider's path. •

The characters may wish to attract the baron's attention, but even though they notice the presence of the apprentices and their comrades, the baron's party remains steadfastly where it is. A moment later, the Stormrider thunders into view, reining up a short distance from the baron and his men.

• The Stormrider comes to a halt some twenty paces from the knights. He sits motionlessly staring at the baron, as his Steed restlessly paws the ground. Lightning crackles along his lance, and a hellish glow emanates from his helmet's eye-slit. Finally, the baron raises one hand and speaks.

"Why have you returned? Surely you found peace when the wizards from Mistridge separated you from that demon-Steed once before."

"You have lived far too long, old man," rumbles the Stormrider. He lowers his lance to point it directly at the baron. "Twas a wizard of Mistridge called me back to the land of the living, and there must be a balance 'twixt Hell and Earth." And with that, he unleashes a massive bolt of lightning.

The bolt strikes the baron squarely, hurling him from his horse. Even from this distance you can see flames shooting from his armor, and you can only hope he is already dead. With a cry of anguish and outrage, his knights draw their weapons and charge.

The Stormrider casually gestures, raising a wind that tears into the knights and their mounts. Their charge dissolves into chaos as the horses panic and wheel frantically. Three knights are instantly thrown to the ground, and you see the other struggling desperately to regain control of his horse as it carries him off into the woods. Still too far away, you can only watch in horror as the Stormrider skewers the three fallen knights one by one. •

The characters probably wish to attack the Stormrider, and so should roll their Initiative Totals. Do not roll for the Stormrider yet; for the first couple of rounds, he is distracted by the ghostly voices of those he has just slain. "**Be silent!**" he shouts at their corpses.

This is the first battle in which the Stormrider bothers to engage in combat with the player characters. After the PCs' free rounds, roll separate Initiative Totals for the Stormrider and his Steed. While the Storm Steed uses its whipping winds to disorient opponents, the Stormrider rides forward, attempting to impale anyone who approaches.

Fighting while mounted gives a character a number of advantages: a bonus equal to his Ride skill +3 (for high ground) to his Initiative Total, +3 to Attack and Defense Totals, and an automatic Encumbrance of 0. If the Stormrider charges, add +3 to his Attack score in addition to his +3 for simply being mounted. If a defender with a higher Initiative Total than his charging opponent thinks to set a longshaft weapon against the charge, he gains a bonus of +3 to his Attack and Defense Totals.

Should anyone actually reach him, the Stormrider again clubs at him with his lance, and this time the Steed joins in, using its hooves to fend off attackers. Whether the Stormrider misses his target or not, it takes him one round to turn about and charge again.

The flaming hoofprints look dangerous but they are actually little more than an annoyance. They cause +3 damage to anyone touching them, but are easily avoided, even when they are extremely close together, as they are only one foot high. Strangely enough, while neither smothering nor dousing with water puts the flames out, the fires don't spread either. A magus may attempt to extinguish the flames with a spontaneous *Perdo Ignem* spell only to discover that he is unable to do so. The storyguide shouldn't tell him the reason why his magic is ineffective (because the flames are an illusion, requiring a *Perdo Imáginem* spell), allowing him to come up with his own explanation—that his spontaneous spell was too weak, for example.

The party may believe that, as with the original Stormrider, the fires will extinguish when the Storm Steed takes to the air, but you should not verify it for them.

After three rounds of two-sided combat the Stormrider is distracted again, this time by something in the woods to the south.

•*Suddenly the Stormrider hesitates, turning to look toward the woods. "No," he grumbles, apparently at someone you cannot see, "Not you."*•

If he is currently surrounded, the Stormrider tries to break free and ride away. To do this he needs to roll a higher Initiative Total than all the opponents engaging him in combat. If he disengages from the melee, he begins riding away on that round. His opponents may then use their full movement to chase him, hoping to come back into striking range. If a PC catches him using less than half of his possible movement, he can attack. Otherwise, the Stormrider will continue to move away each round, riding directly toward Mount Tierné and disappearing into the woods, leaving behind a scene of

destruction and a multitude of blazing hoofprints that quickly wink out.

At this point, any characters who battled the Stormrider need to check for loss of Fatigue. The baron is, unfortunately, already dead.

## The New Baron

•*Immediately after the Stormrider vanishes into the woods a second party of knights rides forth from the castle, followed by a troop of men. One knight, bearing a modified version of the baron's coat-of-arms, issues some orders and his men begin tending to the wounded. Sir Guillaume instantly recognizes this man as Sir Luc, husband of the baron's daughter, and the baron's heir. With two other knights, he rides forward to meet you.*•

Sir Luc had deliberately been slower in donning his armor than the baron. His delay worked in his favor, though—within the day he will be officially recognized as the new baron d'Uverre. But for now, he has all the authority he needs, and it shows in his confident demeanor. If he feels any remorse over the death of the old baron, or the damage to the castle, he hides it well.

He immediately recognizes Sir Guillaume and greets him as though he were already the baron.

•*"It is good to see you in good health, Guillaume. Now that my father-in-law is dead, I will need every able-bodied man when we hunt down this scourge and put an end to it...and make sure it never returns again."*•

Sir Luc barely acknowledges the presence of the others while he speaks to Guillaume. As far as he is concerned, they are merely mercenaries under Guillaume's





command, although in the back of his mind he realizes that they must be from the covenant where Guillaume has been staying. If the apprentices have used any obvious magic, he displays a small amount of deference toward them, although little more than a nod.

The reappearance of the Stormrider and the baron's death have given Sir Luc two things that he desperately desired: the barony and an excuse to attack Mistridge. The Stormrider's words to the former baron about being summoned back by a wizard of Mistridge—although meant to describe Caeron—sounded completely different to the inhabitants of Castle d'Uverre. And since Mistridge is now a threat to the valley, it is up to the valley's liege-lord to end that threat.

Luc begins by suggesting that Sir Guillaume join him in "an armed visit" to

Mistridge, then gradually drops all pretence and swears to tear Mistridge down stone-by-stone "until it is nothing more than a legend to frighten children with." In the unlikely circumstance that Sir Guillaume agrees to join him, Sir Luc assumes the rest of the party volunteers as well and the storyguide can pick up the adventure with Chapter 6: Reaping The Whirlwind, remembering that they will be with Sir Luc's party when the Stormrider arrives.

If Sir Guillaume finds it morally objectionable to join Sir Luc's invading force, Sir Luc first threatens him, then—realizing that Guillaume is perhaps in the company of dangerous wizards—proclaims him a coward and promises to deal with him after he has attended to "the sorcerers in the tower." He then returns to his castle to supervise the gathering of the necessary

## Sir Luc

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

**Age:** 36

**Size:** 0

**Confidence:** 3

**Personality Traits:** Vindictive +3, Ambitious +2, Cunning +1

**Reputations:** Manipulative +2 (Val du Bosque)

Weapon/Attack	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Longsword/Shield*	+7	+8	+13	+6	+7

\*Mounted

**Soak:** +14

**Fatigue levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Body levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Incapacitated

**Abilities:** Ride 1, Shield and Weapon 5

**Equipment:** Full chain mail, kite shield

**Encumbrance:** 0 on horseback, -5 on foot (this score must be subtracted from his Init, Atk, Dfn, and Fat scores if Sir Luc is unhorsed)

Sir Luc is the eldest son of one of Baron d'Uverre's vassals, and as such was fortunate enough to marry the baron's daughter, Francesca. Unfortunately for her,

Luc was less interested in her than he was in taking the baron's place. His relentless ambition has driven away many of the baron's retainers, as all know that when the baron dies, Luc will become baron of Val du Bosque and they will owe fealty to him. With the exception of a handful of Sir Luc's loyal toadies, no one is looking forward to that day.

Luc's path to power is his relationship with the kelpie Seumas. Two years ago, Luc had a lover in the village of Armicstat, a young girl named Ariane (AR-ee-an). One night, at their meeting-place by the river Vreis, Sir Luc spied her being wooed by a stranger. As he watched, the man lured her into the river, where he transformed into a watery horse and drowned her. This was Seumas, who at the time merely saw a beautiful maiden by the water, and had no idea she was involved with the baron's heir.

Although Luc could be said to have no real love for anyone, he felt a great deal of fondness for the young Ariane and was filled with rage when he saw her die. He immediately charged the surprised faerie horse, and dealt Seumas a grievous blow. Seumas made to retreat, but Luc doggedly

forces (via messengers) and oversee temporary repairs to the structure.

If the players decide to challenge Sir Luc, point out that he has plenty of troops only a short distance away—more than enough to capture or perhaps kill the characters before they do Sir Luc any serious harm. If Sir Guillaume attacks Sir Luc, the new baron enters single combat with him, ordering his men not to interfere—and the player characters quickly find themselves surrounded by Sir Luc's men to prevent *their* interference. The PCs would be better off preventing Guillaume from getting into the fight, rather than attempting to hinder Sir Luc.

It is possible that one of the apprentices might wish to use magic on Sir Luc. There is really nothing to prevent this, but either Sir Luc or his men will notice, and Luc will happily use this as an excuse

to throw the lot of them into a cell. You might wish to point out to the players that they are outnumbered, and worse, on foot.

## The River Troll

•The Stormrider's trail leads through a small copse of trees and directly to the river. The river is overflowing due to the heavy rains, but the Stormrider was undaunted, as the trail of broken branches continues on the opposite bank. Strangely, while the Storm Steed's flaming hoofprints vanished immediately after it fled, near the center of the river is a circle of flame, and the water inside the flaming ring boils and bubbles wildly, as though something just under the surface is struggling to rise. •



pursued Seumas until the wounded kelpie could flee no more. Luc moved in to deliver the death-blow, but Seumas promised the knight that if he would but stay his blade, he could give the mortal anything he desired.

Sir Luc suddenly realized that he had the upper hand with a magical creature, and let the faerie talk. By the next dawn, Sir Luc had all but forgotten Ariane, and instead had agreed to a pact with Seumas that would end when Sir Luc was the new Baron d'Uverre. All that remained was for Seumas to find a way, and when Marradal came to him, the kelpie knew he had found that way.

Sir Luc's agenda is more ambitious than even Seumas knows. Luc has always heard the stories of the haunted silver mine (the Devil's Nostril, as it is known) near Mistridge, and how the wizards of that covenant work it for their own profit. Luc feels that if he could control the mine, then its bounty might fund an army, rather than just a castle. And with an army, Sir Luc could become not merely the most powerful man in Val du Bosque, but the most powerful man in Occitania. And since Seumas has told him that once the baron is dead the Stormrider will most likely

attack Mistridge next, he feels confident that the wizards could hardly hope to defeat his forces if they somehow managed to survive the Stormrider's assault.

**Description:** Sir Luc wears a mail coat under his tunic, and a mail coif over his curly brown hair. His eyes are a deep blue, and his expression ranges from disdain to naked ambition.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Sir Luc is used to getting things his own way, but is not stupid enough to demand anything from his superiors. Initially, when faced with the player characters, he is over-excited, due to the influence of the Stormrider's flaming circle. However, if faced with any serious resistance to his will outside of the circle, he relents, making vague threats about the future. (After all, when the group meets him, he has only just become Baron d'Uverre.) Play him as gruff and demanding, but do not go overboard—Luc has nothing to lose by waiting to exact retribution some other day.

**Quote:** "Think carefully about what you do here today—by tomorrow, you will have made an enemy of Baron d'Uverre."



This is a river troll, lurking under the water waiting for someone to approach. Marradal is deliberately maintaining the illusion of the circle of flame over the water hoping to delay the pursuing heroes. Tell the players that they know of a stone footbridge just a little further south and then them decide what they wish to do. If they don't quickly state that they are going to look for the bridge or some other route across, the river troll emerges from the river and lumbers forward to attack.

The troll uses its two huge fists each time it attacks, but as the characters damage it, it grows smaller and consequently deals less damage. When it is reduced to Size 0, it washes away, leaving behind a small greenish-grey eel. The eel is the essence of the troll's magical nature, and it returns to the water in two rounds unless they stop it somehow. If they capture it, play up how it gasps for breath while it is out of the water, and hopefully they will get the message. A battered and leaky bucket can be easily found nearby. Remember also that characters who phys-

ically exerted themselves while battling the troll need to check for Fatigue loss.

## Crossing the River

The ring of fire on the river continues to burn long after the troll has exited the water, but as before the flames neither spread nor get extinguished by the water—they will continue to burn until Marradal knows that they are no longer needed. If the characters want to avoid crossing here, they know of a stone footbridge just a little south of this site. If you wish to extend the session, feel free to have the footbridge washed out so that the players have to devise some other way over the river. Use your imagination, but remember that characters in armor who go underwater are probably doomed without some quick action or forethought on the part of the players.

### River Troll

**Characteristics:** Cun -5, Per 0, Pre n/a, Com -5, Str +3†, Stm +3†, Dex 0††, Qik -1††

**Faerie Might:** 20

**Size:** +5 (See below)

**Personality Traits:** Savage +4

<b>Weapon/Attack</b>	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam
Fists	+4	+4†	+2	+5 x Size

**Soak:** (Size x 2) + 3

**Body levels:** n/a—If dealt one Body level with a sharp weapon or two Body levels with a blunt weapon, the river troll loses one point of Size.

**Vis:** If the player characters manage to capture it (make a Quickness roll of 5+ to grasp it, followed by a Dexterity roll of 12+ to hold onto it) and keep it in water, it provides 5 pawns of Aquam vis. If they kill it or let it die, it provides only 2 pawns of vis.

†Add the troll's current Size to these statistics.

††Subtract the troll's current Size from these statistics.

**Description:** The river troll initially stands approximately twelve feet tall—a man-shaped mass of dripping weeds and moss. Its skin seems nearly translucent, and anyone who looks closely sees fish moving around inside its body.

**Playing the River Troll:** The Troll is rather inarticulate in the language of mortals, and at best can make deep burbling noises. However, it is communicating after a fashion, and you should strive to make it appear as though the troll is talking—just not in a language that makes any sense to the players. It might help to envision yourself talking with a mouthful of water.

**Quote:** "Bluh bwubbuh blub BWUBBLAH!"



(See the Storyguide's Briefing for information on drowning.)

## The Grove

•On the other side of the river you can see the progress of the Stormrider by following the trail of destruction as he ascends Mount Tierné. He appears to be heading in the direction of Mistridge. •

Mistridge is further west of the Stormrider, but never having visited the covenant, the group does not know this. Presumably the characters follow the trail, and after a good half-hour of climbing in the foothills they arrive at a small grove of pine trees. This is a grove where Sante Fabía has appeared in the past, and it has a divine aura of 2, meaning all magical activities here (including those of the Stormrider) are at  $-2$  to the die roll. Additionally, the Storm Steed (being a



faerie) is doubly affected: all of its rolls are at -4.

- As you come around a bend in the path you see a grove of pine trees to your left, and the Stormrider's tracks lead directly into it. Looking closer, you can make out his dark shape, looming over an altar of some kind. •

This is a good opportunity to catch the Stormrider unawares, and you should allow the players a chance to discuss how best to approach him. If they do not begin an immediate onslaught, however, let them talk for a few minutes before you read this:

- The Stormrider appears to be disturbed by his surroundings, his Steed even more so. It shuffles nervously, pawing at the rich earth with its flaming hooves. The Stormrider can just be heard as he mutters to himself.

*"Fabía, Fabía...I loved you so...never was a man's love more true. Why did you reject me? What did my brother offer that I could not?" •*

At this point, the Stormrider is still under the impression that he is Fallemon, the first Stormrider. Ask the players to roll Perception + Awareness + a simple die, and anyone who rolls a 6+ notices a large cairn—a burial mound of some kind—directly behind the Stormrider. The Storm Steed seems to be maneuvering to keep the Stormrider away from the cairn. Again, if the characters decide to wait a moment, they hear more:

- The Storm Steed appears eager to leave, edging away from the altar, which, on closer inspection, is a shrine dedicated to Sante Fabía. But the Stormrider almost absently keeps his mount in place as he goes on.

*"Grimgroth did not deserve your love...it was I who soothed your heart, I who*

*pledged my troth, I who...no. Something is not right...but I **must** be Fallemon..." •*

If anyone has approached the burial mound, he sees the single word "FALLEMON" carved into a stone atop the mound. This is the burial site of the man who was the original Stormrider. Unless anyone has made an effort to gain the Stormrider's attention, he does not notice anyone near him. (Inside his helmet, his eyes are closed as he concentrates.)

Caeron is close to recalling that he is not actually Fallemon. The Storm Steed is afraid that Caeron will remember who he really is, and is trying to leave, or at least prevent him from seeing Fallemon's grave. Seeing Fallemon's name on the grave would be sufficient cause for the new Stormrider to question the night's events.

The players may deduce some of this, and if they force Caeron to look at Fallemon's burial mound, so much the better; Caeron is temporarily distracted while he attempts to sort out the evidence before him. The more confused he becomes, however, the more agitated the Steed grows.

- The Steed seems frantic to carry its rider away from this place and rears up, striking out with its hooves. It whinnies loudly, but this time there is a sound that in a mortal horse would be fear. **"I am not Fallemon!"** the Stormrider shouts, almost as though trying to convince himself. **"I am Caeron!"** •

Weakened by the divine aura and faced with the possibility that its rider might dismount (which would be counter to its plans) the Storm Steed wishes to flee, and puts all its effort into making good its escape. The Stormrider, still somewhat confused, doesn't participate unless he is himself attacked.

If more than two characters become engaged in close combat with the Stormrider or his Steed, the Steed cannot simply ride away, so it pauses for a round without attacking, then leaps over their heads. It takes the Steed two more rounds to thread its way through the grove, and during this time they can chase it or perhaps fire arrows at it. Any arrows that strike the Stormrider elicit lightning bolts in response, but the bolts are weakened by the aura, as mentioned above.

•As the Stormrider clears the grove, he seems to regain his composure. "Each moment I tarry is one more breath that Grimgroth draws. **Beware, Wind-Mage! I have become the harbinger of your doom!**" With that, Stormrider and Steed vanish down the hill, forsaking the road as they race due west—presumably toward Mistridge. •

Anyone who engaged in physical activity during this scene should make a Fatigue test to see if he loses a Fatigue level.

## Drawing Conclusions

As the final confrontation with the Stormrider draws near, the players may be at something of a loss as to how to deal with him. Caeron has revealed some major clues about his identity and motivations but the players might have missed them.

If the players do not have some sort of plan, you should suggest to them that now is a good time to think about what they might do to more effectively battle the Stormrider. If they've hurt him, it is most likely because they made a particu-

larly good die roll or because they battled him when he was not at his full might—such as before he joined with the Storm Steed or while he was in the divine aura of the grove. They obviously cannot rely on brute force, although it will no doubt still be necessary. A particularly well-organized plan could mean the difference between life and death for some of the characters, let alone success or failure.

The trick to defeating the Stormrider is separating him from the Storm Steed. Physical force can be used to unhorse him, but the Stormrider will offer resistance, which could prove dangerous.

By now the players should know that this is not the original Stormrider, so the same tactics that were used against the original will not be as effective, if at all; for example, talking about Sante Fabía will not compel Caeron to climb down from the Steed. But Caeron has taken on the mantle of the Stormrider in order to have his revenge on Grimgroth of Mistridge—and once he achieves that goal (or thinks he has) he will be at a loss about what to do next. The players might be able to take advantage of his indecision.

If the players have deduced that this is not the original Stormrider, they might also suspect that the Storm Steed isn't what it seems, either. For instance, throughout their encounters with the Stormrider and his Steed have been sprinkled little clues that could indicate to them that the Steed is far more intelligent than it appears.

At any rate, if your players seem uncertain as to what they can do, you should suggest some of these things to them or remind them of significant events from the story, bearing in mind that your players will have a greater sense of accomplishment after defeating the Stormrider if you did not give them *too much* help.







## Chapter VI

# Reaping the Whirlwind

While the characters have been pursuing the Stormrider, Sir Luc has marshalled his forces and brought them to the ford below Mistridge. Here he was met by Grimgroth and a small contingent of grogs; Grimgroth saw the approach of the force from Castle d'Uverre and hoped to avert any violence.

The old wizard had persuaded Sir Luc to allow the wizards of Mistridge some time to investigate the return of the Stormrider, but then the Stormrider appeared. Riding in a circle around the field before the tower, the Stormrider caused passions to flare and suddenly both sides were ready to join in battle. Fighting a rising surge of wrath, Grimgroth ordered his grogs not to engage Sir Luc's men-at-arms and was nearly successful in calling a retreat back to Mistridge when the Stormrider unleashed a lightning bolt, striking him down.

Instantly chaos erupted. Some of Grimgroth's grogs leapt to defend him while others attacked Sir Luc and his

knights. Sir Luc's troops surged forward, attempting to overwhelm the smaller force. All the while, the Stormrider circled, his victorious laughter ringing over the battlefield.

## Mistridge Attacked

The route that the Stormrider took is far too steep for the PCs to follow, so they must retrace their steps further down the hill and follow the river to Mistridge.

(If the heroes, through luck or ingenuity, get ahead of Sir Luc, the heroes can be present when the knights meet up with the grogs of Mistridge. The initial confrontation will involve some shouted threats by Sir Luc and some calm warnings from Grimgroth, and the PCs can try to mediate between the sides. Once the Stormrider arrives and begins encircling the mass of troops, the PCs will have to quickly move out of the area or else find themselves trapped. In that happens, a rescue force from Mistridge will likely be needed to prevent disaster.)

•After your long journey you finally reach Mistridge at dawn, and it is not a

### Magical Auras

The covenant of Mistridge has a magical aura of 3; outside the walls, the aura is only 2.

pleasant sight that greets you. At a ford below the tower Sir Luc's forces are engaged in a pitched battle with a small group of grogs from Mistridge. Although the grogs fight bravely, the sheer number of troops opposing them will soon overwhelm them.

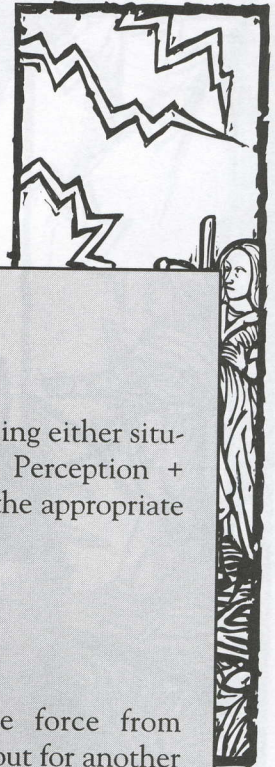
Meanwhile, the Stormrider is riding in circles around the battle, so that the entire area is surrounded by a huge ring of fire. His maniacal laughter echoes even over the sound of clashing weapons and the screams of wounded soldiers. As you watch, the Stormrider breaks off and rides toward Mistridge, unleashing bolts of lightning at the walls. Fires break out all about the tower and even the pounding rain isn't enough to douse them. •

The ring of fire does not include the tower, but the tower is still threatened. The Stormrider's bolts are more powerful than before because the covenant of Mistridge has a magical aura of 3 and the area outside the walls has a magical aura of 2. The lightning is causing tremendous damage to the covenant, and the fires that result are creating untold havoc inside. The wizards of Mistridge have not yet launched a counter-attack, as they are engaged in fighting fires in the library and laboratories.

Although the players should be most interested in combating the Stormrider, they might want to lend their aid in the battle with Sir Luc's men, or in aiding Mistridge's damage-control efforts. Unfortunately, both of these predicaments are symptoms—the Stormrider is the cause. The storyguide should point out to the players that if the PCs leave the fires to the covenant and the battle at the ford to the combatants both situations will resolve themselves, but if no one confronts the Stormrider matters will only get worse.

The apprentice magi should also be reminded of the consequences of the time of day. While the clouds hide the sun, the

magi still know it is dawn, and that means that the Parma Magica rituals they last performed at sunset have now expired. It will take a minute to renew their magical protection. What they may not realize is that Caeron's Parma Magica has also



## Perception Rolls

If anyone expresses an interest in assessing either situation more thoroughly, let him make a Perception + Awareness roll, and compare the result to the appropriate chart below:

### The Battle

Roll	Result
3+	The battle is going against the force from Mistridge but it can probably hold out for another minute.
6+	Sir Luc and his knights are unable to join the fray due to the press of bodies at the ford.
9+	The grogs from Mistridge refuse to give ground.
12+	The grogs could easily retreat if they chose to, but appear to be guarding something on the ground.
15+	The grogs are protecting a white-haired man in an embroidered robe.

### The Tower

Roll	Result
3+	Fires have broken out wherever the Stormrider's bolts have struck the tower.
6+	The main gate remains steadfastly closed, apparently to prevent Sir Luc's men from entering the covenant while its inhabitants are busy with the fires.
9+	In places you can make out people fighting the fires.
12+	The Stormrider appears to be concentrating his attacks on the top of the tower.
15+	Atop the tower, several figures—including some who might be magi—are maneuvering for a clear view of the area, but are having difficulty due to the Stormrider's constant barrage.



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expired. While he is astride the Storm Steed he has no need of it, sharing the Steed's Faerie Might score of 25, but if he's ever unhorsed he will suddenly become highly vulnerable.

## The Final Battle

If the heroes choose to attack the Stormrider they catch him on a grassy area a short distance from the tower, and he happily turns his whole attention to them.

•*"Only the truly suicidal can be so persistent. Come then! I bring death enough for all!"*•

However, Caeron is not the only enemy here—Marradal, obviously, has his own agenda. Now that Caeron has ensured his own death by striking down a magus, Marradal is prepared to let Caeron be defeated—preferably slain. If the players take pity on Caeron and seek to subdue rather than kill him, Marradal is furious. He does his best to kill Caeron, but if the PCs intervene, he quickly decides that discretion is the better part of vengeance.

After striking down Grimgroth and severely damaging Mistrige, the Stormrider is overconfident. He does not immediately charge the player characters, allowing them to approach him before he attacks. This, however, affords the heroes a few options.

### Attacking the Mounted Stormrider

This is the most obvious plan and the most difficult and dangerous. The

Stormrider is at his full power and the characters had better be well-prepared for the might of his lance and lightning.

But this course of action isn't hopeless. If the Stormrider is about to win the combat, the Storm Steed withdraws its power from him, making him simply Caeron again—and extremely vulnerable. The Steed bucks Caeron from its back and withdraws a short distance, avoiding all contact with mortals. At that point, see "Attacking a Dismounted Stormrider" on page 52.

### Attacking the Storm Steed

If the characters intend to win by force of arms, this is their wisest course of action. With the Stormrider on its back the Steed uses its flaming hooves to defend itself, or its hooves and its spiralling horns if it is riderless. Its main goal is to kill Caeron (or get the PCs to do its dirty work for it), but if it becomes too badly wounded it withdraws, if at all possible. (See also "Killing Caeron" on page 52 and "Capturing Caeron" on page 52.)

### Talking to Caeron

This is no doubt the safest course, although perhaps the hardest to pursue. Caeron has had his revenge on Grimgroth, the man who humiliated him and who—in Caeron's eyes—is responsible for all of his ill luck. If it can be pointed out to Caeron that he no longer has an object for his hatred, he might be persuaded to dismount. Remember, though, that Caeron originally decided to seek the power of the Stormrider as a cure for the loss of his immortality, and also remember the Steed's plans for Caeron. The Steed will use its control over





Caeron's mind to make him as unreasonable as possible (reflected in his Furious Personality Trait.) If the characters appeal to his intellect, Caeron must make a Personality Trait roll (Furious + a quality die): if he rolls an 8+, he doesn't dismount, although he doesn't attack, either; if he rolls 15+, he attacks.

You should apply a modifier to his roll based on how persuasive the players are. Here is where Philippe's mastery of Disputatio or Étienne's Enchanting Music Talent could come in handy. You should put an upper limit on either effect, however: no more than a -2 for each.

## Attacking a Dismounted Stormrider

Once off the Storm Steed, Caeron is an ordinary man again, and can be more easily captured or killed. His Parma Magica expired at sunrise, so he is highly susceptible to magic, and without the Steed, his Soak is only +11, making him vulnerable to physical attacks. Furthermore, his low Strength and Stamina, coupled with his heavy armor, severely reduces his mobility and ability to fight.

As the battle continues, the result depends on the goals of the PCs: if they fight to kill Caeron, see "Killing Caeron" below, but if they try to capture him, see "Capturing Caeron," below. If they choose to spare Caeron, the heroes must still defeat or drive off his Steed (see "Attacking the Storm Steed" on page 51).

## Killing Caeron

If the characters fatally wound Caeron, Marradal resumes his true form

and thanks the characters for their part in his vengeance.

• *The Storm Steed suddenly leaps away from the fray. It rears up and paws the air, and as it does the flames of its hoofprints are snuffed out. Before your eyes, the Storm Steed becomes a powerfully-built, dark-haired man dressed all in deep blue. His eyes are still the eyes of the Storm Steed, though—brilliant blue and full of wicked intelligence.*

"Greetings to you, mortals," he says. "I am Marradal, lord of the mountain sidhe (SHEE) and sire of the lightning. I thank you for what you have done here today, for this base villain who lies dying at your hands had dealt me a grievous insult in times past. Now he shall breathe his last, knowing that it was his former captive that brought him to this end. Caeron, it almost seems a pity that you will not live long enough to learn your lesson from all of this...but it has been great sport bringing about your demise, and perhaps that is entertainment enough."

A look of numb shock passes over Caeron's face, then he screams in anguish. As the echoes of his cry die away, he gurgles and lies still. •

## Capturing Caeron

While the Stormrider is too powerful to contain, Caeron is not, and if he is separated from the horse, he is quite vulnerable and can easily be captured. The Storm Steed would rather see Caeron die, so the player characters may suddenly find themselves defending the man they were trying to kill only a few moments before.

If Caeron is captured, he can and should be turned over to the Order of Hermes for justice; having assaulted—perhaps even killed—a magus, Caeron faces execution. Fabienne and Philippe

th know this, and you should mention if someone tries to kill Caeron when the immediate danger is eliminated. If someone does kill Caeron at this point, his slayer will himself be guilty of murdering a magus.

If the group captures Caeron and protects him from his erstwhile mount, the Storm Steed rears up on its hind legs, snorting fire and fixing them with a baleful glare. Marradal needs to be certain of Caeron's death, but not at the cost of his own. So rather than deliver the death-blow himself, he takes on his natural shape and weaves a few clever lies—sprinkled with truths—hoping to ensure Caeron's execution at the hands of the wizards.

- The Storm Steed ceases its attacks and retreats a short distance away. It rears up and paws the air, and as it does the flames of its hoofprints are snuffed out. Before your eyes the Storm Steed becomes a powerful-built, dark-haired man dressed all in deep blue. His eyes are still the eyes of the Storm Steed, though—brilliant blue and full of cunning intelligence.

"Greetings to you, mortals," he says, "I am Marradal, lord of the mountain sidhe, and sire of the lightning. I thank you for what you have done, for this base villain to whom you offer succor is the author of all of the death and destruction here this past night. Had you not succeeded in removing him from my back, I might never have regained my true form, and for that, I thank you.

"This Caeron has, for several years now, been attempting to harness the power of the Stormrider to his will, and he would have easily succeeded had I not detected his efforts and taken the Storm Steed's place. Still, I had not realized how powerful were the wizard's binding spells, and I became a slave to his evil will. I had meant to deliver him to your magical order to face whatever mortal justice you might deem to mete out, but I found myself trapped, forced to relive his memories

of a night lifetimes past. All with the intent of slaying someone named Grimgroth. Sad, really. Now, though, I am freed and he is yours to punish." •

The storyguide should use his best judgement as to what Caeron's reaction will be, crafting the most interesting story he can for the troupe. Perhaps Caeron confesses fully and begs for mercy, or denounces the faerie as a liar, or admits to his part and spits defiance at the characters for having stopped him.

## Sir Luc Accused

- With the enraging flames of the Steed's hoofprints extinguished, the battle at the ford falters, then stops altogether as the combatants lose their fury. In the tower, the covenant folk have already dealt with the largest of the non-magical fires, and saving the rest of the building should now be much easier. As the pounding rain fades to a light drizzle, sunlight begins to shine down. •

Having seen a handful of adventurers—including Sir Guillaume—defeat the invincible Stormrider, Sir Luc is suddenly filled with doubt about his ability to destroy Mistridge. He orders an immediate withdrawal of his men, and the Mistridge grogs are too weakened to stop them. As they are departing, however, Marradal points him out to the group, intending to further divert suspicion from himself.

- "I see that the new baron is less interested in you wizards now that the Stormrider is defeated. How typical that he would seize upon this opportunity to prosper. And how strange that he happened to have an army waiting at hand on the very night that his father-in-law met his end." Marradal looks





pointedly at Sir Guillaume. “Do you suppose he would care to explain how he knew that the Stormrider would be about this night?” •

If you wish to continue with a saga where the story of the Stormrider leaves off, Sir Luc would make an excellent villain to strive against, and so he should leave before the players have a chance to confront him.

If the storyguide would prefer to give this story a definite sense of closure, Sir Luc responds to any calls to him by wheeling his horse about and riding back to where the heroes are, accompanied by four knights. At first he scoffs at any accusations, but if the comments persist, his knights begin to eye him suspiciously and he grows extremely nervous. Finally, he cracks.

• “Enough!” Sir Luc cries. “I am Baron d’Uverre now, and I shall not be questioned by the likes of you!” He turns to his knights. “Arrest these men!”

The knights draw their swords, but level them at Sir Luc. “With all due respect, Sir Luc, we would like to hear how you knew that the baron would die as well.” •

The storyguide should resolve this confrontation based on his plans for the saga and the specifics of the situation. Are the characters are still in good shape and hungry for justice? If the heroes are badly wounded from their battle with the Stormrider another fight could end the saga abruptly. But such a fight could bring the adventure to a satisfying conclusion. Such considerations can be used to decide whether, for example, Sir Luc charges at the PCs, intending to silence his accusers forever, or whether his own knights hold him at swordpoint until he confesses how he came to conspire with the kelpie, Seumas, to murder the baron.

## Venouement

If the heroes decide to attend to their wounded before anything else happens, at this point in the story you need not bother rolling—simply tell them that their ministrations are successful. They can then turn their attentions to other matters.

Any Mistridge grogs left at the ford immediately administer aid to the fallen Grimgroth. Whether they are successful or not is up to you. Having Grimgroth survive the Stormrider’s attack makes him available for future stories, and his gratitude to the player characters is great indeed. But if you choose to let him die, see “Continuing the Saga” on page 55.

The gates of Mistridge open and several grogs go down to the ford to help the grogs already there, while a woman in the flowing robes of a magus approaches the characters, accompanied by a few more grogs. She introduces herself as Rosa, filia (FILL-ee-uh) Grimgroth, sectator (SECK-tah-tor) Jerbiton (Rosa, student of Grimgroth, follower of Jerbiton), and asks them if they are the ambassadors from the covenant north of Val du Bosque. She thanks them for defeating the Stormrider, and is quite surprised if they tell her that this Stormrider was actually Caeron, once an apprentice at Mistridge. She reveals that before she took the name Rosa, she was called Lucienne; she was the other apprentice who helped defeat the original Stormrider. She can tell the group the story of how Caeron left Mistridge (see the description of Caeron on page 58), and explains that she has not heard from him since then. She is saddened by his failure as a magus—and his death, if he was killed—but is even more saddened that he chose to lay the blame on Grimgroth, and that her parens (PAIR-

enz; literally, "parent," that is, teacher) (almost) lost his life as a result.

If Caeron was captured, she arranges to have him incarcerated in a cell in the catacombs of Mistridge, coincidentally, where Caeron's parents dwell. (If Caeron was killed, he also ends up here; Caeron's parents, Felix, is a necromancer.) She provides the characters rooms to stay in and the books they originally set out to purchase, although she refuses to accept any payment: "You have paid Mistridge several times over what these books are worth." Any exceptional act of bravery on Mistridge's behalf is rewarded appropriately—a warrior might be given superior armor or armaments, one of the apprentices might be given *vis* or a magical item, and anyone else might be given money or expensive clothing.

And if Sir Luc was taken prisoner, his former knights drag him away to face mundane justice. A few days later, the characters are invited to attend his hanging.

## Wrapping Up

If you would like to continue with the events and implications of *The Return of the Stormrider*, or if you would merely like to demonstrate to the players how the systems of **Ars Magica** work, you should ask them to participate in the post-game wrap-up.

First, you should discuss with the players what sort of reputations each character might have gained or modified as a result of their roleplaying. Was Le Fort strict? Did Philippe seem meddling? Not all PCs gain reputations every adventure, but if you are convinced that some characters made names for themselves, either add the appropriate Reputation to the character at +1 (making sure to note who holds this opinion of

the PC: the magi of Mistridge or Father François, for example) or adjust an existing Reputation by +1 or -1.

The way the characters were roleplayed may suggest the need for changes to their Personality Traits. For example, Fabienne might have fared so well that she is more confident, Claude could have been so frightened by the power of the Stormrider that he is even less reliable, or Sir Guillaume could have done so poorly against the formidable Stormrider that he has lost some of his pride. The storyguide should ask the player of any character affected in this way whether he wants to change the relevant Personality Traits up or down one point, or whether he wants it to remain the same, in which case he should take care to pay more attention to those Traits in the next game session.

Drastic story events can also change a character's Virtues and Flaws. For example, if Gloria's Overconfidence directly led to the death of one of her comrades, her confidence could be weakened (reducing her Personality Trait Overconfident to +2 or +1) or shattered (replacing her Overconfident Flaw with Underconfident or Weak-Willed), depending on the circumstances.

Finally, assign experience to the characters. Each should receive two experience points for successfully completing the adventure, and any characters who were decently roleplayed should receive one additional point—exceptional roleplaying is worth *two* points. The players can assign the experience points to Abilities that they used during the story, but they don't have to assign them to Abilities that they used successfully (except that, if the apprentices are going to assign their experience points to spells, they must be spells that were successfully cast during the adventure).

A character cannot invest more than one experience point in any given Ability per story, but if his total of experience







points invested in an Ability exceeds his Ability score, the Ability is increased by one and his experience point total in that Ability is reset to zero.

## Continuing the Saga

This need not be the last time that the players use these characters, and *The Return of the Stormrider* can form the basis

of a new *Ars Magica* saga, using the characters presented here as the main focus.

One possible jumping-off point is that Mistridge may have been so heavily damaged that it must start over as a covenant. Along with the death of Grimgroth, several of the other magi of Mistridge could have been crushed under falling stones when a section of the tower collapsed under the Stormrider's assault, and any number of companions and grogs may have died at the ford or fighting fires. The players can take the roles of the characters they played here, or generate new characters using the *Ars Magica* rules,



and re-populate Mistridge as a new, "Spring" covenant.

In this scenario, the heroes need to rebuild Mistridge's destroyed sections, as well as replace any magical books and materials that were lost. Further, as newcomers to the covenant, they can explore some of its more curious areas, such as the catacombs where Felix, the necromantic wizard who taught Caeron, dwelt. Perhaps he is still alive down there, and only bothers to put in an appearance when the new wizards have their first big council meeting...

Another idea is to have the characters return to their own covenant, where they are not the most important characters, but have a degree more security. Whoever remains at Mistridge is certainly friendly with them, although Sir Luc—now Baron d'Uverre, if his true role in the story was not revealed—has most likely taken a strong disliking to them. You could involve them in adventures in Val du Bosque (for which there is a great deal of source material published) or in the area north of the valley, including Foix and, further north, Toulouse. You and your players should work together, using the *Ars Magica* rules to design and develop their covenant. (Remember to include Veristus and Sentus, the masters of the apprentice magi.)

And you need not dispose of the Storm Steed at the end of this story. Perhaps Marradal is trapped in the form of the Storm Steed until he can deliver a magus's corpse to Seumas. If such is the case, he grows to hate the player characters for leaving him in such a predicament (ignoring the fact that it was his idea in the first place). He seeks another angry soul to control and channel his power through, solely to have his revenge on the group. This newest Stormrider would be similar to the Stormrider presented here, but could

have different abilities and powers. Played correctly, Marradal or the Stormrider could become recurring villains, something to inflict upon the player characters whenever you choose to complicate their lives.

## Altering the Story

Nothing prevents you from changing *The Return of the Stormrider* to better match the particulars of your troupe. For instance, if your players have played the original adventure, they might immediately recognize Caeron as the new Stormrider, and since they remember his character they may know his weaknesses. Knowing too much about the story will ruin the experience for them, just like knowing how a book ends before you start reading it.

If you feel you need to change the story, remember that anything that leads the players too far "off the trail" will make the story take longer to finish, or perhaps deprive the players of vital clues that they will need to defeat the Stormrider. Your best bet is to stick to the basic story, but change some of the specifics, such as the Stormrider's exact powers and weaknesses.





# Appendix

## Rider and Steed

This appendix presents in one place the game statistics and detailed powers of Caeron and the Storm Steed.

### Caeron

#### Spells

Although it is unlikely that Caeron will have a chance to use his spells during this story, they are presented below as a reference, in case Caeron survives the climax of the tale. His wizard's sigil is that any plant life in his immediate vicinity warps to vaguely resemble human beings.

#### *Disguise of the Putrid Aroma* (ReAn 5)

R: Touch/Near, D: Conc/Sun, T: Ind  
Spell Focus: A Corked Bottle (+1)

The target takes no interest in you as long as you continue to concentrate, and do not threaten it. A carnivore treats you as if you were simply something it does not eat. It retains normal interest, however, in anyone else nearby. A corked bottle is representative of you and your contained odor.

#### *Jupiter's Resounding Blow* (ReAu 10)

R: Far, D: Mom, T: Group  
Aimed: 0  
Spell Focus: A Violet Amethyst (+5)

Creates a thunderclap; anyone directly underneath must make a Stamina stress roll of 9+ or be deafened. If deafened, the target gets another

### Caeron's Virtues & Flaws

**Magical Affinity:** Caeron is attuned to Herbam magic. This gives him a special Arcane Talent, Affinity With Herbam (recorded under Abilities). He may add his Affinity score to all spell rolls and Lab Totals involving Herbam.

**Self-Confident:** Caeron has firm confidence in his own abilities and has more than the normal number of Confidence points. He may only use these while he is not the Stormrider.

**Strong-Willed:** Ordinarily, Caeron cannot easily be coerced into activities, beliefs, or feelings. This Virtue gives him +3 on any roll which requires strength of will, such as resisting temptation, torture, or the effects of a spell that attempts to dominate his will. Initially, Marradal's control is so well attuned to Caeron's emotions that the wizard's Strong Will proves no hindrance to Marradal, but as the story progresses Caeron's willpower begins to show through.

**Loose Magic:** Caeron lacks the dedication to Master spells.

**Warped Magic:** When Caeron casts spells upon people, they feel distinctly uneasy, perhaps affecting any rolls involving

social interaction, especially with him.

**Faerie Enmity:** A faerie named Marradal (see the description of the Storm Steed) has taken a strong dislike to Caeron, and while originally content to curse him, Marradal has recently decided to bring about Caeron's demise in a spectacular and demeaning fashion.

**Compulsion:** Caeron has a strong desire to assert himself, and often, to his detriment, has difficulty controlling this urge.

**Minor Magical Deficiency:** Caeron has trouble casting Ignem spells. His Ignem score is divided in half for any purposes other than study. This gives him an effective Ignem score of 1.

**Cursed:** Caeron is suffering from two curses. He was cursed by Marradal to never be able to benefit from imbibing a longevity potion. Also Caeron once learned how to hear the voices of the dead—but never learned how to shut them out. Thus, whenever he is around corpses that have not received last rites, he can hear them moaning in pain.

**Deleterious Circumstances:** When Caeron is flustered all of his magic rolls are at -3. This might not come into play during *The Return of the Stormrider* as Caeron does not cast spells while he's the Stormrider.

Stamina simple roll each minute and recovers with a roll of 9+. If the first roll botches, the victim is rendered deaf for a month. Violet amethyst is the stone of Jupiter.

### Gathering of the Stormy Might (ReAu 30)

R: Per, D: Spec, T: Sight

Spell Focus: The Essence of an Air Elemental (+3)

Calls the surrounding clouds into a storm within one hour. The size of the storm depends on the amount of cloud cover available. The storm lasts for a length of time based on the amount of cloud cover present. The duration of the rainfall can vary from just fifteen minutes for thin, wispy clouds to several hours if the sky is already overcast. This spell cannot be used on an utterly clear sky. While this spell cannot be used to make an already exiting storm more severe, it will can be used to cause a gathering storm to break almost immediately.

### Curse of the Unruly Tongue (ReCo 5)

R: Near/Sight, D: Conc/Sun, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A Branch of Holly (+3)

Causes the target to stutter and slur words. Communication rolls are at -3. Spoken spells are at -6 to the spellcasting roll, and there is an extra botch die.

### Wall of Thorns (CrHe 20)

R: Near/Far, D: Sun/Perm, T: Str

Spell Focus: A Single Thorn (+1)

Within seconds, this spell creates a straight wall of woody, thorny bushes up to 20 paces long, 1 pace thick, and 4 paces high. The thorns, which are unnaturally resilient, have a +15 Soak and four Body Levels (and are cut by edged weapons only). Bodily forcing one's way through the wall requires a Strength stress roll of 9+ and does +15 damage whether the attempt succeeds or fails. If the roll botches, an additional 5 points of damage are suffered. The wall grows out of existing bushes or fertile soil. A Climb stress roll of 9+ allows a character to scale the wall, but the character takes +10 damage in the process.

### Converse with Plant and Tree (InHe 25)

R: Touch/Far, D: Conc, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A Chewed Leaf (+1)

You can speak with a plant for one conversation. The level of conversation depends on the type of plants; longer-lived and more noble plants have more to say. A single question and response takes ten to thirty minutes, with slower-growing plants speaking more slowly. Typically, plants can talk about the soil and about other plants around them, but have limited awareness of more momentary events, such as the



## Caeron's Statistics

Statistics in [brackets] describe Caeron after he has been imbued with the powers of the Stormrider.

Age 52

### Characteristics

Intelligence: +2 [+2]

Strength: -1 [+4]

Presence: +2 [+4]

Dexterity: -1 [+2]

Confidence: 4 [3]

Perception: 0 [0]

Stamina: -1 [+5]

Communication: 0 [-2]

Quickness: -1 [+2]

**Virtues & Flaws:** See text for details

**Personality Traits:** Wrathful +3, Haughty +3, Proud +2, [Furious +6], [Vengeful +3]

**Reputations:** Arrogant 3 (Mistridge)

Weapon*	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Quarterstaff	+1	-1	+1	+2	-5
Lance/Shield	-7	-4	-6	+5	-11
Butt/Shield	-14	-9	-8	+2	-11
Fist	-10	-11	-11	-1	-11

\*As Caeron, unmounted

Weapon**	Init	Atk	Dfn	Dam	Fat
Lance/Shield	+13	+16	+14	+5	+9
Butt/Shield	+6	+11	+12	+2	+9
Gauntlet	+6	+5	+6	0	+5

\*\*As the Stormrider, mounted

**Soak:** +11 [+17]

**Encumbrance:** 7 (Encumbrance penalty does not apply when mounted. This has been figured into the combat totals above.)

**Body Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -6, Incapacitated

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -6, Unconscious

**Armor:** Full Chain Mail (Prot. +12, Load -6), Knight Shield (Parry Bonus +4, Load -1)

**Abilities:** Speak Provençal 5, Speak Latin 5, Scribe Latin 4, Magic Theory 8, Hermes Lore 3, Organization Lore—Order of Hermes 3, Parma Magica 4, Finesse 5, Certámen 5, Concentration 3, Affinity with Herbam 4, Guile 4, Charm 1, Subterfuge 4, Intrigue 1, Quarterstaff Parry 3, Quarterstaff 3, Penetration 3, Legend Lore 4, [Lance 10], [Brawl 6], [Ride 2]

### Powers

**Lightning (CrAu25) 0 points:** Caeron as Stormrider may discharge a lightning bolt from the tip of his lance once per round. It must be aimed like normal Hermetic magic (see ArM4, page 71). It has a +6 targeting bonus and does +20 damage.

### Arts

Creo 4	Animál 7	Ignem 2 [1]
Intéllego 6	Aquam 3	Imáginem 2
Muto 6	Auram 5	Mentem 5
Perdo 3	Corpus 5	Terram 4
Rego 10	Herbam 14	Vim 6



passing of animals or people, unless that passing has a direct bearing on the plant (for example, a person cut its trunk). News can spread quickly through a forest when it has to, called from tree to tree on the wind. Bystanders cannot understand your conversation.

### *Twist the Living Tree* (MuHe 20)

R: Touch/Far, D: Sun/Year, T: Ind  
Spell Focus: A Pearl (+3)

You make a living tree bend into unusual positions. Depending on your needs, you can make a cage, a shelter, or a wall. Even the leaves can be commanded, maybe to form a solid roof that sheds rain. Takes one to ten minutes to complete (depending on the complexity of the new shape), during which time you must maintain concentration.

### *Piercing Shaft of Wood* (MuHe 25)

R: Touch/Near, D: Inst, T: Ind  
Aimed: +2  
Spell Focus: An Arrow Shaft (+1)  
Requisite: Rego

Turns a piece of wood into a sleek, barbed, strong shaft that flies through the air at a target. Damage depends on the size of the item from which the shaft is formed: staff (upper size limit) +10, 2-foot branch +8, wand +5. If it pierces a body, removing the shaft causes the target to automatically lose a Body level, unless a Stamina stress roll of 6+ is made (add the Chirurgy score of the one who removes the shaft).

### *Curse of the Rotted Wood* (PeHe 5)

R: Touch/Near, D: Inst, T: Ind  
Spell Focus: A Pinch of Sawdust (+3)

Causes a non-living wooden object to rot and fall apart. Objects up to the size of a single door can be affected, but things that size take up to two rounds to decay. Usually, large chunks of wood start falling off the target, and slowly crumble to smaller and smaller pieces, until only dust is left.

### *Repel the Wooden Shafts* (ReHe 10)

R: Reach, D: Conc/Sun, T: Small  
Spell Focus: A Staff (+3)

Deflects a single blow of any weapon made of wood, up to the size of a two-handed club. You can deflect a different attack each round. The attack automatically misses, but the attacker still rolls to see if he or she botches (with two extra botch rolls for melee weapons). If you ordinarily carry a staff, it must be tossed aside for the casting.

### *Coils of the Entangling Plants* (ReHe 20)

R: Near/Far, D: Spec, T: Spec  
Spell Focus: A Small Net (+1)

Animates all the grass and small plants within a field delineated from side to side by your outstretched arms and in front by no more than 15 paces of distance. The plants grab and wrap themselves around the people nearest to them (Strength stress roll of 9+ to break free, rolled once per minute). If a roll to break free ever botches, the victim cannot escape on his or her own. After an hour's time, the plants release their grip and resume their normal ways. With a Concentration roll of 6+, you can release one individual a round.

### *Lord of the Trees* (ReHe 25)

R: Reach/Far, D: Conc, T: Ind  
Spell Focus: Bark from a Century-Old Tree (+3)

Causes a tree to move its branches and bend its trunk in any way you mentally direct. A large tree striking with branches has Initiative +5, Attack +7, and Damage +10. Normal weapons are practically useless against large trees.

### *The Earth's Carbuncle* (ReTe 15)

R: Near/Sight, D: Mom, T: Spec  
Aimed: +1

Spell Focus: A Small Stalactite (+3)  
Requisite: Muto

Causes a 1-pace circle of ground to become jagged, just under the surface, and those fragments burst into the air. Anyone standing on the circle is thrown into the air and hit with flying debris. Damage is +10. On landing, the victim is partially buried.

## Background

After Caeron passed his apprentice's gauntlet, he was quite eager to leave Mistridge. He despised Grimgroth, and wanted to see the elder magus discredited and humiliated. However, when he announced that he was going to write what he had learned about the Stormrider—which contradicted what Grimgroth had previously published—Grimgroth surprised him, by challenging him to certamen.

Caeron lost against his superior opponent, and the price he paid was that he could never impart to anyone that Grimgroth had been incorrect. Frustrated, Caeron began laying plans to found his own covenant, where he could run things the way he wanted to. So in his thirty-fourth year, Caeron departed Mistridge, taking Ramon (ray-MOHN), the wild man from *The Stormrider*, with him.

Unfortunately, founding a covenant proved harder work than Caeron had anticipated. Initially, it consisted of a few small buildings a short distance to the northwest of Mistridge, with no defenses except for a handful of lazy, undisciplined grogs. Ramon left within a year, tired of Caeron's verbal abuse. Over

time, the covenant grew, but it required Caeron's constant attention. This prevented him from pursuing most of his own magical studies—including creating a longevity potion, a wizard's source of extended life.

In time, Caeron was joined by two other magi, and about a dozen grogs. More buildings were constructed, although most were in poor shape. His attempt at building a wall around the covenant came to a grinding halt when brigands killed several of the workers. His *Aegis of the Hearth* (EE-jiss) was so weak that hedge-wizards frequently raided the covenant. Still, Caeron was over forty years old, and had never even tried to concoct a longevity potion.

Sensing urgency, he left the administration of the covenant to the other magi and locked himself in his lab. Over the course of two seasons, he used up several pawns of *Corpus vis* attempting to raise his *Corpus* score. When he ran out of raw *vis*, he did everything in his power to buy, trade, or steal more *vis*. He lost several more seasons in this fashion and in one of his adventures aroused the wrath of a minor faerie lord named Marradal. Marradal cursed Caeron to never be able to gain any benefit from a longevity potion. Caeron would die of old age.

Caeron grew bitter. He put all his efforts into finding an alternate way of preserving his life. When the other magi abandoned him, taking most of the grogs, Caeron could not have cared less. His experiments in alternate methods of prolonging his life failed one after another. Finally, he struck upon a certain, if extreme, solution: he would become the Stormrider.

Fallemon, the original Stormrider, had been over one hundred years old but the elemental might of his Storm Steed had kept him not just alive, but powerful, all during that time. Although the Stormrider was a violent, destructive being, Caeron had scores enough to settle that the power of the Stormrider would be a welcome gift, even at the cost of his humanity.

Caeron began studying everything that was known about the Stormrider, and more importantly, the Stormrider's Steed. Proceeding from the assumption that the Steed was an elemental embodiment of the storm, Caeron reasoned that there must be more than one such creature—else, there could never be another storm.

He visited his old friend Tomas, who by this time had become a local oracle. By steering the conversation to the Stormrider, he was able to force the old seer to have several visions—including one describing the time and place of the Stormrider's return. He also learned that when the time came emissaries from the Order of Hermes would attempt to stop him. Hoping to confuse his future opponents, he planted misleading clues, indicating that Fallemon had returned.

To complete the deception, while waiting for the appointed night he bought or stole all relics

relating to the Stormrider, including the Stormrider's armor. The only thing he could not acquire was the Stormrider's sword, which had been buried with Clobi outside the walls of Mistridge.

**Description:** Caeron's heavily-lined face shows his age, as well as a history of failures. His thick, dark hair is shot with grey, and his eyes, although they seem tired, burn with intense desire.

**Roleplaying Caeron/The Stormrider:** Caeron is wrathful and haughty, and this is even more true when he is the Stormrider. He is largely unreasonable as the Stormrider, but his intellect is still there, and an appeal to logic actually makes him stop and think.

Remember that the Stormrider is a larger-than-life figure. He speaks in grand declarations meant to intimidate. For example, when attacked without effect, he might say: "Are you so eager to blunt your blade?" Or when he deals a particularly nasty blow, he might comment: "How proud you must be to die at the hands of the Stormrider!" Most irritatingly to the players, the Stormrider constantly laughs at their best efforts. But of course, when wounded himself, he is decidedly silent—except perhaps to threaten retribution.

In battle, the Stormrider tends to strike first with a charge, using the tip of his lance, then with the butt of the weapon in close quarters. He also employs lightning bolts against particularly troublesome foes, and if grappled and unable to free himself, may actually use lightning to blast his assailants, trusting to his armor to absorb any damage to himself.

Throughout the text, most of the Stormrider's dialogue appears in bold text. When it does, you should speak in a loud, booming voice, as though every word was a burst of thunder.





# The Storm Steed

## Background

Marradal is a fairly minor lord of the fey, of the variety mortals would call Unseelie. He normally appears as a tall, powerfully-built man with dark hair and handsome features, although his eyes gleam an unwholesome blue in the darkness. He usually wears dark blue clothing worked with bright blue designs.

Although he is only a lesser noble in the court of the fey, Marradal quite often claims lands or titles that are not actually his. Note that these are not lies as such—as long as no one contests his claims, he is effectively lord of whatever he says he is. This is a common deception for faeries to perpetrate on mortals. Indeed, many a faerie claims to be king or queen of the fey—although only particularly ambitious or foolhardy fey would make such claims in the presence of other faeries. In this story, Marradal claims to be the faerie ruler of Mount Tierné.

He first encountered Caeron when the magus attempted to kidnap him and hold him for a ransom of vis from the faeries who dwelt on Mount Tierné. Marradal escaped, but not before suffering several indignities at the hands of Caeron—insults he could neither forget nor forgive.

The faerie lord placed a curse on Caeron, preventing him from receiving any benefits from drinking a magical longevity potion. Marradal's reasoning was that he himself was immortal, and he had no intention of putting up with an annoying lout like Caeron for any longer than was absolutely necessary.

Marradal had been secretly observing Caeron's plight for his own amusement, but soon realized that, left to his own devices, Caeron would eventually learn how to become the Stormrider. Not only would Marradal's curse be foiled, but with the power of the Stormrider, Caeron might actually be in a position to seek revenge against him.

But, he realized, Caeron could be duped into *thinking* he had become the Stormrider, which would not only prevent the wizard from gaining any actual power, but spell his doom as well. The faerie shook with laughter imagining the look on Caeron's face when he discovered not only that he had been tricked, but who had tricked him.

So Marradal made a bargain with a kelpie, a type of water-faerie, so that he could temporarily change into the form of the Storm Steed. The kelpie, named Seumas, had been attacked by the Stormrider almost a century before while in human form and attempting to lure a young woman into the river. (The original Stormrider made a habit of attacking courting lovers.)

Seumas and the Stormrider fought, and the kelpie managed to drive off the Stormrider, in the process breaking off a piece of one of the Storm Steed's horns. Seumas used this as an ingredient in the potion that allowed Marradal to become the Storm Steed, but his price for this favor was the death of Baron d'Uverre, who Seumas claimed was defiling the waters of the river Vreis with waste from his castle.

**Description:** The Storm Steed appears as a midnight-black stallion with ram-like horns and burning blue eyes. Its hooves blaze with an almost hellish fire, and as it breathes, flames lick out of its mouth and nostrils.

**Roleplaying the Storm Steed:** As the Storm Steed, Marradal is bursting with power, but has lost none of his essential intelligence. His actions show reasoning beyond that of animal cunning, and occasionally, he lets slip clues that he is not actually an animal. For instance, he responds to the spoken word at times because he understands what is being said. Also, even as a horse, some of Marradal's wicked personality shows through in his expressions. You might describe the Storm Steed as "appearing to sneer," or "fixing the characters with an appraising look." Usually the action will be too busy for the player characters to get good looks at the Steed—their attentions are likely to be focused on the Stormrider, after all. But you should drop hints now and again that the Steed is far more intelligent than even a magical horse should be, and if one of the players remarks on the phenomenon, you know you're on the right track.

(Throughout the text of the story, Marradal is referred to as "it" or "the Storm Steed" while in that form. This is to remind you not to refer to the Steed as a "he," because that might tip off alert players that something about the Storm Steed is not what it seems.)

## Special Abilities

Faeries have special powers that they use more or less at will. Powers are rated from 1 (weak) to 20 (very powerful). Remember, faerie powers are not spells, and cannot be resisted by normal magical means. (For more information, see the *Faeries* sourcebook.) Marradal's powers are described below.

**Control Element (Auram) 10:** Marradal can manipulate the element of air at will. This allows him to generate strong winds, lightning bolts, and claps of thunder, as well as fly. Because he has also gained some of the powers of the Storm Steed, he can transfer some of those powers to his rider, allowing Caeron to hurl bolts of lightning.

**Control Emotion 12:** This power allows Marradal to manipulate the emotions of a mortal. Marradal must touch the victim, who then may resist the control with an Intelligence stress roll, with an

ease factor of 12. (Additional rolls are normally made when the victim is forced to react in a manner strongly inconsistent with his usual emotions. Because Caeron is normally a wrathful person, only attempts by Marradal to force him to become calm or unemotional mandate an additional roll.) The faerie need only be in contact when first taking control of a person's emotions; after control is established they can be separated by any distance but the faerie must concentrate on the controlled person in order to will it to experience a specific emotion. Control lasts for three days at a time.

**Curse 15:** Weaker faeries can afflict mortals with minor annoyances such as curdled milk. Marradal is more powerful, and has used it to prevent Caeron from being able to gain benefits from longevity potions.

**Glamour 17:** Glamours are very powerful illusions, appearing real to all five senses and treated as real objects in all ways. Once Marradal leaves or loses interest in the glamour it fades away. Marradal's mastery of this power is such that he can create a fairly spectacular illusion, such as when he "transforms" Caeron into the Stormrider. You should take care not to overuse this power, though; Marradal wants Caeron to completely believe that he is the Stormrider, and any unusual deviation in either his power or the Storm Steed's will alert Caeron that something is amiss.

**Healing 10:** Marradal can heal himself of injuries, and can extend this power to Caeron as well, although he stops helping the magus when he feels it is time for Caeron to die. Healing requires great effort and much concentration. For purposes of this story, Marradal only heals himself while not otherwise occupied (such as in the midst of a battle), or if he is in danger of losing his life.

**Inflame Passions 8:** As the Storm Steed, Marradal can intensify a mortal's strongest emotions by creating a ring of fire around him. Being within this ring causes one's emotions to override rational thought, doubling the strength of all Personality Traits. Characters who leave the ring return to normal in short order. Characters who make a Perception + Awareness + simple die roll of 9+, or Perception + Animal Ken + simple die of 6+, notice that animals are unaffected by it—a distinct difference from the way the original Stormrider's power worked.

The potion using the horn of the real Storm Steed gave Marradal these powers:

**Whipping Winds:** The Steed can generate winds around itself, which kick up dust and debris to confuse and distract anyone in a three-pace radius. Anyone in this area suffers a -3 to all rolls (except Soak rolls), and rolls one extra botch die. Anyone trying to cast a spell in this area must roll 6+ on an Intelligence + Concentration stress roll.

**Flaming Hooves:** The Steed's hooves burn with the illusion of magical fire even when doused with

water or smothered with dirt. Anyone who steps on a flaming hoofprint on the ground or who is struck by the Steed's hooves suffers +3 damage, although inspection of his wounds afterwards reveals no burns; the damage was real, but it was all in his mind. The fires burn as long as Marradal thinks about maintaining the illusion, but once he leaves the scene of an attack the illusion is dropped.

**Flight:** Marradal does not so much fly as ride the winds—the stronger they are, the faster he can fly. If a magus can generate a wind in a different direction than Marradal's, Marradal is slowed or even stopped depending on the relative strengths of the winds (assume Marradal's is a 25th level effect).

## Weaknesses

**Vulnerability to Iron:** The touch of iron normally hurts Marradal, seeming red-hot to the touch—iron weapons gain a +1 damage bonus against him. Because of the kelpie's potion he is temporarily immune to this effect.

Even with the potion's help, Marradal cannot directly affect iron with his magic. But if a piece of iron happens to be in the way of one of his lightning bolts, for instance, the iron confers no special bonus; that is, iron armor protects the wearer as normal but not better.



## Marradal's Statistics

<b>Faerie Might</b> 25	<b>Size</b> +3			
<b>Characteristics</b>				
Intelligence +1	Presence +3			
Perception 0	Communication +2			
Strength +6	Dexterity +3			
Stamina +6	Quickness +5			
<b>Personality Traits:</b> Frenzied +2				
<b>Weapon Init</b>	Atk	Dam	Dfn	Fat
Gore	+5	+7	+15	n/a
Hooves	+4	+5	+9*	n/a
*See "Flaming Hooves," below.				
<b>Dodge Defense:</b> +6				
<b>Soak:</b> +18				
<b>Encumbrance:</b> 0				
<b>Body Levels:</b> OK, 0, -1, -3, -6, Incapacitated				

*The statistics given above are for his "Storm Steed" form. As he will not be in his "human" form for very long during the story, other statistics are unnecessary.*



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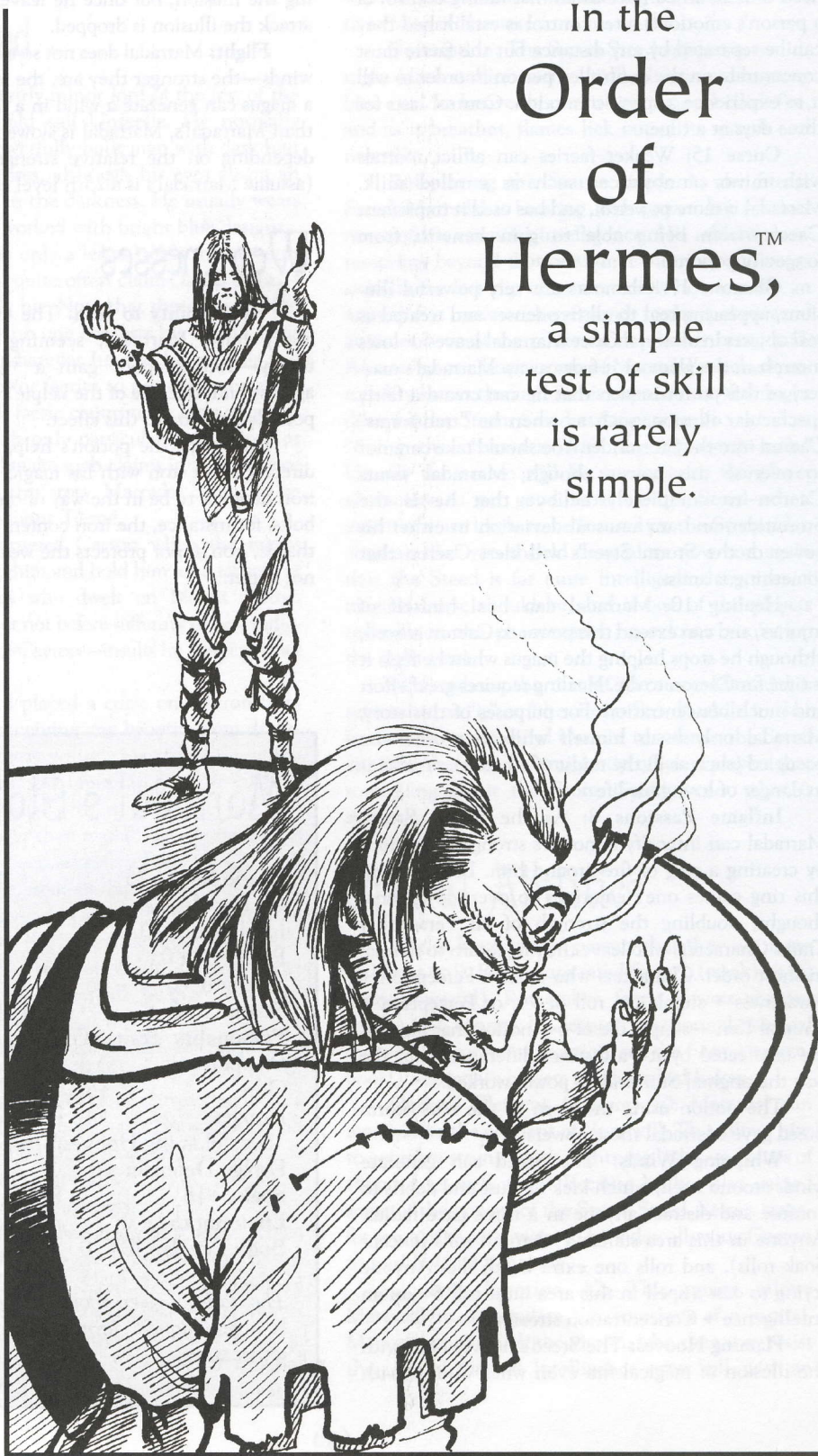
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